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Meeting	Corporate Parenting Board
Date	30 June 2014
Present	Councillors Looker (Chair), Runciman (Vice-Chair), Brooks, Cuthbertson, Fitzpatrick and Gunnell
Apologies	Councillors Funnell and Wiseman

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### **1. Declarations of Interest**

At this point in the meeting, Members were asked to declare any personal interests, not included on the Register of Interests, or any prejudicial or disclosable pecuniary interests they may have in relation to the business on the agenda or other general interests they might have had within the remit of the Board.

Councillor Runciman declared a personal non prejudicial interest in agenda item 4. Good and Safe Placements – Reports regarding the Adoption and Fostering Service as a member of the City of York Council Fostering Panel.

### **2. Minutes**

Resolved: That the minutes of the last meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board held on 7 May 2014 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

### **3. Public Participation**

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

### **4. Good and Safe placements - Reports regarding the adoption and fostering service**

Members considered a report that focused on the Looked After Children's Strategy with specific reference to the achievement of good safe placements for looked after children.

The following reports were also presented for Members consideration:

- annual review of the adoption service,

- quarterly report of the fostering service for the period January to March 2014 and the
- annual report of the adoption panel Chair

The Service Manager for Placements and the Principal Adviser for Children's Social Care provided detailed information in relation to performance improvements in both the adoption and fostering services during 2013/14.

In answer to Members questions it was noted that:

#### Adoption

- A great deal of work was carried out with birth parents prior to adoption, e.g. pre-natal information to ensure that prospective parents had as much information as possible to ensure they could make an informed choices, however there were still no guarantees
- As adoptions often took place outside the York area, the authority became responsible for any adoption support for the family 3 years after the making of an adoption order
- It was important to separate the adoption hearing which formally confers the adoption order from the celebration of an adoption which many magistrates and judges now arrange to afford the adoption the appropriate importance.
- The issues around challenges to adoptions, being possible until an adoption was finally granted, were discussed. A legal adviser was however present at preparation courses for prospective parents to advise on this potential challenge.
- A recruitment drive was underway to increase the pool of prospective parents, with the only stipulations being that parents must be fit and healthy, over 21 years of age and with there being no upper age limit. Full assessment would always be undertaken.
- Since April 2014 it had become mandatory for all care proceedings to be completed within 6 months. It was noted that staff endeavoured to meet this time

limit however their focus was on getting the best outcome for all involved

- Performance levels for York were good overall, however performance fell in relation to the matching of children within 6 months of a court decision on adoption which reflected the challenge of finding matches
- York worked in conjunction with other local authority and voluntary adoption agencies to achieve the best and most prompt placement for York's children.
- The key function of Adoption Panels was to make recommendations on the suitability of prospective applicants to adopt and whether a child should be placed for adoption with particular adopters
- The increasing number of adoptive families being approved in the city will increase the future need for adoption support which may result in additional costs to the council and its education and health partners.

## Fostering

- 41 enhanced foster carers had been retained but a further 5-10 carers were still required
- There had been 2 residential school placements for looked after children this year, it was confirmed that the quality of Ofsted judgements at these schools was checked
- Placements with independent fostering agencies had reduced, due to a lack of capacity, from 16 to 8, however this had now increased up to 14 due to local capacity of York foster carers
- A supportive network was available for older looked after young people and care leavers, following GCSE's, with trainer flats and supported living for 18/19year olds, if required
- The impact on the "bedroom tax" of looked after children and the discretions available depended on the individual circumstances of each case, the York

foster carers affected by the amendments have been supported to continue to foster

Following further discussion it was

Resolved: That the reports be received and noted.

Reason: The Corporate Parenting Board undertakes an overview of the work with looked after children. Consideration of the annual reports will enable to scope for discussion about progress and future plans.

## **5. Work Plan for 2014-15**

Consideration was given to the Boards work plan for the 2014-15 municipal year, copies were circulated at the meeting, and attached to the online agenda. It was noted that Children's Homes inspection reports would be emailed to Members.

Resolved: That the work plan be approved subject to the following addition and amendment:

- 22 September 2014 – Briefing Session with Tricia Head and Maxine Squire, prior to inspection of Children's Services
- 2 February 2015 - Update from Service Manager and the elected Member with responsibility for visiting children's homes (bring forward to 22 September 2014 meeting)

Reason: To ensure that the Board has a planned programme of work in place.

## **6. Chairs Comments**

The Chair confirmed that, in view of changes in Committee membership, with the agreement of all members, future meetings would commence at 5.00pm.

Cllr Looker, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.30 pm and finished at 7.15 pm].