

## **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL – 12 April 2023**

### **MINUTES of a meeting held in the Lecture Theatre, Sessions House**

**PRESENT:** Dirk Ross (Chairman), David Beaney, Dan Bride, Tom Byrne, Gary Cooke, Tony Doran, Alison Farmer, Kelly Grehan, Sarah Hamilton, Shellina Prendergast, and Nancy Sayer.

**ALSO PRESENT:** Dylan Jeffrey, Deputy Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Joanne Carpenter (Participation and Engagement Manager), Christy Holden (Senior Commissioning Manager), Kayleigh Leonard (Participation Team Apprentice), Leemya McKeown (Assistant Director (Safeguarding Professional Standards and Quality Assurance)), Maureen Robinson (Management Information Unit Service Manager), and Hayley Savage (Democratic Services Officer)

#### **1. Apologies and substitutes**

Apologies for absence had been received from Trudy Dean, Lesley Game, Stephen, Gray, Sarah Hammond, Margo McArthur, Tracy Scott, Caroline Smith.

Shellina Prendergast, David Beaney, Alison Farmer, and Dan Bride were present virtually.

#### **2. Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman provided an update on the fostering awareness campaign and hoped that next year all 12 Kent districts would be involved.

#### **3. Minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2023**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2023 are correctly recorded.

#### **4. Participation Team update**

1. Jo Carpenter introduced the update and advised that Sophia Dunston, who had been a valued member of the Participation Team since the beginning, would be leaving the team to join Strategic Commissioning. Kayleigh Leonard, who had completed a Level 3 apprenticeship in public service operational delivery was now in the role of Participation Support Assistant. Nathan Moody had successfully passed his level 2 apprenticeship and was staying in the team to work towards Level 3.
2. Tom Byrne provided an update on the Young Peoples Council which included the Young Life Foundation and the formation of a Young Adults Council (YAC) extra group for unaccompanied asylum-seeking (UAS) young people. A YAC extra meeting took place on 11 April in Canterbury and the main YAC Council meeting was taking place on Friday 14 April at the Malling School.

3. Kayleigh Leonard updated the panel on recent events which included an African drumming workshop, Valentine's Day workshop, a dinosaur workshop, and a visit from the travelling Natural History Museum. February half term events included science days, a day for under 5's and pizza making days.
4. Jo Carpenter provided the panel with dates of upcoming events which all panel members were welcome to attend:
  - 31 May 2023 – all Children in Care Councils together for a meeting and activities in Ashford
  - 25 July 2023 – VSK Post 16 Awards Celebration in Canterbury
  - 27 July 2023 – Corporate Parenting event with young people
  - 17 September 2023 – awards for year 11's
5. Nancy Sayer asked about the recruitment of the NHS funded post for an UAS apprentice and Jo Carpenter said the second round of advertising for the role would close on 21 April 2023. Members agreed the importance of raising awareness of this opportunity. Jo confirmed that the Young Peoples Councils were inclusive of UAS young people and other groups but noted that some UAS young people were wanting to discuss areas relevant and specific to them and therefore the Young Adults Council extra was formed.
6. The update was noted.

## 5. Verbal Update by the Cabinet Member

1. Dylan Jeffrey provided an update on the following:

**UASC data from 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023** – There had been 87 UASC arrivals since 1 March 2023 bringing the total number of UASC arrivals for 2023 to 276.

In March the Council was pleased to welcome Dame Rachel de Souza, the Children's Commissioner, to its Reception and Safe Care service for UAS young people waiting for transfer to other local authority care. The young people had the opportunity to speak about the health, support and care they were receiving, and Dylan thanked the service for their work with UAS young people.

**Kent's Fostering Services** – Dylan thanked the district councils who had circulated information to encourage the take up of foster carers. The next online information event would take place on 22 April 2023 and people interested in becoming a foster carer were encouraged to attend. Dylan asked panel members to make use of all possible opportunities to raise awareness of the need for foster carers.

2. The Chairman highlighted the need for all 12 districts to work in partnership with the Council in promoting fostering. The panel discussed the advantages of regularly enforcing the fostering message and reminding elected members of their responsibility as a corporate parent. It was suggested that Local

Children's Partnership Groups be contacted to widen awareness within districts.

3. Kelly Grehan asked about the potential for displaying posters in village and church halls to promote fostering and Leemya McKeown said she would follow this up with Caroline Smith.
4. The verbal update was noted.

## **6. Performance Scorecard for Children in Care**

1. Maureen Robinson introduced the Performance Scorecard for Children in Care for January 2023 and provided a summary of significant areas:
  - (a) A measure related to initial health assessment referrals within 5 working days of becoming looked after included UAS young people where a decision had not yet been made. The measure regarding the timing of EHCPs included a small cohort of 25 children and the performance was below average.
  - (b) An optimistic target for children in care being adopted had been kept at 15% and this target had been achieved previously. The England average was 10%. The second adoption measure on timeliness of the granting of a placement order was down to court timescales.
  - (c) The special guardianship order measure did not include orders being granted outside of the process either before a child comes into care or after the care episode had ended.
  - (d) The performance for the measure for the percentage of social workers currently employed by KCC in children in care teams had dropped and there had been a reduction of six social workers.
2. Members discussed the timeline of court cases for adoption and care orders and the benefit of a deep dive into the reasons behind any delays in the system. Leemya McKeown said she would investigate this further and report back to a future meeting of the panel. Leemya said the covid-19 pandemic had caused significant delays in the care system, but this had since been reduced. Gary Cooke asked if the report could also look at whether there was a shortage of adoptive parents.
3. Nany Sayer referred to the last meeting of the panel where it was questioned whether there were health delays in the issuing of EHCPs and said a health diagnosis was not a requirement for an assessment of need for an EHCP. She said there was a potential hold up with the gathering of health information in the six-week timeframe when the EHCP assessment process had started due to the huge volume of requests. The compliance was 68% within six weeks and 94% within 20 weeks and therefore the 20-week timeframe was being met significantly.

4. RESOLVED that the performance data in the Corporate Parenting Scorecard be noted.

## **7. Virtual School Kent (VSK) Annual Report Summary**

1. Tony Doran introduced the report which was a summary of the impact of the virtual school in deploying its statutory duty towards children in care, care leavers and previously looked after children and included Key Stage 2, 4 and 5 Outcomes for 2022, wellbeing, participation and engagement and priorities for 2022-24.
2. Dylan Jeffrey asked whether, for those in the Key Stage 4 cohort who had three or more placements, there was any evidence that this had had a detrimental impact on their education. Tony Doran said prediction levels showed that instability had a negative effect, and placement and school stability were the key indicators of successful outcomes. Leemya McKeown added that the biggest predictor of placement breakdown was previous placement instability.
3. Gary Cooke asked about the data for NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) young people and whether performance could be maintained. Tony Doran said the figures in the report were for the 2021/2022 academic year and the figure may not be as positive in the next year's report. He said there was not enough entry level courses for post 16 (in particular UASC) and the loss of the European Social Fund meant there was not enough roll on, roll off provision. From September 2023 the government would bring in a Pupil Premium Plus for post 16 which, depending on rate, may make a difference.
4. Sarah Hamilton asked about the causes of placement breakdowns and Tony Doran said it was important to link what creates a negative impact on placement stability with other services to support young people in the best way possible. Reasons for placement breakdowns included waiting for school placements, patterns of multiple exclusions, and anxiety-based school avoidance.
5. Asked whether the Council was working with Further Education (FE) colleges, Alison Farmer said engagement had taken place with the principals of the FE colleges to help establish capacity and a broader range of qualifications. It would take time for a consistent offer to be in place in terms of broader education for children in care and those with an EHCP, but active engagement had started. Members of the panel agreed a report on post 16 pathways for young people would be brought back to the panel at the end of the year after some planning had taken place with the FE colleges.
6. RESOLVED that the impact of the Virtual School in relation to its performance be noted and its priorities for 2022-24 be endorsed.

## **8. Housing Options for Young Adults who are Care Leavers**

1. Christy Holden and Robin Cahill introduced the report and summarised the progress made on the issues faced by young adults who were Care Leavers and Children in Care in relation to their ongoing accommodation needs.
2. Robin said supported accommodation was available up to the age of 21 and there was in the region of 80 to 120 people who were ready to move on. There were some young adults over the age of 25 using the service as suitable accommodation could not be found.
3. Members acknowledged that the Council did not have a statutory obligation or responsibility to provide housing but there was an opportunity for the Council to build on relationships with boroughs and districts and work collaboratively with them. Maidstone Borough Council and Ashford District Council were noted as examples of districts who were working to provide affordable homes for young people.
4. Christy Holden said conversations had taken place between policy colleagues within KCC and the leads within district and borough councils regarding a range of issues that needed to be addressed with a potential solution similar to the Ex-Service Personnel Covenant. There was an intention to consult with elected Members before taking the matter to Kent Chiefs and Kent Leaders. Christy said she would investigate the potential for a working group to include Members and care leavers.
5. RESOLVED that the report be noted, and assistance be provided to ensure a Care Leavers Housing Offer is available and visible throughout each of the partner organisations.

## **9. Placement Stability**

1. Leemya McKeown introduced the report which demonstrated the robust response to improving placement stability for children in care and the steps taken to research previous placement breakdowns and consider what would support placement stability. The report shared the practice improvement work on placement stability including a Placement Stability Checklist and guidance to support identifying placement fragility at an early stage, prior to breakdown. Leemya gave a presentation, by way of a series of slides, which included the current KPI for placement stability and an overview of the placement stability deep dive analysis and next steps.
2. Asked about stages of child development and support, Leemya explained there was mandatory child development training for social workers at KCC which was also being developed with fostering teams to incorporate the outcomes of the placement stability work.
3. Members discussed the importance of working in partnership with other agencies to deal with issues and reduce timescales, and to ensure that information was recorded within the context of an individual's circumstances. Nancy Sayer highlighted the importance of increased partnership working and the involvement of health including the potential for a child's allocated nurse to

be invited to meetings. Leemya said the Independent Reviewing Officers service had involved other agencies regarding accountability and she noted the increase in external escalations made over the last month. Leemya said there was an evidence-based practice change which could be shared with health, and it was acknowledged that there were multi-agency-based challenges that needed to be addressed.

4. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

**10. Future Meeting Dates**

The future meeting dates were noted.