

CHILDREN AND LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL

A meeting of the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel was held on 14 March 2018.

PRESENT: Councillors J Blyth, L McGloin, M Storey, Z Uddin, J A Walker, M Walters and J Young

OFFICERS: B Bradshaw, A Brown, J McNally

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Councillor G Purvis, Councillor D Davison.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest made by Members at this point of the meeting.

1 MINUTES - CHILDREN AND LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL - 7 FEBRUARY 2018

The minutes of the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel held on 7 February 2018 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

2 SAFEGUARDING AND CHILDREN IN CARE ACTION PLAN UPDATE

In respect of the scrutiny panel's 2015/16 investigation of Safeguarding and Children in Care, Members were provided with an update on the progress made with the implementation of the agreed recommendations/actions, since the final report was submitted to the Executive on 7 June 2016.

Children's Services had submitted a written update in respect of the department's action plan that was prepared in response to the scrutiny panel's recommendations. The update was submitted for the panel's consideration and provided a detailed account of the work/actions that had been undertaken to implement each recommendation.

Following Member's consideration of the written update, the Director of Children's Care responded to Member's queries.

With regards to the Market Position Statement a Member queried what was considered as a reasonable bed rate, it was advised that it is market led and very much dependent on the individual child. The Director of Children's Care considered £2800 per week a good rate for a child in a residential setting. Members were informed the challenge is how we ensured that when we pay for additional care it is because the child needs it. It was advised that some placements can be up to £6000 per week if a child had additional needs. The Director of Children's Care stated that the preferred option is for children to be placed in foster care rather than a residential home.

A Member queried the age range of children in residential homes, the Director of Children's Care advised that in general children in residential care tended to be middle to late teens. It was advised that Children's Care tried really hard not to place small children in residential care however occasionally children with complex needs and disabilities may need support in a residential care environment.

The Director of Children's Care advised It is an Ofsted requirement that children and young people are assessed before placing them in residential placement.

With regards to the Corporate Parenting Board it was advised that significant work had been undertaken. A Corporate Parent Strategy was being developed. The Strategy would be presented to the Director of Children's Care and the Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board by mid-March 2018 and would be ratified at the Corporate Parent Board on 11 April 2018.

In respect of recruiting foster carers it was advised that there had been financial investment. The Local Authority had moved away from traditional marketing and had invested in using professional marketeers to recruit foster carers. It was advised that foster carers were

moving away from IFA's and returning to fostering through the Local Authority. It was advised that the financial payment to foster carers from the Local Authority was now comparable with IFA's.

Members were informed that a lot of work had taken place to improve the participation of care leavers in education, employment and training. It was advised that this work was very important due to changes in the law which places an expectation on the Local Authority to support all care leavers up to the age of 25. The Local Authority currently provided support to care leavers up to 21 years or 25 years if in full time education. The changes would take place in April 2018.

Members were advised that the Director of Children's Care delivered training to Elected Members on an annual basis on Corporate Parenting. The Director of Children's Care informed the scrutiny panel that Corporate Parenting was now embedded into the Corporate Induction which ensured that all officers of the Local Authority understood the responsibility of being a Corporate Parent.

Agreed as follows:

- The scrutiny panel agreed that the actions in respect of the investigation of Safeguarding and Children in Care had been completed and no further updates would be required.