

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on Monday 9 July 2018 at City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 4.35 pm
Concluded 5.50 pm

Present – Councillors

CONSERVATIVE	LABOUR	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT
D Smith	Engel Tait Thirkill	Humphreys

Non Voting Co-opted Members

Chair of the Children in Care Council

Yasmin Umarji Bradford Education

Sue Thompson Bradford District Clinical Commissioning Group

Councillor Thirkill in the Chair

1. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

No disclosures of interest in matters under consideration were received.

2. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

NO ACTION

3. APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED MEMBERS

The Panel was asked to consider the appointment of Non-Voting Co-opted Members for the 2018/19 municipal year and to make a recommendation to the Regulatory and Appeals Committee.

Resolved –

That it be recommended to the Regulatory and Appeals Committee that the appointment of Non-Voting Co-opted Members to the Panel for the 2018/19 municipal year be confirmed as set out below:

- Inspector Kevin Taylor – West Yorkshire Police
- Yasmin Umarji – Education

- Sue Thompson – Bradford District Clinical Commissioning Group
- Chair of the Children in Care Council

ACTION: *City Solicitor*

4. **REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY - PROGRESS REPORT**

Previous reference: Minute 19 (2017/18)

The Deputy Director (Children's Social Care) submitted a report (**Document "A"**) which updated the Panel in respect of the work of the Regional Adoption Agency 'One Adoption West Yorkshire' (OAWY). It included the Agency's Annual Report for the period April 2017 to March 2018 (Appendix 1).

The OAWY Service Delivery Manager went through the report which specifically addressed the issues of IT provision and office accommodation for staff, as requested by Members in November 2017. She explained that:

- The agency had now been operational for 15 months. This had been a time of great challenge; there had been initial issues with regard to office accommodation and IT connectivity but great progress had now been made in respect of both these issues.
- The Agency operated across three distinct business areas: Family Finding, Recruitment and Assessment, and Adoption Support.
- Nationally there were more children than adopters so ways to engage potential adopters and to facilitate early links with children were being explored. There had been an increase in the numbers attending the recruitment/information sessions and the frequency of these events had gone from quarterly to bi-monthly to accommodate demand.
- The agency was looking at the development of a more bespoke family finding model and exploring the use of the media and social media to identify families, particularly for those children who waited longer due to the complexity of their circumstances.
- Early permanence for babies was also being pursued.
- The current target for recruitment was 120 adoptive households across West Yorkshire in the current year. There were currently 87 in assessment.
- A pilot peer mentoring support scheme had been established and officers were very optimistic that this would prove to be a valuable resource.
- 33 recruitment/information events had been held, a large number of which had taken place at locations within Bradford.
- An Adoption Support Care Offer was under development.
- The Agency made good use of the Adoption Support Fund with the aim being to provide support at the earliest possible point.
- Group work and support was an area that was being expanded.
- The Adoption Panel met 7 times a month; delays had been reduced and choice increased.
- Two thirds of children placed within the last year had been through OAWY. Inter-agency fees had increased significantly from 1 June and the agency was looking at creative ways to manage this.
- The agency's management/accountability processes were considered to be

- robust.
- To ensure that children had a strong voice there was an Adopted Teenagers Identity group (ADIT) and an Adopter Voice group.
 - The agency was keen to look at best practice and to drive this forward in the future.

In response to Members questions it was explained:

- It was believed that the regional agency was proving to be better for the district. There had been a significant increase in the range of placement choice; fewer children from Bradford were being placed outside the area and there was much more support available for people to access. A Centre for Excellence had also been established. There had also been a slight improvement in terms of timeliness and it was anticipated that this would continue to improve.
- At this point there were no plans to extend the agency to encompass additional authorities/areas. The agency was already quite large and there was a wish to consolidate on the work that was already being done.
- OAWY had run a recent training event for other authorities and the intention was that this would be done again.
- There had been a concerted effort to resolve the issues with IT connectivity; it having been a challenge as initially there had been five different systems. Lessons had been learned from the issues.
- There were links with the Virtual School and the importance of their work to raise the achievement of adopted children was recognised. Outreach work was undertaken with schools to support them and to ensure that Pupil Premium was utilised for the things adopted students required.
- In respect of the Medical Advisor Service; the agreements about time resource had been negotiated a considerable time previously when there had been fewer children and the hours available did not now meet the need. Negotiation with the Health Trusts was underway on this issue.
- The biggest challenges in the near future would be ensuring optimum outcomes for children whilst remaining within the relevant budgetary constraints and pushing forward on recruitment.

Members commended officers on what had been achieved in the development of the regional agency.

Resolved –

That Document “A” and the Annual Report of One Adoption West Yorkshire be welcomed and that a progress report be submitted to the Panel in twelve months time.

ACTION: Deputy Director (Children's Social Care)

5. IMPROVING SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE/CARE LEAVERS - PROGRESS REPORT

Previous reference: Minute 11 (2017/18)

The Deputy Director (Children's Social Care) presented a report (**Document “B”**) which set out the progress made in respect of the implementation of the recommendations arising from a review of the support for young people in care/care leavers, undertaken by members of Bradford Council's Future Leaders Programme 2016, as requested by the Panel at its meeting held on 13 September 2017.

It was explained that the recommendations had now been brought into the Through Care Service and a number of good outcomes had been achieved. The following initiatives were highlighted:

- A Local Offer website was being created to bring all the relevant information together. There was also access to Facebook and Twitter forums.
- The pilot scheme to give young people in care free gym membership had now been rolled out to all and extended to carers where appropriate.
- A lot of work had been undertaken on engagement. Examples of this included: the provision of free tickets for the Bradford Literature Festival; the entry of a team into the 2017 Dragon Boat Festival (who had won both their races; and free pantomime tickets. Future events were being considered such as a picnic and rounders session at the park.
- Significant progress had been made in respect of apprenticeships; work had been undertaken alongside the Equalities Group and Human Resources (HR) to ensure that all the young people who met the necessary criteria were invited for interview and that they were provided with assistance/support for the interview process. Difficulties had arisen, in relation to necessary HR requirements, relative to a suggestion apprenticeships should be granted automatically to looked after young people but it was possible to ensure that young people managed to gain work experience.
- Preparations were being made for three specific apprenticeships for a Community Residential Worker, a Social Media/Public Relations post and a post to support Quality Assured accommodation for the over 16s (which was to be funded on a regional basis).

The presentation also included information in respect of:

- The numbers of care leavers currently, including those accessing the 21 to 25 service.
- Positive outcomes achieved in respect of access to education.
- The management of homeless young people.
- 87% of care leavers were still in touch with the Service on their 19th birthdays which was considered to be very positive.
- The percentage of young people in suitable accommodation was not as high as the Service would like but the Authority had good contracts in place and strong working relationships with partner agencies such as Centrepoint and Horton Housing and gained added value from these agencies.
- The Therapeutic Social Work Team was now operating. This service had previously been accessed through CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service). There were now 5 highly qualified workers within the service to care for the young people and they would work with individuals up to the age of 21.
- This work included assisting foster carers in dealing with any issues. The wish was for all children to have a 'healing placement'
- The appointment of a dedicated Subject Access Request (SAR) officer had led

to real and amazing feedback. This individual helped young people to access their case file and track their journey including why they entered care; this could be a very healing process for a young person.

- The Local Offer had been published. This had been drawn up further to consultation with young people and staff. Four young people were going to work with the Marketing Team to develop the website. It was intended to use videos rather than written format to relay information and a Theatre Group was also to assist in this. Input from Corporate Parenting Panel would also be sought.
- Finances were a significant issue for young people and the relevant policies had been reviewed so that information would be available for young people to ensure that they knew what they were entitled to.
- Proactive work was being done to access as much grant funding as possible to help finance other initiatives and activities and this was having a positive impact on the quality of the service that could be provided.

In response to Members' questions it was explained that:

- Officers were working hard across the various services to try and ensure that there was a graded approach to prepare young people for leaving care rather than a 'cliff edge' at a particular age.
- Negotiation was being undertaken with adult mental health services in relation to support for care leavers. It was believed that in the Bradford district the necessary services were available. The Therapeutic Social Worker Team helped young people to access community based support. If help was needed post 21 support would be provided and young people would be signposted to the right agencies.
- Work was being done on a regional basis to look at achieving potential benefits for the young people in respect of free public transport and cinema tickets.
- Between the ages of 16 and 18 the Authority had a duty to house a homeless young person immediately. Post 18 they had to be dealt with under the Housing Act legislation and an assessment of their situation would be done jointly with Housing; Through Care would always lobby hard to try and ensure that they were not judged to be intentionally homeless and that a safe recommendation was achieved. The Council had a strong partnership with Centrepont.
- Young people would not be placed in an area of the district where they might be more at risk.
- Young people in custody were visited every month and it was ensured that they had access to appropriate means such as clothing and income.
- Bradford did have a relatively high rate of accommodation in multiple occupation and this had to be utilised for young people but it was quality assured and if there were any issues they would be addressed promptly. Staff would spend additional time with these young people and quality assurance meetings were held every 6 weeks.
- A number of events had been arranged focussed on a group of young people; this had facilitated them coming together and had resulted in the formation of friendship groups.

Comments were forthcoming as follows:

- The Children in Care Council were pleased with recent developments and looked forward to seeing all the proposals become operational. The young people had been consulted and had an input into the development of these ideas. One of the issues for young people was that they should not have to be identified as looked after; for example any tickets they were able to access should be just the same as anyone else. There was also an issue with associated access for carers; some events could be quite intimidating for a young person to access independently.
- The access to the Literature festival had been very positive.
- The behaviour of the young people in attendance at the Dragon Boat Festival had been exemplary.

Members discussed the difficulties in the logistics of providing young people with benefits in terms of free access to facilities and attractions without making it obvious and thus potentially awkward for them and it was noted that this was an issue that required further consideration.

Resolved –

- (1) That the Panel endorses the principles set out in paragraph 3.3 of Document “B” in the development of Bradford’s Local Offer for Care Leavers and that the Deputy Director (Children’s Social Care) be requested to send a copy of the Local Offer to all Members of the Panel once it is finalised.
- (2) That the Deputy Director (Children’s Social Care) be asked to thank officers within the Through Care Service, on behalf of the Panel, for the valuable work they do.

ACTION: *Deputy Director (Children’s Social Care)*

6. WORK PLAN 2018/19

No resolution was passed on this item.

Chair

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