

Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporate Parenting Committee held on 4 January 2023 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Paul Arnold (Chair), Adam Carter (Vice-Chair), Maureen Pearce and Kairen Raper

Chair, Children in Care Council
Laura Hall, Thurrock Open Door
Wendy Caswell, Chair, The One Team, Foster Carer Association
Jenny Josling, Vice-Chair, The One Team, Foster Carer Association

Apologies: Councillors Georgette Polley and Lee Watson

In attendance: Janet Simon, Assistant Director, Children's Social Care and Early Help
Ewelina Sorbjan, Assistant Director for Housing Management
Dan Jones, Strategic Lead, Looked After Children
Helen Alabede, Lead Clinician Community Paediatrics NHS Mid and South Essex (left at 8.30pm)
Yvonne Anarfi, Deputy Director for Safeguarding NHS Mid and South Essex
Joseph Devlin, Operations Manager Youth Offending Service (left at 8.16pm)
Ruth Murdock, Strategic Lead of Quality Assurance and Reviewing
Keeley Pullen, Headteacher of the Virtual School for Children Looked After and Previously Looked After Children
Tina Russel, Assistant Director SET CAMHS and Partnerships
Trevor Willis, Service Manager for Safeguarding and Reviewing
Kenna-Victoria Healey, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting was being live streamed to the Council's website.

21. Minutes

The minutes of the Corporate Parenting meeting on 6 September 2022 were approved as a correct record.

22. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

23. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

24. The Annual Report of the Virtual School Headteacher for Children Looked After – Academic Year 2021-2022

The Headteacher of the Virtual School for Children Looked After and Previously Looked After Children presented the report found on pages 125 - 178 of the agenda.

The Chair of the Committee enquired the role of the service offered to Looked after Children by the Virtual School. The Headteacher of the Virtual School explained that her service worked along side the SEN (Special Educational Needs) Team, she highlighted there were approximately 61 pupils with an education healthcare plan and approximately 50 pupils that had been identified as requiring additional support within their schools.

She continued to advise that their role was the advisory and the challenge, along with providing liaison and guidance with sometimes very practical help to ensure the need of the children attending the Virtual School were met.

The Chair of the Committee followed up his question referring to page 92 and 35% of children who had a persistent absence. He sought if this was of need to be looked into to find out why Children were missing school.

The Virtual Headteacher advised there were 35 pupils not 35% of pupil, who were from the whole virtual school aged from reception through to year 11 which were the 35 Pupils with persistent absence. She explained this was prior to COVID and although there were small numbers of persistent absence the school would put some interventions in place, and it would work to ensure pupils were still learning and attending school.

Councillor Carter thanked the Virtual Headteacher for her report and commented he was pleased to see Thurrock's Children were doing well statistically. He mentioned the report referred to a spending overview for tutoring and sought how much each session costed, along with how many pupils attended the sessions and how long each session lasted.

The Virtual Headteacher explained at any one time there were year five pupils who were being provided tuition which currently equated to approximately 14 pupils and at the same time there were 14 year six pupils who were also receiving tuition. She continued to explain that with approximately 28 Pupils receiving tutoring for two hours per week at £48 per hour, that is where the majority of the funding given to virtual school was spent.

RESOLVED:

The Committee approves the Annual Report of the Virtual School Headteacher for the academic year 2021-2022 and uses this information to acknowledge, evaluate, scrutinise and, if appropriate, challenge the services that are provided for all C/YP LA.

25. Children's Social Care Performance 2022-2023

The Assistant Director for Children's Social Care and Early Help presented the report found on pages 11 - 34 of the agenda.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Director for Children's Social Care and Early Help for her report and enquired as to what Officers were going to do with all of the KPIs mentioned with the report.

The Assistant Director for Children's Social Care and Early Help explained as a service there is a monthly Development Board where each of the Strategic Leads produce a development report, so Officers can look at the performance within their teams and their services. There was also a monthly performance meeting where Officers undertook a deep dive on specific areas to try and come up with solutions or improvements.

Councillor Carter thanked the Assistant Director for Children's Social Care and Early Help for her report and commented it was pleasing to see the figures balancing out following the pandemic. He asked for a breakdown of the missing episodes for example how many missing episodes were without authorisation and how many Children were currently missing. The Assistant Director for Children's Social Care and Early Help confirmed Officers had the figures and they would be circulated to the Committee.

RESOLVED:

That members note improvements and areas for improvement in Children's Social Care and note the work that is undertaken to ensure good and improving performance.

26. Children In Care Council Update

The Thurrock Open Door and Children in Care Council Representative presented their report and in doing so highlighted the following points:

- The CICC had a newly appointed Chairperson Jasmine and this was her first Corporate Parenting meeting. She didn't wish to speak at the meeting but wanted to come along to experience what the meeting was like.
- For those of you who don't know the Children In Care Council were a group of young people in care or care leavers who meet once a month to discuss different things going on in care whether that be updates from the Council or whether that just be general from different services who sought the options of Children in Care
- Our members are 11 years plus mostly due to the nature of our discussions, we deemed 11years as the most as an appropriate age. We do have some care leavers and some who are over 25 years, who we have asked back to give us updates on their on their lives so that so that the younger members can see the future and what it might look like for them.

- We have worked on providing and promoting a new leaflet and a new booking system with a new referral form, which has been circulated to all Social Workers. Should anyone wish to attend a meeting they can contact me directly for information.
- Lastly we've got all of our meetings for the coming year from January to December booked, so hope that when we meet on the end of this month we can confirm our dates and circulate them.

The Chair of the Committee thanked the CCIC representative for her update and mentioned that he and Councillor Raper had attended a meeting back in December and he found it was very interesting to be part of the Childrens discussions. He continued by stating he felt it would be good if the dates could be circulated to all the members of the committee so they could attend to actually see what goes on sort first hand.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee note the work carried out by the Children in Care Council, the purpose, and the role of the Children in Care Council, and to establish what corporate parents need to do to help the Children in Care Council achieve their aims and objectives

27. Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report

The Service Manager for Safeguarding and Reviewing presented the report found on pages 41 - 68 of the agenda.

It was enquired at 2.4 of the report it mentioned that 53% of children didn't know about their care plan. Members sought as to what Officers did to ensure that children understood what a care plan was and what was in their own care plan.

The Service Manager for Safeguarding and Reviewing explained this was feedback direct from children and young people looking more deeply it related to the language that was used. In order to try and address this Officers now included better ways of receiving feedback from young people including QR codes and making sure that the language used was a lot clearer.

RESOLVED:

For the Corporate Parenting Committee to review and comment on the IROAnnual report 2021 - 2022 and the recommendations in the report.

28. Joint Report on Initial Health Assessments for Looked After Children

The Strategic Lead for Looked After Children presented the report found on pages 69 - 76 of the agenda.

Councillor Carter thanked officers for the report and commented that it was quite disappointing to have asked for an update and not have it included as to where extra funding they were given has been spent. He continued by stating he understood Health Colleague's had contributed to the report, however, this had been an area of ongoing concern.

Councillor Carter stated he felt it was necessary to acknowledge the department and people like the Assistant Director for Children's Social Care and Early Help who have worked really hard on getting these numbers back or improving them and it is external partners that are failing not only the Council but our Looked After Children.

RESOLVED:

Members are aware of the continuing performance issues with Initial Health Assessments and the action being taken by Children's Services and the NHS to improve this.

29. Children Looked After Health Report

The Deputy Director for Safeguarding NHS Mid and South Essex presented the report found on pages 77- 124 of the agenda.

Members of the Committee enquired if NELFT had accepted the additional funding from Thurrock and then said it couldn't be used to prioritise Thurrock's children and young people.

The Strategic Lead for Looked After Children advised nationally the advice from NHS England was where a child was placed in any area of the country then they shouldn't be treated unfairly because they happen to be placed in a different local authority area. Therefore, a child place within its local authority area cannot be prioritised over children from another local authority.

The Assistant Director for Children's Social Care and Early Help clarified that the funding didn't come from Thurrock Council but came from the ICB which was Health Colleague's.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the Children Looked After Health Report be noted**
- 2. That members are aware of the key areas for improvements.**

30. Response to Urgent Actions 1 & 2 of National Review – Children with Disabilities and Complex Health Needs Placed in Residential Settings

The Strategic Lead for Looked After Children presented the report found on pages 179 - 200 of the agenda.

The Chair of the Committee referred to page 189 and mentioned there had been no new concerns about the conduct of a member of the workforce identified and there had been no new concerns. He enquired had there been concerns.

The Strategic Lead for Looked After Children explained that it was not unusual in these settings for an allegation to be made against staff member or for concerns to be raised and for it to be looked into and resolved. Where Officers carried out a quality and safety review they had found that there had been issues raised but they had been appropriately notified and been appropriately followed up by the provider, Officers and the Local Authority where the child is placed.

RESOLVED:

- 1. Members of the Corporate Parenting Committee are informed as to the outcomes of urgent actions one and two**
- 2. Members of the Corporate Parenting Committee are advised on the development work planned to develop our oversight of residential homes and schools for children**

31. Corporate Parenting Committee - Work Programme 2022-2023

Members discussed the work programme for the next meeting.

RESOLVED:

It was agreed that the Chair would meet with the Assistant Director, Children's Social Care and Early Help and Strategic Lead, Looked After Children to decide on items for the next meeting on 21st March 2023.

The meeting finished at 9.10 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk**