

Children's Select Committee - Standing Task Group (reports)

NOTES OF THE CHILDREN'S SELECT COMMITTEE - STANDING TASK GROUP (REPORTS) MEETING HELD ON 22 SEPTEMBER 2021 AS A MICROSOFT TEAMS MEETING.

Present:

Cllr Helen Belcher, John Hawkins, Cllr Jon Hubbard, Cllr Jacqui Lay, Cllr Caroline Thomas and Cllr Jo Trigg

Also Present:

Iona Payne

1 Election of a Chair

Cllr Jon Hubbard was elected as chair for the Standing Task Group.

2 Apologies

There were no apologies for the meeting.

3 Terms of Reference

The terms of reference were noted.

4 Corporate Parenting Panel - draft report for full council

The task group started by recognising the depth and breadth of the report presented and the year-on-year improvements made to it.

The task group reviewed the draft report in depth and offered the following suggestions in a bid to further strengthen the report.

This is to ensure that the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel, and outcomes achieved, were presented as strongly as possible to full council, as well as ensuring that the report is entirely “stand alone” and accessible to lay readers.

Overall comment

For ease of reading, it was suggested that the report cross-references paragraphs to data in the scorecard, this could be done using bookmarks (hyperlinks) within the document. This could avoid having to repeat data within the document yet offering evidence for the narrative.

Suggestions

(NB the paragraph numbers refer to the draft report as presented and may be different for the finalised report)

The task group felt that the report could benefit from an executive summary, either as a first page to the report or for each main section of the report (e.g. 4. scrutiny of performance, 5. The Corporate Parenting Strategy, etc.) which would offer a snapshot summary such as current situation (better / worse than expected or comparator), key figures and plans to address any known issues. This could also include a “what went well, and even better if...” section.

It was good to be provided with figures in paragraph 2.2 (background), it may be even better if these included the per 10,000 comparator as used in paragraph 13.4 (recent commentary discussed at the CPP meetings) to enable contextualisation as early as possible in the report. It may also be useful to include a short narrative to explain broadly why children and young people have come into care (as included in CPP scorecard - CLA Starts Breakdown).

Paragraph 2.2 – “26% are voluntarily accommodated”. To better understand this figure, to include national and comparator authorities comparison as well as trend, over the last 3 years if possible.

Paragraph 3.2 – in future to list the reports considered and information received under the 8 categories of data, with cross-reference to the CPP’s priorities. This would enable assurance that the CPP had received relevant information. This could be presented in a table with “ticks” to indicate which category of data and / or CPP’s priority the report provided information on.

The task group fully supported the intention to order the priorities and category of data to match their importance in the “journey of the child”.

Paragraph 5.4 – amend to reflect that all councillors, as Corporate Parents, had been offered training during the induction and check whether all had actually attended (or amend).

Paragraph 6 – to consider including school attendance rates for children and young people in care. If possible, to split that between the different types of placements.

Paragraph 7.1 (i) and (ii) – to include information on children and young people who have moved more frequently, if possible distinguishing between “positive” (e.g. move to independent living) and “negative” moves (e.g. placement breakdown).

Paragraph 7.5 – develop the narrative on plans in place to address the three themes identified in the Annual Disruption Report (e.g. support and supervision, more training, therapeutic approach, trauma informed, etc.).

Paragraph 9 – to include an explanation on contact and suitable accommodation for care leavers as the figures seemed to indicate a slight drift in performance (within the CPP scorecard) but there is no narrative on this within the report.

Paragraph 9.4 – to include the outcome of the campaign (recruitment of specialist foster carers).

Paragraph 9.5 – to include a definition / explanation for Connected Carers.

Paragraph 10.2, second bullet point – to adjust the wording along the lines of “22 children placed with their adoptive families in this period, awaiting Adoption Order”.

Paragraph 15 – to add an indication of whether the actions taken have addressed the concerns raised by Ofsted, if work is still ongoing to add an indication of the current “rate of completion”.

Paragraph 16 – to align, or cross-reference, the ambitions with the CPP’s priorities and the eight categories of data.

Paragraph 20.1 – amend to wording along the lines of “the draft annual Corporate Parenting Panel report was considered by the Children’s Select Committee’ standing task group on Wednesday 22 September. Due to timings of meetings, this year the Children’s Select Committee will receive the finalised annual Corporate Parenting Panel report”.

Overall – if the council has the tools to measure whether in-house foster placements do deliver better outcomes for children and young people in care (e.g. less Missing from Care incidents, better attendance and attainment at school, etc.) these figures should be included in the report.

Conclusion

The task group wished to highlight some of the positives it saw in the report, including:

- placement stability (and the plan to review targets to keep driving improvement);
- plans to make the process (including wording and naming of) of Return Interviews more children and young people friendly;
- plans to keep developing the Offer to care leavers;
- support and supervision being developed for in-house foster carers.

5 Next steps

The Head of Children in Care & Young People agreed to implement as many of the recommendations as would be practicable before the report was presented to full Council.

A summary of the findings would be emailed to members of the task group for comments, then would be sent to officers for sharing at the Corporate Parenting Panel on 28 September 2021.

The findings from the task group and report as presented to Council would be included on the agenda for Children's Select Committee on 4 November 2021.

(Duration of meeting: 12:00-13.15)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Marie Gondlach, of Democratic & Members' Services, direct line 01225 713 597, e-mail marie.gondlach@wiltshire.gov.uk