

**CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY  
PANEL  
29 SEPTEMBER 2010  
5.00 - 7.05 PM**



**Present:**

Councillors Mrs Ryder (Chairman), Mrs McCracken (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Angell, Mrs Birch and Beadsley

**Apologies for absence were received from:**

Councillors Mrs Shillcock and Edger

**14. Substitute Members**

The Committee noted the attendance of the following Substitute Members:

Councillor Beadsley for Councillor Mrs Shillcock

**15. Minutes and Matters Arising**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 19 May 2010 and the training session held on 6 July 2010 be agreed as a correct record.

Matters arising –

- (i) Visit to Rainforest Walk – Councillors Mrs Ryder, Mrs McCracken and Mrs Angell attended the informative visit where Area Manager, Fiona Nelson, gave them an idea of the services that were offered.
- (ii) Revised Terms of Reference – the revised terms of reference had been submitted to the Departmental Management Team and would be submitted to the Executive on 19 October. The Advisory Panel would be updated at the next meeting.
- (iii) Care Leaver Accommodation Scheme – Sheila McKeand updated the Panel on discussions she had with Clare Dorning, Head of Housing Needs, about accommodation for care leavers. No specific plan for accommodation for care leavers had been identified. Overall, care leavers needs were being appropriately met. A floating support service had been commissioned from One Support.

**16. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**17. Report on SiLSiP Meeting held on 18 August 2010**

The Panel noted the minutes of the SILSIP meeting held on 18 August 2010. The Chairman reported that it had been a well attended meeting and she hoped it would be possible to build upon the basic structure of SILSIP.

The Panel watched a photograph slide show of the young people's holiday to the Mill Residential Centre. It was hoped to continue such holidays as they gave foster carers a break and gave the young people the opportunity to have fun whilst participating.

The Panel noted that SILSIP young people applied to the Youth Opportunities Fund for funds to put towards the Awards Ceremony and received £1800. The young people had put forward suggestions for a fun activity to take place after the formal award ceremony.

#### **18. LAC Examination Results and Education Awards Ceremony**

The Panel noted the report of Tony Mansfield, the Education Co-ordinator for Looked After Children, on the end of Key Stage 4 results for the academic year 2009-2010 for those nine students who were in the care of Bracknell Forest Council and who had been looked after continuously during the academic year. Also reported were Key Stage 2 results and Post 16 students, including care leavers who were engaged in education and training. Tony Mansfield highlighted –

- The young people had performed well this year.
- There had been a real change in the importance social workers gave to education and there was now more emphasis on the social worker working with the school. .
- Results had been broadly in line with targets and predictions.
- BTEC grades appeared to be higher than corresponding GCSE grades.
- In the case of one out of area placement, Bracknell Forest had taken the area's education authority to the adjudicator to get the school placement considered most suitable for the student.

Arising in discussion –

- There was a dedicated Connexions worker for post 16 young people.
- Not as many had dropped out of further education as in previous years. There were sometimes difficulties for care leavers struggling with further education at a time when they had to be more independent than when at school and this stage often coincided with leaving a foster placement to move to more independent living. Students were discouraged from leaving care too early in an attempt to avoid this situation. The Panel noted that this was being monitored and students who dropped out often came back to education a few years later.

Tony advised the Panel that the young people had asked to go to Laser Quest as part of the Awards Ceremony and staff were currently negotiating the cost of this activity.

The Chairman thanked Tony for a very interesting report and asked the Panel to let Penny Reuter know if there was any additional information they would like included in next year's report.

#### **19. Performance Report**

Sarah Roberts presented the short performance report giving an overview of performance of Children's Social Care for looked after children for the year to 30 June 2010.

Arising in discussion –

- The overall numbers of looked after children, excluding short break care, had increased over the year from 76 to 86.
- Five young people had moved twice so far this year but over the longer term the trend line analysis showed a slight decrease in the number of placement moves occurring between July 2008 (8) and June 2010 (4).

In order to improve the outcomes of looked after children there was a strategy and action plan to –

- attempt to understand the child's needs and make the correct placement;
- identify and predict issues arising before placements became unstable;
- support foster carers to live through unstable patches.

The Panel noted that many placements had a natural lifespan and the size of different age groups would always affect placement moves and there was more movement in teenage year groups.

When asked why other areas appeared to succeed and met the targets on placement moves when Bracknell Forest had not, Penny Reuter pointed out that Bracknell's data was very accurate. Sarah Roberts would investigate further and contact West Berkshire and Windsor & Maidenhead, whose movement numbers were low, and Buckinghamshire to see if any reasons could be found for Bracknell's higher statistics.

A map was tabled of out of area placements as at the end of June 2010. A previous requirement was to place within 20 miles but that had changed and the Council should now look to place within the authority's boundary. The Panel noted that there was more likely to be more foster carers and residential homes in more rural or impoverished areas where there was less employment and cheaper properties.

The Panel asked for the out of area placement map to be provided annually.

## 20. **Looked After Children Commissioning Strategy Action Plan**

The Panel noted the commissioning strategy for looked after children action plan 2009/2012, the actions of which had been updated as at September 2010.

Arising in response to questions about foster carer recruitment –

- Sheila McKeand referred to the marketing approach taken to encourage people to come forward for assessment. 16 households attended the last information open evening and it was anticipated that quite a few will apply to be assessed. Some applications had already been received and it will therefore be necessary to run a second preparation group.
- The economic climate may have increased interest.
- It was not known if there had been interest to foster teenagers.

The Panel noted that –

- The recruitment of a youth worker for vulnerable children had been successful but the in year cuts to the Area Based Grant meant the post was deleted. Integrated Youth Support would identify areas where the youth service could provide a service for some looked after young people.
- There had been poor attendance at the open evening for supported lodgings.
- An action plan had been drawn up for developing the Children in Care Council (SILSIP).

The Chairman thanked the officers for a very informative report. If members had any further questions they should contact Penny Reuter.

## 21. **Employment of Care Leavers**

Sheila McKeand advised the Panel that there had been good developments in the employment of care leavers –

- A successful bid had been made for Government grant money for a project on employment for care leavers and other vulnerable groups, specifically people with learning difficulties, mental ill-health and ex-offenders. The money had been used towards compiling a recruitment pack and appointing a project manager to drive the project forward.
- Presentations would be made to managers in the new year.
- A Children's Social Care seminar would be held on 18 October to advise workers of the opportunities available for care leavers. A Connexions Specialist Advisor would attend.

## 22. **Information Items**

### 22.1 **Children and Young People's Trust Minutes**

The Panel noted the minutes of the meeting of the Children & Young People's Trust held on 27 May 2010.

### 22.2 **Berkshire East: Health of Looked After Children Annual Report 2009-2010**

The Panel noted the NHS Berkshire East: Health of Looked After Children Annual Report 2009-2010. Members were advised that this report would be discussed at the meeting on 9 March 2011 and members were asked to retain this report and bring it to the meeting to avoid printing it again.

## 23. **Dates of Future Meetings**

15 December 2010 – IRO Service Annual Report  
Annual Performance Report  
SiLSIP attending

9 March 2011 – Leaving Care Process

A suggestion was made that it may be possible next year to arrange a visit to a children's home, as the training session for the Panel.