

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

**Monday, 15 January 2018**

**PRESENT:** Councillor B Oliphant (Chair)  
Councillor(s): S Craig, M Hall and G Haley

**CO-OPTED MEMBERS**

**APOLOGIES:** Councillor(s): B Clelland and E McMaster  
Co-opted Member(s): Ann Page and Sasha Ban

**CP17 APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Cllr Clelland, Cllr McMaster and co-opted member Sasha Ban.

**CP18 MINUTES**

Resolved:

- (i) The minutes of the meeting held on 9 October 2017 were agreed as a correct record.

**CP19 HEALTH OF LAC ANNUAL REPORT**

The Committee received an update of the work and outcomes for the Looked After Children and Young People Health Team in Gateshead 2016-17.

It was noted from the report that the team recorded a total of 187 notifications of children and young people becoming looked after in 2016-2017 of which 165 had IHA's completed. The remaining 22 were/have not been done for the following reasons: 2 no consent received, 1 did not attend appointment, 1 asylum seeker deemed to be 18+, 3 left care before appointment could be arranged, 1 absconded, 14 left care without consent being received.

The Committee were further advised that the LAC Health Team are commissioned to undertake statutory health assessments for Looked After Children up to their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and to support care leavers 18+ to access health services. It was noted that all young people leaving care are provided with a Leaving Care Passport and that a drop in for care leavers has been tried with the support of the LAC team.

A summary of the work being done with unaccompanied asylum seeking children,

foetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) and drug and alcohol services was provided.

It was noted that within sexual health services there was a total of 3 young people who had pregnancies during the year. 2 of the young people had their babies during the reporting period and the other is due after the reporting period. All of the young women have engaged with the Family Nurse Partnership. A further summary of the adoption and fostering work was provided to the Committee.

An update on the training offered to residential and foster carers about the training needs of young people was provided. The following points were highlighted from the report:

- The Designated Doctor LAC delivered training regarding Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) prior to her retirement to a range of audiences including Paediatricians, Midwives, Nurses, GPs, CYPS, Community Health Workers, a range of educational professionals, probation workers, Social Workers and Barnardos staff.
- Looked after children's health needs & issues are included in Level 3 safeguarding training to GPs, A&E obstetric and paediatric staff Level 2 safeguarding training delivered in Gateshead NHS Foundation Trust.
- Level 3 safeguarding training: 'Looked After Children – Health Professionals Role' continues to be delivered to community health staff and doctors who have or may have involvement with this client group by South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust. The training on Quality Health Assessments for LAC is delivered as part of this course for those carrying out health assessments from South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust.

It was stated that inspectors identified that Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in Gateshead are safe and achieve good outcomes. It was further noted that agencies are working well together to meet the needs of children with SEND although some areas for development were suggested.

The Committee received an update on the team developments and were advised of the priority actions for the service for 2017-18. These included:

- Continue a programme of audit strengthened and influenced by the Designated Nurse LAC in the CCG.
- Embed RAG rating for young people age 15 –17 years in relation to health needs to support their transition to leaving care. To monitor the progress of this.
- Continue to develop work supporting the more vulnerable care leavers, including health involvement at Health Transitions Meeting.
- Contribute to the further development of the regional pathway for the diagnosis of children with FAS/FASD Review of the work that has already

happened in Gateshead will feed into this process.

- Continue to work closely with the Local Authority to improve the overall timeframes for Initial Health Assessments.
- Recruitment to the post of Designated Doctor LAC is a key priority for the coming year. In the interim arrangements are in place to cover the vital elements of this role.
- To monitor the updated process for SDQs and to use the score as part of the health assessment.
- Obtain feedback from children and young people regarding health assessments, to ensure the voice of the child is heard.
- Provide Level 3 LAC training to health professionals at Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust.
- The timeliness of consents and initial health assessments will be reviewed continuously throughout 2017-18.
- LAC Health Team will provide support to drop in sessions.

It was asked whether any data was held on the dental treatment received by LAC in comparison to those who are not LAC. It was advised that there are no firm statistics held on this however there are no known concerns around LAC receiving adequate dental treatment from anecdotal evidence.

A question was asked as to whether there is a 'prevent' agenda' for FASD children including early intervention work with young people in early pregnancy. It was noted that work is ongoing to provide support and early interventions to young women who are pregnant to educate them on the risks of alcohol consumption. It was further stated that a wider consultation on this issue is planned.

Resolved:

- (i) That the Committee noted the contents of the report and the priority actions for 2017/18.

## **CP20 EDUCATION ANNUAL REPORT**

The Committee received an update of the work by the Virtual School.

It was noted that LAC numbers in and out of borough are increasing – particularly in the last two years. It was further noted from the report that the largest number of LAC within the secondary sector is in year 11 with 34 LAC in 2017.

An overview of LAC in Gateshead Secondary was presented showing that higher

numbers attend Joseph Swan, Heworth and St Thomas More – it was also said that around 23% of the total Gateshead LAC population are being educated out of the borough.

It was stated that the attendance figures outlined within the report are drawn down from the Virtual school on a termly basis from EMIS and via school information requests. It was also noted that LAC who achieve 100% attendance are rewarded with a certificate and a voucher from REALAC – low attendance is identified as an emerging issue and is picked up in the PEP or reported by social workers then followed up.

The Committee were advised on the arrangements for the Pupil Premium Grant for Looked After Children for the financial year 2016-17. In March/April 2017, each school (maintained and non-maintained but not private schools) will receive a payment broken down as follows:

- £300 paid for each term
- £500 paid based on 2 completed Personal Education Plans over a 12 month period (statutory requirement) received into the REALAC/Virtual School
- £500 to be retained by Realac/Virtual School to be used for additional support to both Individual Looked after Children and their schools.

It was noted from the report that schools will be expected to use the funding for the following:

- Directly support the achievement and attainment of LAC
- Close the attainment and progress gap between LAC and their peers
- Support underlying issues and interventions for LAC who are at risk of exclusion,
- Non- attendance and other issues that may affect learning

A summary of learning outcomes for LAC in Year 2 was provided to the Committee noting the following:

- 12 out of 15 children gained the expected level in writing
- 12 out of 15 children gained the expected level in reading
- 13 out of 15 children gained the expected level in maths
- 12 out of 15 children gained the expected level in the combined reading, writing and maths

It was noted that there has been a rise in LAC achieving results in reading, writing and maths at Key Stage 1 from 2015-16 to 2016-17. Further information from the report was summarised including an update on teaching staff, a support worker and education psychologist.

An update on post 16 LAC was provided addressing an increase in PEP returns for LAC 3-16 years in primary and secondary school in and out of the borough. It was said that this was largely due to the implementation of the new PEP process and building the capacity within the Virtual School team. Further actions and challenges

were highlighted from the report, there were:

- To develop a revised system for improving PEP returns for all Post 16 LAC
- To further increase PEP returns for 3-16 LAC both in and out of borough
- To continue to challenge schools to complete PEPs within the given timescales and return all PEPs within 10 days
- To increase the number of PEP meetings attended by the Virtual school, focusing particularly on Year 9 and Year 6 in order to flag up any possible difficulties around transitions

A question was asked around the permanent exclusion of LAC – it was noted that the service have a strong relationship with the admissions and exclusions team and that an update to the paperwork has highlighted the use of fair access and inclusion panels. It was further noted that schools have a designated person trained in safeguarding to support LAC.

It was asked whether pupil behaviour is logged for LAC so that should there be a permanent exclusion it can be seen what intervention work has been done. It was said that early intervention work is always logged within the schools.

It was asked whether there were any Section 47 LAC – it was advised that there are lots coming through the system every day.

Resolved:

- (i) The Committee noted the contents of the report.

## **CP21 ADOPTION ANNUAL REPORT - 2017**

The Committee received an update of the activity of the Adoption Service for the year ending March 2017.

It was noted that for the current year, April 2017 to the time of writing the report, 19 children have been adopted with adoption hearings pending for a further 9 children. A further 9 children are also placed with their adoptive families awaiting adoption and the service is currently family finding for 10 children.

It was stated that the service continues to perform well against a backdrop of external challenges and reforms. It was further stated that work in relation to the establishing a Regional Adoption Agency, “Adopt North East” (Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside, Northumberland and South Tyneside) is ongoing with proposals to be considered by Cabinet in February 2018 with a ‘go live’ date of October 2018.

An update on adopter recruitment was provided, it was noted that there have been several methods used to recruit adopters including radio campaigns and advertising on public transport – further updates on marketing were provided to the Committee

from the report. It was further noted that many enquiries that had come from outside of the borough were for adopters seeking very young children where their own local authority was not prioritising this type of recruitment.

The Committee were advised that from April 2016 to March 2017 Gateshead Council's adoption panel recommended approval for 24 prospective adoptive families. A further update was also provided advising that where timescales for adoptions were not met was due to reasons such as children having very complex backgrounds, complex needs as well as issues of uncertainty such as potential Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

Further updates were provided to the Committee from the report as well as a summary of the key issues and aims for the year ahead. These were:

- To build on our recruitment approach to attract potential adopters from within a 50 mile radius of Gateshead, and to increase the numbers of enquiries from potential adopters, particularly those who might wish to consider older or more complex children or sibling groups.
- To explore opportunities for continued collaborative working with other Local Authorities and voluntary adoption agencies in order to maximise placement choices for children.
- Meet the increasing demand for post adoption support as children with more complex needs continue to be placed for adoption. Evaluate and develop the existing post adoption support that is on offer and make effective use of the Adoption Support Fund. Ensure the provision of access to the fund as appropriate for Special Guardians of previously Looked After Children.
- Continued exploration and development of "fostering to adopt" opportunities in order to reduce delay for children.
- To continue to managing the changes and the requirements of the Adoption Reform agenda, and the implications of the "regionalization of adoption" which will require all local authorities in England to move to a system by 2020 whereby adopter recruitment, family finding for children and adoption support will all be delivered on a regional basis.
- Continued monitoring of our performance and systems to effectively analyse outcomes and identify potential areas for future service development

It was asked whether there had been any adoption breakdowns within Gateshead, it was noted that there has been one. The Committee noted that the report was very comprehensive and honest which was welcomed.

Resolved:

- (i) The Committee noted the contents of the report.

## **CP22 MISSING FROM CARE ANNUAL REPORT**

The Committee received an update summarising missing from care episodes from December 2016 to November 2017 and an update regarding protection and monitoring of child sexual exploitation.

It was noted that young people who go missing from care of the Council do so for many reasons which cannot be viewed in isolation from their home circumstances and their experience with the Looked After system.

The Committee were advised from the report that there were 936 missing episodes between December 2016 and November 2017 of which 60% were looked after children. It was further noted that this is an increase in the total number of missing episodes compared with the previous year.

An update was provided on the work of the LSCB Missing, Sexually Exploited and Trafficked Sub Group (MSET). It was noted that in 2016/2017 there were 48 young people discussed at MSET and during 2017 45 young people were discussed, it was further noted that some of the young people were discussed more than once. The Committee were also briefed on a typical response to a young person missing from a children's home.

It was noted that the sexual exploitation of children involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where the young person received something. It was further noted from the report that the service monitors the risks of child exploitation carefully and that there are currently 16 young people who are at risk of child sexual exploitation which is a 33% increase on last year. An update was also provided to the Committee on the work done by the Sanctuary North and Sanctuary South projects.

It was asked what the process would be for dealing with an angry/violent young person who refuses to stay in placement. It was stated that consistency of support and an open mind were key to ensure that the young person remains engaged. It was further stated that the use of in-house agencies could be used where necessary.

Resolved:

- (i) The Committee noted the contents of the report.
- (ii) The Committee agreed to receive an annual report on missing from care issues within Learning and Children.

## **CP23 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee received the work programme for the municipal year 2017/18, which will be a standing item on each agenda. There were no changes to note.

Resolved:

- (i) The Committee noted the provisional programme.

- (ii) That Committee noted that further reports on the work programme will be brought to the Committee to identify any additional policy issues, which the Committee may be asked to consider.

**CP24 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Resolved:

- (i) 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.

**CP25 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:

- (i) The Committee noted the report.

**Chair.....**