

Meeting	Corporate Parenting Board
Date	20 March 2019
Present	Councillors K Myers (Chair), Cuthbertson (Vice-Chair), Brooks, Crawshaw, Rawlings and Runciman
Apologies	Councillor Funnell

32. Declarations of Interest

At this point in the meeting Members were invited to declare any personal or prejudicial interests they might have in relation to the business on the agenda or any other general interests they might have within the remit of the Board. None were declared.

33. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the last meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board held on 5 February 2019 be approved and then signed by the Chair as a correct record.

34. Public Participation

It was reported that there had been no registrations to speak under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

35. Independent Reviewing Service

Members considered a report which provided them with a summary of the key issues identified in the 2017-18 Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) Annual Report, prepared in accordance with statutory requirements for IROs to report to the Corporate Parenting Board and senior managers about the council's performance as a corporate parent to the children and young people in the care of the local authority.

The Independent Reviewing Service's Service Manager was in attendance and provided additional information in relation to sufficiency of placements, reasons for out of area placements, reasons for use of independent fostering agencies, effect of

small cohorts on York's data, placement breakdowns and changes in placements, and York's fostering offer.

Officers advised that they had recently appointed to the post of Head of Quality Assurance and Safeguarding and they had already seen the positive impact of this role on the service by providing an effective challenge and overview of quality assurance. Furthermore she stated that they had also set in place a mechanism at assistant director/senior management level to oversee cases requiring escalation and this provided a good oversight of complex cases at senior level and was working well.

Officers then responded to questions from Members in relation to:

- Caseloads - It was acknowledged that although these were getting higher, that they were manageable and it was noted that there was a need to consider complexity of cases/numbers on a child protection plan when managing caseloads.
- Out of authority placements, and the reasons for these.
- Reviews – it was noted that reviews were offered to all children and young people over the age of 4, but not all taken them up. Work being done with the Child Participation Group to encourage take up.
- Placement stability and placement disruptions – members expressed the view that it would be useful to know whether changes in placement were as a result of the child or foster parent's request, and to have some analysis/reasons for the move. Officers advised that they could bring forward some themes from disruption meetings.
- Quality assurance – officers advised that activities were taking place across service including undertaking an end to end review of the child's journey, undertaking audits and reviewing front door arrangements.

Resolved:

- (i) That the Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) Annual Report for 2017-18 be noted
- (ii) That areas of positive performance referred to within the annual report and identified areas for improvement be acknowledged.

- (iii) That the unit's commitment to better deliver its statutory responsibilities to children and young people in care and their parents or carers, in particular increased consultation, participation and challenge be noted and Members' support in achieving this be acknowledged.
- (iv) That the report be used to inform the ongoing work of the Corporate Parenting Board in raising outcomes for the children and young people in the care of the City of York Council.

Reason: To keep the Corporate Parenting Board updated in relation to the Independent Reviewing Officer Service.

36. Meeting the needs of Looked after Children

Members considered a report prepared and presented by the Virtual School Headteacher which provided an overview of the current position in relation to the educational outcomes of children and young people in care.

The Virtual School Headteacher presented members with some provisional data in relation to benchmarking and trends for key stages 1,2 and 4 and drew Members attention to detail contained in the report in relation to staffing arrangements, attendance and educational outcomes.

Officers responded to questions from members and provided further information in relation to the following issues:

- Personal Education Plans (PEP), what constituted a poor quality PEP, the need for social workers to challenge PEPs and for schools to review PEPs regularly and reassess unsatisfactory PEPs.
- Behaviour, how behavioural difficulties were dealt with at school, inclusion reviews, support for schools, impact of academisation of Danesgate

Resolved: That the report be noted.

Reason: To keep the Board updated in relation to the educational outcomes of children and young people in care.

37. Assessing Permanent Carers- Fostering Recruitment and Enquiries

Members considered a report prepared by the Service Manger of the Assessing Permanent Carers Team which provided them with an overview of mainstream fostering enquiries and assessments during 2018.

The Council's Group Manager for Achieving Permanence was in attendance at the meeting to present the report. She acknowledged that the number of enquiries received from people interested in becoming foster carers which weren't followed up by those enquiring was high in York and that officers were looking at the reasons behind this. She advised that a task and finish group had been established to focus on a campaign to recruit foster carers. They were looking at other authorities to see what was working and what was not working and had been advised that they needed to look at digital marketing and focus on a targeted and responsive digital campaign. An update on this would be included in a report which would be brought to Members at a future meeting.

Officers advised that they were improving the information on the council's website and discussion took place with members around methods of communication acknowledging that some people preferred to be contacted during the early evening rather than daytime, and that some people preferred to be contacted by email rather than telephone however this varied. Members suggested that contact could be made with particular groups of people who may be interested in fostering and local partner organisations where existing volunteers may be interested in fostering. Officers acknowledged the need to follow up with people who had made an initial enquiry but had decided that fostering wasn't right for them at the time, in case their circumstances had changed, but to accept the fact that fostering was not for everyone and that, having made an initial enquiry, people could change their minds for many valid reasons.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

Reason: In order that Board Members are kept updated with regard to recruitment of foster carers.

38. Member Induction

The Corporate Director of Children, Education and Communities asked for Board Members views on what information should be included in the Member Induction process for new councillors.

Members stressed the importance that all councillors were made aware, from day one, of their responsibility as a corporate parent and made the following suggestions:

- General information needed to be provided to all councillors in relation to their role as a corporate parent, but this information needed to be accessible and not too overwhelming.
- Additional relevant and more specialist information needed to be provided, throughout the year, to those appointed to the Corporate Parenting Board.
- All Councillors should have the opportunity to meet and talk to members of the Show Me That I Matter (SMTIM) Panel, York's Children in Care Council, and watch the film made the SMTIM Panel last year known as The Pledge/The Guarantee

Resolved: That the above comments be noted and taken into account in organising induction for Members.

Reason: To ensure that all Members are fully informed at to their responsibility as a corporate parent and that Corporate Parenting Board's remit as set out in its Terms of Reference is fulfilled.

39. Work Plan

Members considered the proposed meeting dates for the next municipal year as set out in the agenda papers.

As part of the discussion around Member induction, under agenda 7, the following comments were made by officers and Members:

- Before the Board's first meeting in the new municipal year, it would be beneficial to have a session in Cafe West, as had been done previously, so the Board Members could meet with SMTIM Panel members.
- It would be a good idea to reassess those appointments made to the Board 6/12 months into Councillors' terms of office to ensure that the appointments were working well for those appointed and for the Board.
- Consideration should be given to organisation of the Board's work and the option of part of the agenda being set by the young people and part by officers/members, and the possibility of meeting in different locations, rather than West Offices.

Resolved: That the comments above be noted and further discussion take place at the start of the new municipal year.

Reason: In order to set a work programme for 2019-20.

Councillor K Myers, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.00 pm and finished at 6.45 pm].