

Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporate Parenting Committee held on 19 July 2022 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Adam Carter (Chair), Paul Arnold, George Coxshall (Substitute for Georgette Polley), Kairen Raper and Lee Watson

Apologies: Councillors Maureen Pearce (Vice-Chair) and Georgette Polley

In attendance: Shelia Murphey, Corporate Director of Children's Services
Janet Simon, Assistant Director, Children's Social Care and Early Help
Dan Jones, Strategic Lead, Looked After Children
Kate Kozlova-Boran, Strategic Lead, Learning and Skills
Tiffany Bright, Inspire Skills Manager
Clare Moore, Strategic Lead for the Youth Offending Service and Prevention
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.

1. Minutes

The minutes of the Corporate Parenting meeting on 1 March 2022 were approved as a correct record.

2. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

3. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Children's Social Care Performance 2021-22

The Assistant Director for Children's Social Care and Early Help presented the report which was on pages 9-34 of the agenda.

Councillor Raper thanked Officers for the report and referring to page 9 of the agenda enquired who carried out the visits to children and young people and how regular these were. The Assistant Director for Children's Social Care and Early Help explained it could be agreed as part of their looked after review that a child be visited every 12 weeks. She continued to advise there was a range of different frequencies and even if a visit frequency was 6 weeks, it

didn't mean the child would only be visited every six weeks. Ultimately it would depend on the circumstances for the child and what they needed.

The Chair of the committee commented he was pleased to see improvement with regards to missing episodes and asked Officers how this was achieved. The Strategic Lead for Learning and Skills advised they were able to realign the delivery of the services from Inspire and so concentrated the delivery on the return to home interviews. Members heard more personal advisors had been brought into the service and face to face delivery had been increased.

She continued to explain it was made sure that Officers went out to the homes to see the young people face to face, and to support those relationships. The idea was that young people would start trusting the Inspire careers advisors and then missing episodes would decrease because there was a trust between the young person and Inspire.

RESOLVED

- 1. 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.**
 - 2. Note the impact of COVID 19 on some areas of performance.**
- 5. Children Looked After and Care Leaver Sufficiency Strategy Update**

The Strategic Lead for Looked After Children presented the report which was on pages 35 to 86 of the agenda.

RESOLVED

That Members review the update within this report of the Children Looked After and Care Leavers Placement Sufficiency Strategy January 2021 – 2024.

6. Report on Initial Health Assessments for Looked After Children

The Strategic Lead for Looked After Children presented the report which was on pages 87 to 94 of the agenda.

The Chair of the Committee commented it was worrying that the numbers were quite low. He continued by saying at Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee last week a report was presented which showed the target for 2021/ 2022 was 80%. He enquired what was being done to get this key KPI back on track.

The Assistant Director for Children's Social Care and Early Help told the Committee there had been a lot of work around Initial Health Assessments and from this Officers had managed to improve performance. She continued

to advise when assessing children for their Initial Health Assessment, firstly the child had to be referred to the health authority which had to be completed within five working days and performance in that area was sitting around 80%.

Members heard some of the issues Officers were experiencing was being able to provide health assessments for children who were placed outside of Thurrock. If they were close enough, wherever possible Officers tried and arrange for them to come back into the area for the assessment to be completed. Conversations were being had weekly with Health colleagues about what the Council could do to support them and what actions were being taking to improve.

Nickola Rickard, Designate Nurse for Looked After Children in Mid and South Essex commented, she felt it was important to reflect this was a national issue as nationally initial health assessment providers were struggling to complete them within the 28 day time frame. Some of the reasons for this were still related to COVID, and there was a national shortage of paediatricians with the skill set to undertake these specialist health assessments. She continued by stating for the children who were placed out of area, the provider team will contact the designated nurse to ensure that wherever possible, children were being seen in a timely way and any barriers were being addressed.

The Corporate Director of Children's Services stated she felt it was fair to say the completion of assessments not on time was not acceptable. She advised Members Officers had been working really hard on this for almost three years following the Councils last Ofsted inspection, which was in 2019.

She continued by saying it was important for the referrals to made early so they could be completed and advised Members the report was to be presented the Health and Well-being Board where there were more strategic health partners.

It was agreed to keep the item on the agenda for monitoring.

RESOLVED

- 1. That Members are aware of the work that has taken place, and areas for improvement in completing Initial Health Assessments, and note the work that is being undertaken to ensure improving performance.**
 - 2. Note the impact of COVID 19 on this area of performance.**
- 7. Inspire - Head Start Housing: Supporting Care Leavers**

The Inspire Skills Manager presented the report which was on pages 95 to 100 of the agenda.

Councillor Watson thanked Officers for the report and enquired as to how many voids had been allocated per year from the HRA housing stock to care leavers.

The Inspire Skills Manager explained when a property was returned to the voids team and should Inspire have a need for it, then housing released the property to them. Members heard a strategy was agreed when Head Start was first launched in December 2018 and was to come to an end in December 2023, during this time Inspire had been gifted 33 beds.

She continued by mentioning Housing reached 30 beds very early on and so the strategy was refreshed, to align it with the Housing Strategy and this was launched earlier this year. It was commented that on average, of the 30 beds over the last four years 7.4 void beds had been made available to Care Leavers.

During the discussion Officers assured the Committee that no care leaver would be made homeless as part of the pilot.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

8. Corporate Parenting Strategy

The Strategic Lead for Looked After Children presented the report which was on pages 101-126 of the agenda.

RESOLVED

That the Committee note their responsibilities as Corporate Parents.

9. Work Programme

The Corporate Parenting Committee discussed the work programme detailed within the agenda.

Members requested that an update be brought on Initial Health Assessments to the next meeting in September 2022.

RESOLVED

That the Corporate Parenting Committee agreed the work programme as outlined within the agenda and agreed that an update report on Initial Health Assessments be brought to the next meeting in September 2022.

The meeting finished at 7.47pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

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