

**CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY
PANEL
6 JULY 2018
2.00 - 4.15 PM**



Present:

Councillors Dr Barnard (Chairman), Mrs Ingham (Vice-Chairman), Ms Hayes and Peacey

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Mrs Birch and Mrs Temperton

1. Election of Chairman for 2018/19

RESOLVED that Cllr Dr Barnard be elected Chairman for the municipal year 2018/19.

2. Appointment of Vice-Chair for 2018/19

RESOLVED that Cllr Mrs Ingham be appointed Vice-Chair for the municipal year 2018/19.

3. Apologies for Absence/Substitute Members

There were no substitute members in attendance.

4. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5. Minutes and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2018 were approved as a correct record.

6. Urgent Items of Business

There were no Urgent Items of Business.

7. Children Looked After (CLA) Missing Annual Report

Nick Young, Exploitation Prevention Manager presented the Children Looked After (CLA) Missing Annual Report.

The overall number of Children Looked After in Bracknell Forest had increased by 18%, with the greatest increase in the 10-17 year old age bracket. Children were often placed at a distance away from their home to protect them, however these children could go missing by attempting to return home.

There was a smaller proportion of children who now went missing more frequently. Nick explained a case study around this which dealt with a young person who went missing associated with county lines drug supply and criminal exploitation.

Nick explained County Lines, which was when criminals from London used individuals in peripheral towns such as Bracknell with good access to motorways to distribute drugs, often carried by vulnerable young people. 'Cuckooing' was a term for when drug dealers took over the home of a vulnerable person and operated from their home. Young people involved in these practices were taught not to release information to professionals, which made it very difficult for partners to work with them. Bracknell Forest had commissioned the St Giles Trust from London to train staff and work with young people at risk of gang involvement.

The exploitation prevention manager was a new role created in April 2018. The team would continue to expand, and it was hoped that a specialist police officer could be seconded to the team. The expanded team gave increased capacity, particularly to conduct return home interviews with children placed at distance.

Sexual Exploitation Missing Risk Assessment Conference (SEMRAC) was a large multi-agency meeting which included representation from schools, health and children's social care to discuss individual cases of concern.

In response to questions, the following points were noted:

- Whenever a child looked after went missing, the Chief Executive and Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning were briefed on the situation.
- Children Looked After who went missing from a placement outside of Bracknell Forest would have a return home interview, which would be emailed to the host Local Authority and Police Force. Strong connections were maintained with placements out of area.
- If children were involved with a London gang, it could be difficult for them to return to area from a placement.
- It was stressed that although in some cases, family influences could be positive, this was not always the case.
- Consistency in visitors was important, and it was valuable to have the same social worker visit children placed out of area on each visit to build a relationship.
- It was noted that children placed out of area remained under the responsibility of the placing authority.

The Panel thanked Nick for his report.

8. Statement of Purpose, Annual Report and Ofsted Inspection Review for Larchwood

Lou Richer, Team Manager Children's Social Care attending the meeting to present the Larchwood Statement of Purpose and Annual Report.

Larchwood Short Breaks Unit offered respite care and a 'home away from home' for children with disabilities. The unit had been inspected by Ofsted in March 2018 under the new Ofsted guidance, and had been deemed Outstanding in every area.

Larchwood was a source of income generation for the authority as the unit provided services to children from other Local Authorities, so the cost of the unit to Bracknell Forest was mitigated.

Larchwood had cared for 18 children over the past financial year, and the spaces left by children leaving the care of the unit had been filled through a high turnover.

Ofsted had highlighted the fact that children's views, wishes and feelings were listened to and personal requests taken into account.

The unit worked closely with a number of schools including Kennel Lane, and benefitted from close links between school and Larchwood staff to aid transition periods between Larchwood and school.

Larchwood had its own safeguarding policy which focussed on issues particular to the care of disabled children.

New care planning headings had been introduced to encourage children to be involved in their own care.

In response to questions, the following points were noted:

- It was expected that families were able to stay together because of the high quality respite they received from Larchwood.
- The children at Larchwood had a very good relationship with staff, and enjoyed spending time there.
- Children at Larchwood were technically children looked after, as they were in the care of the unit for more than 75 nights per year.
- Although Larchwood was equipped to look after sick children requiring respite care, these children were often looked after at similar provisions run by Health partners.

The Panel thanked Lou for her report.

9. **Life Chances Annual Report**

Peter Hodges presented the Life Chances Annual Report.

The Life Chances team met once a month to review cases which required additional support. Placement stability, health and education of children looked after were all assessed, and these aspects were RAG rated based on need. The team ensured that their decisions were consistent with that of SEMRAC judgements.

The Life Chances team were proud of the strong health indicators for Bracknell Forest Children Looked After. Any non-completions was due to the child refusing to go to the doctor or dentist. Health colleagues were very encouraging towards young people, and often achieved better outcomes through relationships.

The creation of the Children Looked After Pod had helped the Life Chances work, and had ensured that the child was prioritised. The Pod had meant that young people always had someone they knew to speak with, even if their social worker unavailable.

The Life Chances conference had representation from all partner groups, such as teachers, foster carers, elected members and social workers.

Ofsted had found that Life Chances work at Bracknell Forest demonstrated joined up working, and met the needs of complex children.

In response to questions, the following points were noted:

- A number of Children Looked After did receive orthodontic treatment as well as dentistry.

- The Family Safeguarding Model was the key to supporting families, through more concise reporting.
- The Children Looked After POD had meant that social workers in other PODs could focus on keeping existing families together.
- Where a family needed to be relocated due to being at risk of exploitation, the Police would liaise with social care.

The Panel thanked Peter for his report.

10. **Statement of Purpose and Annual Report for the Fostering Service and Private Fostering**

Roseanne Turner, Fostering Team presented the Statements of Purpose and Annual Reports for the Fostering and Private Fostering service.

Private fostering

A private fostering arrangement was an agreement entered by a child's parents than they would live with a relative or friend, and not with their parents for more than 28 consecutive days. If notified of the arrangement, the Local Authority would do checks on the placement, and would bring the matter to the Fostering Panel for quality assurance purposes.

The number of private fostering arrangements notified to the Council remained small in Bracknell Forest, and it was unclear whether this was a true reflection of the total number of arrangements. The notifications received had come from carers rather than professionals.

Residents were being encouraged to report private fostering arrangements by promotion through the Bracknell Forest website and video, and through information distributed to community locations such as GP surgeries and schools.

Fostering

Recruitment of new foster carers had been difficult over the past year, although the reasons for this were unknown. The current year had improved in Bracknell Forest, and members were reassured that the next year's annual report would reflect these changes.

The Local Authority had been particularly challenged in the last year due to the increase in Children Looked After which had not been reflected in an increase of foster carers. The number of Special Guardianship Orders had increased to 43, and this reflected a pattern of increase.

In response to questions, the following points were noted:

- Collaboration between foster carers and the fostering panel was working well.
- Carers who came to fostering panel felt supported, carefully interviewed and felt that a good relationship was formed.
- There were a number of reasons why enquiries were not converting into new foster carers, such as logistical issues of lack of space, to the emotional journey required from new foster carers. Officers would visit a family as soon as possible once they had expressed an interest in foster caring.
- As a small authority in Berkshire, Bracknell Forest was competing with other Local Authorities for foster carers, but had a higher target for recruitment than other authorities.
- Members were reassured that all enquirers were supported while waiting.

- When a mystery shopper had called the Fostering team to assess the service, they had received good response and felt valued.

11. **Statement of Purpose and Annual Report for Adoption**

Claire Corcoran presented the Statement of Purpose and Annual Report for Adoption. The report was the first of its kind from Adopt Thames Valley following the merge including Adopt Berkshire.

It was noted that the move to Adopt Berkshire had been a success, despite a change of systems and management to align with processes in Oxfordshire.

Adopt Berkshire worked well in conjunction with Bracknell Forest's social work teams, and attended tracking meetings to ensure they were aware of all children who may require adoption placements. Adopt Berkshire staff also offered training sessions to foster carers to prepare them for the introduction phase between children and adopters. Children in Bracknell Forest progressed to adoption quickly.

The move to Adopt Thames Valley had not affected the levels of enquiries as anticipated, and the team maintained the same number of visits for Bracknell Forest as they had under Adopt Berkshire.

Claire commented that the primary difficulty was the adoption of larger sibling groups.

In response to questions, the following points were noted:

- There had been a few delayed legacy cases from Adopt Berkshire, however the evidence demonstrated that there was no significant delay to children being adopted.
- The Panel requested that the next Annual Report include data on the time between identifying a match and granting an adoption order.
- Although the adoption function was handled by Adopt Thames Valley, the children remained the responsibility of Bracknell Forest who tracked their progress closely and assessed whether there were any delays to their adoption.
- There were a number of children with complex needs for whom finding the right placement was a challenge.
- There had been 24 adoption matches in the last quarter across Thames Valley. It was felt that a larger pool of adopters across Thames Valley had helped to give better matches to adoptees. Adopt Thames Valley also offered more marketing and enquiries resourcing, and meant that information sessions could be run more regularly.
- A child waiting for adoption would continue to receive support from their social worker.

The Panel thanked Claire for her report.

12. **Plans for Future Meetings**

This item was postponed to take place in a workshop for panel members in the autumn.

13. **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 14)

14. **Performance Management Information**

The Panel considered the latest performance management information.

It was agreed that in future, any questions on the dataset should be emailed to the responsible officer prior to the meeting, allowing the Panel extra time to consider the Key Performance Indicators which would be established at the forthcoming workshop.

15. **Dates for Future Meetings**

21 September 2018

CHAIRMAN