

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

Thursday, 11 October 2018

PRESENT: Councillor B Oliphant (Chair)

Councillor(s): M Hall, S Craig, D Bradford, P Craig, L Kirton,
K McCartney, C McHugh, M Ord, R Oxberry and
S Ronchetti

CO-OPTED MEMBERS Malcolm Hedley and Jeremy Cripps

CP41 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors McMaster, Weatherley and Clelland.

CP42 MINUTES

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 July 2018 be approved as a correct record.

CP43 YOUNG PEOPLE'S PRESENTATION

The Committee heard from several young people on some work that they had undertaken to raise funds.

The young people had been offered some match funding by the Council. In order to raise funds the young people made soap and crocheted cloths and also were able to get money through the key fund.

The young people described how lots of planning had gone into the fund raising and they worked as a team to achieve their goals. The funds paid for a trip to London and the team visited the Houses of Parliament and went to see Aladdin. There were some new members of the group so it was a good opportunity to get to know each other.

The group are currently making some short video clips to go on the website which describe what it is like to go into foster care and help people who are new to the system. One Voice Youth Network have also developed an email address for non-urgent questions.

The Regional Children in Care Council are currently looking at two areas, Rights and Entitlement and Contact (Family Visits). The children have been looking at Contact, including whether venues are suitable, whether a different name should be used. The young people spent some time in separate groups with members of the

Committee and updated them on some of the work they had done so far.

The Committee thanked the young people for their time and their input into the meeting.

RESOLVED - That the information in the presentation be noted.

CP44 LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW

The Committee received a report on the statistics relating to looked after Children in Gateshead covering the period up to the end of August 2018. The report and presentation focussed on presenting key characteristic data and the data is themed as follows:

- How many looked after children do we have, and how does that compare to other areas
- How many children entered care and how many children and young people left care
- What are the characteristics of our current looked after population

At the end of August 2018 Gateshead had 409 Looked After Children, this is an increase of 4.1% from the end of March 2018. Those 409 children came from 230 individual families. A flow of 106 children entered care since March 2018 and 86 left care in the same period. On average over the last twelve months, 15 children entered care and 14 left care per month. Overall activity for admissions and discharges over the last twelve months was lower than the previous twelve, 352 compared to 369 in the same period last year. In September 2018 Gateshead had 11 children entering care and 10 leaving so it appears the numbers are slowing down.

The circumstances for individual children coming into care vary, the recorded primary need code shows that the largest category is Abuse and Neglect, 168 of all of the admissions in the last 12 months. Factors identified whilst the cases were being assessed included, domestic violence, mental health issues and neglect. There has been a slight decrease in the number of children leaving care and returning home, although there has been an increase in the number of children leaving care on special guardianship and child arrangement orders.

The majority of children are placed in mainstream fostering placements, there are still a high number of children in family and friends places. The aim is to use very few independent foster agency placements although the numbers are slightly higher. There has also been an increase in the number of children who have to be placed in independent residential placements.

There are currently 197 children placed out of borough, however, 150 of those are in Gateshead owned provision. 135 of those placed out of borough are located within the North East.

With regards to performance there are three indicators where targets have been

met. There are two indicators which are not meeting targets and 2 indicators have been revised and are new to have no targets.

8 out of 409 (1.96%) looked after children experienced 3 or more placement moves in the previous 12 months. At the same time last year there were 6 out of a total of 391 (1.35) looked after children. Gateshead's performance compares favourably with the national picture where around 10% of children have experienced 3 or more placement moves on average.

There were 109 out of 133 children who have been looked after for over two and a half years who have been living in the same placement for at least 2 years (81.95%).

At the same time last year there were 96 out of 109 children in the same placement (88.1%). Whilst this is a reduction from last year the current figure continue to compare extremely favourable to the National average which stands at around 72%.

During the period April to August 2018 there were 11 children who had been looked after for over 6 months and had been adopted 1 child has left care on a Special Guardianship Order.

During the period there were a total of 67 children who have left care giving an overall performance of 17.9% slightly below target. Early indicators for this indicator are positive for next year with a number of new matches already being made so far.

During April to August 2018, 11 adoptions took place, 4 of which were within the best interest date timescale (36%). At the same point last year there were also 11 adoptions of which 5 were within the time (45.5%). Gateshead currently have 44 children in the adoption process, 35 have a placement order granted and 18 have been placed, 17 have been matched waiting to be placed.

There are several factors which contribute to the delays and not meeting of the targets, these include delays in family finding when trying to place siblings together. Adoption placement held up waiting for proceedings to conclude. Lengthy court proceedings and then external family finding undertaken to reflect the child's cultural background.

Of 100 care leavers, 58 (58%) are in some form of education, employment and training with the remaining 42 (42%) not in employment, education or training. Recent trends indicate improving outcomes in this area.

Of 100 care leavers that are currently allocated, 99 (99%) were judged to be in suitable accommodation. The 1 case judged to be in unsuitable accommodation is in custody.

It was noted that there is a need to look in more detail at the numbers. This is something which officers are looking at in weekly performance clinics. It is known that the reasons are complex and varied as to why/how things are happening. It was queried that if there is an area where targets are not being met, is it the case that the targets are too ambitious. It was noted that this was not the case and that the reasons for not meeting targets were complex and were being investigated

further. It was also noted that some additional tracking and monitoring of processes has been put in place so officers can see where barriers arise and can look at opportunities to change processes.

RESOLVED - That the information contained within the report be noted.

CP45 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee were presented with the work programme report. It was noted that the Fostering and Adoption reports will be presented at the January meeting. The reports going forward will be brought to the July meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED - That the information contained within the report be noted.

CP46 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED - That the press and public be excluded during consideration of the following item.

CP47 REGULATION 44 REPORT

The Committee received a report outlining Ofsted Regulation 44 independent visits and inspection outcomes carried out in the Council's children's homes between June 2018 and September 2018.

Since the last meeting Blaydon Children's Home have been inspected. The formal report has not yet been published, however, initial feedback is that it will receive a Good. It was noted that there is some work to do in respect of Risk Assessment which need to be updated daily. Fire drill records are required for AM/PM. The other issue raised was about staff handovers and when staff were made aware of risks.

RESOLVED - That the information contained within the report be noted.