

# **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON TUESDAY, 10TH JANUARY, 2023**

**MEMBERS:** Councillors Elif Erbil, Gunes Akbulut, Ahmet Oykenner, Andrew Thorp, Adrian Grumi, Nelly Gyosheva, Suna Hurman (Deputy Mayor) and Ruby Sampson

**Officers:**

Director of Children and Family Services

**Also Attending:**

**1. WELCOME & APOLOGIES**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

There were no apologies given.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following declarations of interest were received:

Cllr Akbulut declared she was a member of the Fostering Panel.

Cllr Grumi declared he was a Governor for Broomfield School.

**3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

Approved

That the Chair signed the minutes of the meeting held on 02 November 2022 as a true and correct record. Subject to the spelling of Cllr Thrope's name to include the e.

**4. LEVEL OF CARE PLACES IN THE BOROUGH AND THE NATIONAL SHORTAGE OF CARE PLACES**

Councillor Abdul Abdullahi, Cabinet member for Children's Services introduced the item explaining himself and the team had been working on the issue of the level of care places since June 2022. The recruitment and retention of Social Workers remains a top priority.

Ram Ramasurbamanian, Head of Access to Resources Integrated Services highlighted the key points from the report which included the local and national issue of shortage of placements in children's homes and foster parents and looking at ways to tackle the issue. These include the possibility

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of increasing the local authority foster care provision, working with other local authorities to develop in house care homes and sub-regionally finding ways to increase capacity to end inappropriate placements.

In response to members questions, officers advised they try to keep placements within London, although the capacity is decreasing, and some children have gone as far as the midlands. The team works to keep the children as close to Enfield as possible, however with some children it can be beneficial to be away from London to access specialist therapeutic homes. If this is the case the parents are supported to visit the child.

Officers confirmed there around 50 children seeking asylum within the borough and there are no children who do not have a placement. The team have a good relationship with the providers and work hard to get each child placed.

Following member queries, officers explained that independent fostering agencies cost around £450 more per week. There is a London wide framework who oversee the independent fostering agencies.

Members wanted to know the main barriers for having adoptive parents, to which officers explained that an adoption is a court decision and is not always the best option for the child. Special Guardianship, which is means tested, can be available to friends or family of the child to enable them to remain within their community.

In response to questions from members, Officers explained that they have members of staff on duty every day and an out of hours system to be able to respond to any emergencies.

**ACTION:** Anne Stocker to provide data from the last 3-4 years in relation to item 14 of the report.

### 5. RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF SOCIAL WORKERS

Anne stocker introduced this item explaining that a stable and secure workforce is highly important, with relationships being a key factor in order to empower change and make a difference.

Angela Bent, Head of Practice Improvement, highlighted key points from the report.

Following questions from Members, Officers explained that the reason Zimbabwe and South Africa were the countries chosen as part of the International Social Work Programme were because their practices and standards are similar to those we have in the UK. This being the voice and needs of the child being a priority.

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Officers explained the apprenticeship programme lasts for 3 years, at the end of this they gain a degree. Officers are confident the current apprentices will graduate and are supporting them with their studies and work.

Members raised concerns on the methods of recruitment, particularly some advertised requesting specific genders or background. Officers confirmed that Enfield do not include this in their recruitment process and has a very mixed demographic in the workforce.

In response to Members questions, Officers explained that Enfield has a strong access to resource team with a great leader and it is very rare that a placement is not found. Officers also explained that there is a great Employee Support Programme available to staff and an individual programme for Social Workers. There are also emotional and wellbeing groups and the department has a fantastic management structure who provide support.

Following a query from members, the Officers explained that the recruitment process for social workers can not be less formal as a level of standard needs to be maintained and can not take any shortcuts. The risk of reducing standards would be too high.

### **6. RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF FOSTER CARERS**

Debbie Michael, Fostering & Permanence Service Manager presented this item highlighting the key points from the report.

Members had queries on the marketing and communications strategies used. Officers explained that they had recently got a budget back for marketing and communications and will be using this for billboard adverts. Digital campaigns will also be done to raise awareness and generate interest. These methods have been used previously but there is not data to assess its benefits. Officers explained they get the best uptake from recommendations and their events.

Members suggested using Instagram or other social media to create videos which give positive experiences of foster carers.

Officers explained that faith groups have been involved in promoting Enfield's fostering service. An advert was recently put out on LGR radio to get across to the Greek and Turkish community.

Officers requested that members inform them of any events or large group meetings that the fostering team can get involved in to create interest.

Members suggested communicating more clearly that the allowance is not taxed. However Officers had reservations as the incentive should not be focused on the money.

### **7. WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23**

NOTED the work programme for 2022/23.

**8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

NOTED the dates of future meetings as follows:

Thursday 23 March 2023

All meetings commence at 7pm and will be held in the Conference Room at the Civic Centre.

The meeting ended at Time Not Specified.