

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

4 AUGUST 2015

The meeting commenced at 4.00 pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor: Chris Simmons (In the Chair)

Councillors: Mary Fleet, Sheila Griffin, Ged Hall, John Lauderdale, and Trisha Lawton.

Young people's representatives:

Holly Bratt, Ben Marshall and Abby Wallace.

Officers:

Sally Robinson, Director of Child and Adult Services
Danielle Swainston, Assistant Director, Children's Services
Mark Smith, Head of Integrated Youth Services
Jane Young, Head of Service, South Locality
Juliette Ward, Young Inspectors Co-ordinator
David Cosgrove, Democratic Services Officer

19. Apologies for Absence

Councillors Brenda Loynes and Carl Richardson (Observer).
Co-opted Members Julie Cordiner and Michael Lee.

20. Declarations of Interest

None.

21. Minutes of the meeting held on 14 July 2015

Confirmed.

22. Adoption Annual Report 2014/15 and Adoption Agency Statement of Purpose 2015/16 *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

Non-key decision.

Purpose of report

The purpose of the report was to present Children Services Committee with the Annual Report of the Adoption Agency 2014/15 and the Adoption Agency Statement of Purpose for 2015/16.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Head of Service, South Locality reported that it was a requirement of the National Minimum Standards that the authority produce a Statement of Purpose and Children's Guide for adoption services and reviewed these at least annually. It was also a requirement that the executive side of the local authority receive six monthly reports detailing the management, outcomes and functioning of the Adoption services. This information was provided within the Annual Report and the Statement of Purpose which were submitted as appendices to the report.

The Head of Service highlighted the priorities identified for 2015/16 within the Annual Report. The Head of Service indicated that the service would look to, among other priorities;

- utilise the existing Family Finding post to identify children needing adoptive placements earlier and using our own resources, established links and new research to positively match with adopters within timescales;
- work collaboratively with the regional consortium, Adoption Link, Activity Days, and opening minds events to identify placements for children with complex needs and sibling groups;
- work positively and proactively with the child's social worker to improve the quality of Life Story work;
- provide those who have adopted with post adoption support;
- raise awareness of the newly introduced adoption support fund and to utilise the funds available to provide therapeutic support to those living in the Hartlepool area who have adopted;
- target our current advertising campaign to look specifically at recruiting adopters for older children and siblings group;
- look at the feasibility of being part of a regional adoption agency, pooling resources with neighbouring local authorities to recruit, train and assess prospective adopters ultimately increasing choice for social workers when considering permanency via adoption for children.

The Head of Service stated that government was generally pushing local authorities towards working more collaboratively on adoption and fostering in general so the work with regional and sub-regional partners was becoming more focussed and discussions had commenced on the potential of a Tees Valley agency and further reports would be submitted to Members should this progress.

The Chair highlighted that the report indicated that there was a vacancy on the Adoption and Fostering Panels though Council had appointed Councillor Lindridge to the position. The Chair also noted that the British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) had ceased very recently and would that create any issues for the Authority. The Head of Service reported that BAAF had ceased with some of its functions having transferred to children's charity and adoption and fostering agency, Coram, and to a new entity, CoramBAAF Adoption and Fostering Academy. The same services would be provided, though Coram had, in the past, been very London centred.

Decision

That the Adoption Agency Annual Report be noted and the Statement of Purpose and Children's Guide approved in line with the Adoption National Minimum Standards 2011.

23. Fostering Services Annual Report 2014/15 and Statement of Purpose 2015/16 *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

Non-key decision.

Purpose of report

The purpose of the report was to present Children Services Committee the Annual Report of the Fostering Service 2014/15 and the Fostering Service Statement of Purpose for 2015/16.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Head of Service, South Locality reported that it was a requirement of the National Minimum Standards that the service produce a Statement of Purpose for fostering services and review these at least annually. It was also a requirement that the executive side of the local authority receive three monthly reports detailing the management, outcomes and functioning of the Fostering Services. This information was provided within the annual report and the Fostering Statement of Purpose for 2015/16 attached as appendices to the report.

The Head of Service highlighted the priorities identified for 2015/16 within the Annual Report. The Head of Service indicated that the service would look to, among other priorities;

- target recruitment to attract foster carers for older children and sibling groups and those with more challenging behaviours.
- continue to offer and deliver an extensive training programme to our carers to ensure that all of our fostering households have

achieved the qualification within the allocated timescales and can demonstrate continued professional development as foster carers.

- continue to strive to support our carers to engender stability within placements for our looked after children.
- consult foster carers in relation to the performance of the Local Authority in relation to support, training and retention of foster carers and to use this information to develop future priorities.
- continue to facilitate sons and daughters group for children of foster carers.
- review the approval ages and status of the more experienced carers with a view to encouraging them to provide placements for older children with more complex needs.
- To continue to work collaboratively with the neighbouring authorities to share resources and expertise in foster carer recruitment.

The Chair again highlighted that the report indicated that there was a vacancy on the Adoption and Fostering Panels though Council had appointed Councillor Lindridge to the position. The Chair also requested that future reports include the previous year's statistics for comparison purposes.

The Chair commented that foster carers were exceptional people that opened their homes to children in care and carried out first class work with these children in helping them develop and overcome their difficulties.

Decision

That the Fostering Annual Report be noted and the Statement of Purpose approved in line with the Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011.

24. Reconstitution of the Governing Body of St Hild's Church of England Voluntary Aided School *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

Non-key decision.

Purpose of report

To seek approval of the Children's Services Committee to the reconstitution of the Governing Body of St Hild's CE VA School and the Instrument of Government in accordance with the School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations 2012 as amended by the School Governance (Constitution and Federation) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014.

Issue(s) for consideration

The revised constitution for St Hild's CE VA School had been received following approval by the Governing Body and the Dioceses of Durham and Newcastle Joint Education Team. A copy of the Instrument of Government was attached as an appendix to the report.

Decision

That the reconstitution of the Governing Body of St Hild's CE VA School, under the School Governance (Constitution and Federation) (England) (Amendment) Regulations and the revised Instrument of Government in accordance with the details submitted be approved.

25. Youth Employment Initiative (*Assistant Director (Regeneration)*)

Type of decision

For information only.

Purpose of report

The purpose of the report was to inform the Committee that an application had been submitted to the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) to deliver the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI).

Issue(s) for consideration

The Head of Integrated Youth Services reported that in January 2013, the European Commission created the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) in order to tackle the high levels of youth unemployment across member states. The initiative was worth €6 billion in total and was directed at young people who were unemployed or inactive. The YEI would particularly support young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) in regions with a youth unemployment rate of 25% or above.

The Tees Valley qualified for additional funding under the YEI and had a notional allocation of £10.9m which had been equally matched by £10.9m from the Tees Valley ESF allocation. The ESF element of the funding needed to be locally matched and, due to the Tees Valley's Transition Region Status, Tees Valley was required to match the ESF element at 40% which equated to £7.2m. This meant that the total programme amount for the Tees Valley would be around £29m.

On Wednesday 22nd April 2015, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), as the Managing Authority for YEI, issued three Open Calls to commission ESF/YEI projects which would support Priority Axis 1 of the Operational Plan: Inclusive Labour Markets and Investment Priority: 1.3

Sustainable Integration into the Labour Market of Young People (YEL). A brief description of each of the Open Calls as well as the indicative budgetary allocations was shown in the report.

Following the announcement of the Open Calls, the Council had been approached by a number of partners and agreed in principle to act as the Accountable Body to submit bids for all three Calls as part of a Tees Valley Consortium. The full consortium consisted of 61 partners including the four other Local Authorities in the Tees Valley, five Tees Valley FE Plus providers, Cleveland College of Art and Design, Voluntary Development Agencies, voluntary and community groups and Private Sector Organisations. The Council had also secured the full match funding requirements through this partnership approach.

At the meeting, it was indicated that the joint bid under Open Call 1 had been unsuccessful though the consortium had been invited to submit full bids for Open Calls 2 and 3. These two bids would still provide investment in excess of £22m with a target of assisting over 5000 young people.

Members indicated their disappointment that the Open Call 1 bid had failed and questioned when the results of the bids to Open Calls 2 and 3 would be known. The Officer stated that it was anticipated that the results would be known in the early autumn so the scheme could commence in October.

The Chair commented that the authority had a proven track record on reducing youth unemployment and youth unemployment figures for the town had reduced significantly over the past year. There would be no financial risk to the authority as the consortium would be reimbursed for its expenditure. This was an exciting opportunity and with Members, the Chair hoped the bids to Open Calls 2 and 3 would be successful.

Decision

That the report be noted.

26. Any Other Items which the Chairman Considers are Urgent

The Chair highlighted again to Members that the meeting scheduled for 18 August had been cancelled, so the next meeting of the committee would be held on 15 September at 4.00 pm at the Civic Centre.

The meeting concluded at 4.30 pm.

P J DEVLIN
CHIEF SOLICITOR
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