

MEETING:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
DATE:	Tuesday, 2 May 2017
TIME:	2.00 pm
VENUE:	Council Chamber, Barnsley Town Hall

MINUTES

Present

Councillors Ennis (Chair), P. Birkinshaw, G. Carr, Charlesworth, Clements, Franklin, Frost, Gollick, Hampson, Hayward, W. Johnson, Lofts, Makinson, Phillips, Pourali, Sheard, Tattersall and Unsworth together with co-opted members Ms P. Gould and Mr J. Winter.

64 Apologies for Absence - Parent Governor Representatives

No apologies for absence were received from Parent Governor Representatives in accordance with Regulation 7(6) of the Parent Governor Representatives (England) Regulations 2001.

65 Declarations of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interest

Councillor Lofts declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute no. 67 due to his being a member of the Adoption Panel. Councillors G. Carr, Charlesworth, Tattersall and Unsworth declared non-pecuniary interests in the same minute due to their involvement with the Corporate Parenting Panel.

66 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 14th March 2017 were approved as a true and accurate record.

67 Support to Looked After Children from Barnsley Placed outside the Local Authority area

The following witnesses were welcomed to the meeting:

- Rachel Dickinson, Executive Director - People Directorate, BMBC
- Jon Banwell, Head of Service Children In Care, People Directorate, BMBC
- Sharon Galvin, Designated Nurse Safeguarding Children, Barnsley CCG
- Andrea Scholey, Named Nurse CiC, 0-19 Children's Community Nursing Service, Public Health, BMBC
- Liz Gibson, Virtual Headteacher for Looked After Children, People Directorate, BMBC
- Cllr Margaret Bruff, Cabinet Spokesperson - People (Safeguarding), BMBC

John Banwell presented a report on behalf of the Executive Director Core Services and the Executive Director People regarding Children in Care (CiC) outside of Barnsley. It was explained that wherever feasible, Children's Social Care and Safeguarding Services aim to place children in Care (CiC) with carers within the Borough, in line with statutory guidance. However, for some cases this is not always possible or appropriate.

Members asked questions in response to the report submitted and the introduction by John Banwell and the following matters were highlighted:

As at 31st March, 12 of the 93 children placed outside Barnsley have been placed for adoption. Three are in secure placements (two on remand, one on welfare grounds). One child is in a residential school because of specific educational requirement and is jointly funded with education. Two children are placed with relatives, one is in independent living, 11 are in residential settings. 18 are in residential placements, two in family assessment placements and 64 in foster placements outside the authority. Some of these will be in-house foster carers who live outside the Barnsley Boundary.

There are currently 11 children placed within 10-20 miles of the Barnsley boundary, with just 24 placed more than 20 miles away. Location is not the main consideration when placing children, it has to be the right match for the child. Support is provided for all young people, regardless of where they live. Barnsley performs well when compared to other Local Authorities. Children with complex needs must be carefully matched. There is a small group of children whose specific needs mean it is right to place them out of the Barnsley Borough.

There is a shortage of in-house foster carers, particularly for adolescents, sibling groups, young people with complex needs, long term carers and for emergency placements. Recruitment processes have been revised and now use Facebook, Twitter as well as regular mass media to spread the message of 'Barnsley carers for Barnsley children'. A recent event at Barnsley football club has started to generate some interest, as has a similar initiative working with the North East Area Council to highlight the range of people who can be foster carers.

The approval process for foster carers takes around six months, which includes training and guiding applicants through the process. An independent review of the process identified why people drop out of the process and there is now an action plan in place to simplify the process. The website and policies and procedures have been updated. The best recruiter for foster carers is other foster carers through word of mouth. Once approved, foster carers may be waiting some time for a placement, dependent on their terms of approval. All foster carers are approved for children aged between 0-18 but with a preference for a certain age group. Matching meetings take place monthly with foster carers and the support available is outlined to them, should they wish to consider widening their preference. Placements with independent fostering agencies (IFAs) are very expensive at an average of £900 per week and between £2500 and £3000 for a residential placement.

Members were reassured that during the current budget round and the medium term financial strategy there will be no reductions in funding. Similarly, although there was the possibility of Barnsley children placed outside the Borough not having statutory health checks, this has now been resolved through negotiation. On some occasions

Andrea Scholey (Named Nurse, CiC) may have to travel to do the assessment. This is not ideal, as local health practitioners know what services are available. There is a good reciprocal arrangement across South Yorkshire. Procedures for care leavers are the same wherever young people are placed. Young people are visited by Barnsley's targeted advice workers although this is not always in a child's best interests for children placed outside the Borough as they will have limited local knowledge.

The performance management of services for children and care leavers is robustly monitored. Visits are monitored monthly and there are regular team meetings. If a target is missed this will be quickly identified and steps taken to ensure it does not happen again. Every child has an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) who is also able to identify if a placement is struggling.

When children are placed out of authority the school will be visited to go through the child's educational and wider pastoral needs, which is very well appreciated by designated teachers, particularly when a child has complex needs. A meeting usually takes place prior to the child starting school to enable a strong package of support to be put in place. Regular monthly meetings take place with South Yorkshire Police and there are clear visiting arrangements with other police forces.

All Independent fostering agencies (IFAs) are part of the White Rose framework, commissioned and monitored by all Local Authorities. All placement contracts have strong information sharing protocols and performance against the contract is carefully monitored.

Many children coming into care have complex needs, with many having attachment and bereavement issues. Particularly complex needs include special educational need, physical or learning disability and social, emotional and developmental problems. Once needs have been identified plans are put in place to meet the individual needs of the child. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) are available both for the children and to support carers. It is not possible to have reciprocal arrangements with other authorities for children with complex needs placed outside of Barnsley due to the small number of children involved. Children with complex needs are consulted during visits with social workers, but improvement is always possible.

All children have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) which is updated three times a year and has a section to record a child's wishes and feelings. Problems with the care plan can often be unlocked when heard from the child. What a child says is always taken seriously, although conversations will be tempered according to the age, understanding and ability of the child. There is a small group of children who aren't happy at being in care and will always say they want to go home, which may not be in their best interests.

When a placement is not working, additional support is provided, but if a placement is found to be no longer suitable a move will be planned. Placement stability overall is good but disruption meetings are always held following placement breakdowns so that lessons can be learned for future placement support.

Representatives were thanked for their attendance and contribution.

68 Scrutiny Task and Finish Group (TFG) Reports from 2016/17 (Reports for information only)

Members were provided with copies of reports which had recently been to Cabinet in respect of work undertaken by scrutiny task and finish groups:

- Higher level skills and jobs
- Fly-tipping
- Flooding

It was reported that the reports had been well received by Cabinet. Members involved in the Task and Finish Groups were thanked for their hard work.

RESOLVED: that the reports be noted.