

**CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY  
PANEL  
15 DECEMBER 2010  
5.00 - 7.20 PM**



**Present:**

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

**Apologies for absence were received from:**

Councillors Mrs Birch and Mrs Shillcock

**24. Welcome**

The Chairman gave a special welcome to SILSiP members attending the meeting and introductions were made around the table.

**25. Substitute Members**

The Committee noted the attendance of the following Substitute Members:

Councillor Beadsley for Councillor Mrs Shillcock

**26. Minutes and Matters Arising**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 29 September 2010 be agreed as a correct record.

Arising from the minutes –

- (i) Revised terms of reference – The revised terms of reference were approved by the Executive on 19 October. A copy is attached to the minutes as an annex.
- (ii) Naming of SiLSiP members in the minutes – The minutes of the meeting were a public document and the young people from SiLSiP who attended the meeting had no objection to their first names being recorded in the minutes.

**27. Children in Care Council: "Say it Loud, Say it Proud"**

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Louise Hopkinson, the Children's Participation Development Officer, who attended the meeting with Amy, Frankie, Liz and Luke, SiLSiP members. The young people gave presentations on the activities at SiLSiP over the past year which included –

- A Take Over Day where the young people took over part of the Foster Carers' Conference and tested carers' knowledge on the UN Rights of the Child. The foster carers used voting handsets to register their answers and a box of chocolates was awarded as the prize.

- In August 2010 11 young people went on a very enjoyable three day break to the Mill Residential Centre in Dorking, Surrey where they took part in circus skills, go karting, kayaking and team building games. They all agreed they would like to repeat the experience. The Panel noted that the young people would be involved in organising a future trip.
- On 27 June 2010 SiLSiP members attended an annual children's rights convention at Legoland in Windsor.
- SiLSiP put in a successful bid to the Youth Opportunities Fund for funding towards the Education Awards Event. At the Awards, SiLSiP members gave a presentation promoting the work of SiLSiP. After the formal presentations at Easthampstead Baptist Church the young people went to Laser Quest at the Big Apple, Wokingham.

Louise Hopkinson outlined plans for next year –

- The arrangement to get together with other looked after children in Berkshire had been cancelled due to the snow and would be re-arranged.
- The next SiLSiP newsletter was in the process of preparation and would be sent to all members of the Panel.

Councillor Mrs Angell congratulated SiLSiP members on the excellent quiz they conducted at the Panel's training session in July 2010.

The Chairman thanked the young people for attending the meeting and wished them a happy, peaceful and enjoyable Christmas and New Year.

## 28. **Independent Reviewing Officer Service Annual Report and Council Response**

Sandra Davies, Head of Performance & Governance, Children, Young People & Learning, introduced the fifth annual report on the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Service and the Council's response. A revised Annex 1, the cover report to the Executive member for Children, Young People and Learning, was tabled at the meeting. Annex 2 was the Council's response.

The Panel noted that

- the Department for Education had confirmed that their guidance would not change but the role of the IRO was under discussion on how it may develop in the longer term. A briefing paper would be brought to the next meeting of the Panel.
- the IRO's annual reports had demonstrated a consistency of approach over a number of years, and the excellent professionalism of the IRO had been important to the successful delivery of the service.

Jan Poole, the IRO, highlighted the following from her report –

- 230 looked after children reviews were held, 228 (99%) of which had been conducted within statutory timescales.
- 93.3% of the children and young people participated in their reviews.
- 10 reviews were chaired by the young person themselves.
- In May 2010 following the introduction of the Short Break Statutory Guidance on how to promote the welfare of disabled children using short breaks, an internal review had been conducted of the children and young people in receipt of short breaks under Section 20(4) of the Children Act 1989. Short

break care reviews were given equal importance to those for children who were classed as fully looked after.

- The IRO considered family contact for two children in long term foster care to be too frequent because of evidence of it causing instability for the children and disruption of the placements, a situation already recognised by Children's Social Care. An independent assessment resulted in a reduction in contact frequency for one. In the second case, care proceedings had been initiated, after legal advice.
- In the period of the report the numbers of looked after children had increased by 11.8% from 76 to 85 children but this increase in numbers was not the only pressure on the service. Completing all reviews on time presented a challenge and, in recognition of the increase, some additional resource had been identified to support the IRO, currently as a short term measure.
- Attendance of the IRO at events such as the Foster Carers' Conference and Foster Carers' preparation groups would assist in developing a greater understanding of the review process. The Panel asked the officers to take this on board.

Arising from questions by members –

- The IRO expanded on the reasons why a young person may not contribute to their review.
- Overarching Permanence Plans were presented to the review by the Social Worker. They set out the umbrella plan proposed for the child by the local authority. The Care Plan worked towards implementing the Permanency Plan which was a longer term plan aiming at a permanent result for the child. This may include returning home to their family, remaining cared for in a foster or residential placement or, on occasion, adoption.
- There were issues around a young person wishing to stay with their foster carer after the age of 18. It highlighted the need to review Pathway Plans at 16 to 18. There were a number of pilots across the country on young people staying with their carers beyond the age of 18.
- There had been a significant increase in the number of children being placed with families in Bracknell Forest. There had been two successful campaigns to recruit foster carers.
- There was a shortage of supported lodgings for young people aged 16+. Carers offering supported lodgings were assessed like foster carers but they offered a more independent level of care than living with a foster family. The Panel noted that under new legislation, 16/17 year olds would be assessed under the Children's Act, not the Housing Act, and would be more likely to be looked after.
- Parental involvement in a review was always encouraged, but sometimes parents were seen separately from the child if the IRO considered that necessary to avoid emotional abuse or undermining the child.

The Panel noted the report and the Council's response, particularly issues mentioned in paragraphs 5.8 to 5.10 on Pathway Planning for young people, the quality and sufficiency of placements, including the duty from April 2011 to provide sufficient accommodation locally, and the provision of therapeutic services for which there was new guidance. There was now a dedicated post in the specialist CAMHS team to support the needs of looked after children. The need for placements was a challenge for small authorities but if it was not met there was a potential for an adverse judgement. Regional commissioning was currently being investigated.

The Panel thanked Jan for a very interesting report which gave an insight into the Borough's looked after children. This would be Jan's last meeting as she was leaving Bracknell Forest. The Panel wished her all the best for the future.

## 29. **Annual Performance Report and Monitoring Report**

The Panel noted the annual performance including a tabled amendment. Sarah Roberts explained the significance of some of the individual indicators –

- NI 62 - The number of children with three or more placement changes during the year had increased from 13.4% to 19.3%.
- NI 63 - The long term stability of children under 16 had decreased slightly from 52.4% to 50%.
- NI 66 - The timeliness of reviews had increased from 91.3% to 95.3%.
- NI 101 – eight young people achieved 5 A -C GCSEs compared to nil last year.
- NI 148 – The number of care leavers in suitable education, employment or training had decreased from 36.45 TO 30%.

The Panel noted the performance monitoring report, correct as at 30 September 2010. Sarah Roberts highlighted –

- The number of looked after children was consistently in the 80's.
- The explanation of the legal status categories of children looked after.
- The statistics for 15 authorities were charted showing the stability of placements of looked after children from April 2004 to March 2010, ie, the number of children who had three or more placement moves.

The Panel questioned the reasons for Bracknell Forest's statistics compared to the comparator authorities. Some possible reasons were –

- One authority's age profile of looked after children was mainly younger. Rigorous monitoring was undertaken, particularly of those children with two changes of placement and those deemed to be at risk of placement breakdown.
- Another authority had 70% of it's children fostered within the authority's area and employed a Life Chances team to give additional support to those at risk.
- A further authority historically had an issue around under-recording whereas officers were confident that Bracknell Forest's data was accurate.

Sheila McKeand explained the process in place in Bracknell Forest to assist placement stability –

- A Placement Planning Panel met monthly and considered cases, particularly where
  - the social worker was concerned that the child was on the edge of coming into care;
  - there were problems in a placement;
  - external placements needed review.
- A sufficiency duty plan would be available in April 2011.

The Panel noted that work would be undertaken on best practice and the male/female breakdown of the placement moves.

## 30. **Date of Next Meeting**

9 March 2011                      Leaving care process  
Berkshire East: Health of Looked After Children Annual Report  
2009-2010 (Sharon Hickson, LAC Nurse)