

**CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY
PANEL
16 MARCH 2018
11.00 AM - 1.05 PM**



Present:

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

Co-optee

Doug Jennings

Observer:

Councillor Dr Gareth Barnard

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Peacey

39. Apologies for Absence/Substitute Members

It was noted that Cllr Brossard was acting as substitute for Cllr Peacey, and Cllr Ms Gaw was acting as substitute for the vacant post following the resignation of the chairman.

40. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

41. Minutes and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2017 were approved as a correct record, subject to amending the attendance record to include Doug Jennings as an observer.

Arising from the minutes, the following points were noted:

- Will Nimako was leaving the Council at the end of March 2018, and had plans to develop his own business. The Panel recognised Will's excellent work and commented that he would be much missed.
- Members offered their support to mentor any looked after child considering their next steps in education or work. Karen Roberts agreed to relay this message to the Virtual School team. **(Action: Karen Roberts)**
- Council tax reduction for looked after children living out of borough was in the early stages of discussion.
- Holly House was under development for 10 beds, some of which were high support beds. The Service Level Agreement was being finalised. Karen Roberts agreed to organise a viewing for Panel members once the building was finished. **(Action: Karen Roberts)**
- Free bus passes for care leavers had not yet been granted, as further information was required on the financial impact of supporting care leavers up to 25.

42. **Urgent Items of Business**

There were no urgent items of business.

43. **Staying Put**

Karen Roberts (Head of Service, Youth Justice and Leaving Care) presented the Staying Put Update report.

The Staying Put policy had been revised to account for changes under Universal Credit. Before Universal Credit, care leavers had been better off when claiming benefits than when working.

Care leavers were exempt from rent payment if they were in full time education.

Arising from questions, the following points were noted:

- Universal credit automatically updated based on income, and would reflect seasonal work. This meant that each care leaver would be in a different situation dependent on their work situation.
- Universal credit was due to come into effect in May 2018.
- The Panel suggested that officers look into the impact of Universal Credit for care leavers in other Local Authority areas.
- Rental payments under Universal Credit would be paid directly to landlords.

44. **Pledge and Big Ballot**

Louise MacLennan (Participation) presented the Bracknell Big Ballot Briefing report, and asked the Panel for ideas for promotion of the event.

Arising from discussion, the following points were noted:

- More looked after young people were using the advocacy service, which was also being offered to children on Child Protection plans.
- The SiLSiP website was being launched in May 2018 alongside the Local Offer website.
- It was suggested that the Big Ballot event should begin with food to encourage attendees to chat.
- Panel members offered to assist with transport to the event, subject to the necessary DBS checks.
- The 'speed dating' section of the event for young people to get to know members was welcomed, to give young people an opportunity to get to know the Council's decision makers.
- All members of the panel should be DBS checked, and Peter Hodges resolved to check this with Democratic Services. **(Action: Peter Hodges/Lizzie Rich)**
- The Panel were asked to promote the event with foster carers wherever possible.

The Panel thanked Louise for her report.

45. **Family Safeguarding Model**

Mairead Panetta (Operational Lead for Family Safeguarding) gave a presentation on the Family Safeguarding Model. The model introduced in Hertfordshire in 2015 and is now being implemented in four Local Authorities: Bracknell Forest, Peterborough, West Berkshire, and Luton Councils..

This model was a new approach to working with child protection and children in need by using motivational interviewing, having adult workers within the children's social care teams with specialisms in mental health, domestic abuse and substance misuse. The approach aimed to increase the amount of time social workers spent with families using a variety of new tools to support families. The ethos was to keep families together.

In Hertfordshire, under the Family Safeguarding Model, Child Protection numbers and A&E attendance had reduced and school attendance had improved. Ofsted had commented that the model was effective on their inspection.

Motivational interviewing was highlighted as a particularly critical element of work, whereby staff were trained to assess where parents were on the cycle of change. The approach had been used in drug and alcohol services previously, and encouraged open questioning and forward thinking. Social workers had taken the process on board and can already see the impact when using the approach with parents.

The model was launched in Bracknell Forest at the end of October 2017, which had created specific Family Safeguarding Teams although all staff had been trained in motivational interviewing across the service.

The caseloads for social workers remained a challenge, as Bracknell Forest caseloads were on average at 18 per social worker compared to the recommended 13 under the model. Short term interventions were being planned by recruiting a family worker into the Assessment Team in an attempt to keep reduce some work going through to the Family Safeguarding teams. The establishment of the new children in care pod, with two experienced workers joining it in the next month, will also assist..

It was noted that the service currently had a higher than usual proportion of newly qualified social workers which was an added pressure this year.

The adult workers in the Family Safeguarding Model teams had been particularly welcomed as they brought energy, enthusiasm and ideas to the teams which had been seen as a real success. 40 parenting programmes had been started by these combined teams, 11 of which had been finished.

York Consulting had been appointed to evaluate the model, they have held focus groups with staff and will be meeting with ten families to track their progress under the model. .

The Child Protection numbers had been much higher at the start of the model, and had decreased at the time of the meeting. Some of this was due to the new way of working.

The case studies were noted and gave a flavour of the work being undertaken and the impact.

Arising from questions, the following points were noted:

- The workbook is electronic, where the social worker and adult workers record their case summaries and then discuss cases in group supervision sessions.. In addition there were 8 modules of a parenting programme assessment with direct work tools to use with families, parents could keep these and reflect on in between social worker visits. It was hoped that more mobile technology could be explored for social workers working in the field to encourage immediate case note recording.

- One new mental health worker had been recruited to work with parents with mental health needs under the model, but also had skills to work with children where necessary. A second such worker will start next month.
- A Joint Executive Board across Bracknell Forest and West Berkshire had been established to consider the key performance indicators and the sustainability of the model, to encourage funding from partners.
- A report on the Family Safeguarding Model had been requested to come to the Children, Young People and Learning Overview and Scrutiny meeting in June 2018.
- It was clarified that all new referrals came through the MASH into the Assessment team, and if the criteria for Family Safeguarding was met, the process would be passed to a Family Safeguarding Team. The MASH and Family Safeguarding teams were separate, but worked closely together.

The Panel thanked Mairead for her presentation.

46. **Child Looked After (CLA) POD**

Peter Hodges (Head of Service, Children Looked After) presented the Children Looked After (CLA) POD report.

The current model for Children Looked After was spread across the under and over 11s teams. It was proposed that a dedicated Children Looked After team be established who could work with children who the Local Authority was sure would remain looked after. The new team would be able to support life journey work, and would not have other allocated cases to work alongside. Having an established team would ensure continuity for Children Looked After throughout their childhood, and would ensure that Children Looked After always had access to someone to speak to. The new team was proposed to start in May 2018. Appointments had been made to all positions, and Peter was confident that all appointed staff were passionate about Children Looked After.

The Children Looked After function had been judged Outstanding by Ofsted, however there was still progress to be made.

Arising from questions, the following points were noted:

- All social workers had an opportunity to join the new team, and all staff had been consulted. One post had been moved from the Under 11s team to this new team.
- The Over 11s team was now a Family Safeguarding Team. There remained a small number of dedicated Under 11s social workers.
- The criteria for the Children Looked After Pod was that all children were subject to a care order where there was no plan for reunification or legal permanence, where the matter was not before the court.
- The governance of the team had been established in consultation with staff. All staff in the new team had been appointed through expressions of interest rather than restructuring.
- Members welcomed the Life Journey work, as it was felt that it was important to record and communicate to children why they were in care.
- It was noted that all the social work appointments to the new team were female. Officers commented that there had been no men apply for the role, but the importance and rarity of male social workers was recognised.

47. **Corporate Parenting Resource Pack**

Peter Hodges (Head of Service, Children Looked After) presented the Corporate Parenting Resource Pack, which was for the use of the panel to demonstrate the impact of their work.

Arising from discussion, the following points were noted:

- The Panel requested that an annual report on the Corporate Parenting function be presented to Council, to encourage all members to recognise their role as Corporate Parents. This report should recognise achievements of the panel, document questions and other activity. However it was noted that this would need to be member-led rather than officer led to be effective. **(Action: The CPAP chair to co-ordinate)**
- The Panel noted the foster carer survey, and proposed that additional support was required for foster carers. The findings from an update to the survey would be brought back to the Panel. **(Action: Peter Hodges)**
- It was clarified that all foster parents were involved in care planning and training plans, however support was not available 24 hours a day. The Council's Emergency Duty Service would answer calls during certain hours of the night.
- It was clarified that Special Guardians were also given training where a Special Guardianship Order was awarded by the courts. This was particularly relevant for grandparents, who were encouraged to reflect on their own parenting approach.
- The stability index took into account placement moves, school moves and changes in social worker. This information was held collectively between social work and the Virtual School.
- Return interviews following missing episodes were monitored closely, and a social worker would visit the child at distance if necessary. The benchmark for return interviews was 72 hours, but social workers often visited on the same day.
- It was requested that Missing information be included in the regular performance management information. **(Action: Lorna Hunt)**
- Members commented that they had particularly enjoyed mentoring looked after young people in the past, and requested that officers take the offer of mentoring back.
- It was suggested that the befriending system be advertised further to address the waiting list.

48. **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 5).

49. **Performance Management Information**

The Panel noted the high number of placements for older children who were historically more difficult to place due to their complex needs.

There was an increase in the number of children being placed for adoption.

The Panel raised concerns that the number of children refusing health checks had increased. It was noted that health and dental assessments were a current focus this quarter.

The Panel recognised the pressures on a fostering team which had been designed for fewer children.

Bracknell Forest had around 50 foster carers and numbers remained stable although recruitment of carers was a key priority.

50. **Panel Announcements**

There were no panel announcements on this occasion.

51. **Date of next meetings**

The date of the next meeting was 22 June 2018.

CHAIRMAN