

Meeting: Corporate Parenting Panel

Date: Tuesday 18 July 2023 (commencing at 2:00pm)

Membership:

Persons absent are marked with an 'Ap' (apologies given) or 'Ab' (where apologies have not been sent). Substitute members are marked with a 'S'.

County Councillors

Sinead Anderson (Chair)
Anne Callaghan BEM
Francis Purdue-Horan
Sam Smith

County Council Officers

Amanda Collinson	-	Service Director for Care, Help and Protection
Laurence Jones	-	Service Director for Commissioning and Resources
Sophie Eadsforth	-	Group Manager for Looked After Children
Claire Sampson	-	Group Manager for Safeguarding, Assurance and Improvement
Ap Jon Hawketts	-	Group Manager for Commissioning
Charles Savage	-	Group Manager for Psychology and Inclusion Services

Substitute Members

None

Officers and colleagues in attendance:

Katherine Browne	-	Senior Public Health and Commissioning Manager
Adrian Mann	-	Democratic Services Officer
Philippa Milbourne	-	Business Support Administrator

1. Apologies for Absence

Jon Hawketts

2. Declarations of Interests

No declarations of interests were made.

3. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting held on 16 May 2023, having been circulated to all Members, were taken as read and were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

4. Foster Carers Liaison Group Update

Sophie Eadsforth, Group Manager for Looked After Children, provided an update on the recent meetings of the Foster Carers Liaison Group (FLAG). The following points were discussed:

- a) The virtual meetings of the FLAG are well attended, with around 33 different households represented at the latest session. The meetings are an opportunity for foster carers to share good new stories, ask questions and raise concerns. Although the FLAG is a conduit for foster carers to be able to discuss any problems that they are experiencing as a group, there are also other avenues through which households can engage with Council officers directly on their specific issues.
- b) Due to the current size of the FLAG meetings and the volume of questions raised, it can be difficult for the Council representatives in attendance to answer everything in detail during the session – so questions are taken down and responses are circulated after the meeting using various channels. To seek to ensure greater clarity, it is proposed that a nominee is sought from the FLAG to attend the formal meetings of the Panel as an opportunity to bring forward specific questions from foster carers on service provision, as the Panel could represent a better forum for addressing these queries.
- c) The Panel noted that care should be taken to ensure that FLAG participants have the opportunity to be heard by both Council officers and elected members at their meetings, as well as being able to escalate specific service-related queries through an appointed representative to the Panel.

Resolved (2023/018):

- 1) To note the update on the Foster Carers Liaison Group (FLAG).
- 2) To request that an approach is made to the FLAG to seek a formal representative to attend the meetings of the Panel, to raise any specific issues impacting foster carers in Nottinghamshire.

5. Children in Care Council Update

Laurence Jones, Service Director for Commissioning and Resources, provided an update on the recent engagement with the Children in Care Council (CiCC). The following points were discussed:

- a) The Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership's business plan is currently under review. The views of the CiCC have been sought as part of the

development process for the new business plan, to ensure that it meets the safeguarding needs of the children and young people in care in Nottinghamshire.

Resolved (2023/019):

- 1) To note the update on the Children in Care Council and confirm that no additional actions were required in relation to the points raised.

6. Elected Member Visits to Nottinghamshire Children's Residential Homes

Councillors Sinead Anderson, Anne Callaghan and Francis Purdue-Horan presented a report on their visits to children's residential homes (either run by the Council or by external providers for the sole use of the Council). The following points were discussed:

- a) Councillor Anderson and Councillor Callaghan visited the Lyndene children's home on 9 June, and Councillor Purdue-Horan visited Oakhurst on 20 June. The visits took place when the children were at home, and were a positive experience. The atmospheres at the homes were good, and the staff appreciated members visiting to see the children in residence.
- b) The Panel expressed its thanks to the staff of the residential homes for their hard work. Members hoped that other County Councillors beyond those on the Panel would be interested in carrying out future visits, as part of their corporate parenting remit.

Resolved (2023/020):

- 1) To note the report on Panel member visits to Children's Residential Homes.
- 2) To encourage other County Councillors to participate in these visits, following receiving the appropriate training, as part of their corporate parenting remit.

7. Update on Nottinghamshire Children's Residential Homes

Laurence Jones, Service Director for Commissioning and Resources, presented a report to provide an overview of the internal children's residential homes provision in Nottinghamshire. The following points were discussed:

- a) The Caudwell House residential home is rated as 'outstanding' by Ofsted and its Regulation 44 reports continue to be very positive. It provides residential care for children with physical disabilities and associated learning and healthcare needs, including children on the autistic spectrum. Grounds maintenance work has started with the removal of the sensory walkway so that a path suitable for wheelchairs can be put into the adjacent sensory garden.
- b) The Big House is a short breaks home for school-aged children who have a severe intellectual disability, combined with manifestations of challenging and complex behaviour. The demand for places at the home can be high. A great deal of work has been carried out to achieve improvements following the most

recent Ofsted inspection, and the latest Regulation 44 reports have been very positive.

- c) The mainstream homes of Lyndene and Oakhurst are performing well. A building refurbishment is being scoped at Oakhurst, for completion by the end of October. Westview remains closed pending renovations for it to reopen as a specialist home, and the works will start once the Oakhurst refurbishment has been completed.
- d) Clayfields is a children's home that operates as a national resource for the provision of secure care for up to 20 vulnerable young people. It is inspected annually by Ofsted, and this year's inspection has just begun.
- e) A shortage of staff for residential homes is a national issue currently, but the Nottinghamshire homes are attracting qualified and experienced people. This is particularly important as it is intended to open a new two-bed home in the early autumn. As part of staffing planning in the long-term, steps are underway to develop work further experience opportunities and vocational qualifications. A good progression structure is in place, so there are strong opportunities for people seeking a career in this area. Ultimately, due to the current challenging situation, recruitment must be proactive and targeted, with strong communications to emphasise the opportunities and career paths available in Nottinghamshire.
- f) The Council's Group Manager for Regulated Services, who has formal oversight of children's homes, has retired. A appointment has now been made to the role, with the oversight function resting with the Service Director for Commissioning and Resources until the post is taken up by the new appointee.

Resolved (2023/021):

- 1) To note the report on the internal children's residential homes in Nottinghamshire and confirm that no additional actions were required in relation to its contents.

8. Inspection Gradings of 'Exclusive Use' Children's Residential Homes

Laurence Jones, Service Director for Commissioning and Resources, provided an update on the current performance of the children's residential homes that are operated by Homes2Inspire for exclusive use by children in the Council's care. The following points were discussed:

- a) The 'exclusive use' homes are performing well, in general. Where Ofsted and Regulation 44 inspections have raised concerns, good progress has been made in delivering the improvements to address them effectively.
- b) The Savills Garden, which represented a full kitchen/market garden exhibited at the Chelsea Flower Show, will be installed at the Meadow View children's home to help teach cookery skills to the young people living there.

- c) The Panel felt that the establishment of the Savills Garden at Meadow View was extremely positive for the home and its residents, and recommended that everything possible should be done to share and celebrate this good news story.

Resolved (2023/022):

- 1) To note the update on the current performance of the children's residential homes operated by Homes2Inspire.
- 2) To request that consideration is given to any additional communications that can be released to celebrate the installation of the Savills Garden (exhibited at the Chelsea Flower Show) at Meadow View Children's Home.

9. Update on the Independent Review of Children's Social Care

Amanda Collinson, Service Director for Care, Help and Protection, provided an update on the Government's response to the Independent Review of Children's Social Care (IRCSS). The following points were discussed:

- a) The Department for Education published the 'Children's social care: stable homes, built on love' strategy on 2 February 2023, with a focus on six key 'pillars'. An accompanying consultation was also launched and the Government's response to this is awaited. Currently, the Government is working to identify three local authorities to act as 'pathfinders' in respect of Pillar 1 ('Family Help provides the right support at the right time so that children can thrive with their families'), but these have not yet been announced.
- b) Locally, work is being carried out by the D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership to deliver a recruitment and retention programme for foster carers across the whole D2N2 area. The programme is intended to establish strong support around individual foster carers and is being developed on the basis of the 'Mockingbird' system of sustainable foster care.
- c) Given the issues at the national level in recruiting people into social work, there will be some challenges in delivering Pillar 5 ('A valued, supported and highly-skilled social worker for every child who needs one'), so detailed consideration is being given to how social workers can be recruited and trained in-house, as well as being sourced from agencies where required.

Resolved (2023/023):

- 1) To note the update on the current position relating to the outcomes of the Independent Review of Children's Social Care and confirm that no additional actions were required in relation to the points raised.

10. Performance of Adoption Services 2023

Amanda Collinson, Service Director for Care, Help and Protection, presented a report on the performance of the Council's Adoption Services during 2023. The following points were discussed:

- a) The number of children adopted within Nottinghamshire has dropped since 2015. In 2017, 64 children were adopted, whereas 33 were adopted in 2022. However, the number of children leaving care through Special Guardianship Orders and Kinship Services are now increasing.
- b) There is a target to confirm a match with an adoptive family within 121 days of a Placement Order being made, and this is often met. Nevertheless, the target can be challenging to meet in the case of children who may be older or have complex needs, or where siblings need to be placed together. In addition, there can be further legal challenges to Placement Orders at the point of the match, which can cause a delay whilst the Court hears the challenge. Matching targets are easier to achieve when there are more adopters available locally, and there have been successes in creating a pool of adopters in Nottinghamshire.
- c) Following the conclusion of care proceedings, the placement process for children should be completed within 26 weeks. Regionally, the process is taking around 32 weeks, currently. A great deal of work is underway to reduce backlogs in the system, and a fast-track scheme is in place. Placements can be delayed by the time required to achieve effective matches, and by the current availability of adopters. As a result, the initial work to find an effective placement is started ahead of the final hearing in the care proceedings, wherever possible.

Resolved (2023/024):

- 1) To note the report on the performance of the Council's Adoption Services and confirm that no additional actions were required in relation to its contents.

11. Provision, Achievements and Progress of the Children in Care Council 2022-23

Laurence Jones, Service Director for Commissioning and Resources, presented a report on the work of the Children and Young People's Participation team with the Children in Care Council (CiCC). The following points were discussed:

- a) The Children and Young People's Participation team is responsible for the planning and delivery of a range of activities outside of the school day for children in care and adopted young people. This helps to develop wider participation and enable young people to come together to have a voice about their life in care through the work of the CiCC. If desired, representative of the CiCC are welcome to attend the meetings to the Panel to escalate any feedback.

Resolved (2023/025):

- 1) To note the report on the work of the Children and Young People's Participation team with the Children in Care Council and confirm that no additional actions were required in relation to its contents.

12. Health of Children in Care

Katherine Browne, Senior Public Health and Commissioning Manager, presented a report on the health needs of children and young people who are in the Council's care. The following points were discussed:

- a) Most children and young people enter care because of abuse and neglect, and so may have additional healthcare needs that are greater because of the impact of their adverse experiences. The NHS Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) has the oversight for ensuring that appropriate healthcare provision is put in place for these children.
- b) The Council works in partnership with the ICB to produce an Initial Health Assessments (IHA), which must be completed within 20 working days of a child entering care. The achievement of the statutory timescales requires joint and cross-organisational processes between the health providers and the Council. However, there can be delays in the initial referral for a IHA being made, slowing down the process.
- c) Review Health Assessments (RHAs) then provide a holistic review of health and development, gathering information about emotional and physical health by engaging the child or young person in their own healthcare, to then provide information and advice to the child, their social worker and carers regarding their specific health needs.
- d) All assessments are undertaken by a medical professional on a face-to-face basis with the child. Good performance would constitute more than 90% of IHAs and RHAs being within the required timescales. However, currently, 65% of IHAs are completed with the statutory deadlines, with 72% of RHAs being completed to time.
- e) The ICB is committed to working with the Council and local providers to drive improvement, and will be reporting back regularly on progress, including to the Chief Nurse. Recovery workshops have taken place to consider how the assessment process can be developed, how collaboration can be improved, how barriers to access can be reduced, and how the right processing capacity and resilience can be ensured. Council officers have also met with colleagues from Derbyshire County Council to discuss the delivery of improvement through ensuring that the right processes are in place, that referrals are made at the right time and that the right capacity is in place to manage them.

Resolved (2023/026):

- 1) To note the recovery work underway in relation to the completion of Initial Health Assessments and Review Health Assessments relating to the health needs of children and young people in care within the statutory timeframes.

13. Work Programme

Laurence Jones, Service Director for Commissioning and Resources, presented the Corporate Parenting Panel's current Work Programme. The following points were discussed:

- a) The development of a new Sufficiency Strategy for children in care will begin next year.
- b) Feedback from the Nottinghamshire District and Borough Councils has been sought on the approach that they take to their corporate parenting functions, and it is hoped that an appropriate representative will be able to attend the October meeting of the Panel to discuss this topic.

Resolved (2023/027):

- 1) To note the Panel's Work Programme.

There being no further business, the Chair closed the meeting at 3:06pm.

Chair: