

**CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY
PANEL
23 JUNE 2017
11.00 AM - 12.50 PM**



Present:

Councillors Mrs McCracken (Chairman), Mrs Ingham (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Birch, Ms Hayes and Peacey

Co-Optee

Doug Jennings

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Mrs Temperton

1. Election of Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor Mrs Jennifer McCracken be elected Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel for the current municipal year.

2. Appointment of Vice-Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor Mrs Sandra Ingham be elected Vice-Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel for the current municipal year.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Minutes and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2017 were approved as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman.

Arising from the minutes, the following updates were given:

- Councillor Mrs McCracken advised the Panel that the Jealotts Hill Landshare had granted a 20x30ft piece of planted and maintained land to the Foster Carers Association, should they wish to use it.
- Councillor Peacey agreed to represent CPAP on the Care Leavers Offer working group with Nora Dudley.
- The Looked After Children celebration event had been moved to Easthampstead Park Conference Centre in November 2017. Kashif Nawaz and Peter Hodges were considering dates, and would advise CPAP members once known.
- Councillor Mrs McCracken advised that she had approached Vincent Paliczka, Director of Environment, Culture and Communities who had allowed up to 138 people to attend a pre-opening visit to Coral Reef in a Looked After Children visit. Peter Hodges agreed to arrange this with Louise McLennan.
- Councillor Mrs Birch advised that she had arranged for the Foster Carers and children to go to the final rehearsal of the South Hill Park pantomime on 30 November 2017, and that at least 50 people would be able to attend for free.

- Doug Jennings advised CPAP of the Foster Carers picnic which would take place on 27 July 2017 at Jocks Lane.

5. **Urgent Items of Business**

There were no urgent items of business.

6. **Adoption Statement of Purpose and Annual Report**

Hilary Loades, Adopt Berkshire and Rosanne Turner, Family Placement Team attended the meeting to present the Adoption Statement of Purpose and Annual Report.

Hilary advised the Panel that although the Statement of Purpose had changed very little, when the new Adopt Thames Valley agency is formed the statement of purpose would be different as it will incorporate other adoption agencies.

With regard to the Annual Report, Bracknell Forest was performing well, particularly with regard to the timely placements of children which reflected good permanency planning. There had been a national decrease in applicants for adoption, but also a national decrease in adoptees as well. Hilary commented on the changing culture of adoption with adopters narrowing their requirements.

Hilary commented that the three children listed with placement orders on 31 March in the Annual Report now all had placements.

Adopt Berkshire would be focussing on helping other Berkshire Authorities in their Ofsted inspections, having assisted Bracknell Forest and West Berkshire in their recent inspections. In Bracknell Forest, Ofsted had commented that they had been impressed by the social workers' knowledge of their cases and could see that we don't give up on the plan for adoption even with older children who may have special needs.

Rosanne Turner, Team Manager of the Family Placement Team commented on the post-adoption service offered by the Council where 26 children in Bracknell Forest had benefitted from the Adoption Support Fund. Post-adoption counselling was also offered as a service.

The Panel noted that the Court system was preferring to grant Special Guardianship Orders at the expense of Adoption Orders and that the number of Special Guardianship Orders in Bracknell Forest had increased significantly. This also impacted on the number of SGO allowances which the Council had to pay and this was increasing. Families with a Special Guardianship Order would also be supported financially through the adoption support fund for any therapeutic needs..

Arising from discussion, the following points were noted:

- If a child was Fostered for Adoption (FFA), they could be placed immediately following discharge from hospital. This would result in negative number of days as they are placed prior to the Adoption Order being made.
- Where other authorities had changed their children to 'long term fostering' status, Bracknell Forest had maintained existing adoption plans following the implementation of Adopt Berkshire. This made Bracknell Forest's number of children awaiting adoption look significantly more than other authorities, but Hilary noted that it was a credit to the authority that these children had now all been placed. Peter Hodges undertakes a 6 monthly update of the last three years of all cases to be clear of the reasons for delays for adoption.

- Although Adopt Berkshire had never been fully staffed, the staffing level is effective and met requirements. Agency staff had not and would not be used at Adopt Berkshire.
- Cornerstone had become a franchise business in 2017, and the relationship between Adopt Berkshire and Cornerstone had been more difficult than anticipated as the Berkshire Authorities were the first to engage with Cornerstone.

The Panel thanked Hilary and Rosanne for their update.

7. **Private Fostering Statement of Purpose and Annual Report (to include Private Fostering Animation)**

Rosanne Turner presented on Private Fostering's Statement of Purpose and Annual Report.

At present, there were only two children in Bracknell Forest who were known to be privately fostered.

Privately fostered children were treated as Children in Need, and were visited regularly by social worker to ensure their safeguarding was in place.

The Panel watched the new Private Fostering animation as developed by Private Fostering and Public Health teams, and agreed that it was a good opportunity to get material about private fostering into schools, GP practices and other public places. The animation had already been promoted on social media, and members were encouraged to share it widely.

A private fostering report was submitted annually to the LSCB to ensure all agencies were aware of the practice, and of any signs that a child may be privately fostered.

Arising from discussion, the following points were noted:

- The Council had a duty to promote private fostering, as the public may not have realised that they need to notify the Council of any such arrangement.
- There is no disincentive to notifying the Council of a private fostering arrangement, and it just allowed social workers to undertake assessments and give advice and resources to families. Notifying the Council should be in the best interest of the family. Panel members suggested that perhaps this assurance should be more widely promoted to encourage people to notify.
- Any arrangement over 28 days (or an arrangement envisaged to be over 28 days) was classed as a private fostering arrangement, and so the boarding schools in the borough had been approached to advise them of their need to notify in this case.
- In a private fostering arrangement, the financial responsibility and duty of care remained with the parent. If the Council raised concerns about the arrangement, it was the responsibility of the parent to move their child.
- It was possible to foster and private foster simultaneously, and this would not cause a breach of responsibility.

The Panel thanked Rosanne for her report.

8. **Missing and Absent Annual report for Looked After Children**

The Panel received and noted the Missing and Absent Annual Report for Looked After Children.

Arising from discussion the following points were noted:

- Of the 12 children worked with having gone Missing/Absent, 8 were girls and 4 were boys.
- The Panel raised concerns over the use of cannabis and mental health amongst those who had been Missing, and it was noted that while some cases may have been induced by drug use, some Looked After Children had other mental health challenges which had made a return home interview inappropriate.
- A small cohort of children had been placed out of area due to a local and national shortage of cares who can handle their specialist needs and risks. Where a child was placed out of area, it was hoped that the arrangement would be temporary.
- Where a child was placed out of area, social workers were still required to visit them regularly. Other methods of contact were used in addition, such as texting and calling. Processes for contact of out of area children were robust in Bracknell Forest.
- From October 17, motivational interviewing would be extended to all Children's Social Care staff.

9. Larchwood Regulation 44 Visits Annual Report

The Panel received the Larchwood Regulation 44 Visits Annual Report for information.

It was agreed that a visit to Larchwood should be arranged for CPAP members, at a time when the children were offsite.

10. Performance Management Information

Lorna Hunt presented the latest Performance Management Information.

The Panel discussed the sudden increase in children subject to Child Protection Plans, and officers commented that this was likely reflective of a changing demographic in Bracknell Forest, and that the thresholds and judgements at Child Protection Conferences were reasonable.

A political discussion on resourcing for the increase in Child Protection Plans was likely to take place following publication of the Ofsted report.

11. Panel Announcements

The Panel were informed that at The Big Ballot event, the Looked After Children had chosen fostering and recruitment as their subject for the year.

The following updates were noted:

- Doug Jennings advised the Panel that the Foster Carers Association had won the Pride of Bracknell award for their work. The Panel sent their congratulations to Doug and all others at the Association.
- The Panel welcomed Councillor Peacey to its membership, and suggested that she may wish to take over the Work Experience and Apprenticeships remit from Councillor Heydon.

12. Date of Next Meeting and Items for Forward Plan

The date of the next meeting was 29 September 2017.

It was suggested that the Ofsted report should be discussed as an item at the next meeting.

For the December meeting, Panel members requested an update on Cornerstone, the 6 monthly Adoption report and an update on Adopt Thames Valley's progress.

CHAIRMAN