

**CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY
PANEL
8 DECEMBER 2017
11.00 AM - 1.16 PM**



Present:

Councillors Mrs Ingham (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Birch, Ms Hayes, Mrs Temperton and Ms Gaw (Substitute)

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Mrs McCracken and Peacey

26. Apologies for Absence/Substitute Members

It was noted that Councillor Ms Gaw was acting as substitute for Councillor Peacey.

27. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

28. Minutes and Matters Arising

The minutes of the last meeting were approved.

Arising from the minutes, it was noted that the Larchwood carol singing would be held on 11 December 2017 at 4-5pm.

29. Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business.

30. Six Monthly Adoption Report

Peter Hodges and Claire Cochrane presented the 6 monthly adoption report from Adopt Thames Valley (formerly Adopt Berkshire).

The report covered the period April to September 2017, before the establishment of Adopt Thames Valley.

The Cornerstone franchise had been secured in May 2017, although the agency had been working with the Cornerstone partnership for some time before this. Cornerstone ran a mentoring scheme and restorative parenting programmes, and had recently become a franchise which was proving successful.

Fostering for Adoption continued as a focus for the agency in order to reduce the number of moves and uncertainty for children, and there had been a few Fostering for Adoption placements in Bracknell Forest. It was noted that Fostering for Adoption carers were required to fulfil foster carer criteria and undergo special training.

Bracknell Forest adoption and approving adoptors timescales were good.

The idea of First Glimpse meetings was discussed, where prospective adopters could see the child in their school or foster care context without being introduced. A clear policy was being developed around this to ensure the meetings were used in the right way.

Becoming Adopt Thames Valley had created larger pools of adopters, more training opportunities and was hoped to ensure more adopted children were placed locally. The new agency had been soft launched, with a full launch due in the New Year to which Panel members would be invited. There had been some difficulties around integrating the IT systems of all Local Authorities, but these were being addressed.

Arising from questions, the following points were noted:

- 7 FTE staff members had been allocated to Adopt Berkshire staff in the new structure, and were now based in Woodley. Some Adopt Berkshire staff had chosen not to join Adopt Thames Valley.
- Where a child was placed with a Local Authority in a different area, a payment of £27k was made to the receiving agency, and £43k per sibling group. This was to cover social work time and investment. Adopt Berkshire had a greater income than expenditure through these payments.
- There was a particular need for BME adopters.
- A post-adoption support plan was developed for every match, to include therapeutic and financial support. The support plan was reviewed annually, and new adopters would be trained and mentored through Cornerstone.
- There had been one adoption breakdown across the region, but none in Bracknell Forest. It was requested that the next Annual Report detail the number of breakdowns.
- Over the next 6 months, Special Guardianship Orders would be reviewed across all Local Authorities in Adopt Thames Valley and processes aligned.
- Whereas adopters did not receive allowances, SGOs received £160 per week for clothing, food and other requirements on a means tested basis.

The Panel thanked Claire for attending the meeting and for the Annual Report.

31. **Virtual School Annual Report**

Kashif Nawaz presented the Virtual School Annual Report.

The report captured trends in performance, and a decrease in the proportion of fixed term exclusions.

Arising from the minutes, the following points were noted:

- Each child in the virtual school was visited on a termly basis by a social worker and virtual school officer, even if they were placed outside the borough.
- Young people were invited to return to Bracknell Forest for the Celebration of Achievement event if they had been placed outside the borough.
- It was requested that the time periods for Ofsted ratings for schools attended by the Virtual School cohort be clarified for the next Annual Report.
- Data regarding behaviour in school was not yet available, but was in development.
- The number of fixed term exclusions did not relate to placement stability.
- Data collected in Bracknell Forest was high quality, and led to well informed decisions being made about young people.

- The Partnership recognised the strength of partnership which was noted in the directorate Ofsted inspection, and congratulated the Virtual School team.

The Partnership thanked Kashif for his report.

32. **SiLSiP Annual Report**

The Panel watched the video of the SiLSiP summer activities, which included baking, canoeing, camping, and performing arts.

Peter Hodges praised the work of the team supporting SiLSiP, and commented that the young people enjoyed and valued the time and effort spent on organising such events.

The Panel raised the following points:

- Members of the Panel congratulated the children on their recent presentation evening, which was enjoyed by all who attended.
- The input and success of Will Nimako, Care Leavers' Participation Officer was commended, and members raised concerns over his contract coming to an end in March. Members were keen to recommend to officers that everything be done to keep Will in a permanent post, as they recognised his good work and the value of the participation officer role.
- It was noted that there was a deficit in Independent Visitors, and a recruitment process was ongoing.
- While the Panel welcomed visits to universities, it was suggested that care leavers may benefit from visiting universities closer to home, such as Reading or Guildford where they may be able to live at home.

33. **Leaving Care Service (verbal)**

Karen Robert, Head of Youth Justice and Leaving Care, and Clare Glennerster, Leaving Care Service Manager updated the Panel on the Leaving Care Service activity:

Care Leavers' Celebration Day and Mark Riddell

Will Nimako, Care Leavers Participation Officer had taken two care leavers to represent Bracknell Forest at the Care Leavers' Celebration Day at Salford University. At the event, Will had met Mark Riddell, Care Leavers' Champion for the Department for Education who had since visited Bracknell Forest Council. Mark thought the Care Leavers service was very good.

Christmas for Care Leavers'

All Care Leavers would be given a gift voucher and food voucher. Easthampstead Baptist Church had donated toiletries and other gifts for the Care Leavers, and Waitrose had given £15k to buy gifts and fund participation activities.

University

Five care leavers had started at universities in the Autumn of 2017, although one had since left to find a job with support from the Care Leaving team. Altogether, there were currently eight Bracknell Forest Care Leavers at university.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers

Karen updated on the situations of three unaccompanied asylum seekers in Bracknell Forest.

Aspirations for the Care Leavers team

Clare Glennerster commented that going forward, the Care Leavers team would be focussing on the following areas of work:

- The Care Leavers would like to be involved with the celebration ceremony.
- Council tax exemption for Bracknell Forest Care Leavers living out of the borough.
- The development of Holly House accommodation, which was due to start in January.
- Free bus passes for Care Leavers would be explored with the bus companies, and Cllr Chris Turrell, Executive Member for Planning and Transport.
- The future for Will Nimako and the Care Leaver Participation role.

34. Health of Looked After Children

Fiona Nyquist and Sharon Hickson presented an update on the Health of Looked After Children.

Bracknell Forest Health checks for Looked After Children were above average, but dental checks were slightly below average. This was due to a small number of refusals which had affected the percentage.

Health checks were conducted with Bracknell Forest children placed up to 20 miles of the Berkshire border. Where children were placed outside of 20 miles of the Berkshire border, challenges could be raised with the host authority and an escalation process had been established with NHS England where issues arose. For this reason, Looked After Children were placed within 20 miles of the Berkshire border, wherever possible, to avoid delays.

Due to the increase in the number of Looked After Children in Bracknell Forest, further funding had become available from the CCGs. There was still problems with the inflexibility of appointments, but this would be raised with the CCG if the problem continued.

Health colleagues had joined in with participation events, linked with SiLSiP, and had conducted a care leavers' questionnaire on emotional health. A health representative sat on the foster carer panel, and a Looked After Child or Care Leaver was always included on the interview panels for Health colleagues.

The Panel thanked Sharon and Fiona for attending the meeting and for their report.

35. Cornerstone Update

Peter Hodges presented the Cornerstone Update.

Cornerstone provided mentoring for adoptive families and fostering families, for children and young people.

As a result of a recent survey for carers, a monthly support group and one-to-one support for foster carers had been established.

The Panel commented from their experience that foster carers felt they needed better information about the children in their care, and to be better informed about the process. Foster carers had communicated their difficulty in caring for children with different cultural needs to their own. Although foster carers were included in the decision making process around their foster children, they often felt that their views were not heard.

36. Performance Management Information

Peter Hodges presented the Performance Management Information for the last quarter.

Overall, the stability of placements had improved. The number of children placed over 20 miles of the Berkshire border had remained consistent.

It was anticipated that the Family Safeguarding Model and Early Help service would help the number of Looked After Children to level out, or decrease.

The education data included in the information would increase.

It was suggested that performance management information be considered as the first item on the next agenda to give more time for discussion.

37. Panel Announcements

There were no panel announcements on this occasion.

38. Dates of next meetings and forward plan

The Panel noted the forward plan, and the date of the next meeting which was 16 March 2018.

CHAIRMAN

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