

Children & Young People Select Committee

A meeting of Children & Young People Select Committee was held on Wednesday, 15th July, 2009.

Present: Cllr Mick Eddy (In the Chair), Cllr Jim Beall, Cllr Phillip Broughton, Cllr Mrs Ann Cains, Cllr David Harrington, Cllr Miss Barbara Inman, Cllr Mrs Maureen Rigg (vice Cllr Lewis), Cllr Andrew Sherris.

Officers: Shaun McLurg, Jackie Ward (CESC); Graham Birtle, Fiona Shayler (LD); Jim Bell (R).

Also in attendance: Mr G Davies, Mr D Campbell (Non Voting Co-opted Representatives).

Apologies: were submitted on behalf of Cllr Frankland, Cllr Lewis, Mr Frank, Mr Beach, Mr Lupton.

1 Declarations of Interest

None

2 Minutes for Signing - 11th February, 2009

The minutes of the meeting were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

3 Draft Minutes - 24th June 2009

The draft minutes of 24th June 2009 were agreed as a correct record.

Matters Arising

Members stated that the information on Exit Interviews had not been received and requested that this be sent as soon as possible.

Members requested information on the newly appointed Head Teacher for the Virtual School as soon as it was available.

4 Efficiency Improvement and Transformation (EIT) Review of Child Placements and Residential Care

Members were presented with a report on the Fostering Service and the Adoption Service. It was stated that further information would need to be added to the report on the private sector and private fostering, it was also requested that further information on independent fostering be included.

Further information was presented on the different types of fostering arrangements available. Foster Carers receive support from a Social Worker on a monthly basis but were often in contact each week. An out of hours service was also available for any emergencies that foster carers may have.

Stockton works alongside Darlington Borough Council to carry out training to Foster Carers and also liaises with them over placements.

The Service had been previously inspected by Ofsted annually but due to changes in legislation the inspections would now take place every three years. The Service had consistently received 'good' inspection grades.

Discussion was held on advertising campaigns to recruit foster carers. It was suggested that rebranding and sharing the costs of advertising with neighbouring authorities could be considered.

It was stated that the rigorous investigation process to become a foster carer can put people off, there was also a high proportion of people who would apply then withdraw during the process. Shaun McLurg felt that targeted marketing was the most successful way of recruiting.

Discussion was held on appointing independent providers of foster carers to place children and whether the ability to negotiate costs was an option. Members also discussed the possibility of sharing services with other authorities to reduce costs.

Members then went on to discuss the adoption process which on average takes around 8-10 months. It was a lengthy process as the importance of finding the best match for both the child and adopter was paramount. The adoption process could also be a very sensitive process as it often followed a family bereavement.

Discussion was held on research for people tracing their birth families and whether a small fee could be charged to raise income for the service.

The average cost for the adoption process was detailed and whether any costs/processes could be shared with other providers/authorities.

AGREED that the information provided be noted and Members were requested that any further questions be forward to Graham Birtle, Scrutiny Officer, for answers to be provided in writing.

5 Monitoring Reports

Members considered both of the monitoring reports and requested that the appropriate Officer for each of the reviews provide a presentation at a future meeting.

AGREED that the monitoring reports be considered fully at a future meeting.

6 Work Programme

The next meeting would be held on 19th August, Joanne Moore had been invited to provided evidence. Further meetings would be held on 26th August and 9th September.

AGREED that the work programme be noted.

7 Chair's Update

The Chairman distributed a recent article that was published in The Times on 11th July, 2009 entitled 'Who ate all the Pies? Britain's obesity capital resists health drive' for Members information.

AGREED that the Chair's update be noted.

