

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on Wednesday 11 January 2017 at City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 4.35 pm
Concluded 7.10 pm

Present – Councillors

CONSERVATIVE	LABOUR	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT
D Smith	Tait Thirkill	N Pollard

NON VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBERS

Chair of Children in Care Council
N O'Neill
Inspector K Taylor
Y Umarji

Bradford District Clinical Commissioning Group
West Yorkshire Police
Bradford Education

Observer: Councillor V Slater – Portfolio Holder – Deputy Leader and Health and Wellbeing

Apologies: Councillor Engel

Councillor Thirkill in the Chair

17. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

In the interests of transparency, Councillor D Smith noted that he was a trustee of Canterbury Imagination Library (Minute 19 refers).

18. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

There were no appeals submitted by the public to review decisions to restrict documents.



19. EDUCATION OUTCOMES FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN 2015/16 AND VIRTUAL SCHOOL UPDATE

The Deputy Director - Education, Employment and Skills submitted a report (**Document “G”**) which provided an interim summary of the educational attainment of looked after children (LAC) in the Bradford district. The report related to those children and young people of school age who had been in care for one year or more on 31 March 2016. The report explained that a further comprehensive report would be presented once the validated national data was published in the Spring term.

The report also provided an update on the work of the Virtual School (VS).

In presenting the report the Virtual School Head highlighted the following points:

- The Virtual School now came under the responsibility of the Deputy Director – Education, Employment and Skills.
- In terms of the methodology of assessment, although the Foundation stage had remained the same that for the other key stages had changed which meant that the results were not directly comparable with statistics from previous years.
- The percentage of those achieving a Good Level of Development (GLD) at Early Years Foundation Stage was rising. Although this was still too low it was noted that the cohort was only small. The main issue for this age group was the communication and language element and this was an area to be worked on. All five elements (Communication and Language/ Personal, Social and Emotional/ Physical Development/ Literacy/ Mathematics) contributed to the overall performance outcome for each child.
- For KS1 the assessment of GLD focused on when children reached the ‘age expected standard’ in Reading, Writing and Maths.
- In terms of reading the percentage for LAC was close to that recorded for all Bradford children. The weakest subject, in this age range, was writing.
- The overall progress achieved by the current KS1 children from their performance at Foundation stage was excellent.
- KS2 performance was measured in terms of reaching the ‘age expected standard’ in Reading, Writing, Maths and Grammar, and Punctuation and Spelling. The percentage of LAC achieving the standard in combined reading, writing and maths was well below the level of their peers in Bradford.
- In terms of value added progress scores, which indicated the progress of pupils from one key stage to the next, the weakest subject was reading (this was reflected nationally) and the strongest writing.
- Attainment for KS4 was now measured across 8 qualifications with double weighting given to English and Maths. The combined score for LAC was 31%, with Bradford children overall being 45.4% and nationally 48.2%
- Figures were given on the number of children within each cohort with an EHC (Education, Health and Care) Plan, SEN (Special Educational Needs) support, FSM (Free School Meals) or who were considered to be disadvantaged.
- Details were also given in respect of the Associate Programme being run by



the VS which allowed rapid intervention to be provided for individual children as and when needed. This had proved to be very successful and further appointments to the Associate role were to be progressed. Positive feedback had been forthcoming from educational settings in respect of the effectiveness of this support in providing stability and assisting in avoiding exclusions.

He and the Deputy Director responded to questions from Members:

- There were educational initiatives over the summer holiday period that the VS supported. The majority of children that the VS was associated with were in mainstream school so could access whatever activities were offered by their usual provider.
- The VS covered all LAC not just those who might be struggling with education.
- A significant number of children attended the Police Camp over the Summer which was valuable in terms of wider social skills.
- The work undertaken by the Associates would vary according to the needs of the individual child; this could include a focus on attachment or emotional issues.
- Training was provided for school staff to support/complement the work undertaken by the Associates.
- The work undertaken with non-attenders to ensure that they could access learning would be maintained.
- There were currently no specific VS initiatives for LAC focused on particular subjects but it was something that could be considered. The role of the VS was to monitor and support what schools were doing for their LAC.
- Attainment was important but progress from the initial starting point was crucial; this was about closing the gap. The VS looked at whether each child was on track and identified those who may be underperforming. If a child was underperforming then the school would be contacted to establish any reasons for this.
- A Nursery stage PEP (Personal Education Plan) had been developed so that intervention could happen at an earlier stage.
- Schools were generally very inclusive and there were not usually any problems with getting a placement for LAC in schools.
- In respect of young people who refused to attend school; the Associates would work with the provider in whatever setting they were in, they would go into the residential homes when this was appropriate.
- Pupil Premium Plus (PPP) had to be spent on LAC and had to be accounted for by the designated teacher(s) for each school. It equated to £1900 a child but did not have to be used equally, it may be that one child required more support than another at any one time.
- If a young person was not attending school this money would be retained by the VS and appropriate support would be provided to get the individual back into education.
- The Associates were funded from the 25% of the PPP which was retained centrally.

- In terms of outcomes/ results from the work of the Associates, these could be



qualitative rather than quantitative; just engaging in education could be a positive outcome for a particular child.

- Designated teachers were asked to provide feedback in their reports on the work undertaken by the Associates but the children could also be asked for their views.
- The need for intervention by the VS was identified via a number of routes including social workers, designated teachers, teaching assistants or through the VS itself. Foster carers or the young person themselves could also flag up any issues.
- There had been particular issues with the reading paper for KS2 in terms of accessibility and it was understood that the DfE (Department for Education) were looking at this.
- The progress of an individual child could now be tracked from nursery when the VS first became involved with them. The majority of LAC had a starting point that was well below their peers particularly in the areas of language/communication and literacy – these were the prime areas to focus on.

The Portfolio Holder noted that:

- The Governors of a school had a duty to monitor the allocation of PPP.
- There was currently a national campaign about the importance of the first 1000 days in the development of a child.
- The Authority had recently been awarded Innovation Bid funding associated with work on early intervention/assistance.

The Deputy Director said that there was a programme associated with the Innovation Bid that aimed to provide support to foster carers and Children's Centres associated with challenging children.

A Member commented that the Imagination Library was a successful scheme which provided every child up to the age of five with a book a month. Links would be made with the VS in relation to funding and data collection.

In concluding the Virtual School Head said that a more detailed report based on the published data would be presented to the Panel later in the year.

Resolved –

- (1) That Document “G” be welcomed.**
- (2) That a further report be submitted to the Panel once the published data is received from the Department for Education.**

***ACTION: Head of the Virtual School
Deputy Director – Education, Employment and Skills***



20. INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER SERVICE - ANNUAL REPORT

A report was presented by the Deputy Director (Children's Social Care) (**Document "H"**) in relation to the work of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Service and its Annual Report which was required to be produced under the IRO Regulations. The Annual Report provided evidence in respect of the effectiveness of the service, examined the quality of the reviews offered to young people and set targets for the future development of the service.

The IRO Manager highlighted following points:

- The figure for the number of looked after children (LAC) had been 941 as at 3 January 2017; this was an increase on the figure for the previous year.
- The numbers entering and leaving care had been similar to the figures for the previous year.
- There had been a significant decrease in the numbers exiting care in 2016.
- The numbers of Interim Care Orders, Section 20 voluntary arrangements and Special Guardianship Orders.
- There had been a significant decrease in the numbers placed for adoption. This reflected the national trend.
- Placement with parents had increased slightly as had placements with family and friends.
- The Service had carried out over 2500 reviews during the period April 2015 to December 2016, of which 98% had been completed within the relevant timescale despite increasing caseloads and staff changes. Recruitment was in process to replace officers who had retired.
- Positive feedback had been received from young people.
- The Audit Grading System was now aligned with Ofsted requirements and this information was being used in sufficiency reports.

The following responses were given to questions from Members:

- Details were outlined in respect of the two IRO challenges that had escalated to Formal Dispute Resolution and it was noted that these had arisen as a result of matters of process not serious failures.
- In terms of the statistics for 'feeling safe' this could be a matter of interpretation for the particular child for example it could be that they had had an issue at school or elsewhere outside the home. It depended what a child was worried about and what was relevant to them at that point in time. Particular examples could be made available to Members to offer reassurance if they wished.
- The uptake of Viewpoint (as a method of recording the views of young people) was slightly down on last year. A User Group was looking at ways to drive this forward. It tended to be more popular with younger people and was now more accessible due to the introduction of an App. The content had recently been updated in consultation with the CICC. It was thought that if children started using Viewpoint at an earlier stage they would be more likely to continue as they got older.
- There was no statutory requirement for IROs to meet with a young person



- separately to the review meeting but it was considered to be good practice.
- Viewpoint was not the only method of participation for LAC. Many of the older young people preferred to attend the review meetings in person.
 - Work was being undertaken to look at how Viewpoint might be better utilised.
 - If a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) was entered into for a child they ceased to be a Looked After Child. If they were under a Section 20 or ICO they remained in the system.
 - Working with children from newly arrived communities could bring different challenges.
 - Unaccompanied asylum seeking children were taken in a planned way through agreement with the Home Office; ten young people had been accommodated since October all of whom were over the age of 16. These young people were deemed to be LAC and were allocated a social worker and therefore an IRO and would go through the review process. Seven other unaccompanied asylum seeking children had arrived in the district other than through the Home Office initiative.

Resolved –

(1) That the Corporate Parenting Panel notes:

- (i) **The work undertaken by the Independent Reviewing Officer Service and its ongoing role in providing robust and challenging reviews of all Care Plans.**
- (ii) **The improvements achieved over the last twelve months in terms of children’s participation, the continued improvement in timeliness and the successful introduction of a quality assurance process for the service.**
- (iii) **The contribution made and value added by the Independent Reviewing Officer Service through the reporting of quality assurance findings to the Strategic Leadership Management Group.**
- (iv) **The continuation of good collaborative working arrangements with social work teams and partner agencies in order to achieve the best outcomes for Bradford’s Looked After Children.**
- (v) **That the Independent Reviewing Officer Service’s Annual Report will be submitted to the January meeting of the Panel on an annual basis and will include data for the preceding 20 month period up to the end of November.**

(2) That the Service’s Work Plan for 2016/17, as set out in the Annual Report, be endorsed.

ACTION: Deputy Director – Children’s Social Care



21. INDEPENDENT MONITORING AND QUALITY ASSURANCE OF RESIDENTIAL CHILDREN'S HOMES

A report was submitted by the Deputy Director (Children's Social Care) in relation to the independent monitoring and quality assurance of the district's Residential Children's Homes, in accordance with Regulation 44 of the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015. The report stressed the importance of the role of Elected Members in this process (**Document "I"**).

In presenting the report the following points were highlighted by the Quality Assurance Manager:

- There were eleven homes and the role of the Quality Assurance Manager (QAM) was to visit each on a monthly basis with a specific emphasis on a number of key areas. The aim was to provide support for the homes and to ensure the 'care of the child' and that they were prepared with the necessary skills and documentation for Ofsted inspection.
- Each visit was very thorough and would take approximately 4 and a half hours. The QAM would also facilitate visits by Elected Members and the aim was to undertake 3 visits per annum per home. Members' visits were focussed on engagement with the young people and trying to ensure that their views were heard. Members were asked to form a judgement on the quality of the care at that home for the young people across a range of aspects. They could flag up any concerns and would provide additional scrutiny and challenge.
- New regulations had been introduced in 2015 and there was now further emphasis on accountability in the inspection framework.
- Monthly reports were sent to the manager of each home with copies to Ofsted and the responsible individual, who had responsibility for the overall supervision of the homes.
- Accessing learning was a very important issue. Ofsted would look at the starting point for each child/young person and the progress that they had made.
- In 2014 a higher requirement had been introduced for the 'outstanding' classification. Since this time there had been a decline in the proportion of 'outstanding' judgements received but there was a high level of 'good' with one home 'requiring improvement'. Overall it was considered that the position was positive.
- It should be borne in mind that there was a need to ensure that the homes were flexible in meeting the needs of their young people and an Ofsted inspection was just a snapshot on one particular day.

She responded to questions:

- Ofsted also took account of the regular monitoring reports in their assessments.



- The judgement was based on three areas. The 'requiring improvement' judgement had arisen as a result of a technicality not associated with the quality of care provided at that home and systems had been put in place to ensure that the same issue did not arise again.
- Any best practice identified as a result of the monitoring process was recommended and shared to others but the QAM's position meant that she had to be independent of the Children's Social Care Service and had no influence over how any recommendations might be implemented.
- In terms of comparison with other authorities; although no specific information was available at this meeting, as a result of the changes to the inspection framework there had been a significant decline in the numbers of homes designated as 'good' or 'outstanding' across the country. Ofsted's stance was that if it could not be demonstrated that something was happening it was not happening.
- The monitoring reports were expected to be provided to Ofsted within 28 days of the QAM's visit along with any comments made by the relevant registered manager/responsible person.
- She would be happy to facilitate visits by Members at different times of the day, for example before or after school, to increase the chances of young people being present.

In response to the points raised the Deputy Director also noted that

- The dissemination of best practice was part of the role of certain officers.
- The service had a good relationship with Ofsted that permitted open and honest dialogue to take place.
- Bradford had more residential homes than many other authorities which made direct comparison on a percentage basis problematic.
- Some private providers had left the market and others were circumspect about the children that they were prepared to accept.

The Chair commented that the more visits a Member undertook the more they learned about what was required and what to look for.

The Panel noted that all Councillors had a responsibility as corporate parents not just those appointed to this Panel. It would not be practical however to have all Members undertaking visits although it could be advantageous for Ward Councillors to establish links with any residential homes in their area.

Members discussed the practicality of visits and the frequency and need for them to be arranged in advance bearing in mind that this was the young people's home. They asked the Deputy Director to confirm that all Members of Corporate Parenting Panel were required to have a DBS check and that this would be necessary prior to undertaking any visits



Resolved –

That the Deputy Director – Children’s Social Care be requested to review the process of Member involvement in Regulation 44 visits to monitor Residential Homes, including establishing the need for Members to have a DBS check prior to undertaking visits, and to submit a report to a future meeting of the Panel.

***ACTION: Deputy Director – Children’s Social Care
Regulation 44 Monitoring and Quality Assurance Manager***

22. REFERRAL FROM CORPORATE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - CHILDREN PLACED IN BRADFORD FROM OUTSIDE THE DISTRICT

At the meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 6 October 2016, consideration had been given to a report of the Strategic Director – Children’s Services in relation to the arrangements that the Council and its partners had in place to safeguard against Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). The Committee resolved, amongst other things;

‘That the Corporate Parenting Panel looks into the number of children being placed in care in Bradford from outside the district and any emerging issues.’

A report of the Deputy Director (Children’s Social Care)(**Document “J”**) was therefore submitted for Members’ consideration.

It was explained that this recommendation had arisen due to a concern expressed by a Member of the Scrutiny Committee in respect of the responsibility of this Authority and its ability to make checks with the same level of robustness for any young people who had been placed in Bradford from outside the district as was done for the Authority’s own looked after children.

An overview of the CSE team was given and it was noted that there had been a significant increase in staffing since the last report to the Panel. It was explained that:

- If a child looked after by another authority was placed in the Bradford district then the responsibility for that child remained with the placing authority. However any child that was placed in Bradford and being at risk would receive the same response as any other child in terms of going missing or CSE. They would be discussed on a daily basis just as any other child and if they went missing attempts would be made to locate them and advice and support offered to them. There was a statutory duty on the placing authority to inform the authority where the child was being placed, albeit that this did not always happen. Each child would be flagged on the system including information on where they were from and their risk factors. If a child was from within West Yorkshire the West Yorkshire Risk Assessment Tool would be used; if from further afield then the tool for the authority concerned would be used and the CSE Team would assist with the development of a risk management plan.



- The CSE Team visited private providers and foster carers to offer support, training and advice and they also worked closely with the residential homes.

The following responses were given to questions:

- It was believed that approximately 80 children or young people from outside the district were currently placed in Bradford only a proportion of whom would be at risk of going missing or CSE.
- All the young people in residential care were Bradford children.
- Each looked after child in Bradford with a social worker had an active open case; if a child placed from outside the authority did not have an active open case there was still a sub-section specifically dedicated to recording information relevant to CSE or going missing.
- Information was shared with other authorities.
- The numbers of children recorded as missing included any from other local authorities.

The Co-opted Member representing the police said that there was only one 'disrupting officer' within the district but each Neighbourhood Team had 'problem solvers' who would have the profiles of any young people who regularly went missing.

Members noted that the current 'disrupting officer' was very effective.

Resolved –

- (1) **That the contents of the report be noted.**
- (2) **That the Panel is reassured that children and young people placed in Bradford from outside the district are treated exactly the same as children from Bradford in terms of safeguarding from child sexual exploitation and going missing and also that appropriate information sharing takes place between Authorities.**

NO ACTION

23. WORK PLAN 2016/17

Resolved –

That the following items be added to the Work Plan:

**Regulation 44 Visits Review
Education Outcomes**

ACTION: Deputy Director – Children's Social Care

Chair

Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a correct record at the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

THESE MINUTES HAVE BEEN PRODUCED, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, ON RECYCLED PAPER

