

**CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY
PANEL
9 MARCH 2011
5.00 - 7.20 PM**



Present:

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

Councillor Barnard, Executive Member for Children and Young People

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Mrs Shillcock

31. Substitute Members

The Committee noted the attendance of the following Substitute Member:

Councillor Beadsley for Councillor Mrs Shillcock

32. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

33. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2010 be agreed as a correct record, subject to recording the apologies of Councillor Barnard.

Matter arising –

Minute 28, Independent Reviewing Officer – The Panel noted that an appointment had been made to the IRO vacancy and Carol Lamkin would take up the post at the end of March. An agency was currently providing IRO cover.

34. The Leaving Care Process

Fiona Gibbins, Manager of the Over 11's Team, presented the report of the Director of Children, Young People and Learning on information collated from interviews with five Bracknell Forest care leavers.

Fiona referred to two sets of recently published new guidance relating to the care leavers' process and emphasised to the Panel that Bracknell Forest was already implementing many of the envisaged changes. She particularly referred to –

- The preparation with the young person of a pathway care plan detailing transition and the leaving care process. This would commence at fifteen and a half and the first one should be completed within nine months. The current pathway plan was being used as a consultative document.
- Bursaries for care leavers in higher education.

- Support up to the age of 25, if requested.
- Statutory reviews in the case of any move from regulated to unregulated care.

Fiona gave several scenarios, showing the differing support needs of individual care leavers. These illustrated the challenges the young people and social workers faced.

Arising in discussion –

- The possibility of an analysis of those young people wanting to leave care at an early age.
- The need to demonstrate more the benefits of supported lodging and to increase that provision.
- Mother and baby units available for young people with babies.

The Chairman thanked Fiona for a very interesting report.

35. **Berkshire East: Health of Looked After Children**

Sharon Hickson, Designated Nurse for Looked After Children, Berkshire East Community Health Services, presented the annual report on the health of looked after children 2009-2010.

Specific responsibilities of the Designated Nurse were –

- Advisory role to looked after children, carers and other professional involved in their care.
- Statutory duty to provide advice to the PCT on planning, strategy and audit of quality standards in relation to health services for looked after children.
- Policy and procedures.
- Liaison with health professionals undertaking health assessments.
- Monitoring and performance management including audits on the quality of health assessments.
- Annual report.
- Clinical governance and audit.

Arising in discussion –

- The difficulty of getting out of area assessments carried out within the statutory timeframe. Notification of placement change remained an issue.
- Notification of when a child became looked after had been an issue in the past.
- Why did Bracknell Forest perform just above average, when other comparable authorities did better? Some other authorities did not have as many children out of area and did not do initial assessments within the statutory timeframes. In Bracknell's small cohort, three or four refusing to undertake an assessment made a difference to the statistics.
- Some health authorities charged local authorities for health assessments. East Berkshire did not.
- Inequitable access to CAMHS was a problem and access for children placed out of area remained a significant concern.

The Chairman thanked Sharon for an interesting report.

36. **Performance Monitoring Report**

The Panel noted the performance monitoring report for the year to December 2010.

The overall numbers of looked after children and the siblings groups had remained fairly consistent. Abuse/neglect had remained the largest category of need. The current trend in placement stability had improved from 19.3% in 2009/10 and currently stood at 8.7%. 56% of looked after children were out of area.

The Panel noted that officers were working with unitary colleagues to provide services and support each other.

37. Briefing on Changes in Care Planning Regulations, including Changes in IRO Role

Sarah Roberts introduced the report of the Director of Children, Young People and Learning on the changes in policy and practice arising from new regulations and guidance with effect from 1 April 2011. The main changes were –

- Greater emphasis on keeping children within their own communities. Clear evidence had to be provided where this could not be achieved.
- Specific rehabilitative duty to return children to the person with parental responsibility where consistent with the child's welfare.
- Significant increase in the role of the Independent Reviewing Officer in care planning.
- Care plans would be an over-arching document, bringing together all key historical and planning information for a looked after child and must include a full health plan and a Personal Education Plan. Those accommodated by agreement with the parents must now also have a care plan.
- Detailed placement plans, setting out how the child's day-to-day needs would be met, must be included in the care plan. Disruption to their education was to be avoided, particularly at Key Stage 4. Placement of a looked after child, usually a care leaver, in an unregulated setting was subject to an assessment of suitability.
- Children in Need plans must be drawn up when children accommodated under section 20 of the 1989 Act ceased to be looked after and returned home.
- The power to approve an emergency placement with family and friends for a period up to 16 weeks.
- A framework for local authorities to determine whether short breaks for disabled or other children was best provided to them as children in need or looked after children. The length of placements had been reduced to 17 days for a single short break period and total duration of 75 days in any 12 month period.
- Duty to visit children who ceased to be looked after as a result of being taken into custody and who were not eligible for leaving care support.
- Local authorities to show that they were taking reasonable and active steps to ensure that there was sufficiency accommodation within their area to meet local needs.
- Pathway plans to be prepared for all eligible children and continued for all relevant and former relevant children. There was now a duty to former relevant children under 25 who wished to take up a program of education or training.

The Panel thanked Sarah for a very interesting report and noted that –

- Many of the new requirements were already in place in Bracknell Forest.
- The new regulations included significant new requirements entailing a substantial increase in work load and possible future additional financial costs

to support former relevant children who returned to education. An additional half time IRO post would be appointed.

38. Dates of Future Meetings and Forward Plan

8 June 2011	Training session
6 July 2011	Placement Sufficiency: residential, fostering, adoption
28 September 2011	Education – examination results
14 December 2011	IRO service annual report

39. Final meeting for some Members/Officer

This was the last meeting for Councillors Mrs Jacqui Ryder and Mike Beadsley and Penny Reuter, Chief Officer: Children's Social Care.

Penny would retire in April and, on behalf of the Panel, the Chairman thanked Penny for all her work in Children's Social Care and particularly in support of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel. The Panel had achieved much good work since its inception and as a result of this the Chairman had recently been invited to one of the other unitary authorities to speak to their councillors about what we did around corporate parenting in Bracknell Forest. The Panel wished Penny the very best for her retirement and the next chapter in her life and as a token of their thanks presented her with an orchid.

Penny responded that it had been a good experience working with the Panel and that much of the success of the Panel was attributable to the leadership of the Chairman, Councillor Mrs Jacqui Ryder, who was not seeking re-election in May. Jacqui had been enthusiastically committed to the welfare of Bracknell's looked after children and care leavers, attending many corporate parenting events and SiLSiP, the Children in Care Council. On behalf of the Panel, Councillor Mrs McCracken presented the Chairman with a gift of candlesticks in recognition and thanks for her work with looked after children in Bracknell Forest.

Councillor Mrs Ryder responded that she had enjoyed chairing CPAP for the past four years, working with members and officers, and had found it very rewarding. She hoped the new Chairman would enjoy the office as much as she had.

Councillor Mike Beadsley was not standing for re-election in May and the Chairman thanked him for his support of CPAP.

CHAIRMAN