

**MINUTES of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Committee held on 1 November 2012 at 7.00pm**

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**Present:** Councillors Oliver Gerrish (Chair), James Halden, Mike Revell, Joy Redsell, Charles Curtis

**Apologies:** Councillors Angie Gaywood, Sue Gray and Lynn Worrall.

**In attendance:** R. Minto – Service Manager (Placement Support)  
N. Carter – Open Door  
K. Crawford – Foster Carer/ One Team  
J. Howell – Foster Carer/One Team  
N. White – Virtual School Head  
S. Tuttle – CICC Chair Person  
B. Foster – Head of Children’s Services  
M. Boulter- Democratic Services

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**17. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Corporate Parenting Committee held on 1 November 2012 were approved as a correct record subject to the addition of the word ‘pay’ in minute 7.

**18. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations were made.

**19. HEALTH OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN**

Officers stated that the challenges in maintaining health for looked after children was ensuring their records were complete and up to date. The significant changes in the health service had been a challenge for the Council but this was now settling down into a new system and the Council was working closely with health partners to ensure all services to all children was delivered. **It was added that work was being progressed to ensure all children leaving care at 18 would soon have a health passport**, which was a detailed document on their health history that they could take with them when they left care.

Officers outlined in detail the way they worked with health services, which was mainly through a steering group composed of Council officers and health professionals but also the Safeguarding Children Clinical Network, which was a pan Essex network that supported the looked after children nurses in their role.

The Committee discussed how children placed out of Thurrock were looked after and officers replied that they were confident these children received all necessary health checks. This was ensured by the Looked after children's nurse, who was based in Thurrock but also had dedicated time to query and scrutinise all health reports for these children. The responsibility of the health for looked after children was primarily the health service, although the foster carer and social worker did have significant parts to play.

Immunisation was discussed and it was clarified that there had been gaps in the records kept by the council and the health service regarding this service but there were no gaps in the actual administration of immunisation jobs.

Officers clarified that health records did tend to follow the children around to wherever they were based although there were practical considerations, namely that if a child moved out of Thurrock for a short term placement, their health records would normally stay within borough.

Councillor Revell expressed his view that the committee still needed to understand its role better and that as corporate parents, the committee members and all Members had to act like parents to each and every child. He thought that some communication or training was needed for all Members to inform them of their responsibilities towards looked after children.

**RESOLVED that:**

- i) The report be noted.**
- ii) The Committee extend an invitation to health partners to attend for relevant meetings to help progress the health of looked after children constructively and to address any concerns of the Committee on the partnership working between the health service and the Council.**

**20. EDUCATION OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN**

The Committee was informed that there was a dip in performance at GCSE and SATs level, although this was dependent on the group of pupils for that year. Because there were so few children involved, there was a tendency for educational performance to vary from year to year. However, it was noted that 2010/11 results had been exceptional.

Officers stressed that the location of the children was extremely important and it was much harder to provide regular and quality educational support to those children who lived a long distance from Thurrock.

The Head of the Virtual School appealed to any Members who wished to become a mentor to looked after children.

Year 10 and 11 pupils were a very challenging area and there were plans to target children's educational support at an earlier age to ensure this period was not so difficult. Ways to ensure this time of a child's school career was successful included apprenticeships and the training of carers to provide support during these school years.

A representative from the One Team felt that schools needed to be better trained to deal with children at this stage of their life and officers agreed, stating that all schools received specific training from the virtual school on such issues, although more opportunities to provide training would be welcomed. A Member added that looked after children should be asked to mentor other looked after children as this could give them responsibility at that age and help with the issues faced.

Through debate it was found that the virtual school set its own performance indicators, that certain children with specific learning needs had to be educated outside the borough and that every child had an education plan (PEP) which was reviewed by the Virtual Head every six months.

A small discussion was had on asylum seekers and the committee agreed to put this on the work programme for future debate.

Following a question, the role of the virtual school was outlined, namely that it was established to oversee the education of looked after children. It was essential that looked after children received professional and expert support in their education to ensure they received a fair chance. The school tracked their attainment and provided any learning or leisure resources that child needed to experience all learning experiences. This support was provided in a way that did not make that child stand out or seem special by fellow siblings or school friends.

In relation to children not in education, training or employment (NEET), the school was increasing apprenticeships, which had proved very successful.

**RESOLVED that the educational outcomes for Looked after Children in Key Stage 2 and 4 in 2011/12 and the additional provision in place to further support the education of Looked after Children be noted.**

**21. UPDATE REPORT ON ESTABLISHMENT OF FOSTER CARER ASSOCIATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF FOSTER CARERS CHARTER**

Officers outlined that they needed agreement on the status of the charter within the Council and stated that the Corporate Parenting Committee would agree and sign the charter off at the beginning of every year to ensure it remained current. A representative from One Team stated that the charter had been agreed by officers and foster carers alike and so represented a real consensus.

Some councillors felt that the wording and readability of the charter could be improved if it was reviewed by the Council's communications department. It was felt that this could reduce the sense of ownership by the foster carers who had been involved.

Following a question on the council being open in its data to foster carers, representatives agreed that the council was open with its data.

**RESOLVED:**

- i) The progress in developing the work of foster carers committee be noted.**
- ii) The Committee approve the draft text of the Foster Carers Charter subject to the agreement of the contents by the Chair and Vice-chair of the Corporate Parenting Committee, the Placement Support Manager, The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Foster Carers Association and relevant Portfolio Holder.**

**22. BRIEFING NOTE ON OFSTED INSPECTION ACTION PLAN**

Members requested that a briefing note be provided on budget savings related to leisure services before the March meeting. Open Door confirmed that they provided most of the funds for their own leisure activities.

**RESOLVED that the briefing note be noted.**

**23. DISCUSSION ON CORPORATE PARENTING PUBLICITY**

Officers outlined the need to be sensitive when promoting corporate parenting services and also the legal obligations not to publicise any child's identity. The Council did not support foster parents contacting the press to raise issues relating to corporate parenting. The Committee were asked whether there were any general aspects or issues in corporate parenting that they would like promoted through the Council press office.

Councillor Halden felt that there should have been a written report for this item and was disappointed. Although he did suggest that the Looked After Children Strategy could be a good aspect to promote.

Councillor Gerrish stated that the Committee understood the need to talk sensitively about looked after children as much as what to promote.

## **24. WORK PROGRAMME**

Members briefly discussed the government requirements on care leavers but agreed this could wait for next year's round of meetings.

### **RESOLVED: That:**

- i) An update on Health of Looked After Children be added to March's meeting.**
- ii) The issue of Asylum Seekers be noted and added to next year's meetings.**
- iii) The issue of formally co-opting certain representatives to the committee be progressed outside the meeting.**

**The meeting finished at 8.56pm.**

Approved as a true and correct record

**CHAIRMAN**

**DATE**

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact  
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or alternatively e-mail [mboulter@thurrock.gov.uk](mailto:mboulter@thurrock.gov.uk)**