



# **Corporate Parenting Children in Care and Care Leavers**

Report from:  
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## **Ofsted Feedback**

### **March 2014 Ofsted**

The corporate parenting board is weak and, until very recently, there has been no corporate parenting strategy. Action should be taken to revise the function and purpose of the corporate parenting board and strategy to ensure that the needs of looked after children are paramount and that the right actions are taken to improve the quality of their lives.

### **September 2016 Ofsted**

The corporate parenting board now has a clear focus on issues for young people and is beginning to have an impact on improving services. The Children in Care Council is established and is listened to by the council, but more work is required to ensure that it is representative of all children in care in Birmingham.

Clear governance arrangements now oversee the board and its work effectively. Although the board has achieved some improvements, it is still at an early stage of considering the full range of issues for children looked after. For example, the board has not considered the IRO annual report and, although it secured a number of refurbished laptops for children looked after, did not know how many children looked after had access to a computer or laptop at the time of the inspection. It has, however, established itself as a key driver in improving services for children looked after and has ensured that nearly all councillors have had training about their corporate parenting responsibilities.

### **Children in care improvement highlights**

Working with the courts and the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) to ensure that children gain legal security swiftly through reducing court timescales, as well as the review and development of services that deliver good quality assessments and support for special guardians and connected persons caring for children.

Appropriate decisions are made for children to become looked after.



Most children are enabled to have meaningful contact with their family. This includes foster carers supporting some complex contact arrangements to ensure that children are able to maintain their important family relationships.

Children benefit from regular review of their care plans.

When children are placed out of the local authority area, priority is given to securing a suitable placement, with education services identified as soon as possible. This includes appropriate use of both therapeutic and secure accommodation to meet needs and reduce risks for some children.

The education of children looked after is positive, with attendance, attainment and progress being supported effectively by a well-led virtual school. An increasing range of after-school activities are enabling children to become more self-confident.

The number of children attending good or better schools has increased.

For those children who struggle to sustain a place in mainstream education, a range of alternative provision is used.

The vast majority of personal education plans are now completed within appropriate timescales and those sampled were generally of good quality

Risks for children who frequently go missing, and risks from gangs or sexual exploitation, are considered and reduced through robust plans.

Most children live in stable placements.

Children are engaged in decisions about their lives and social workers visit them regularly.

Adoption is considered for children who cannot return home and they live with their new families more quickly than at the time of the last inspection.

Care leavers enjoy positive relationships with their personal advisers, are supported into adulthood.

The majority of children who have disabilities and who are in care are making tangible progress and are positively engaged with by their social workers.

The local authority took practical and decisive action to review and improve the welfare of children living with special guardians and connected persons.

Assessments for foster carers are thorough, include relevant checks and are appropriately challenging if concerns are identified. The large majority of foster

carers spoken to by inspectors were very positive about the support they receive from their supervising social workers, describing them as 'amazing' and 'second to none'

The local authority has commissioned an effective service to support children aged 10 to 16 years who are moving from residential care to foster placements.

## **Children in care improvements**

Some children have experienced numerous placement breakdowns due to a lack of robust matching processes.

Some children experience delay in receiving services to meet their needs and improve their outcomes.

Children, including those placed for adoption, are not consistently helped to understand their care histories through direct work and life story work.

Assessments and plans for children who have a plan to return home require improvement to ensure that risks are fully considered and that the right support arrangements are in place.

The current provision of independent visitors is not sufficient to meet the needs of children looked after.

Return home interviews are not routinely offered and completed with all children looked after following each missing episode.

Children cannot easily access timely support to improve their emotional well-being and mental health.

The large majority of children's care plans require improvement to ensure that the child's full range of needs and risks are considered, and to ensure that actions are sufficiently clear and time-bound to enable effective monitoring. Adherence to and follow-through of care plans is an area of weakness, with the lack of a sense of urgency leading to drift. This includes delay in accessing appropriate services for children, and is particularly evident for children in their junior and secondary years.

Timeliness to achieve permanence for children is variable, and for some children is poor. For those children experiencing delays, this is due to lack of swift action for access to appropriate services and assessments in identifying appropriate permanent placement options.



For some children, consideration of diversity is limited to noting the child's identity and diversity, without then developing this into a detailed plan to meet these needs

## **Corporate Parenting Activity 2016**

### **What we have done well**

- **Corporate Parenting Strategy and update report**
- **Corporate Parenting Board - has a clear focus on issues for young people and is beginning to have an impact on improving services.**
- **Development of mentoring scheme and academic mentors through Virtual School.**
- **Development of work with elected members across the City including District Corporate Parent Champions.**
- **Events for Children in Care, Care leavers and Foster Carers**
- **Stronger links and increase in reward partners for Children in Care.**
- **Development of Foster Friendly Family and Friends**

### **Corporate Parenting Governance**

The 2015/16 Corporate Parenting strategy was put in place to reinforce the corporate responsibility of everyone in the Council. The strategy reinforces the corporate responsibility of everyone in the Council, both elected members and staff, and of its partner agencies, to improve the life chances of children in care and care leavers and ensure they get the right support and services where they live.

The Corporate Parenting update report was released in September 2016 and highlights the areas of development in 2016.

### **Corporate Parenting Board**

The Corporate Parenting Board champions Birmingham's looked after young people.

The Board is a multi-disciplinary, multi-agency group chaired by Councillor Susan Barnett, comprising of, Children in Care Council (CiCC) representatives, elected members, Assistant Director Children in Care Provider Services, Head teacher,



Birmingham Virtual School, Representatives from other Directorates, Rights and Participation service, Children's Social Care; Birmingham Foster Care Association, representing the voluntary sector; Health , West Midlands Police , Other representatives where necessary to the agenda.

The Corporate Parenting Board believes that our children and young people in care are best placed to tell us how services can be improved. Members of our CiCC are the life and soul of our Corporate Parenting board, the board listens carefully to what they have to say and does all it can to meet their expectations. A member of CiCC attends each CP Board meeting to present the work of the CiCC.

## **Mentoring Scheme**

The Corporate Parenting mentoring scheme is based on the simple idea of pairing up Birmingham City Council's large, altruistic and dedicated workforce, with our children in care and care leavers who need some extra support.

In early 2016 a bespoke mentoring scheme training package for staff was introduced through the Virtual School allowing mentors and partners to provide targeted support within all areas of educational attainment in schools and colleges throughout the city and also young people/adults placed Out of Authority.

By August 2016 204 Birmingham City Council staff and reward partners including Birmingham City University, the NHS and Service Birmingham were trained as Corporate Parents.

100 staff and partner mentors are now providing one to one support in a range of ways including support with coursework, homework, reading, and writing, securing apprenticeships, employment opportunities and life skills.

Mentors are also providing dedicated support with college and university enrolment, attending open days, supporting with the transition into independent living, mock interview and skills sessions and days out.

Other staff and partners that have received training are providing support in a number of ways including the Birmingham Virtual School Raising Aspiration Programme Careers events and participation in group activities with young people and adults.

## **Corporate Parenting mentoring case study 1 - Sabrina**

### **Sabrina's view**



My name is Sabrina Robinson and I am 18 years old. Having a mentor has been a blessing. I'm saying this because I didn't realise how much I needed Heather until I had her working with me. She has been absolutely amazing, she definitely works above and beyond.

Heather has now been working with me for just over a year and she's been a great help. She found me two work placements, helped me sort out my portfolio (she literally didn't care how long it would take for it to be completed) as long as it was, (and when I say long, it took absolutely ages!) the persistence was real!

Shortly after we met, Heather realised that I needed help in order to move house. It wasn't an easy process but Heather went back and forth in her little car taking my things to my new house. For that I am ever so grateful. If Heather hadn't helped me, I don't know who would have.

### **Corporate Parenting mentoring case study 2 – Sally**

#### **Professional's view from a Birmingham Virtual School Education Advisor**

I referred Sally to the Corporate Parent mentor scheme in the summer holidays of 2015. The reason being that Sally was facing a placement move, and this combined with returning to college was causing her a lot of anxiety.

Sally's mentor made contact with her very quickly. I met with Sally during the holidays and she was very dubious about why she was being contacted and how this was going to help her. I explained the role of the mentor and asked Sally to give her a chance. Sally's mentor and I kept in good contact and I encouraged her to persevere. Very quickly Sally's mentor proved to her that she was genuine, trustworthy, caring and consistent. She helped Sally in many practical ways - with her placement move, enrolling at college, and then later in the academic year, finding her a work placement for her Health and Social Care course. Sally would not have completed her college course, and been accepted on to the next level without her mentors input. Sally's mentor has been a huge and invaluable support for Sally, who struggles with independent living and personal organisation. I am hugely grateful to Sally's mentor for everything she has done for Sally and feel that her input has made Sally's experience of being in the care of the local authority a much more positive experience. Her intervention has also improved the prospects of Sally - who is now studying on a level 3 course and could progress to higher education in two years' time. Sally's mentor has enhanced the work of the statutory services by working alongside us, and she has given the time and care that Sally needs to move forward with her life at this time of transition.



## **Academic Mentoring**

The Corporate Parenting partnership with BCU has identified over 40 undergraduate students who have been trained to become Corporate Parents.

In October 2016 The Birmingham Virtual School developed the role of the Academic Mentor in partnership with Birmingham City University and Communicate, a software-based literacy and communication teaching intervention designed specifically for use with people who have delayed literacy and communication skills.

The project is designed to focus on core communication skills along with building self-esteem and confidence. A Corporate Parent mentoring team comprising of a champion, lead mentor and academic mentors are initially working as teams with five residential homes within the city.

The mentoring team are working together to provide support to some of our young people in developing their literacy skills. They are also providing support with homework and coursework. The pilot will develop further throughout 2016/17.

## **Elected Members Responsibilities**

In 2016 the Corporate Parenting Board carried out a series of Corporate Parenting presentations at each of the 10 district meetings. The meetings set out Corporate Parenting responsibilities to members, to enable them to get involved in corporate parent activities. Following the presentations each district elected a corporate parent district champion to work as part of a team collectively to engage with and support all elected members in their role as Corporate Parents.

Members have also been supporting children in care in a number of ways as this role develops including raising over £1,000 to ensure that 622 Children in Care received presents in 2016.

## **Corporate Parenting District Champions**

In July 2016 the Corporate Parenting working group came together to discuss the role of the Corporate Parent Champions and how they can collectively support Children in Care and Care leavers in a number of ways across the City. The group included area director, members and key staff that work within children in care.

- The group took into consideration the following:
- Corporate parenting strategy and key priorities.
- Children in Care Council (CiCC) priorities.



- Work of the Corporate Parenting Board and Virtual School Board of Governors.
- Corporate Parenting District Champions

In August 2016 the Lead Corporate parent Councillor Susan Barnett was elected to work alongside the Corporate Parenting Coordinator and scheduled a timetable of sessions for 2016.

The group's role is to monitor the work surrounding children in care, looking for opportunities and ways they can make a difference to young people in care locally both as a group and in their individual districts. The group makes links between the corporate priorities and local initiatives.

It was decided that the group would meet on a monthly basis and the first meeting took place on the 26th September with a focus on Educational attainment and rewards.

A Workshop took place in December 2016 where District Champions met with Heads of Service to discuss in detail work around Education, Pathway Planning and Care Leavers. Three further sessions will be taking place in 2017 that will focus on each of these areas and the support champions can offer in more detail.

### **Foster Friendly Family and Friends**

Birmingham City Council has become one of fewer than 30 councils across the country to establish itself as a Foster Friendly employer.

A partnership has now been secured with the University of Birmingham where BCC Foster Carers are being used as mentors. There is no right in law to leave for fostering purposes; however, BCC is now making Fostering Leave available to support employees who are also Local Authority foster carers or family and friends carer. This is in addition to current annual leave provisions, public holiday leave, and flexi-leave where applicable. It is also separate from the current provisions for Special Leave.

### **Laptops to support with Educational Attainment**



Two successful applications in 2015/16 have provided 120 laptops for young people in care across Birmingham who are entering higher education and did not have access to a computer.

This project was put in place to meet a current funding gap for young people in care, giving them access to laptops in order to support their progression into continued education.

The safeguarding of the young people whilst online has been paramount to the success of the project. Policy Central Monitoring software was installed on all 120 laptops before they were distributed.

By installing Policy Central we have provided a comprehensive and automatic protection for each young person that has received a laptop. A monitoring process and team has been implemented within Birmingham Virtual School, the team take forward any captured identified by the system and action in line with the process.

## **CASE STUDIES**

### **Case Study: Afra**

Afra has just completed her BTEC Level 2 First Diploma in Travel and Tourism South and City College Birmingham, Hall Green Campus. She has also achieved her Functional Skills Level 1 in English and Maths.

Afra lives in independent council accommodation with her one year old son and has no support from family. She attends college three days a week.

With daily struggles of keeping a house, budgeting and looking after a young child who was sometimes poorly and unable to go to nursery it was not easy for Afra to maintain her place at college and complete the work required to pass the course.

Having this laptop has enabled Afra to complete her coursework at home in the evenings at weekends, and also keep up with her peers by working from home when she has been unable to get to college due to personal circumstances out of her control.

The laptop has also enabled Afra to keep in contact with her Corporate Parent mentor by email and her college tutors and peers which she says has made her feel less isolated.

When Afra was asked for feedback she said, "I could not believe it when my Virtual School worker told me I would be getting this laptop; I never knew that people could be so kind to me.

“It has helped me with my studies and confidence and to be honest I would not have completed my level 2 in travel without being able to study online when my son sleeps in the day or goes to bed. Thank you so much.”

### **Case Study: Lucy**

Having her own laptop has allowed Lucy to continue with her study through her pregnancy by completing work through the online portal at home, particularly in the later stages of pregnancy when Lucy would not have managed the long journey on public transport so frequently.

Lucy, 17, from North Birmingham, said: “As a pregnant mum to be I was still given the opportunity to have a laptop, something I never thought I would have. It has opened up lots of doors for me. I can now comfortably study at home and do not have to go to the library.

“It has also allowed me to look at baby groups that I could join and learn more about what awaits me over the coming months. I have been really thankful for the opportunity to be able to research about how I can continue with my education when my daughter arrives and never knew there were so many options available to me. I cannot thank you enough; the laptop has made a real difference.”

## **Children in Care Events**

### **Birmingham Virtual School Going4Success Award and Celebration Events**

In 2016 three events took place for Children in Care to celebrate their educational attainment and achievements over the key stages. 27 Reward Partners supported these events in a number of ways including venue hire, reward vouchers, trophies, and activities and showing personal support at events. These events have been key in providing our Children will a tradition that throughout their school life there will be events to celebrate their achievements.

### **Winter Events**

In December 2016 three events took place for Children in Care, Care Leavers and Carers.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> November The Winter Wonderland on the welcomed 656 primary age Children in Care, carers, family and partners to John Willmott Secondary School. The young people enjoyed an Ice Rink, Santa Grotto, Arts and Crafts, Snow Simulator, magician and much more.



This event was supported by reward partner Service Birmingham with presents donated by elected members.

442 Children in Care, Care Leavers, carers and partners enjoyed an evening's celebrations including live entertainment and a three course meal at the Holiday Inn on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> December. This event was supported by the Lord Mayor and District champions who were table hosts.

The reward partners for this event were Service Birmingham, Teamwork's Karting and Capital FM.

The foster carer's recognition event at Aston Villa Football Club recognised the achievements over 100 Birmingham Foster Carers in a number of categories. Over 200 carers, friends and family celebrated at the event.

### **Going4Sucess careers events**

Launched in autumn 2015 and two further events took place in the spring and summer term of 2016.

The purpose of the events is to raise the aspirations and increase the vocational knowledge of our young people and their carers.

The autumn term event had a multi vocational focus that comprised of a number of workshops including theatrical make up, public services, motor vehicle maintenance, construction and art and design.

The spring term event focused on careers in health and was delivered by reward partner HealthTec and hosted at North Birmingham Academy. The interactive workshops for young people included paramedics, first aid and medical engineering.

The summer term event was hosted and delivered by the REP theatre and the event included a number of interactive workshops for young people including wigs and make up, lighting and sound, backstage tours, set design and props.

Each event has a tailored interactive session for carers on a number of topics.

Over 260 young people and carers attended the 2015/16 careers events.

Moving forward the 2016/17 careers events will have a focus on higher education and apprenticeship will take place at venues across the city.



**Photos from Going4Sucess Key Stage 1 and 2 Event, Winter Ball and Wonderland**

**Report From:** Lisa Carter

**Report To:** Schools, Children & Families Overview & Scrutiny

**Date:** 25th January 2017

**Title:** RIGHTS AND PARTICIPATION SERVICE

'RAP aims to OPTIMISE and EMPOWER children and young people's involvement in strategic, local and day to day decisions that affect their lives. We challenge and champion children and young people's rights to ensure that when decisions are made children and young people are involved, consulted and listened to.'

#### **The journey so far**

The Rights and Participation Service provides issue based advocacy support for children and young people in care, care leavers, children and young people within the child protection process and can support children and young people when requested throughout a family group conference. We are different from other professionals because an advocate works for the child or young person to ensure their voice is heard. We do not work within best interests guidelines and work to a code of national advocacy standards.

The Rights and Participation service also supports our Children in Care Council and our Care Leavers Forum. Increasingly in the last 12 months more participation work has come to the team. We have led on young people's engagement and initial views on the Trust as well as supporting our young people to engage in a number of projects, meetings, campaigns and support in the recruitment of new staff.

#### **What we have done**

- Support and advocate for individual children and young people.
- Share quarterly reports capturing advocacy trends and individual case studies with area team and Ads
- Report back to corporate parenting board
- Support young people to make complaints and /or support within mediation process

- Collate and escalate issues where appropriate.
- Support and facilitate a minimum of 24 meetings per year of the children in care council.
- Support members of CiCC to engage with their peers and initiate and agree campaigns on a rolling 12 month program. Support young people to hold officers accountable to these campaigns and push through to completion.
- Set up and continue to support and facilitate a pilot care leaver's forum. Work with young people to develop and sustain a program of work.
- Support YP to be involved in recruitment and interviews of officers.
- Continue to attend area meetings and deliver training. Work alongside and offer support to principle social workers.
- Work with area teams (LACES/IROs Care Leavers Services) to raise the profile of MOMO. Identify and support champions.
- Visit disabled children's homes and share report with senior managers, attend and visit homes where Birmingham children are placed as and when (prioritising Priory and Meadows)
- Develop age appropriate resources as required ('first time in care' resource as an example)
- Deliver training as and when required.

### **CASE STUDY Care leavers Forum**

An excellent discussion was had around the experiences care leavers around health needs.

It was common amongst those who attended that privacy around these was a major issue especially as they got older or if they had a question which they wanted to ask the Health professional.

'....my carer would sit in the room – which was embarrassing, I wanted to ask about sex and contraception, but they would just think I was having sex - but I wasn't'  
(CL18)

Having to register at new Doctors, Dentist and Optician each time there was a placement move was also an issues especially for those who had a number of placement moves;

'The Optician was rude – I had told my foster care that I had had an eye test but I still had to have another on. The Optician checked the system and said I had already had one and could not have another – they were not happy for wasting the appointment' (CL18)

All the Care Leavers present shared that they had NOT seen or heard of the Health Passport. All shared that it was important that a proper record was kept of immunisations, accidents, broken bones, scars etc. and these were available especially when they left care.

'....I don't know my family medical history' (CL 18)

'I don't know if I have had Chicken Pox and I have a child!' (CL 19)

Puberty: All who attended shared that this was not a good experience and no one person told them about this if anyone at all. As attendance was all female a very open and honest discussion was had and they recognised it was as difficult for boys as well as girls.

'the worst is moving to a new placement and not knowing where the pads are or the sheets it's just as bad for the boys if they have a wet dream' (CL 19)

It was common across the group that there was a presumption among professionals that they were sexually active and at least one young person was prescribed contraception unnecessarily. More than one young person had been made to have a pregnancy test.

'...when it was not positive they marched me to the doctors to have one done there!' (CL18)

For looked after children and young people who are not in school or have poor attendance it was recognised that this may mean that they were not in class for the 'puberty' lesson reinforcing again the need to have access to a constant and open dialogue with someone who they trust.

The 'first bra' experience was not a positive one with many attending sharing that they had made to feel embarrassed and often going without a bra even though they need one as they felt they had no one to talk to.

'...without the labels we are all humans' and people often forget about that...' (CL 20)

The Care Leavers forum made the following recommendations:

- That a key person who has a positive relationship and is consistent in the child/young person's life has the conversation.
- This is an open, age appropriate and constant conversation not just a one off and the child/young person is aware and happy with this.
- That all young women have the opportunity to have a positive experience in purchasing their first bra/having a bra fitting.
- A 'box' is available containing information, sanitary wear, sheets is available when arriving at a new placement.
- A new and relevant 'health passport' should be made available to all young people especially when leaving care and it is important that young people are involved in developing this.

#### **Case study for advocacy support with a placement issue:**

A referral was received from the social worker of a 12 year old young person (M), subject to a full care order. Efforts were in place to find a permanent placement for him but the social worker felt that M did not feel able communicate his placement views with any of the professionals involved. The social worker believed that M being involved with the process, and the social worker gaining understanding of his views, was imperative for the success of any long term placement.

The advocate met with M on three occasions over the course of 2 months. Whilst M had strong ideas about what his placement should be like he initially struggled to communicate this. M enjoyed computer games and the advocate suggested to M that he could build his ideal home within the game 'Minecraft'.

M did an amazing job of producing his ideal home and an example is shown below. Whilst initially this allowed a discussion of the material things important to M (a large garden, a good view and a dog to be his friend), the process allowed the advocate to encourage M to talk about wider aspects of his placement. For instance, M didn't mind that much about his carers (as long as they were kind) but felt it was important not to have a long journey to and from school.

M was able to discuss with his advocate his relationship with his siblings, and his thoughts and feelings about being separated from his siblings and why. This information could potentially be used by the social worker to provide specific emotional & behavioural support for M, leading to a greater chance of a successful long term placement.

### **Case study for advocate support for young people to be involved with meetings:**

A referral was made by the allocated social worker for 3 female siblings (aged 15, 12 & 11). The referral was received shortly before the 2nd Child Protection Review Conference due to concerns that the young people did not feel able to attend meetings, share their wishes & feelings and be involved in the decision making process.

The advocate met all of the young people prior to conference. One young person felt able to attend their conference with the advocate's support and share their wishes and feelings at the start of the conference. The advocate worked with the other siblings who produced a report each to be shared with the conference. One of these young people said "I am happy to make a wishes and feelings report. I have said in this report what I have wanted to say for ages".

The advocate regularly met the young people, often using drawing and craft to help them consider their thoughts & feelings and to express these. When discussing the advocate's role, one sibling stated "You go to the meetings and are a voice for young people to speak. It is good because if I am shy then you can speak for me. The advocacy meetings give me a chance to really think about how I feel".

The advocate was also able to work for the children's rights. There were periods where their case 'drifted', together with a change in social worker and Child Protection Officer. The advocate was able to appropriately escalate child protection concerns arising from her advocacy visits.

All of the siblings felt able to attend their next Review Child Protection Conference. One sibling said:

"It was good and I am finally happy that I got to say what I wanted to say. I also think that I am more confident when I speak when my family isn't there because if they are there I get shy and I don't speak and I am scared of what they would think of my opinion. Advocacy is really good because they really help you to speak and boost your confidence.

Each young person produced their own report (prepared with the advocate) and able to speak freely of their experiences and feelings. The CPO emailed afterwards:

"I just wanted to say what a great job (the advocate) has undertaken with the children. It was a joy to have the child's voice at conference and to have a child in person is even better. (The advocate) enabled the three children to make their views known"

The advocate supported the children in attending a Family Group Conference and their following Review Child Protection Conferences. The advocate continued to provide resources and time for the young people to explain their wishes and feelings and support for them to share these.

All three siblings are now placed together with a family member. The children are sad that they cannot stay with their mum but feel that by being involved in their Child Protection Conferences they understand why this is & that they have been involved in the decision making about who cares for them now.

### **Disabled Children's Homes visiting Advocate**

The role of a visiting advocate to a children's home is to get to know the children and get a feel for how a home functions including any informal practices. The advocate can then showcase any excellent practice and also act as a critical friend and identify areas that may raise concerns.

'D chose a purple ribbon out of 7 coloured ribbon options. He had a smile on his face as he swirled the ribbon around making circles and shapes. He examined the stick he was holding and the ribbon. The advocate asked him and signed if he liked playing with the ribbon he smiled and signed thumbs up sign. D played with the ribbon for a considerable time. He seemed to really enjoy the activity. He was quiet, peaceful and relaxed. D joined the group and did some ribbon dancing in the garden before saying goodbye to the advocate and going to judo class. The advocate asked M, C, M, C and D if they wanted to do some ribbon dancing in the garden. The young people enjoyed making shapes with the ribbons. They formed a circle and moved in and out moving the ribbons up and down. Each young person had a turn to dance with the ribbon in the circle. C then led the other young people and told them what to do next. The advocate and the young people all sat down on the bench with the ribbons and swirled the ribbons around on the floor. They pretended they were fishing in a river and then sang lots of songs together. M said she liked the ribbons. D didn't want to participate in the ribbon dancing. C said that she had had a great time and would like to dance and sing with the ribbons again'

We have been visiting our 5 homes fortnightly to build relationships and have now reduced to monthly visits with reports sent to senior managers and shared with the homes.

### **The good things/improvements**

- Continue to see regular and constant referrals for advocacy (evidence positive outcomes for young people)

- Key trends and themes are received positively and beginning to see reflected in area team discussions/schemes of work
- Quarterly reports appear to be well received – focus on trends and individual stories
- Good working relationships with other professionals.
- Increase in number of young people involved in CiCC/Care leavers Forum.
- Successful campaigns with improved practice that evidence voice of the child priorities.
- Innovative practice that can evidence voice of the child – Trust engagement day being one example.
- Increased use of new technologies (MOMO/you tube)

**What still needs to be done and how we are going to do it.**

- Continue to work with care leavers group – embed the work in, create an engagement plan and develop campaigns. Monitor progress.
- Support CiCC to develop and grow – create exciting opportunities and programs of work that will help us engage and share information with more young people. Evidence an increase in young people’s involvement and engagement.
- Utilise social media tools more fully – link this to ensuring that young people have appropriate information around rights and entitlements.
- Continue to embed MOMO – encourage and champion its use outside of children in care teams.
- Identify best advocacy practice and link to quality standards

**Report From:** Theresa Kane HoS & Sara Delaney Assistant HoS

**Report To:** Schools, Children & Families Overview & Scrutiny

**Date:** 25<sup>th</sup> January 2017

**Title:** Achieving Permanency for children: Making Adoption Work

**Summary:** Birmingham Adoption Service undertakes statutory adoption work; recruitment and assessment of prospective adopters, Family Finding, post adoption support, birth record counselling and management of letterbox contact. The adoption service is regulated by Children Act 1989, 2002, 2004, Children and Families Bill 2014, and National Minimum Standards 2014, supported by the Adoption Statutory Guidance 2014.

**The journey so far**

Ofsted Inspection 2016 stated that the Adoption Service is moving in the right direction, a rating of Requires Improvement was given compared with Inadequate rating in 2015.

*“Steady progress over the last 15 months, under a new manager, has improved the adoption service by increasing staffing, expanding family-finding teams and establishing a post-adoption service. A clear improvement plan identifies the areas requiring urgent attention, such as improving the timeliness of, and monitoring the progress of, adoption plans”.*

**Performance Improvement--Adoption Scorecard Data.**

- 140 children placed for adoption between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016.
- 107 children have been placed between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 and 30<sup>th</sup> November 2016
- Average Time between entering care and being placed for adoption = 660 days, in line with England average and below statistical neighbours of 651 days.
- Average Time from authority to place and achieving Match for adoption= 263 days, above the England average of 223 days, but below statistical neighbours of 254 days.
- The percentage of children who wait less than 16months between entering care

and moving in with their adoption family is 38%. The England average is 47% and our statistical neighbours are 41%.

- Adoptions as a percentage of children leaving carer is 14%, which is above the England average of 16%.
- Adoptions of children from ethnic minority backgrounds are 11% which is above the England average of 9%

**Ofsted recognised mitigation in the scorecard and the impact of Adoption Service tenacity to place complex children--** *“ In particular, delays relate to the time taken to identify suitable families to meet the needs of harder to place children. Delays are mitigated by the council’s tenacity in identifying adoptive families for children with complex health and disability needs”.*

#### **Post Adoption Support Team, (PAS).**

A Post Adoption Support team established in December 2015 Clinical Psychologist provides highly specialist support to meet complex needs of children through a Clinical Psychologist able to develop psychological formulations to target appropriate intervention.

Assessments and Interventions are delivered by Social Workers, TESS, and Forward Thinking Birmingham (CAMHS) or through the commissioned framework funded by the government led Adoption Support Fund. Links with the Sexually Harmful Behaviour Team, (SHB) team provide advice, assessment and intervention for children and adopters where sexualised behavior is problematic.

109 applications have been made to the Government funded Adoption Support Fund between June 2015 and December 2016, this led to delivery of a funded therapeutic package in 108 cases.

#### **Assessment of Prospective Adopters.**

- Assessment are now completed in-house without the use of Independent Social Workers
- To promote Foster carer adoption specific workbook and training has been developed.
- Positive Parenting Strategies programme has enhanced adopters confidence and skill base.
- Foster For Adoption early discussions with prospective adopters supported by workshops and training has been delivered to area workers.
- Good feedback from adopters on training.

70 adopters have been assessed and approved between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016

#### **Panels.**

- Eight Adoption specific panels are held monthly.
- In the previous 12 months 66% of reports met the required timescale, the quality of

these reports has been good.

- PAR's submitted to panel have been of a high standard.
- The quality of Matching reports and support plans has been good and detailed how adopters will meet the needs of children.

### **What we have done**

**Recruitment:** A new corporate rebranding campaign under the #changinglives has been designed and led to more enquiries converting to placements for children. Closer working relationships with the LGBT community have been developed. Partnership with First4Adoption and Mirror newspapers to promote children waiting for adoption during the National Adoption Week in October 2017.

The Recruitment teams monthly Information events including specific events aimed at LGBT and UASC applicants has enabled attention to attracting applicants wishing to adopt within the priority groups for the service; ----children with disabilities, siblings groups, BME children, older children with development trauma and attachment difficulties

The recruitment team is working with Corporate Communications to ensure that the recruitment strategy is in line with council priorities and their expertise promotes the activities of the team.

**Performance:** Ofsted (2016): children now move to adoption more quickly than at last inspection, more consistently helped to understand their history through direct work and life story work.

Planning for permanence is stronger, parallel planning proactive and timely intervention Joint work with courts, SW and Carcass has reduced delays.

**Regional Adoption Agencies:** The service is in discussion with other statutory (Hereford) and voluntary sector agencies to move to a Regional Adoption Agency with the benefit of developing a centre of expertise promoting timeliness and economies of scale for matching, adopter recruitment and adoption support.

### **Family Finding**

**Permanency Advice Clinics:** for each area provide advice and support on permanency decision making, planning, CPR's and life story work.

FF workers facilitate CPR training, providing expertise and skills.

Partnership with Adoption Focus to hold profile exchange events has increased family finding.

### **Service Re-design: (aimed at reducing delay and improving timeliness against scorecard above)**

A move from two Family Finding teams to three Family Finding teams has promoted greater communication and working links with area Children Service Teams, this enables early referral of children and prevents delay.

Ofsted recognized the strength of matching adopters and children:

*“Matching practice is effective, considers the strengths of adopters, their capacity to meet the needs of children with complex needs and the level of support they will need. As a result, children and their adoptive families receive the right support”.*

**Post Adoption Support:** joint TESS and Adoption Service partnership has provided specialist advice and psychological formulations of need to inform referral for therapeutic work.

**Workforce Development.**

Workforce development--has ensured stability and a significant reduction in agency posts. A rolling training programme reflects the DfE Knowledge Skills and Practice standards for Permanency.

Evidence and innovative practice supported by reflective supervision improved assessment, matching and support for families.

**The good things/improvements**

- Recruitment of staff across the service has led to a stable workforce
- Training programme developed managerial supervision and support of staff and practitioners skill sin assessment, placing and supporting adoption
- Adoption scorecard performance data has shown reductions in the number of days between children entering care and moving to adoptive family
- The Recruitment team has improved co-working with fostering and adoption assessment teams to develop and strengthen the initial enquiry and first home visit targeting recruitment and applicants understanding and knowledge in preparation for assessment.
- Liaison with family finders to strengthening understanding of the children waiting for adoptive placements promoting recruitment to meet need.
- Development of Permanency Clinics to promote identification and referral of children, placement decision making and presentation of sensitive information in CPR reports and life story books
- Staff trained in therapeutic interventions and links made with commissioned services to enable timely and appropriate support.
- Improvement in collating and the needs and profile of children requiring permanency through adoption.
- Developing a commissioning framework of providers for post adoption support

**What still needs to be done and how we are going to do it**

**1) Achieve permanency for children without delay.**

- Establish Permanency Panels to increase capacity and prevent delay from thirteen separate Adoption and Fostering Panels to Permanency panels will increase capacity and prevent delay.

- Monitor Permanency Advice Clinics to strengthen decision making and referrals
  - Early Tracking of children to track timeliness of adoption plans and time Placement Order to Improved quality of CPR's through training from specialist Family Finders and support for area Social Workers.
  - Improved Life Story Books through training and support for area Social Workers
  - Adoption Monitoring Meetings with Heads of Service to identify delay and drift
  - Quality Assurance--Child Permanency Record's, (CPR)- This document is an important record for the child to provide understanding of their birth family, their journey into care and adoption. The reports submitted to panel this year have shown an improvement in quality.
  - CPR training co-facilitated by FF practitioners.
  - Work on improving report quality has also been offered by Panel advisors through one to one support for area Social Workers
  - Head of Service quarterly performance reports to identify the child's journey and barriers.
  - Improve assessment timescales
  - Improve the recording of children with disability
- 2) Ensure a sufficiency of appropriate prospective adopters to meet need.**
- Increase recruitment of prospective adopters through the enhanced recruitment strategy
  - Improved use of social media
  - Targeted events to recruit adopters for hard to place children
  - Improve and evaluate the initial experience of enquirers through the use of Mystery Shoppers.
  - Links with the Penny Appeal to broaden adoption and fostering knowledge within the Muslim community through the use of ambassadors promoting the message that adoption is compatible with religious teaching
  - Early discussion with approved adopters about children before the Adoption plan is finalised
  - Co-working of initial home visit by recruitment and assessment team to share knowledge and expertise at the front door
- 3) Prevent Adoption Breakdown.**
- Staff trained in therapeutic intervention
  - Development of in-house specialist support programmes
  - Development of a commissioned framework for therapeutic providers
  - Increased capacity of Clinical Psychology time to provide robust formulations of need
  - Parental support groups and training in therapeutic Positive Parenting Strategies
  - Use legislation to expand support for adopted children in school via Virtual Head

***Feedback on the Assessment and Support teams work from Prospective Adopters after their assessment and training***

- ***“We would like to place on record our appreciation for all the hard work carried out by M as our foster child D moved on for adoption. M put in additional hours due to the unfortunate illness that stuck both the foster and adoptive families. We were constantly kept informed of anticipated revised timescales and arrangements for D’s move. M was always kind and supportive to all parties and treated everybody with the utmost consideration.”***

***Feedback on Support Activities***

***“We just wanted to take this opportunity to praise all the good work carried out in making our dream a reality. We are forever grateful for having such a social service. We currently take our daughter to the stay and play which we value and appreciate. We would also like to mention the training team who do a wonderful job. We are now at the stage of doing letterbox contact, again this team are also great to deal with.”***

***Feedback on Family Finders Activity , matching and introductions between child and adopters***

***“Thank you for all of your hard work and professionalism in making our dream come true. Your guidance and support before, during and after introductions is very much appreciated. We feel that you are an asset to Birmingham City Council’s family finding team and are grateful to you for finding us S.”***

**Report From:** Theresa Kane – HoS & Michelle Gardiner – Assistant HoS

**Report To:** Schools, Children & Families Overview & Scrutiny

**Date:** 25<sup>th</sup> January 2017

**Title:** The Fostering Service

**Summary:**

**The journey so far**

Birmingham City Council (BCC) aims to provide the most effective intervention in a proportionate and timely way that engages with children and their families. The fostering service is an integral part of Birmingham City Council's Children's Services.

The aim of the service is to provide the opportunity for all looked after children and young people to experience positive family life through the provision of high quality substitute family care.

The fostering services were working on a patch basis up until 2016 when the operational decision was made to co-locate in Woodcock Street. The aim of the co-location was to offer a consistent placement and support service across the City.

Connected Person Assessment & Support was transferred across from the mainstream fostering service to a newly formed Special Guardianship, Connected Person, Private Fostering Service in 2016. The rationale for the move was based on the size of the fostering services and the differing priorities that needed to be driven forward. The separation within the service allowed for mainstream fostering to focus on placements, recruitment, assessment and support for foster carers.

The service has formed a partnership relationship with the Corporate Communications Team. This has allowed the service to benefit from the knowledge and expertise within the council around marketing and recruitment.

A dedicated training officer has been in post since 2016 at senior social worker level. The worker has the responsibility for ensuring that there is a specific training programme in place for foster carers. The training programme is based on

the needs of the children and carers and is reviewed annually.

There have been changes to the way the service works and the co-location has enabled closer working with the Placement Team.

The service has a target of recruiting 8 new internal fostering placements per month.

### **What we have done**

Ofsted recognised the limitations of our current IT systems. The service was commended by Ofsted for being proactive in identifying our system limitations. Ofsted were impressed with the plan in place to take forward to the Carefirst Replacement Project Team.

The Fostering Service has been working closely with the Information Management Team to develop a fostering scorecard. When completed this will provide us with crucial performance data e.g. timeliness of annual reviews, numbers of enquiries received and the conversion rates of these enquiries.

The service has recently undertaken a targeted recruitment drive which was aided by an interview on Switch Radio. Following on from the success of the interview, Switch radio station have offered the service a monthly slot on the radio and we are planning a focused marketing campaign in the lead up to fostering fortnight. The focus for the marketing campaign will be on teenage placements, sibling groups and UASC (Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children) and Long term fostering, these areas were identified as areas for improvement of future sufficiency.

Ofsted recognised the benefit of bringing the fostering assessments back in house. The improvements were as follows:

- Overall quality of the assessment has improved
- Assessments are being completed in a more timely manner
- Improved Quality Assurance
- Improved consistency of assessments

In bringing the assessments back in-house the service has reviewed the Training and Support programme for Foster Carers, Connected Persons, SGO and Staff Training. A Training Coordinator has been appointed and implemented Attachment and Safeguarding Training as mandatory.

Partnership working has improved through work with Dr John Hoffman and the research project, 'Dealing with Attachment Issues', Leicester University. The fostering service has been collaborating with the Rees Centre and Oxford University on other research projects such as the study into a cross-country

comparison of the factors that contribute to a successful foster placement.

The fostering service facilitated a three day visit with Swedish social work colleagues from Vallentuna. The purpose of the visit was for Swedish colleagues to learn from our practice procedures and legislative requirements within Fostering. This visit resulted in building further international social work relations for the Fostering Service.

Other examples of what we have done:

- Co-location of the entire service to Woodcock Street.
- A Rewards and Recognition event for foster carers in December 2016. The event was a resounding success and in attendance was Peter Hay (Strategic Director), Councillor Brigid Jones and the Lady Mayoress of Birmingham City Council.
- Ofsted recognised the work undertaken by the fostering service identifying foster carers that have not been utilized for long periods. This has enabled the service to have an accurate fostering register.
- A representative from the service attends the monthly Recruitment and Marketing West Midlands Consortium Group. A project derived from this group is to produce a marketing video that is funded by the local authorities collectively. The aim is to use combined budgets and resources to produce a marketing video which can be tailored to each individual LA's needs and used as part of recruitment improvements.

#### **The good things/improvements**

- There are currently 445 internal foster carers approved providing a total of 747 potential placements
- There are 12 EDT (Emergency Duty Carers).
- December 2016 there were 614 internal placements versus 591 external placements.
- There have been 75 de-registrations of mainstream foster carers up to the end of December 2016. This figure is high due to the service undertaking a data cleanse of the fostering register and removing foster carers from the register who were no longer providing fostering placements.
- December 2015 to December 2016 there were 26 new mainstream fostering approvals providing an additional 33 fostering placements.
- The average number of case allocations a full time fostering support social worker has across the service is between 17 to 20 cases.

- The current recommendation for a fostering assessment is 16 weeks. The service are currently completing assessments within 8 – 12 weeks timescales as part of improved performance.

A planned approach has been made to provide a more joined up approach to recruitment and marketing with the Corporate Communications Team. The focus is on delivering targeted and evidence based marketing through the positive promotion of fostering and the financial package offered by Birmingham City Council. We are currently in the process of developing a new Fostering Website. The new site will help aid the recruitment of potential foster carers, by allowing the service to control the content enabling fostering to evidence the competitive package on offer.

The service was tasked with providing data for the Ofsted return for 2014/2015 and the data quality was poor at this time. The service developed new systems for monitoring and the return in 2016 was provided internally evidencing an accurate picture of the service.

Targets have been set for our Recruitment Team to obtain a net gain of 8 internal foster placements a month. The Fostering Teams are working closely with the recruitment and assessment teams. A geomapping tool has been produced that shows the geographical areas where children in care are placed. This will help identify potential hotspots where the recruitment teams can target for sufficiency requirements for children in care in the future.

Staff recruitment and retention has greatly improved. Staff absence in 2016 has significantly reduced. The service was previously showing one of the highest sickness absence rates within Children's Service and is now the lowest. This has been as a result of senior management applying a consistent use of policies and procedures across the service. This improvements has resulted in significant financial savings.

Accurate recording of children missing from care has improved due to new systems that are monitored regularly across the fostering service in conjunction with area services. Capturing the data accurately has improved safeguarding for vulnerable children and young people.

#### **What still needs to be done and how we are going to do it**

During the past 12 months the service has been able to identify gaps in service provision and planned how these can be rectified. The key objectives for service improvement:

- Improve internal placement levels

- Net gain of 8 new fostering placements per month
- Better use of the internal fostering estate
- On-going Improved Practice development

Monthly monitoring meetings are held with team managers and senior management to scrutinise blocked beds and internal vacancies. This ensures that there is an accurate picture of the fostering households and an efficient use of the internal fostering households.

Partnership working between internal fostering and the placements team is underway and an integral priority to allow greater autonomy and control over the internal fostering estate.

The fostering service will continue to prioritise the recruitment and retention of foster carers in order to meet the demands of sufficiency for all children in care.

Ofsted highlighted the importance of Birmingham City Council upgrading their systems and following on from this the service is part of the Carefirst Replacement Project. The Fostering Service is at the forefront of this project and have numerous representatives from various parts of the service. The delivery of the new system is due to take place late 2018.

Birmingham City Council is a 'fostering friendly employer' and aims to encourage as many staff as possible to foster for the Local Authority (providing they do not work directly with looked after children in front line children's teams). The benefit of the scheme is that fostering friendly employees can take an additional 10 days leave per year. Foster carers for local authorities are eligible.

The service continues to review/update policies and procedures in line with legislative requirements and required practice improvements. Currently within the service the Smoking cessation policy has been implemented and the Fostering Financial Agreement is currently in the final stages of review.

The Fostering Service have achieved a lot in the past 12 months and this has not only been beneficial to staff and foster carers but it has also had an effect on the level of support we are able to offer our children in care. The service recognises that there are still improvements to be made and there is continued work and development around our systems and working practices.

The continued work in improving the service is monitored monthly via the Provider Services Action Plan and also by ensuring that we as a service are working within the requirements of the directorate and service improvement plans.

**Report From:** Theresa Kane HoS & Kim Smith Assistant HoS

**Report To:** Schools, Children & Families Overview & Scrutiny

**Date:** 25<sup>th</sup> January 2017

**Title:** Review and improvement work undertaken: Special Guardianship Orders and Connected Persons Arrangements.

**Summary:**

**The journey so far**

In 2015 Birmingham began to review and develop their arrangements for Special Guardianship (SGO) and Connected Persons Assessments. This led to the introduction of an in-house team of assessors in July 2015, until this time assessments had been commissioned externally to independent assessors. There were concerns in relation to the quality of some of the external assessments and the short time scales that were being allowed to complete the work. The in-house team has continued to develop and there are now two large teams undertaking assessments and providing support.

Alongside the above development work a review of historical SGO cases was undertaken and where cases raised concerns, dependent on level of concern, arrangements are being made to visit or contact and offer support, training and guidance, as may be appropriate.

The Review identified a number of issues that contribute towards an SGO arrangement not working:

1. Households where there are two carers, and only the "connected person" is really keen to care.
2. Single carers or couples where there are already similar aged children in the household, in particular where the children do not have a strong relationship already.

3. Single carers where the impact of another child joining the family mean the day to day logistics of caring for another child make life very difficult
4. Situations where the suggestion/ invitation to care has been driven by the Gal; the child's solicitor; the Court; a social worker and where the prospective carer has found it too embarrassing/awkward to say no.

The above learning is now incorporated in all assessments undertaken and in the "Why Would We" training completed by all staff in the SGO/CP/PF service.

The quality and robustness of assessments has been improved through training, supervision and quality assurance. All assessments consider thoroughly:

- Capacity of applicant's to care throughout childhood.
- Relationship between child and prospective carer.
- Ability of carers to support the child to overcome impact of abuse or neglect.
- Effect of the child into adulthood of being cared for under SGO or connected persons arrangement.
- Ability of carers to manage any risk from birth parents.
- Applicant's relationship history.

#### **What we have done**

- All assessments are now completed in house in collaboration with the area worker. Assessments are not independent but are completed on behalf of Birmingham.
- After close working with the Courts and our colleagues in legal services the standard time for completing an assessment is now routinely accepted as a minimum of 12 weeks.
- Introduction of Coram BAAF Form C template.
- No recommendation will be made in an assessment without all checks completed and DBS and Medical viewed by assessor. To assist the Court and assessment will be filed, but without a recommendation. An addendum will be provided once the outstanding checks are received.
- Mid Point Reviews have been introduced at week 6/7 to discuss the progress of the assessment and examine any issues.

#### Post Order SGO Support

- All new SGO arrangements now remain open to children's services for 3 months post order and to SGO service for 6 months after the order is granted. During this time training, support and guidance is provided.
- A comprehensive list of children subject to SGO in Birmingham and their address details has been compiled– currently at 655.
- A letter has been sent to all to advise them of our Helpline number, support/training/drop in sessions available to all SGO arrangements.

- The Viability Pilot (South Team) was due to conclude in September again the outcome of the pilot will inform the development of the policy. The pilot was extended to December and a report is now being prepared.

#### Dialogue with Other Agencies and Court

We are having regular meetings with the Courts and CAFCASS to ensure they are aware of the changes we are making to our service.

#### Current cases

There are currently 49 connected persons carers providing 57 placements for children known to them and 95 cases currently allocated to workers for assessments and support.

#### The good things/improvements

Ofsted Inspection 2016 recognised the work undertaken and the improvements made.

*“The local authority has taken robust action to ensure, following a recent child death, that the circumstances of children subject to a special guardianship order (SGO) have been reviewed to ensure their welfare. Current assessments to place young people under SGOs with carers are now of satisfactory quality”*

*“The local authority took practical and decisive action to review and improve the welfare of children living with special guardians and connected persons following the death of a child in 2015. Detailed reviews of children who were subject to proceedings for special guardianship orders, and those who had been placed with special guardians over the preceding two years, was undertaken. Appropriate follow-up action was taken when relevant to promote individual children’s welfare. The local authority has added substantial resources to develop the assessment and support service for SGOs and connected persons to ensure that these placements are timely, safe and supported for children. SGO and connected persons assessments are now of a good quality. Furthermore, the local authority is in the process of identifying and contacting all special guardians to explain its offer of support”*

We have also received positive feedback from fostering panel and the courts.

**What still needs to be done and how we are going to do it**

It has been recognised that there is often a need to “test out” a placement if the child is not already living with the applicants. We are currently considering ways of doing this.

- The Mid-Point review could consider if the assessment is progressing well enough to consider moving the child in during the assessment period.
- Secondly we can consider approving applicants as connected person’s carers initially with a plan to move to SGO after a period of 12/18 months. It is recognised that initially this may result in an increase in our connected persons numbers, but it is hoped that with close working between the connected persons team and the SGO Team that the transition to SGO should be encouraged and eased.

These approaches are welcomed by the Court who have indicated that they are likely to move towards not making the SGO if the child has not lived with the applicant for a reasonable period of time.

Greater use of Family Group Conferences to establish at the earliest opportunity which family members are in the best position to offer alternative care arrangements.

**Report From:** Shank Patel – Head of Service

**Report To:** Schools, Children & Families Overview & Scrutiny

**Date:** 25th January 2017

**Title:** Scrutiny Evidence Gathering - 18+ Care Leaving Service

### **The journey so far**

The 18+ Care Leaving Service is city wide service that supports care leavers from the age of 18 to 21, or up to the age of 25 if they are in higher education, this being mainly University. The support is offered and co-ordinated through an allocated personal advisor to each care leaver.

With additional investment in the service a fourth leaving care team has been created to support a rising number of unaccompanied asylum seeking care leavers

as well as care leavers who were as children in care allocated to the disabled children's social care service.

Week beginning 9th January the service was supporting 708 care leavers. x30 FTE Personal Advisors assigned to the service, x4 FTE vacancies are to be recruited to by the end of Jan 17.

Both internal and external partnerships have been developed and strengthened. This has been focused on assisting and supporting care leavers with housing, accommodation, emotional and mental health, finance / DWP, Education including bursaries (Eve Brook Scholarship), apprenticeships, discharge planning from custody and transition planning with adult service.

### **What we have done**

Continued to focus on the relationship based practice of the Personal Advisor and with this their pathway plans have focused on their support needs as well as factors of concern and vulnerability.

Developed and revised the Pathway plan so that it clearly resonates the voice of the care leaver and their involvement and contribution to their pathway plan is clearly evident

Strengthened the relationship with the Child in Care and Care Leavers Council

The good things/improvements

- Ofsted Inspection Judgement Nov. 16 – Experience and Progress of Care Leavers – Requires Improvement  
  
‘Considerable work has taken place since the last inspection to improve practice. Young people say that they feel well supported by their aftercare advisers and show confidence in seeking advice and support when they need to. Personal safety and keeping safe are key themes which are regularly discussed with care leavers, and when interventions are required they are duly recorded....’
- In touch with 97% of care leavers, better than the national average of 88%
- 94% in suitable accommodation
- 101 care leavers at University, which is approximately 15%, this against a national average of 6%

- YP choosing to stay in care until their 18th birthday at 78% against 68% nationally
- Staying Put – doubled since the last inspection, x35 to x77.  
What still needs to be done and how we are going to do it
- Pathway Planning – To revise and compress the 18+ Pathway Plan
- NEET – 46% NEET against a national average of 40% - Support from Core Assets through the YEI funding has been secured and is operational
- Transition planning 16-18 with CiC, DCSC & Adults
- TESS / Forward Thinking B'ham – Access & Support
- NHS England – To support care leavers with their emotional / mental health needs through Personalised Budget Pilot
- Health Passports – Ensuring that all care leavers aged 18 have all their health needs documented for future use and reference
- Housing & Accommodation – To implement the St Basil's- Barnard's accommodation framework
- Finance- Universal Credit, benefits, DWP, poverty
- Council Tax Exemption
- Care leavers in custody, better release planning & support
- Celebrating success and achievement
- To establish a dedicated duty service operating from the Light House and away from New Aston House

**Report From: Sally Craddock**

**Report To: Schools, Children & Families Overview & Scrutiny**

**Date: 25th January 2017**

**Title: South Children in Care Service**

## The journey so far

There have been significant improvements in the last 12 months in staffing retention, a reduction in the number of agency staff and an improvement in all the key performance indicators.

This has enabled:-

- Children to have a consistent social worker
- Children to build a better relationship with their named worker
- Permanency Planning to be improved with more children in permanent placements
- Better partnership working

Child in Care Reviews, Area Resource Panels and regular, robust reflective Supervision allow robust planning and challenge to plans for children as well as tight management oversight.

The area is embedding an external placement panel to ensure that children's needs are being met in external placements and that the placements are cost effective and provide value for money.

The social work interventions being delivered are more focused to the needs of the child and their family/carers. The quality of interventions have been enhanced through discussion between managers and social workers in supervision and using feedback from children and families and carers about how they have experienced our intervention and its impact.

What we have done

We:-

- exercise our corporate responsibilities with pride and care
- provide good quality responsive services to all children aged 0 -18 years who are in care
- ensure no child is unallocated
- ensure every child has a social worker who they are able to contact
- ensure good retention and positive development of staff

- create a positive work environment with a learning culture

We have ensured that our staff team is stable and able to meet our children's needs. Our team comprises of 6 team managers, 4 senior practitioners, 23 senior social workers, 18 social workers and 5 senior social work assistants. 8 of the staff work part time, which adds to the flexibility of our service.

Over the last 12 months we have:

- improved the quality and practice of the service we deliver, and this has been reflected in an improvement in all the key performance indicators
- maintained the percentage of our children that are visited within timescales at 97%
- increased positive service user feedback about the quality of the social work interaction
- reduced the number of complaints our service receives
- delivered interventions which are more focused and purposeful using child focused tools
- improved planning for permanency within the child's journey
- successfully increased the number of children matched to adoptive placements
- reduced the number of children subject to a placement order
- significantly reduced the number of s20 children

There are currently 519 children allocated across the South Child in Care Service comprising of:

- Section 20 = 52
- Care Order = 351
- Interim Care Order = 79
- Placement Order = 34

- On remand / LA accommodation = 3

We have strengthened our partnership working evidenced in:

- increased understanding and implementation of right service right time
- joint recruitment initiatives between the area services and fostering and adoption to recruit new carers for Birmingham
- local development of relationships with partners in 18+; Tess; placements; Laces and the Virtual School.
- attendance at school and police panels within the area

Our improved partnerships have established a better understanding of each agencies offer to our children and how we can work more effectively operationally to achieve improved outcomes for our children.

Compliment from a parent:

From: A Father

Sent: Friday, November 18, 2016 8:01 PM

To: M B

Subject: H M(SOCIAL WORKER)

Dear M B,

I would like to express my deep appreciation and satisfaction regarding the services provided by the above-named social worker over the past couple of years in dealing with my daughter's case.

Since H has worked with my daughter, she has been so dedicated, resilient, cooperative and committed to the course and left no stone unturned in arriving at this later stages of revoking the care order,

As the care Order has been revoked at our last family court sitting on the xx November, 2016

I would therefore like to convey a special thank you to H on behalf of my entire family and wish her success in all her future endeavour. We are ever so grateful to her.

Many thanks and best Wishes,

A Father

The good things/improvements

The key improvements have been:

- the retention and stability of the workforce with all our posts filled
- the reduction in the number of agency workers, with several becoming permanent staff
- positive recruitment and promotion opportunities for both senior practitioners and newly qualified staff
- practitioners are clear about their role and are committed to the young people for whom they are the corporate parent
- a number of historical orders were revoked and children were safely returned to parental care where possible
- a practice focused training programme for all staff was embedded which included the training of team managers in systemic practice
- introducing a south monthly service meeting where all of the children in care team staff come together to share and learn about different good practice and develop their knowledge

The improvements have enabled us to:

- develop a strong working environment, good team cohesiveness and morale as well as a supported environment where staff can learn and develop
- ensure each child has a named social worker who is consistent in their lives and therefore able to build meaningful relationships with the young people.
- undertaken a number of new ventures introducing a summer trip to the seaside for some of our children and their social workers to add another dimension to the intervention offered by their social worker
- collect and make Christmas hampers for all of our young people aged 16-18 years who resided independently to provide extra support

- increase the number of children placed in adoptive placements, particularly in respect of older children, sibling groups and harder to place children
- engage in a Partnership with a local College where some of our children in care “took over” their social work course on Take Over Day

Compliment from a partner agency:

From: Elizabeth Freeth

Sent: Wednesday, December 21, 2016 11:23 AM

To: L G

Subject: South CIC

Good Morning .

I would like to say a big thank you to you and your team for the support you have given to the young people who reside with us.

I was extremely pleased with the extra thought your team have put into thinking about the support for the young people, all of whom are 16+ at Christmas time.

My residents have received hampers from your team which I know they have fundraised for this themselves. The team should be commended as the extra little touches make all the difference to the young people.

Thank you again from all of us.

Kind regards

Elizabeth Freeth

Project Co-ordinator -

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**What still needs to be done and how we are going to do it**

We need to continue to improve the child's journey and direct experiences by:

- Continuing to work in a child focused way with the child remaining at the centre of all that we do all of the time.
- carefully review each child's plan regularly to ensure that it remains the best plan for that child
- securing permanency plans more quickly
- improving our placement choices for children
- reducing the number of placement moves for children
- reducing the number of external and residential placements where our children live
- ensuring we achieve value for money in our external placements
- Improving our matching processes for placements
- consistently re-inforce interventions to reduce our numbers of children that are missing, at risk of child sexual exploitation, at risk of female genital mutilation or missing education

#### How will we do this:

- by reducing the court timescales, improving our pre proceedings work and continuing to develop our partnership working with Cafcass and the IRO service
- providing placements that are timely and fit for purpose and meet the child's needs. This would allow for more planned moves, children having choices in their moves and introductory visits.
- offering a wider spectrum of placements that can cope with multiple difficulties and challenges that some of our children present
- continuing to develop our partnership working with other agencies both internally and externally to ensure matters are tackled consistently and robustly

- endeavouring to place our children with Birmingham foster carers
- ensuring that we seek and listen to feedback from children and their carers
- continuing to invest in staff development and training to ensure that we maintain our current positive workforce

**Report From:** Manjeet Rai

**Report To:** Schools, Children & Families Overview & Scrutiny

**Date:** 25th January 2017

**Title:** Head of Service. Children In Care North West and Central

**Summary:** 8 Children in Care Teams all based at New Aston House.

### **The journey so far**

Area Resource Panels on a weekly basis as assisted hugely to reduce the children in care, agreement to Legal Planning Meeting and funding issues.

Overall reduction in children in care via rehabilitation home, adoption, special guardianship orders and revocation of care orders

Focused on practice through Practice Forums, completing practice evaluations and learnings from these. Ensure that SWs complete quarterly case summaries, updating chronologies.

Children who are in care now are in the right service except for those that are Section 20 with plans of rehabilitation remain with our safeguarding teams

### **What we have done**

Continues to be stable work force with a total of 53 staff.

Overall Morale is positive and good in CIC.

Total of 2 agency workers covering maternity leave, 1 covering sickness.

8 agency workers across the whole service

Group Supervisions continue within teams where Snr Prac lead on, discussing complex case looking at themes, practice and reflection. Learning to improve on practice.

CIC Practice Improvement Forums are used to improve areas where staff could benefit from. Monthly meetings with all CIC social work teams to focus on practice issues/policies/procedures.

Focus on care planning in adoption cases/procedures

Court Skills – completing statements/ giving evidence/completing Child Permanency Reports

Transition process to adults

Learning from Serious Case reviews

Three Monthly Case summaries to reflect on what has worked well, what hasn't worked well and why this has not. Child being the focus.

3 managers have completed the Systemic Supervision Training and further 2 managers are on the course. Attempts are being made to embed this into supervision

### **The good things/improvements**

Reducing Children in Care

We have tracked our Section 20 children in care. These have been reviewed and for those where parental responsibility needs to be shared we have initiated care proceedings. Worked closely with Edge of Care to return children to families where it has been safe to do so.

As part of our CIC improvement plan is to look at assessing possible rehab of children to families from LA care. This again following discussions with our IRO colleagues is being progressed and family assessments are being completed to focus what changes have occurred within the family and how these have been sustained, reassessing children's needs and how parents can now meet them. We are completing family assessments on these cases.

External Panel reviews – Monthly

Reviews have led to case determine cases for Complex Care Planning

Planning of YP to transition team and step down to semi-independent living.

Addition funding is challenged and what value for money we are getting from providers. – focussing also on whether SW were fully aware of how YP's needs are

being met within the financial package. Ensuring the package for the young person is outcome led. Focus is on high cost placement

#### Revocation of Care Orders

We have successfully completed revocation of Care Orders on children who are have been living with their families and this has assisted our numbers being reduced

Updating assessments on Children who are Placed with Parents. Ensuring Schedules 3 assessments are completed and updated for every child who is placed at home on a care order. Assessing whether circumstances of the parent(s) have changed to enable our involvement to cease,

We have good links with our fostering and adoption services. Early identification of children that is likely to have plans of adoption for family finders to be identified. We now have permanency clinics where practitioners from the adoption service are available on a fortnightly basis to discuss cases

#### **What still needs to be done and how we are going to do it**

##### CSE/MISSING

Consistency in recording. Use of return interviews

Improving partnership working with Police.

Develop a local missing person forum to discuss/share information collectively, including SWs, TMs commencing 13/1/17

Use of statutory visits to discuss risks/vulnerability/impact.

Use the CSE area coordinator and area lead TM to support social workers working with CSE- focus on tools/relationship/

Have Clear understanding of processes of transfer to transition teams, criteria for service, timescales for assessments.

Develop relationships with the adult transition team. Early referrals to transition teams to enable the process of assessment to commence sothat when young people with complex need have appropriate support identified from the transition team. Building better links with the transition team/ inviting to team meetings having a linke TM with adults transition teams.

## Court Work

Whilst there has been improvements in court work we still have some way to go to ensure that we complete court cases within the 26 weeks. We are working closely with our safeguarding teams for early identification of court cases so that these can come at the point of issuing care proceedings. We are also using the joint practice forums for CIC and safeguarding to learn and improve on court work particularly where pre – proceedings should commence much earlier. This is working progress.

**Report From:** Andrew Wright

**Report To:** Schools, Children & Families Overview & Scrutiny

**Date:** 25th January 2017

**Title:** Birmingham Virtual School

### What we have done

#### Head-lines

- Management Tools – e-PEP, improved from 80% to over 90%
- Safeguarding:
- Attendance – upward trend
- Persistent Absences (PA's) - reduction
- Exclusions – reduction (11 to 0)
- NSP – reduction
- NEET's – reduction

- Lees than 25 hours education - reduction
- Programme – RAP, e-learning, personal tuition, literacy (letterbox, communicate)
- Events – Reward, Careers, Unlink programme
- Emotional Well Being – Vulnerable Pupils Project, Malachi, BCAT, ARC launch.

**What still needs to be done**

- Improve educational outcomes/more intelligent understanding of CiC progress – NCER national project
- Develop Attachment Aware Schools across Birmingham – Lead city strategy
- Increase number of CiC in good or better schools – enhanced links with schools

Focus Area	Detail
<p><b>1. Raising Attainment</b> (a) Outcomes</p>	<p>KS2: B'ham Lac (achieving Level 4 and above) improved in all areas between 2014 and 2015 with the exception of writing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading increased by 4% in 2014</li> <li>• Writing decreased 3% (but remained an increase from 2013)</li> <li>• Maths increased by 3%</li> <li>• GPS increased by 7%</li> </ul> <p>The results in 2016 show us that there was a big drop in Reading, Writing and GPS.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Girls did better than boys in all subjects.</li> <li>• Children placed in Birmingham tend to have better attainment than those placed OOA.</li> <li>• Of those children placed OOA children who were in West Midlands Local Authorities did achieve better than those who were placed further away.</li> </ul> <p>KS4: 2014- 2016</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5+ A* - C's inc E&amp;M increased by 1.1% in 2015 and reduced by 5% to 13% in 2016 (including Special Schools)</li> </ul>

<p>(b) NCER</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5A*-C increased by 5.8% in 2015 and reduced by 8% to 19% in 2016.</li> <li>• the number of YP gaining 5 A* - G has improved over 3 years as does the number of YP gaining 1A* - G</li> <li>• The Virtual School have had less missing results this year.</li> <li>• The 2016 national Progress 8 score for state funded pupils was -0.03 and for Birmingham it was 0. The Virtual School Progress 8 score for 2016 was -1.2</li> <li>• The 2016 range of Progress 8 scores for the Virtual school was -7.1 to 3.2, with 35 pupils exceeding 0 (all of whom were OOA) and 24 with less than -2.</li> </ul>
<p>(c) Electronic Personal Education Plan</p>	<p>BVS is part of the national pilot for data</p>
<p>(d) Learning Toolkit</p>	<p>The e-PEP was introduced in Jan 2016 after a term of intense training for all VS, DT's, IRO, SW Teams. E-PEP Champions support the development across BCC and OOA. This has enabled 95% (ex. Post 16) of PEP's to be completed in the summer term 16. (90% inc Post 16). The latter figure has increased to 91.6% for the Autumn term 2016.</p>
<p>(e) Raising Aspiration programme (RAP)</p>	<p>The 'menu' of interventions has been developed considerably over the academic year (see areas detailed below). The processes for ensuring these are personalised for all learners are being refined.</p>
<p>(f) E-Learning</p>	<p>A 'one-site' holiday period learning programme for targeted pupils is the focal point of this strand. The RAP integrates the Learning Link activities detailed in section 2.</p>
<p>(g) Literacy</p>	<p>A number of software packages have been introduced. These include age-specific software, intensive learning packages and study/revision guides.</p>
<p>(h) 1:1 Tuition</p>	<p>All pupils up to Year 8 receive 'Book Parcels' sent to their placement address. These are age specific and aim to support pupils enjoyment of reading, to encourage reading with an adult and help to raise an interest in Numeracy. This is currently being evaluated by Leic. Uni. In addition Communicate (Rapid English) is being piloted in Bham Residential Children Homes.</p>
<p>(i) Going For Success Reward Events</p>	<p>All pupils up to Year 8 receive 'Book Parcels' sent to their placement address. These are age specific and aim to support pupils enjoyment of reading, to encourage reading with an adult and help to raise an interest in Numeracy. This is currently being evaluated by Leic. Uni. In addition Communicate (Rapid English) is being piloted in Bham Residential Children Homes.</p>

	<p>A large proportion of our children are behind in their age-related education. As a result of the PEP meeting a number have personal tuition in target subjects.</p> <p>The branding of 'Going For Success' has allowed a new Reward System (effort, progress, attainment, achievement and attendance) to be developed. There are three formal events in the year (Primary, Key Stage Three, Key Stage Four/Post 16). All involve a formal presentation process at a large venue, followed by an informal social gathering for the young people, their Carers, teachers, SW and VS staff.</p>
<p><b>2. Data</b></p> <p>(a) Attendance</p> <p>(b) No School Place</p> <p>(c) NEET's</p> <p>(d) Less Than 25 hours</p>	<p>The Virtual School dashboard is reviewed on a monthly basis with weekly analysis of vulnerable groups</p> <p>The attendance for Primary LAC has been consistent for the last three academic years. In secondary school LAC attendance has a slight upward trend over the same period.</p> <p>The current attendance is:          Primary (Bham) – 96.62%          Primary (OOA) – 97.62%          Secondary (Bham) – 92.14%          Secondary (OOA) – 92.98%          Primary - (96.0% – 14/15, 96.06% – 13/14)          Secondary – (91.15% - 14/15, 90.62% - 13/14)</p> <p>This has been reduced by 50% and is around 1.4% per month.</p> <p>The NEET figures follow an annual trend of a low point in October which rises up to the end of term. YEI mentor team expanded for Spring term.</p> <p>The number of CiC without a full-time offer has been reduced this academic year from 1.8% in Sept to 1.5% in Dec.</p>
<p><b>3. Learning Pathways</b></p> <p>(a) Curriculum Links</p> <p>(b) Arts Links</p>	<p>The 'Learning Links' within the 'Learning Toolkit' includes a number of strands to raise the aspirations and expand the learning experiences of our young people:</p> <p>This engages CiC in after school activities at their host school alongside their peers. This is a new learning experience not previously offered at the school.</p> <p>A range of providers offer holiday, after-school and weekend courses across the Arts, a school partnership across a number of Bham Schools for curriculum-based projects for CiC and their peers, music lessons in the children residential homes – all leading to an Arts</p>

<p>(c) Health Links (d) Cultural Links</p>	<p>Showcase event at the Rep Theatre. Other partners include Geese theatre, The Drum. Currently developing an Arts Connect programme across West Midlands Virtual School Network First Aid courses for children in residential homes DofE for post 14 yr olds, JASS Award for 11 – 14 yr olds, Gateway for Children with Disabilities, Music lessons in residential homes</p>
<p><b>4. Employment Pathways</b></p> <p>(a) Going For Success CEIAG Events</p> <p>(b) Work Experience</p> <p>(c) NEET's (d) Higher Education</p> <p>(e) Reward Partners</p>	<p>The vulnerability of CiC and the potential for a disjointed educational pathway can create gaps in an individual knowledge and understanding of the world of work. There are a number of initiatives that help to guide and support CiC in this and enhance anything provided in their host educational setting</p> <p>There are three termly events based around an employment sector, organised in a twilight session, offering immersion and active workshops from professionals in their field, with complimentary Carers development programme and activities for younger children. In 15.16 these included Vocational (based at an FE College), Health (supported by HealthTec and based at a secondary school), and Arts &amp; Culture (based at the B'ham Rep Theatre). The first for 16/17 was at Aston Uni across STEM.</p> <p>A new programme offered during the holidays by BCC, HealthTec, Bham Rep, KPMG for one-day work-link activity supported by the Corporate Parent Mentor. There have been two NEET mentors working with targeted CiC.</p> <p>A growing number of partners inc. Aston Uni, BCU. The KS4 Reward Event was hosted and supported by BCU. A new Uni Link programme launched in Nov to pull together the range of activities currently offered (eg. Unifest) and to offer a longitudinal programme from Year 7 for identified CiC with the potential to progress to Uni. A growing number of businesses support a range of events, rewards etc.</p>
<p><b>5. Corporate Parenting</b></p> <p>(a) Mentors</p> <p>(b) Academic Mentors</p>	<p>The Virtual School continues to develop positive role models from other adults in the lives of CiC.</p> <p>The Corporate parent Mentor is a growing group for Birmingham CiC, both within and beyond the city. There are 204 CP Mentors who have undergone initial training, with 100 supporting CiC.</p> <p>The partnership with BCU has identified over 40 undergraduate students who have been trained to</p>

<p>(c) Foster Carers</p>	<p>become CP Mentors. A number of these are Academic Mentors working in Children residential homes to support literacy currently being piloted. The training programme for Foster Carers continues to grow and develop alongside the Fostering &amp; Adoption Team. A conference is held annually for carers with Early years children</p>
<p><b>6. Emotional Well-Being</b></p> <p>(a) Staff Development</p> <p>(b) Malachi</p> <p>(c) Therapeutic Schools Link/Vulnerable Pupils Project</p>	<p>It is highly likely that the vast majority of CiC have experienced high levels of emotional trauma. There has been considerable thrust on supporting our young people to be included in their education to help them succeed. The Virtual School offers a diverse training programme for DT's, SW, IRO's, FC. This has been enhanced by joint work with FTB/Ed. Psyc. service. The Virtual School is an integral part of the launch of the national initiative Attachment Research Community (ARC), linking with Adoption UK and contributing to national research via REES centre (Oxford University). The current system for emotional support is saturated by demand with the potential of some CiC not being able to access this in a timely fashion. The VS works closely with other providers who have two peripatetic services in two locations across the city. These complement TESS and FTB. Malachi are able to offer support to families as well as to individual CiC. Supervision is also offered to VS staff with plans to make this available for Corporate Parent Mentors. A further provision for targeted CiC as identified in PEP meetings. There have been two national projects that have helped to shape the emotional well-being offer for CiC. The Schools Link Project has developed a range of collaborative strategies (between Health &amp; Education) for supporting very needy children in schools settings. The Vulnerable Pupils Project directly is working with VS, COBS, FC, Esd. Psych. In both the projects a Primary Mental Health Worker bridges Health and Education.</p>
<p><b>7. Governance</b></p> <p>(a) Board Of Governors</p> <p>(b) Corporate Parenting Board</p> <p>(c) BCC Scrutiny</p>	<p>A new Board was introduced 2015.16 with a committee structure being added for 16.17. There is a direct link to the CPB with shared Chair. Representation from FC, BCC, Education, Business, VS. VS reports to BCC scrutiny around outcomes. Meets Termly with VS representation  Reported termly</p>

<p><b>8. Pupil Behaviour</b></p>	<p>There were no permanent exclusions of Children in Care from Birmingham schools throughout the academic year of 2015/16. This has been achieved by direct partnership work with schools, Head Teachers/Principals, City Of Birmingham School and other agencies. This has been maintained during the Autumn Term 2016.</p>
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**Birmingham Virtual School**  
**Going 4 Success**

### Careers guidance –Healthtec

HealthTec hosted ePEP training for 70 teachers from schools across Birmingham in October 2015

HealthTec begun hosting First Aid courses for Virtual School members of staff, with the first cohort being trained in October 2015.

A series of First Aid courses for Virtual School students in the homes, which commenced in January 2016.

A bespoke careers event took place at North Birmingham Academy in March 2016.



## Birmingham Repertory Theatre

- Year 5/6 - 'Spy' School
- Transition Project (Year 6)
- KS2 - Thematic work around The Lion, The Witch & The Wardrobe
- KS3 - What It Means To Be A Brummy
- Residential Homes - Toy Theatre
- Arts Link NSP Support
- Arts Showcase

## Outdoor Activities

- **Outdoor Activities Programme – MENCAP**
- JASS Award
- Duke Of Edinburgh Award
- Residential – North Wales



Birmingham Virtual School  
**Going 4 Success**

## Developing Partnerships With Foster Carers

- CEIAG Events – Development Programme
- Early Years Conference
- Board Of Governors
- Going For Success Reward Events



**Report From:** Kalvinder Kohli – Head of Service, Commissioning  
Centre of Excellence

**Report To:** Schools, Children & Families Overview & Scrutiny

**Date:** 27th January 2017

**Title:** Development of a positive accommodation and support  
Pathways for young people in care aged 16 plus

A small number of development projects are currently in progress to improve the accommodation and support options available to young people.

The emphasis is upon positive transitions into adulthood that achieve good outcomes in terms of young people's ability to live independently, to succeed economically and enjoy good health and wellbeing.

The journey so far

In 2016, Birmingham was one of the first local authorities to formally adopt the Barnardos/St Basils Care Leavers Accommodation and Support Pathway. This builds upon and sits within the context of the existing Positive Pathway for young people developed by St Basils. Both models have national recognition as models of best practice and have been adopted by a number of local authorities.

The St Basils Youth Hub continues to work with over 4,000 young people a year that may be at risk of homelessness or entering children's social care. 84% of young people are successfully prevented from becoming homeless or requiring social care. The Youth Hub model has been adopted by a number of authorities nationally and has also received European recognition through the Cities for Active Inclusion initiative. The Youth Hub also provides access to a range of supported accommodations through Supporting People for young people including 16 year olds that are in the care of the local authority.

Birmingham one of 7 local authorities to successfully receive Local Government Association funding for a children's efficiency project. The aim of the Birmingham project is to explore the reasons for high cost packages of supported accommodation for 16/17 year olds and to seek solutions to improve both outcomes and cost.

A Skill's to Life wheel has been designed with the aim of seeking corporate sponsorship from local businesses to support a young person's journey into

independence. The model has been presented to the Children in Care Council and young people have agreed to support the work to identify further projects and activities that they would like to see as part of the project.

Housing Strategy and Homelessness Transformation. Work is currently underway between the People and Place Directorates to develop a Housing Strategy and Supported Housing Policy for the City. This will set out the housing offer to young people in the City which includes a positive pathway response to tackling homelessness.

Supported Lodgings models have been commissioned for young people in care for a number of years. This provides an alternative to foster care and other forms of supported accommodation. A family/home environment is provided for young people who otherwise would not cope so well in other settings. Recently the service has been expanded to take UASC aged 16 plus and continues to achieve some very positive outcomes.

What we have done

St Basils/Barnardos Care Leavers Accommodation and Support Pathway

Three initial workshop delivered by DCLG funded facilitators have taken place for BCC staff, supported accommodation providers, and key stakeholders from health in order to start to map the existing services against the accommodation and support pathway, identify gaps and enable participants to consider how they make a contribution to delivering the pathway within Birmingham.

Local Government Association: Children's Efficiency Project

The project has now been scoped into three distinct areas in terms of our approach;

- 1) Challenge and Review, using high cost case studies as a learning exercise to determine the factors that resulted in an escalation in price and to determine what could be done differently.
- 2) Psychologically Informed Environments (PIE) and Mental Skill Training (MST), to build the resilience of both young people and the staff that support them.
- 3) Development of an early identification tool, which places a focus upon progressive outcomes.

## Housing Strategy and Homelessness Transformation

Young Peoples housing needs will be a key feature of the proposed housing strategy and associated work in relation to the Supported Housing Policy and Homelessness Transformation. The positive pathway approach which is recognised within young people services will be developed further within the context of the homelessness transformation work. The work has been presented to the Housing and Homes Scrutiny Committee on the 17th January 2017.

## Foyer Style Employment First Model for Young People in Care 16 plus

12, self - contained supported accommodation flats have been secured through a purpose built scheme in Great Barr. The scheme will offer onsite employment and training resources to young people accessing the supported accommodation. The aim is to take an employment first approach whereby, the access into training; education and employment are a key offer of the service provision. The first referrals are due to take place this month.

## ESF – YEI funding match with Supporting People Funding

Supporting People funding has been matched to the ESF – Youth Employment Initiative, therefore enabling greater capacity for housing related support provision to deliver EET outcomes for young people the furthest away from the labour market. This includes young people with an in care background.

The good things/improvements:

A closer relationship between disciplines particularly in relation to housing, children's social care and commissioning colleagues.

Ofsted recognition for the work that is currently being undertaken to develop best practice models in relation to housing and support through the use of the St Basils/Barnardos model.



What still needs to be done and how we are going to do it

Want to get to a point where as a City we do not confine or define young people by their past experience but makes an outcomes focused offer in relation to their specific circumstances.

Work to fully embed the St Basils and Barnardos care leavers accommodation and support pathway with providers and partner agencies.

Linked to this is the need to ensure that all providers deliver tenancy ready programmes for young people as part of their transition into independent living. This is already a requirement of all Supporting People funded supported accommodations. It was also a line of inquiry by Ofsted in terms of the discussions relating to the provision of accommodation options for young people leaving care.

Scope out the possibility of a radically different approach to commissioning supported accommodation for young people aged 16 plus in the future. There is an opportunity to draw together the expertise, learning and best outcomes for young people from across supporting people funded provision and current provision through the proposed Staffordshire Framework.

**Report From:** Melanie Page

**Report To:** Schools, Children & Families Overview & Scrutiny

**Date:** 25th January 2017

### **The journey so far**

The BCC Childrens Residential Service has been reduced over the past five years through a number of closures; the 5 mainstream homes were subject of TUPE to Priory education service in October 2016. The remaining service offers permanency and short breaks for disabled children across five sites. The services provide 27 long term beds and 120 short break placements.

In April 2015 the Childrens Homes regulations were revised and reissued including the Quality Standards. The Ofsted inspection framework was also revised, the grade descriptors and Judgment names changed.

The Disabled Childrens Residential Service has struggled over the years to have its own identity and has generally had to follow the recording systems and processes that were implemented across the estate. Ofsted made a requirement in 2015 that there should be an improvement and reduction of paperwork and recording systems, so that children and families can understand what is written about them and the progress their child makes. Also the paperwork will be more suited to children with disabilities, complex needs and non-verbal communication.

All of the homes have two inspections a year from Ofsted, they have an independent visitor who visits monthly to comply with section 44 of the children homes regulations. Managers undertake a 6 monthly analysis of the progress of the home and this is sent to HMCI, the managers also produce development plans for the homes based on the reports from these audits.

At Edgewood Road there is a working agreement with health; nurses are employed to provide care for children with additional health care needs. The social care staff are also specialist trained.

Ofsted Judged Edgewood Road as inadequate in January 16 and issues 12 compliance notices this was a difficult time particularly after a solid inspection record of being good for years. Both social care and health worked closely together to rectify all of the issues and Edgewood road was judged as requires improvement

when re inspected in February 16. A recent Ofsted inspection in October 16 has judged Edgewood Road to be good.

There are requirements in three of the homes to improve the decoration and fabric of the building. Works are being carried out and there have been huge improvements, however progress can be slow. Managers from property maintenance have visited the sites again in October.

The children must have access to aids and equipment to be able to communicate and express their views. A substantial amount of training and purchasing of equipment has taken place as well as visits to services that have embedded strategies for communication. The inspector highlighted the difficulties staff have engaging with some schools to access communication passports and the homes are not consistently using the resources available to them.

The positives are broad, generally children enjoy living in the homes and receiving short breaks. There was positive feedback from Parents, social workers, health and schools. Children make progress and have good relationships with staff.

What we have done

The requirements brought forward by Ofsted has focused the service to meet all of the requirements however some are still to be embedded and the requirements have been repeated for two homes, the round of inspections before Christmas recognised the vast improvements made with recording systems, communication for children, working with schools and assessing and monitoring deprivation of liberty as well as enabling children.

We work very closely with property maintenance to improve the homes living environments for the children. A range of decorating and maintenance is currently taking place in the homes.

We have had two new sensory environments installed which are very popular with the children. Edgewood Road have a garden project where they are raising money for outdoor play equipment. All short break bedrooms are themed and have points of reference for children with Autism.

The home managers have successfully obtained funding from Service Birmingham Staff Benefit Scheme to purchase I pads and communication software, computers as well as play equipment and garden play equipment.

An audit of training and development was taken early in the year and each home manager has engaged in developing their staff teams and undertaken training. This

year in addition to the core training specialist Autism tiers 1 -3 training has been undertaken by staff and managers.

The umbrella project is working with sexual health coordinators to provide training to all staff.

The home managers and service manager have visited other residential services to share good practice.

The homes have developed their working relationships with schools, in particular Calthorpe School has responded to arrange a regular meeting to share good practice regarding communication.

Parents are regularly invited into the homes and encouraged to give feedback.

Supervisions and team meetings are reflective and regular. Each home has engaged the staff in development days focusing on the development of the service.

5 staff have been trained by Makaton to local tutor level which enabled them to train staff, we have invested in communication symbols, pictures and I pads.

Safeguarding disabled children through the BCSB has been accessed as well as a bespoke training package by Trinity Training in Nov/Dec.

The management teams have engaged with all of the briefings offered by HR in people management. Strengthening the support to staff and ensuring procedures are followed and absence is robustly managed.

During the TUPE mainstream staff were interviewed for various posts. An internal and external recruitment drive ensured that all of the current vacant posts were filled. Significantly reducing the need for agency staff.

The Rights and participation Service have always supported the residential homes particularly with projects such as funding for Arts awards and events. Unfortunately due to resources the visiting advocates to the home were stopped and it became a referral based service. After discussions in January the visiting advocates have been reinstated and the children now have access to a visiting advocate once per month.

### **The good things/improvements**

At Warwick House the Communication and Autism Team, Children Out of School Project has been operating from the building for three years. This year building



works were undertaken to completely separate the short breaks from the school and give them their own environment a service level agreement has been put in to place.

There have been Improvements in all homes environments

Recruitment of new staff. This Included a successful children's panel that were supported by the RAP advocate.

A project of leasing appropriate transport for the children including minibuses and people carriers.

Celebrations – cooking project at Warwick House, Arts awards, educational achievements.

Parents have set up their own forums at Warwick and Charles House this has come out of regular coffee morning started by the homes.

Staff have been recognised by being nominated for shining star and chamberlain awards

Children have learned new skills and moved on to Foster care or returned home as well as successful transitions to adult care. With OT assessments children with high dependence using high sided beds have progressed to using ordinary beds.

Positive things reported about the service.

The staff team demonstrates a high level of understanding of the young people's needs and know what the young people like and don't like and how they like to be treated. Staff now have a greater understanding of Deprivation of Liberty and how it applies to the work they do. The home continues to have strong links with other agencies, particularly around young people's medical needs. A Speech, Language and Communication Audit has been completed and look at ways of communicating with young people. Edgewood Road Independent visitors report Dec 16

Children and young people progress across all aspects of their lives. They grow in confidence as they try new experiences and consistently celebrate their achievements.

Children and young people hold the home in high regard. One said, 'The staff are all kind and I get on with most people, and this means that we can all do activities and be like a normal family.'

Both health and education staff are very complimentary about the staff. Teachers value staff's knowledge of autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. They

are keen to extend the behaviour management strategies used at the home across to school

Camborne house Ofsted report Oct 16

The first time I came to look around here I thought it looked great. I am really looking forward to going to Drayton Manor Park on Thursday. It is going to be epic. A child Wrote – CHARLES HOUSE, CHARLES HOUSE – VERY GOOD. Charles House. Independent advocate report Oct 16

Mom of twins who are aged 11 and attend the home together - they have been attending for just over 6 months. Mom reported that they used to go to a play scheme for children with ADHD/Autism where they used to get bored, but they really enjoy and love coming here. Mom explained the difference it has made – previously she had only got about 3 hours sleep and now she gets about 5 or 6 hours. Her daughter has now learnt that when she is in bed she needs to go to sleep. Warwick House Independent Visitors Report August 16

Staff are extremely dedicated and are innovative about how they work with young people. They embrace change and the new leadership in the home.

Young people enjoy better quality and more meaningful contact because of improving communication and behaviour management strategies.

Managers and staff are keen to visit other providers and work in partnership with schools to look for and implement new ideas at the home. Reservoir Road Ofsted report Oct 2016

What still needs to be done and how we are going to do it

- Embed the communication framework and Makaton training.

Each home has a repeated requirement from Ofsted. The newly qualified Makaton tutors will be running workshops for staff. Each home has a communication framework which they will tailor to each child, working closely with school and home. This will be audited monthly by the independent visitor.

- Ensure recording is fit for purpose and meaningful.

Discussions are still taking place with health to tweak the new recording system at Edgewood Road so it is more meaningful but meets with the CQC requirements.

Charles House is piloting a child friendly daily record which has been very successful and will be rolled out to other homes.

- Ensure the homes environments are fit for purpose.

Decorating, repairs and maintenance schedules of work will continue to progress.

The savings proposal will be consulted upon, it is part of the proposal that the building at Reservoir Road is used for short breaks currently delivered from Charles House as it is a much newer building.

**Report From:** Steve Mennear Head of Service TESS

**Report To:** Schools, Children & Families Overview & Scrutiny

**Date:** 25th January 2017

**Title:** Therapeutic Emotional Support Service (TESS)

**Summary:**

#### **The journey so far**

**The purpose of TESS is to promote the health and emotional wellbeing of children and young people and to support those who have responsibility for their care. The underpinning approach is 'Relationship-based Practice'. This acknowledges that relationship is a central element in practice and draws on the extensive evidence base that confirms a good therapeutic alliance is the key to a positive outcome for any intervention. The aim is to build resilience rather than 'treat' difficulties or problems with a focus on supporting the development of secure attachments.**

**Fully staffed the service has 27 workers and managers - predominately therapeutically trained social workers who include fully qualified family therapists, play therapists and counsellors. We also have an art therapist and two clinical psychologists with plans to recruit a third.**

**TESS was established in April 2013 as an 'in-house' emotional wellbeing service for Birmingham's looked after children. It also covers care leavers and more recently extended its support to cover children on the 'edge of care'. The service had previously been part of Looked After Children CAMHS, a joint venture between BCC and the NHS which had the aim of providing a 'Comprehensive CAMHS' for looked after children. LAC CAMHS ended in March 2013 due to the need for BCC to make significant budgetary savings.**



**The NHS staff returned to ‘mainstream’ CAMHS hosted by Birmingham Children’s Hospital. Since then NHS CAMHS has been re-commissioned as part of the new 0-25 Mental Health Service – Forward Thinking Birmingham (FTB).**

#### **What we have done**

**The service has gone through a number of changes in the past three and a half years to make it more efficient and responsive to requests for support. We offer three levels of response in respect of meeting the emotional wellbeing needs of looked after children:**

#### **Level 1 – Consultation, Advice and Support**

**We provide a Helpline from 9am to 12noon weekdays for social workers and carers to ring up for advice regarding children and young people and to discuss potential referrals along with a ‘TESS Referrals’ inbox. Consultation is provided at the three area main offices twice monthly with opportunities for bookable and drop-in sessions and monthly to the Fostering Service for link workers and their foster carers. TESS is also represented at the Area Resource Panels and the Birmingham Complex Care Panel.**

#### **Level 2 – Initial Screening and Team around the Child meetings**

**All new referrals are screened for level of urgency and prioritised. There are good links with FTB to discuss more serious presentations with joint FTB/TESS ‘Initial Screening’/‘Choice Appointments’. The majority of referrals will be booked into a TESS – only Initial Screening meeting and if a direct therapeutic intervention is identified as appropriate children will be allocated depending on level of priority and the nature of the intervention required. For children placed out of city support is offered to identify a local service and for children who do not meet the threshold for NHS CAMHS we can commission a local therapeutic service.**

**As of the end of December 2016 the average waiting time for an Initial Screening to be offered was 5.3 weeks**

### **Level 3 – Direct Therapeutic Intervention**

**TESS offers a wide variety of therapeutic interventions. These include Systemic Family Therapy, Play & Art Therapy, Counselling, Video Interactive Guidance (VIG), Filial-based Therapy, Dialectical Behaviour Therapy Skills (DBT), Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP) and resilience-based approaches. While some approaches are designed to develop secure attachments within stable placements the majority of TESS interventions are delivered to children in temporary placements and to support transitions through to permanency.**

**As of the end of December 2016 the average wait for a direct intervention to commence was 9.4 weeks from date of referral or an average of 4.1 weeks from when the need was confirmed at an initial screening.**

#### **The good things/improvements**

**The initial screening / team around the child meetings are generally viewed very positively. People are asked to fill in a questionnaire and comments include:**

**“It was very helpful in providing further insight into the behaviour and emotional presentation of (child)” (social worker)**

**“I was able to speak freely...my points and observations were valued...comfortable environment to speak in” (foster care)**

**“Talking therapy helped me loosen up” (young person)**

**At the end of an intervention children, young people and carers are asked to complete the ‘Children’s Experience of Service Questionnaire’ (Chi-ESQ). These are also generally positive and include comments such as:**

**“What was really good...was how at ease the child was made to feel, enabling them to express themselves...the continued advice to use whilst at home...the play that would reveal what was going emotionally and information given on how best to deal with it.” (foster carer)**

**“I think the support we received was really good. There was lots of strategies to try and help my child” (foster carer)**

**There has been a lot of positive feedback from the Edge of Care Teams regarding the support offered from TESS to date. They have appreciated the offer of strategies, guidance, suggestions and new tools to use. They have**

also appreciated the time to reflect and look at things from a different perspective – particularly with regard to their ‘stuck’ cases.

We have introduced two new interventions to help support carers and children develop secure attachments. Filial therapy is a psycho-educational family intervention in which the therapist coaches a foster carer to hold special child-led play sessions with the child in their care. The aim is to build the attachment between the child and the carer, and to enable the carer to become more attuned to the child’s needs. An example was our work with ‘David’, a 15 year old with a male carer. David had a traumatic history including sexual abuse from his father. By the end of the intervention David had become a very different lad - more confident, more self-aware and more able to engage socially.

Another approach we have developed is Video Interaction Guidance (VIG). This is a NICE guidelines approved intervention that uses video-feedback in order to encourage positive aspects of the care-giver – infant interaction. This was offered to ‘John’ and his carer. John was a 4 year old with a significant history of parental neglect and abuse, witnessing parental violence and drug abuse. Through observing the videoed sessions the carer was able to reflect on their attuned responses to John that provided emotional containment and reassurance. The carer reported that outside of VIG sessions, they saw John growing in closeness, seeking hugs, and using his carer to make sense of his day; this in turn helped secure his relationship with his carers and allowed John to feel more settled and safe.

#### **What still needs to be done and how we are going to do it**

**1. Improvements to our ‘front-end’ response.**

The main criticism from the OFSTED report related to response times within both TESS and FTB. Our aim over the next twelve months will be to continue the reduction in average waiting time for first appointment and to remove any waiting time for allocation once the need for a direct TESS intervention has been established.

**2. Develop and embed the ‘LAC Pathway’ in conjunction with Forward Thinking Birmingham.**

Joint ‘Initial Screening’/‘Choice Appointment’ slots began in September 2016 with the aim of ensuring there was no more ‘bouncing’ of referrals between FTB and TESS – which was also picked up on by OFSTED. We

also need to ensure that Birmingham's looked after children have appropriate access to care pathways within FTB. We now have an 'nhs.net' email account to facilitate transfer of confidential information between ourselves and FTB – streamlining communication. We still need to finalise a data-sharing agreement so we can be clear who is accessing what service. We also need to finalise some of the care pathways including access to psychiatric opinion and neurodevelopmental assessments.

**3. Embed support to the Edge of Care Service.**

Two systemic practitioners (including one 'trainee') were recruited to provide half time clinical input to each of the three Edge of Care teams. Consultation is also provided by our qualified Systemic Family Therapists. Feedback on the support offered so far has generally been very positive. As part of a TESS restructure a systemic team was developed to support this work with a dedicated manager to oversee the Edge of Care development.

**4. New evidence-based interventions.**

As noted above we have introduced two new interventions to help support carers and children develop secure attachments – Filial Therapy and Video Interaction Guidance (VIG). The service is committed to ongoing training of staff to ensure we remain at the cutting edge of evidence-based interventions.

**5. Care Leavers.**

The Public Health funding of the Care Leaver's Mental Health Service came to an end in March 2016 and this left a gap that was not covered by the developments in Forward Thinking Birmingham. Public Health have initiated a pilot project around Integrated Personal Budgets for care leavers and as part of the government's 'Future in Mind' initiative to promote, protect and improve children and young people's mental health and wellbeing, a small amount of transformation money has been identified to support care leavers. In addition TESS has identified resources to provide bookable sessions for young people and their personal advisors and we will be looking to develop this over the next twelve months.