

REPORT TO FULL COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING GROUP

17 FEBRUARY 2016

1) Membership

Corporate Parenting Group Membership:

Councillor Paul McLain – Cabinet Member for Children and Young People
Councillor Lesley Williams – Gloucestershire County Council Representative
Councillor Chris Coleman – Gloucestershire County Council Representative
Mike Dawson – Chief Executive: Tewkesbury Borough Council
Charles Welsh – Executive Head Teacher of Oakwood Primary School
Jon Cryer – University of Gloucestershire
DS Simon Atkinson – Gloucestershire Police Constabulary
Helen Crystal – Clinical Commissioning Group
Pauline Edwards – Gloucestershire Care Services NHS Trust
Heather Ingram – Executive Head Teacher of the Alternative Schools Provision

Member Champions

Cllr Joe Harris
Cllr Brian Oosthuysen
Cllr Stan Waddington

2) Data relating to Children in Care and Care Leavers in Gloucestershire

- a) As of 31 December 2015, 566 children and care leavers were living in care in Gloucestershire, an increase of 14.3 per cent, (71 children), from the number of children reported in December 2014.
- b) A total of 24 admissions were made during December 2015, (slightly down on the 25 admissions reported in October 2015).
- c) Of the 566 children living in care, 233 children, (41.2 per cent), had been placed in care under a Voluntary Section 20 Arrangement.
- d) 21 children, (3.7 per cent), had been placed at home with their parents, up on the number of children, (3.6 per cent), reported in October 2015 (19).
- e) The percentage of children experiencing '3 or more placement moves' has risen, with 70 children, (12.4 per cent), reported at the end of December 2015.

A detailed performance report will be considered at the Corporate Parenting Group meeting on Monday 22 February 2016.

3) Children in Care Council meet Corporate Parenting Group

Following on from the success of 'Gloucestershire's Children in Care Council meet the Corporate Parenting Group' event on Wednesday 28 October 2015, a similar event will be held in the Growth Hub at the University of Gloucestershire, Oxstalls Campus, Oxstalls Lane, Gloucester at 2.00 pm on Friday 19th February 2016.

The event will be hosted by young people from the Children in Care Council and take the form of an interactive workshop. Please contact Della Price, Participation and Consultation Manager for Children and Young People Team for more details.

4) Corporate Parenting Group Meeting – 3 December 2015

Performance and Data Report

At its meeting on 3 December 2015, the Corporate Parenting Group received an update on the number of children living in care in Gloucestershire.

Members were informed that there had been a total of 535 children living in care at the end of October 2015, a rise of 5.3% from the 508 children reported in October 2014.

Under half of these children (43.9%) had been placed with the agreement of their parents, (a total of 235 children). Of the other 257 children, 48.0% had been placed in care through the court process, 7.7% (41) had been placed via a placement order and 0.4% (2) had been placed under police protection. Most children had been placed with foster carers (79.3%), whilst a small proportion (7.9%) had been placed in residential schools or homes, 4.1% (22) had been placed for adoption and 8.8% (47) placed with their parents, or in independent living arrangements.

Of the 313 children taken into care in 2015, 61 children had been taken into care for a second or subsequent time, denoting an overall upward trend.

Further examination of some of these children, (56), indicated that:

- a) Over half of these children 59.0% (33) had returned to live with their parents, but had come back into care at a later date. Younger children, returning home to their parents following intervention by the courts, had been readmitted at a later date.
- b) Older children (25) tended to come back into care (44.6%) with the agreement of their parents. Of these 25 children, 11 had been of the 16+ age group, and a further 11 in the 11-15 age group
- c) Of all of the children readmitted into care, 46.4% (26) had been in the 16+ age group

- d) Almost a third of the children, 30.4% (17) had returned to care within three months of their previous period of care ending.

It was reported that some children inevitably return to care following a deterioration in circumstances at the family home, making it difficult or un-safe for the children to remain with their parents or family. Members were informed that the aim was to keep the number of times children and young people being re-admitted into care as low as possible, to avoid disruptions and poor outcomes.

Members sought assurances that children returning to live in care would be listened to. It was suggested more work be undertaken to ask children about their care journeys and experiences, and for Young Ambassadors to provide support and assistance with this work. Della Price, Participation and Consultation Manager for Children and Young People, to assist with progressing the work.

Care Proceedings and Permanence Report

Members considered what was being done to counteract delays in achieving permanence. Members were informed that permanency planning was being strengthened in Gloucestershire to ensure children were not subject to drift and delay. An independent audit of Section 20 cases had been undertaken to identify any cases that needed progression.

A 'Permanency Summit' had been held with managers receiving updates on recent legal judgements and case precedents to remind them of the need to secure children's legal and emotional permanency. A tracking system has been developed to monitor cases in pre-proceedings and care proceedings and officers continued to meet with Service Leads to review Section 20 cases.

It was suggested that the outcomes of the audit and tracking systems be presented to the Safeguarding Board. Furthermore, officers to consider good practices at other local authorities and the merits of appointing a specialist role of Case Progression Manager.

Virtual School Educational Results

Members received a report on the educational progress of children living in care in Gloucestershire and the efforts being taken to remove any barriers to learning.

The group noted the following information: -

Key Stage 2: 71% of children in this cohort continued to make good progress.

Key Stage 4: 32 out of the 37 students in this cohort had achieved a qualification ranging from Entry Level to GCSE (with 4 students achieving 5 A*-C grades).

5) Corporate Parenting Group Meeting – 22 February 2016

At its next meeting, the Corporate Parenting Group to consider permanency planning, placement stability and an update on the council's adoption service.

Councillor Paul McLain

**Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and Strategic
Commissioning**