

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

### **MINUTES of the meeting held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone.**

**PRESENT:** Dirk Ross (Chair), Dan Bride, Becki Bruneau, Tom Byrne, Trudy Dean, Alison Farmer, Stephen Gray, Kelly Grehan, Sarah Hamilton, Sarah Hammond, Dylan Jeffrey, Nancy Sayer, Tracy Scott, and Caroline Smith.

**ALSO PRESENT:** Sue Chandler, Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services.

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Joanne Carpenter (Participation and Engagement Manager), James Clapson (Democratic Services Officer), Kevin Kasaven (Director of Children's Countywide Services), Leemya McKeown (Assistant Director, Safeguarding Professional Standards and Quality Assurance) and Maurine Robinson (Management Information Service Manager).

#### **1. Apologies and Substitutes**

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Mr Doran, Mr Harman and Mr Love.
- 1.2 Mr Beaney, Mrs Dean, Ms Hamilton, Mr Jeffrey and Ms Bride were present virtually.

#### **2. Chairman's announcements**

- 2.1 There were no announcements.

#### **3. Minutes of the meeting held on 26 July 2023**

- 3.1 **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 26 July 2023 were correctly recorded subject to an amendment to item 8, paragraph 3; the Department for Education's grant for recruitment and retention of foster carers should be amended to £240,000.

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

- 4.1 Ms Carpenter and Mr Byrne provided an update on the following:
  - There had been a lot of Christmas activities, including arts and crafts, making advent calendars and chocolate. There had also been two Christmas parties for adopted and fostered children, and their families. There would be a further update about the Christmas activities at the next meeting.

- Panel Members were invited to attend a Christmas show performed by children in care (CiC) and adopted children on 20 December.
- Four apprentices had nearly completed their studies, and four care leavers would soon be joining the Participation Team.
- It was agreed that young people would be invited to attend a future meeting of the Panel, probably during the 2024 summer holidays.
- The Young Adult Council (YAC) had the opportunity to speak to University of Kent representatives in September.
- The YAC met in October to consider how they could give back to the community. Work was underway to explore the possibility of volunteering for Porchlight where they could help cook and provide meals for homeless people.
- The Panel watched a video about the activities that took place during the October half term. It included comments from children about their experiences and why the sessions were important to them.
- The Chair noted the positive impact that the Team had on children's lives and thanked them for their work.

## **5. Verbal Update by the Cabinet Member**

### **5.1 Foster Carer Awards 2023**

Mrs Chandler opened this year's Kent Fostering Service's Award Ceremony at the Detling Showground on Friday 10th November. There were 294 nominations for foster carers and staff. Mr Cooke, Chairman of Kent County Council and Mr Ross, the Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel presented 37 awards to foster carers, supported homes hosts and staff. Congratulations were offered to every winner and nominee.

### **5.2 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) Update**

There had been 67 UASC arrivals in the first week of December. The total number of arrivals for 2023 was 2,178. Steps were being taken to ensure there was sufficient capacity to manage new arrivals and meet the statutory duties under the Children Act 1989. Subject to full funding from the Government, three reception centres had been identified in Ashford, Dartford and Faversham. They would be run by KCC employees and provide temporary accommodation until the children were transferred to another UK local authority (LA).

### **5.3 Change in Legislation**

New legislation came into force in October that required all providers of accommodation for CiC or care leavers up to the age of 18, to be regulated by Ofsted. Providers would be required to submit a review of the support offered to young people every six months and have an Ofsted inspection every three

years. The change was designed to help improve standards and outcomes for children and young people.

#### 5.4 Christmas Appeal

KCC partnered with the Young Lives Foundation this year for the annual Kent Corporate Parenting Christmas Appeal. The aim was to raise £20,000 to provide a £10 gift voucher to every care leaver in Kent. The target was exceeded, and thanks were offered to everyone who donated for their generosity.

#### 5.5 The following points were noted during the discussion that arose from the verbal update:

- The time taken to transfer UASC children to other LAs took too long. It was anticipated that there could be up to 800 additional CiC during peak periods if the National Transfer Scheme was not improved.
- Specialist teams within Ofsted would start accommodation inspections in April 2024. KCC had interpreters who could assist Ofsted when interviewing young people at reception centres if required.
- It was often difficult to find accommodation for young people under 16 years old because they could only be placed in foster care or a registered children home. 1300 children from other LA's were placed in the county and there was a shortage of capacity.
- There was a large overspend on the placements budget. This was largely due to the cost of external placements and placements for children with complex needs. A review was underway to ensure children were in the right placements for their needs and, when appropriate, the cost of care was part funded by the health services.

### 6. Performance Scorecard for Children in Care

6.1 Ms Robinson provided a summary of the significant changes to the Scorecard since the last meeting and asked for feedback on the proposal to present a performance report every six months.

6.2 The following points were noted during consideration of the item:

- Adoption targets were heavily impacted by court delays. These delays were mainly due to a shortage of Judges in Kent, however there had been some improvement following a change in court guidance that meant some cases were no longer required to go to court.
- There were 238 children subject to an interim care order two years ago; at the end of November 2023 this had increased to 319 children, despite the number of CiC remaining relatively stable.

- Many of the missing episodes were recoded due to missed curfew times. However, it could be concerning if an individual went missing regularly for a short period of time as it could be the start of the grooming process. When these patterns were identified, early intervention could help support children.
- Ms Bride offered to bring a report about missing people in care to a future meeting of the Panel.

6.3 The Performance Scorecard for Children in Care was noted.

## **7. Corporate Parenting Annual Report**

7.1 Ms Smith introduced the Annual Report, noting that it had initially been requested by the Chair and could be used to promote the work of the Panel. She added that next year the report would be more data driven and linked to the performance reports.

7.2 The following points were noted during consideration of the item:

- Thanks were offered to Mr Gray in particular for his efforts in relation to the Christmas Appeal.
- Any surplus money raised from the Christmas Appeal were ring fenced for care leavers. Surplus funds from previous Appeals had paid for welcome boxes for care leavers moving into their new homes.

7.3 The Corporate Parenting Annual Report was noted.

## **8. Looked after Children Annual Report for NHS Kent and Medway**

8.1 Ms Sayer introduced the Report that and detailed the activities to support and improve the health of looked after children under the remit of the NHS Kent and Medway Integrate Care Board (ICB) for the period from April 2022 to March 2023.

8.2 The following points were noted during presentation of the item of the item:

- The number of children ending up in acute care had reduced.
- Trainee GPs would spend four months with the service to gain an understanding of the vulnerabilities of CiC and care leavers.
- Supporting UASC exerted pressure on the services provided by KCC and the health service. There was often a poor understanding of the health background of UASC which added a degree of complexity to their care.
- Work was underway to offer free prescriptions for care leavers.

8.3 The following points were noted during consideration of the item:

- Looked after children tended to move between areas, the creation of the ICB from multiple Clinical Commissioning Groups had led to an improvement in the service for looked after children.
- The ICB was currently going through a redesign and would need time to settle.
- Care leavers often talked about the cost of prescriptions. This would be facilitated via a pre-payment system.
- When UASC arrive, they complete a health questionnaire. If there was a concern that the child had a contagious illness, they are placed in isolation while tests are carried out. Discussions were underway with the Government to ensure that the new reception centres would have enough isolation areas.
- When the UK left the EU it lost access to European medical data. This has made the identification of illnesses more difficult as there is no data to indicate what strands of disease UASC are likely to have picked up on their journey to the UK.

8.4 The looked after Looked after Children Annual Report for NHS Kent and Medway was noted.