

GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL
CORPORATE PARENTING SUB OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MEETING

Monday, 20 March 2017

PRESENT: Councillor B Oliphant (Chair)
Councillor(s): S Green, J Adams and B Clelland

CO-OPTED MEMBERS John Wilkinson and Jeremy Cripps

CP23 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr S Craig, Cllr Simcox, Cllr McMaster, Sasha Ban and Julie McCartney.

CP24 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2017 were agreed as a correct record.

CP25 PRESENTATION BY YOUNG PEOPLE - REGIONAL CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL

Representatives from One Voice attended the meeting to talk about the work of the Regional Children in Care Council and what it feels like to be a looked after child (LAC).

The group looked at the number of house moves each person had had throughout their life and discussions took place around that.

It was reported that the group has asked services to start mapping what they already do for care leavers, the information will be collated and any gaps identified. Committee was asked for ideas as to any priorities the Children in Care Council should be looking at. It was suggested that work could focus on the risk of exclusion from school, looking at what could best help LAC to be stable in school and make their experience better.

The young people discussed their own experiences of school and what their future plans look like.

It was suggested that it could be timely to review the Care Pledge and the Care Leavers Charter to ensure the pledges promised are still appropriate.

RESOLVED - That the information be noted.

CP26 PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW

The Committee received a report outlining performance data for 2016/17. It was reported that to date there is 371 children looked after in Gateshead, this is above the national average and work is ongoing to look at this in terms of how to reduce numbers, for example through early help and support before children come into care.

The majority of looked after children are in the age group 9-17 years old. There are less younger children as it would be hoped most would be rehabilitated to home or adopted. In relation to the types of orders it was confirmed that the majority are through section 20 orders, this is a voluntary arrangement where the parents are working with the local authority, the local authority has no parental responsibilities. A full care order is based on assessments on the family and occurs when there is no option for the child to return home, this lasts until the child is 18.

It was noted that placement stability is important in ensuring positive outcomes for young people. This performance indicator is measured through the number of looked after children who have had three or more placements during the year. It was reported that 3.5% of looked after children in Gateshead have had three or more moves, the national average is 11%. In relation to long term placements, 86.8% of looked after children in Gateshead have remained in their placement for at least 2 and a half years, the national average is 67%.

The number of out of borough placements remains static, the majority are in foster placements just outside of Gateshead in the local area. It was confirmed however that some placements are further afield, in Barnet, South Lakeland and North Yorkshire. In terms of adoption there have been 17 this year, 13 of which were within the best interest date timescale, this is above the national average.

It was reported that care leavers data is gathered based on the position of the care leaver on their 18th birthday, which does not take into account any breaks in education, employment or training.

The Mind of My Own (MOMO) app is continuing to be used to gather LAC views, which is being used in conferences and LAC reviews. The MOMO continues to be developed for younger children and also for those young people who are not verbal.

It was questioned what is in place to keep the knowledge within the service when there is a high staff turnover. It was confirmed that monthly meetings are held with the quality assurance team and reports are fed back to senior management team who keep on top of data.

It was queried why the number of LAC is higher in Gateshead than in other areas. It was confirmed that all North East authorities are higher, which is as a result of the economic deprivation in the area. Work is ongoing to get to the root of the problem before it escalates. It was questioned at what point the number of LAC becomes too much. It was acknowledged that the average case load for Social Workers in Gateshead is 22 cases, for Gateshead this between 350 – 390 LAC. It was also noted that numbers have plateaued over the last few years.

RESOLVED - That the comments of the Committee on the performance outlined be noted.

CP27 OFSTED INSPECTION - SPECIFIC LAC IMPROVEMENT PROGRESS UPDATE

A report was presented to Committee on the work on the LAC Improvement Plan following last year's Ofsted inspection. A number Recommendations were received from Ofsted around improving the quality of all children's plans. A working party has been set up to develop new LAC and pathway plans, which will go onto Care First in May 2017, this will map a child's journey through care and ensure a more outcome focussed plan.

Another recommendation was ensuring child protection conference and reviews are used to drive plans through robust challenge. It was noted that training has been carried out to ensure challenge is monitored and evaluated. In terms of supporting care leavers to understand their health histories, a nurse has been appointed to work with the LAC team to ensure all care leavers receive their health passports. In addition, Personal Advisors are in place wot work with care leavers to ensure they are aware of their legal entitlements.

In terms of education and training partners offering support for care leavers to stay on their courses, a steering group has been set up. The group is looking at improving the apprenticeship, internship and traineeship offer and further education provision to ensure a wider offer for care leavers. It was confirmed that the group is made up of a number of partners who meet bi-monthly.

It was questioned what is being done in relation to mental health needs of care leavers. It was confirmed that there is a national working group whose findings are due to be published at the end of March. It was acknowledged that LAC can be fast tracked into the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). It was suggested that more work is needed into terms of those non LAC with mental health needs and those children on the edge of care. It was confirmed that a report on the re-design of CAMHS is due to be reported to Families OSC in the next work programme.

RESOLVED -

- (i) That the Committee's comments on the progress of the Ofsted recommendations be noted.
- (ii) That the Committee agreed to receive a progress update in March 2018.

CP28 ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME

Committee received the provisional work programme for the municipal year 2017/18.

It was suggested that the Committee visit a children's home or an alternative venue instead of inviting children into the Committee.

It was noted that young people would be invited to attend October 2017 and March

2018 meetings and it was agreed to look at an alternative venue on these dates.

- RESOLVED -
- (i) That the Committee endorsed the OSC's provisional work programme for 2017/18 and referred it to Council on 8 June 2017 for agreement.
 - (ii) That the Committee noted that further reports will be brought to the Committee to identify any additional issues which it may be asked to consider.

CP29 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

- RESOLVED - That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the remaining business in accordance with the indicated paragraphs of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

CP30 REGULATION 44 REPORT

The Committee received a report on the Ofsted inspection outcomes and regulation 44 independent visits carried out in the Council's children's homes. The reports written as a result of the visits are circulated to the Service Director, Social Work, Care Wellbeing and Learning, Service Manager for Looked After Children and the Registered Manager of each Home.

- RESOLVED - That the information be noted.