

**CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY  
PANEL  
8 MARCH 2017  
5.00 - 6.55 PM**



**Present:**

Councillors Mrs McCracken (Chairman), Mrs Ingham (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Birch, Mrs Temperton, Brossard (Substitute) and Peacey (Substitute)

**Apologies for absence were received from:**

Councillors Ms Hayes and Heydon, and Doug Jennings (Co-Optee)

**Also Present:**

Councillor Dr Barnard (Co-Optee)

**103. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**104. Minutes and Matters Arising**

The minutes of the meeting on 7 December 2016 were approved as a correct record.

**105. Urgent Items of Business**

There were no urgent items of business.

**106. Foster Carers Association**

Maggie Smith and Corrie Sharpe of Bracknell Forest Foster Carers Association gave an update on the work of the Foster Carers Association which had been running for six years.

The Association had created a private Facebook group to make connections and answer questions, which had been successful. Where foster carers were not able to answer each others queries, they would be raised with professionals.

It was recognised that due to time pressure on foster carers, it was difficult to get a group gathered in person. It was hoped that there would be more opportunities for the children to gather together and make connections, as well as the foster carers.

It was suggested that the Association could present at new foster carer training to promote the group and encourage membership.

Members asked whether the Association were interested in maintaining a plot of land at the Jeallotts Hill landshare project. It was agreed that if foster carers were interested, this would be arranged by members. **(Action: Cllr Mrs Jennie McCracken/Foster Carer Association)**

107. **Health of Looked After Children Strategy 6 Month Update and Introduction to Debbie Hartrick**

Debbie Hartrick and Fiona Nyquist gave an update on the health of Looked After Children in Bracknell Forest, and introduced the new structure of health colleagues for Looked After Children.

Debbie Hartrick informed the Panel that she was now the Assistant Director for Safeguarding across the East Berkshire Clinical Commissioning Groups, and the Designated Nurse for Safeguarding, Special Educational Needs and Looked After Children.

It was reported that the issue with timely health assessments for Looked After Children placed out of area was a national one, and that there were particular concerns regarding children placed in Hampshire and Kent. A mapping exercise was ongoing to assess the role of Designated Nurses in this. Debbie commented that she had requested that the Chair of Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead's Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) to raise the issue with the Department of Health to escalate concerns across Berkshire. For this reason, Debbie endorsed the Staying Close initiative because where a child remained within Berkshire, healthcare professionals would be proactive in raising concerns with the placing authority.

Fiona commented that there was good communication with Bracknell Forest to ensure that the health of looked after children is promoted.

It was noted that the Designated Looked After Children Function had moved from Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust (BHFT) to the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) as part of a national move to remove conflict of interest.

Debbie commented that she intended to form a Looked After Children working group across East Berkshire to meet quarterly with CCG, BHFT and Local Authority representatives to discuss any concerns. This is something that Bracknell Forest are keen to engage with and be part of.

With regard to updates on the annual plan, Debbie gave the following updates:

- The Passport for Care Leavers had been designed and delivered in consultation with young people and Louise McLennan from Bracknell Forest and would be distributed across Berkshire. All information in the paper copy would be electronically replicated across health systems. Debbie and Fiona were complimentary of Bracknell Forest and their commitment to the health of looked after children. They were the only LA from across the East of Berkshire who participated in this work and this was much appreciated.
- With regard to unaccompanied asylum seekers, there had been 25 received across Berkshire. A support group had been established to discuss the specific health and emotional needs of these children, and the work in Bracknell Forest had been commended to the Home Office.
- A refreshed business case was being submitted to the CCGs to reflect the increase in numbers of Looked After Children in East Berkshire.

In response to questions, the following points were noted:

- A Looked After Child would have their health assessments undertaken by one professional, usually either a health visitor or school nurse. If there were additional needs or concerns, a specialist nurse would undertake the assessment. Continuity was preserved where necessary.
- Members welcomed the health passport and commended the work which had gone into it.

## 108. Leaving Care Service

Nora Dudley and Karen Roberts gave a presentation on the Leaving Care service.

Nora commented on the good work of Will Nimako, Care Leavers Participation Officer, particularly around engaging care leavers through technologies such as Facebook, Whatsapp, and a website for the young people. Will had undertaken housing liaison work with young people and Clare Dorning, Head of Housing Strategy, and had negotiated the Council Tax exemption for care leavers up to the age of 21 from 1 April 2017. It was noted that the Council Tax exemption was one of the first such policies for Care Leavers in the country, and had exhibited good joint working across Council directorates.

The Care Leavers Offer was being developed in Bracknell Forest to consult organisations, churches and community groups about their offer and provision for care leavers. Consultation meetings would be delivered to assess the Bracknell Forest offer, and a working party had been established to investigate this. It was suggested that a member of CPAP may join this working party. **(Action: CPAP members to consider whether wish to join and contact Nora)**

Nora commented on the affordability challenge of Staying Put in the context of the national picture of young people living with their parents for longer. While the majority of young people wanting to Stay Put were planning to go to university, it was recognised that those who were looking to start work often could not afford the private rental market and needed to Stay Put with their foster family. **(Action: Karen Roberts is in the process of writing a paper to be considered by the Executive Member)**

Karen Roberts reported on the situation of two unaccompanied asylum seekers from Eritrea. Both boys were now in education and undertaking qualifications in English as a Foreign Language, Maths and Computing. Both boys had engaged with Looked After Children reviews, which had commended their commitment and enthusiasm.

Karen commented on the Holly House development, including 12 proposed flats on the Look Ahead estate for care leavers with additional support needs. Building work for these flats was due to start in Autumn 2017 and to be ready by September 2018.

Arising from questions, the following points were noted:

- Looked After Children were exempt from the single room rate allowance until they turned 22, when their housing benefit would stop. Bracknell Forest Council was joining with other Local Authorities to petition central Government to reconsider this age cut-off.
- Will Nimako's contract was due to finish on 31 March 2017, and a business case was being put together to try and extend this.
- Permanency and Staying Put was discussed with young people and foster parents from the age of 16 in preparation, and it was noted that if a foster parent did not wish to stay on with their young person post-18, the placement would be reconsidered.

## 109. Staying Put Update

Peter Hodges and Nora Dudley gave an update on the Review of the Staying Put Policy.

In response to Members' questions, the following points were noted:

- It was noted that a Staying Close arrangement has been proposed for looked after children in residential homes. This requires that private rented accommodation or step down foster placements must be within walking distance of the looked after child's original residential unit. This was recognised as a challenge to the Staying Put provision.
- If a Looked After Child chose to go to university, they were encouraged to seek a 52 week accommodation offer where possible which would limit their dependency on the foster parent. However, it was recognised that the provision would be specific for the need and relationship of the care leaver and their foster parent.

#### 110. **Participation Annual Report**

Sarah Roberts, Policy and Research Officer presented the Participation Annual Report. It was recognised that the report would be updated with final quarter figures at the end of March 2017.

In response to Members' questions, the following points were noted:

- Most Members had attended the 'Do You Know?' training delivered by SiLSiP including the Leader of the Council. The Chief Executive and Director of Children, Young People and Learning were due to attend an upcoming session, and all members who had not yet attended were encouraged to do so.
- A business case for a contract for independent visitors and advocates was being constructed. It was noted that the Lead Member for Children's Services at Wokingham had suggested training members to be used as independent visitors in another authority, and it was agreed that this should be investigated further.
- The Big Ballot event would be held on 10 May 2017 in the Council Chamber between 5 and 7pm and all CPAP members were welcome to attend. The event was an opportunity for all looked after children over the age of 8 to vote on an issue for SiLSiP to focus on for the coming year. Online and postal voting had been enabled, but attendance was encouraged.
- It was clarified that independent visits were booked on a monthly basis for a year at a time, and could be renewed annually.
- It was noted that, following consultation with SiLSiP, the summer residential trip had been replaced for 2017 by a series of activities throughout the summer in order to engage more young people.
- The Takeover Date for 2017 was to be confirmed, but would be in November.

#### 111. **Exclusion of Public and Press**

**RESOLVED** that pursuant to Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and having regard to the public interest, members of the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of the following item which involves the likely disclosure of exempt information under the following category of Schedule 12A of that Act:

- (1) Information relating to any individual (Item 11).

#### 112. **Performance Management Information With Focus on Placement Stability**

Lorna Hunt and Peter Hodges presented the Performance Management Information for Looked After Children, with a focus on Placement Stability.

Members noted the continuing high number of older children in care, which was recognised as a national issue. There had been an increase in total number looked after children since the same period in 2016.

Members were glad to note that there was evidence of impact in relation to placement stability and there had been a reduction in the number of children with three or more placements.

It was noted that support arrangements for all children would be agreed by the courts through an adoption support plan with the placing authority retaining responsibility for children placed out of area for three years. Any financial support agreements would continue until the child was 18 years old by the Placing LA.

#### 113. **Advocacy and Independent Visitors Briefing**

Sarah Roberts presented the Advocacy and Independent Visitors Briefing report for clarity.

It was clarified that independent advocacy was available for any child receiving a service from the Local Authority as part of their basic rights. An independent visitor was an adult volunteer who was removed from the decision making process, who supported the child independently. Both independent advocacy and independent visitors were currently commissioned through Action For Children.

#### 114. **Panel Announcements**

The following Link Councillor panel announcements were noted:

- Councillor Mrs Temperton reported that of the asylum seekers, one was doing well and undertaking his own advocacy for right to stay, but another was likely to be deported following legal issues with their appeals. Members of CPAP offered to help in any way possible.
- Councillor Mrs Ingham informed the Partnership that the Hilton Hotel had agreed to host the Looked After Children's Celebration Event for free, although refreshments would need to be sourced. The date of the event was 27 October 2017, at 4:30pm. Further information would be provided in due course.
- Councillor Mrs McCracken informed CPAP that Louise McLennan had contacted the craft shop at Moss End to arrange an event there. She also commented that she had discussed the possibility of a large booking for the South Hill Park pantomime to allow all foster families to go together. There was also a discussion that foster carers and children could be invited to a dress rehearsal of the pantomime **Action: Cllr Mrs McCracken to update at the next CPAP meeting on progress).**
- Councillor Mrs McCracken also commented that she had been successful in agreeing for looked after children and foster families to be invited to Coral Reef prior to official opening and have an experience of the facilities.

#### 115. **Dates of Next Meetings and Forward Plan**

With the agreement of the Leader of the Council, it was agreed that future Panel meetings would take place at 11am on the following dates:

23 June 2017  
29 September 2017  
8 December 2017  
16 March 2018

**CHAIRMAN**