

Report for Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) 6 December 2019

Children in Our Care Strategic Group (CIOCSG) Update

The last CIOCSG was held on 21st November 2019 and will continue to meet 6 weekly.

Items discussed were:

- Aspirations for Children in Our Care (CIOC)
- Health Assessments
- New Care Leavers Parenting approach
- Ongoing Schemes/Activities for CIOC
- Update on Approaches to Safely Reduce the Numbers of CIOC.

Aspirations for Children in Our Care (CIOC)

Joint partnership work is ongoing between the Virtual School (VS) and Health around identifying health and educational needs and how we can raise the aspirations of CIOC once needs are identified and appropriate support/work is undertaken.

This links in with the wider Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) work around health needs and commissioning the appropriate services once needs are fully understood. Central to this work is the 'Voice of the Child' and listening to their needs.

A report will be brought to the CPB once the JSNA is completed.

Health Assessments

A new designated LAC consultant has recently been appointed, Dr Alison Morrison.

Health have introduced more effective systems to track any late notifications or consents for initial Health Assessments. This will improve services for CIOC.

Work is ongoing to ensure that CIOC placed with family or friends receive health assessments in line with those children placed in foster care or residential placements.

New Care Leavers Parenting Approach

A new scheme is to be launched focussing on supporting our care leavers who become parents.

We currently have 6 children who have been removed from their parents (care leavers) care. The aim is to understand why and to offer earlier interventions/education in order that children can be maintained with their birth parent(s).

Ongoing Schemes/Activities for CIOC

- Care leavers celebration event has been provisionally booked for 21 January 2020. Venue to be confirmed.
- The 'Helping Hands' scheme is progressing well. HR and finance are involved in setting up systems so staff can offer either/both financial support or their own time. Young People can also be linked into an appropriate person and/or group from the Talent Network.

- There are parameters around the funding offered to care leavers via the helping hands scheme i.e. funding could be used to buy equipment to support learning at university. There is an expectation that those who receive funding will 'give something back', this might be fund raising themselves.
- Christmas Book Scheme. Plans are underway to run this very successful scheme for a third year. Members are encouraged to buy a book for a CIOC for Christmas from Drakes bookshop.

The Council has this year set themselves a target of giving a book to every child in care (500+).

Partners are very enthusiastic about this particular scheme and would like to be involved in the future.

- Madlog scheme (linked with ARC/'More stuff like this please'). This is an Irish company who has pledged to donate a bag to sell for every bag designed by a care leaver which is sold.

Our libraries have offered the use of their design equipment to support care leavers in designing bags.

- Libraries and Leisure. Work continues to support CIOC and care leavers with a variety of reading schemes, activities and events.

The 'Lets Take Action' group are to be encouraged to be part of the 'Stockton book of the year' initiative.

There are already strong links between our libraries and primary and secondary schools to encourage reading.

The new library at the Ingleby Barwick Leisure Centre is due to open next year and will offer specific spaces to encourage group and community activities. Links to foster carers continue to be built.

Update on Approaches to Safely Reduce the Numbers of CIOC

The Dartington programme has now been completed. Based on systems theory a key recommendation is for Stockton to develop an approach to remedy the disparity of numbers between those children coming into care (high) against those going home (low).

Dartington confirmed that a high number of children are in care because of their parent's needs rather than the children's own. Moving forward we therefore need to develop and commission services to support adults.

The Impower project continues with focus on needs and strengths rather than just risk. This approach suggests that outcomes for CIOC and on the edge of care will improve if we first understand their needs.

Work is ongoing with Social Workers, Foster Carers, IRO's, residential staff and IFA's to test this approach.

This approach will also help us understand need on a wider community level to inform focussed commissioning.

The CIOC Strategic Action Plan will be reviewed in February 2020 and will particularly consider the impact that all of the work being undertaken with CIOC and care leavers is having improving outcomes.

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