

Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporate Parenting Committee held on 12 March 2015 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Bukky Okunade (Chair), James Halden (Vice-Chair), Charles Curtis, Sue Gray, Susan Little and Joycelyn Redsell

Natalie Cater, Thurrock Open Door Representative
Christina Day, Chair of the Children in Care Council
Jackie Howell, Representative of Thurrock One Team Foster Care Association
Patricia Perolles, Designated Nurse
Sharon Smith, Representative of Thurrock One Team Foster Case Association

In attendance: Carmel Littleton, Director of Children's Services
Andrew Carter, Head of Care and Targeted Outcomes
Paul Coke, Service Manager (Children & Families)
Leanna McPherson, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

24. Minutes

The Minutes of the Corporate Parenting Committee, held on 18 December 2014, were approved as a correct record.

25. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

26. Declaration of Interests

Councillor Susan Little declared a non-pecuniary interest as she was a member of the Adoption and Fostering Panel.

27. Adoption Report Outlining Process and Performance

The report presented to the Committee by the Head of Care and Targeted Outcomes updated the report previously presented in September 2014 and activity over the last six months.

The Committee were advised that Havering had withdrawn from the consortium and the Council were now working closely with Southend-on-Sea. The service was primarily concerned with finding the right family for a child,

whilst balancing a reduced budget and no increase in staff capacity. It was noted by Members there was likely to be an overspend this financial year.

The Committee considered the report presented before it and noted that improvements in service provision were being made. It was also noted that not all pressures on the service were financial.

The Committee felt it was important for the service to have a strategy in place to recruit adopters and in response to a question the Committee noted that the Council had taken part in national LGBT Adoption and Fostering Week.

With regard to potential overpayments, the Committee were satisfied that officers were undertaking a full review of the current system.

RESOLVED: To note the report, following consideration and agreement that the Committee were satisfied the agency was effective and achieving good outcomes for children and service users.

28. Health of Looked After Children

The Head of Care and Targeted Outcomes introduced a report to the Committee which considered the health of Looked After Children.

The Committee were aware that meeting the healthcare needs of Looked After Children was a significant priority for Children's Social Care. Many children who become looked after would do so following a period of parental neglect or abuse, and may not have had their health needs addressed appropriately.

The Committee were advised that the Council was coming closer to the national average for dental health checks, based on 2013/14 national returns.

The Committee's attention was drawn to a data cleansing exercise which was currently taking place. The systems used by health and Children's Social Care did not 'talk' to each other and therefore inaccurate recording of immunisations was taking place. This work was due to be finished by the end of the financial year and it was anticipated the number of children recorded as being immunised would increase significantly. Immunisation clinics were planned to address specific groups without immunisations such as unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

Reassurance was sought from the representatives from Thurrock One Team Foster Care Association that health checks were being undertaken and the Chair of the Children in Care Council advised the Committee that she felt that in particular the older Looked After Children had high quality health care.

In response to questions regarding the recording of data, the Service Manager confirmed there were strict processes in place following an "update, audit and challenge" structure.

RESOLVED:

- 1. To note the contents of the report.**
- 2. To support the proposal that Health colleagues be invited to take the lead role in the preparation of future reports on Health matters to the Committee.**

29. Information on Recent External Placements for young people

The Head of Care and Targeted Outcomes presented the report to the Committee, which updated Members on a range of issues regarding the placement choices made for looked after children.

Placements were made in-house where possible, however the Council did have to use agencies on some occasions. This was particularly the case with larger sibling groups. The Committee also noted that planned placements and emergency placements placed different pressures on the service and there was currently an overspend of £100,000.

The Committee questioned the process for unaccompanied children, in particular those seeking asylum and where advised that with all placements culture and religious needs were taken into account. A health assessment would be undertaken and immunisation given accordingly.

In response to questions regarding looked after children on remand and those reaching the age of 18 years old, Members were reassured that no individual would be left unsupported.

The Committee thanked officers for a well structured informative report.

The Director of Children's Services suggested to the Committee that information on distant placements be considered at a future meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED:

- 1. To note the efforts made by officers to choose appropriate resources for looked after children, including our more difficult to place children.**
- 2. That distant placements be considered at the next meeting.**

30. Attendance of the District Nurse at Meetings

The Head of Care and Targeted Outcomes introduced a report to the Committee advising that it was intended to widen the professional representation on the committee on a regular basis in the interest of encouraging multi-disciplinary participation and accountability in finding services for looked after young people.

The Committee noted there was an error in the title of the report, which should read 'designated nurse' and not 'district nurse'.

The Committee welcomed the proposal and therefore:

RESOLVED: That the Designated Nurse for Looked after Children be requested to attend meetings of the Corporate Parenting Committee.

The meeting finished at Time Not Specified

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

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Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk**