

Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporate Parenting Committee held on 6 September 2022 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Adam Carter (Chair), Maureen Pearce (Vice-Chair), Paul Arnold, Kairen Raper (via Microsoft Teams) and Lee Watson

Jenny Josling, Vice-Chair, The One Team, Foster Carer Association

Apologies: Councillor Georgette Polley, Laura Hall, Christopher Bennett, Sharon Smith and Sheila Murphy

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
Clare Moore, Strategic Lead for the Youth Offending Service and Prevention
Luke Froment, Social Care Service Manager (left at 7.53pm)
Nikola Rickard, Designate Nurse for Looked After Children
Tina Russel, Assistant Director SET Camhs and Partnerships
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.

10. Minutes

The minutes of the Corporate Parenting meeting on 19 July 2022 were approved as a correct record, subject to noting the following were in attendance at the meeting, Nikola Rickard Designate Nurse for Looked After Children, and Ewelina Sorbjan Assistant Director for Housing Management.

11. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

12. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

13. Children's Social Care Performance 2022-23

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

The Chair of the Committee thanked Officers for the report which highlighted and included a number of positive elements. He sought clarity on the timeline for adoption as looking back over the years in 2019 to 2020, Thurrock were under the average time between entering the adoption service and moving in with an adoptive family.

The Assistant Director for Children's Social Care and Early Help explained it could take just one case for the figures to go out and this could be for different reasons and sometimes this takes a little more time to complete the process. If that meant Officers had to persevere to find right placement for that child or young person, by taking a little bit longer as a result of officers completing the right searches and finding the right family then that was right thing to do.

During discussions Councillor Watson raised a query with regard to the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, within the report it had been stated there was to be an increase in the number of unaccompanied asylum seekers the local authority would be expected to take under their care. She continued by asking how many children Thurrock would be expected to accept in one go. Officers explained there had been an increase of 0.1% and this took the Councils number from 31 to 45. Members were advised the announcement was still very recent and Officers were to meet with colleagues in the Home Office to discuss the news, however at this stage Officers commented it was not looking likely that the authority would have to accept 14 children or young people all at once.

Members also discussed the 'Think Family' service which went live in April 2022 and supports early intervention and was evidence based in the hope there be fewer children within the care system. The Committee heard the service had already received 114 referrals, which enabled Social Workers across the service to meet and assess the support needed by young people and children who were potentially at risk of entering the care system, this could include looking for a family member for the child to stay with while any concerns could be assessed.

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.

14. Adoption Statement of Purpose

The Strategic Lead for Looked After Children presented the report found on page 35 to 62 of the agenda.

Councillor Watson thanked Officers for the report and sought an update on the current vacancies. The Strategic Lead for Looked After Children advised the Committee at present officers were recruiting and the advert was out for permanent roles, with the closing date for applications on 12th September which would be followed by interviews.

During discussions it was confirmed that given the nature of the roles and enhanced DBS enhanced check would be required for the four posts.

RESOLVED

That the Members of the Committee are informed about Thurrock's Adoption Statement of Purpose.

15. After Care Service Report

The Social Care Service Manager introduced the report found on page 63 to 72 of the agenda.

Following questions from the Committee it was explained the pipeline coming through, officers knew there was likely to be an increase in the number of cases coming into the aftercare service based on the figures they currently had. The Social Care Service Manager continued by advising there was a business case which was currenting being explored, looking at increasing resources in within that the team to include an additional two PAs.

He further commented that Officers completed some great work in terms of looking at older cohorts and the possibility of closing some of those cases appropriately, although there was still some work to do in terms of those cases.

Members heard in terms of mediation that to keep young people in their placements, there was a lot of work which went into discussions with the young people themselves and with their foster carers right from the age of 16 years old around Staying Put arrangements. The Social Care Service Manager advised there were a number of young people who are in Staying Put arrangements, which basically means that they remain in their foster placement post 18. He continued by commenting officers had received some success with Staying Put arrangements and extended those arrangements, particularly where young people were in education.

Responding to a question from Members the Assistant Director for Housing Management advised that officers would not necessarily keep any properties vacant waiting for young people when leaving care. However, in turn within the stock officers were able to identify properties which would be available and would encourage young people leaving care to bid for property if this was something they wished to do, so assisting them to take active part within that process.

RESOLVED

That the Members of the Committee are informed about Thurrock's Aftercare service.

16. Performance Report on Initial Health Assessments for Looked After Children

The Strategic Lead, CLA introduced the report found on page 73 to 80 of the agenda. Following this the Designate Nurse for Looked After Children talked Members through her presentation.

The Chair of the Committee commented that in March 18% of children who reached 28 days in care received an initial health assessment within 20 working days, however since then the figure has not gone above 18%. He queried how this was the case, given funding available to clear the backlog. The Designate Nurse for Looked After Children explained this was due to the availability of paediatricians. She continued by explaining recruitment was also looked at as an option to try and help clear the backlog of children waiting their initial health assessment.

The Designate Nurse for Looked After Children further commented it was important to remember health colleagues were not allowed to prioritise Thurrock children over other children who come into care from other areas.

During the discussion Councillor Watson sought information on how the resources were being distributed across the boroughs by Nelft. She further enquired how the Council could monitor Nelft to ensure funding and support was being delivered equally. The Designate Nurse for Looked After Children advised they worked with Nelft, met them regularly on a monthly basis and were currently awaiting a report on how the additional funding was spent.

RESOLVED

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.

17. Joint Housing Protocol for Care Leavers

The Strategic Lead, Looked After Children presented the report which could be found on pages 81 to 86 of the agenda.

RESOLVED

- 1. For the Committee to note the statutory duties of the Local Authority to support young people in obtaining suitable accommodation and how we plan to meet these duties.**
- 2. For the Committee to have oversight of the joint protocols and be involved in the ongoing review of delivery across Children's Services and Housing Services.**

18. Children in Care Council Update - to follow

As the Chair of the Children In Care Council and the Children In Care Council Project Worker had sent their apologies to the meeting, the Chair of the Committee advised Members he had agreed to defer the item to the January meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the report be deferred to the next meeting of the Committee on Wednesday 4th January.

19. Corporate Parenting Committee Annual Report 2021/2022

The Senior Democratic Services Officer introduced to the report which was to be found on pages 87 to 98 of the agenda. It was explained as the previous Chair of the Committee was no longer an Elected Member, the report was written on behalf of the Vice-Chair.

RESOLVED

- 1. That the contents of the Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2021/2022 be noted.**
- 2. That the Corporate Parenting Annual Report be referred to Full Council, to share the work of Committee and their main achievements for 2021/2022 municipal year.**

20. Work Programme

The Corporate Parenting Committee discussed the work programme detailed within the agenda. Members requested the following items be included on the work programme:

- NELFT Report
- Mark Riddle Returning Visit
- Mental Health Report

RESOLVED

The following reports be included on the work programme for 2022/2023:

- 3.NELFT Report – January 2023**
- 4.Mark Riddle Returning Visit – March 2023**
- 5.Mental Health Report – March 2023**

The meeting finished at 8.25 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**