

**CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY
PANEL
8 JUNE 2011
5.00 - 7.20 PM**



Present:

Councillors Mrs McCracken (Chairman designate), Mrs Birch, Ms Brown, Ms Hayes and Heydon

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Mrs Barnard, Kendall, Ms Whitbread and Ms Wilson

1. Welcome

Members were welcomed and introductions were made around the table.

2. Training Programme

An introduction to the role of the Corporate Parent. A structure chart of Children's Social Care was tabled.

3. Who are our Looked After Children?

Sheila McKeand gave a presentation a copy of which would be attached to the minutes of the session. The presentation encompassed age range, legal status, origins, categories, planning, regulations, where they live, leaving care. A care plan was tabled.

If children had a Care Order the Council shared Parental Responsibility with the parents and could make decisions for the child. For children accommodated at the request of their parent the parent retained Parental Responsibility and the Council must seek the agreement of the parent for any significant decision. .

The Looked After Children service is one of the most regulated services.

Corinne Sharp, a foster carer and Vice Chairman of the Foster Carers' Association attended the session and answered member's questions about her experiences of fostering in Bracknell Forest. Arising from questions:

- Key measures of success included encouraging young people leaving care to engage in employment, education or training (EET). This was measured by what the young person was doing on their 19th birthday
- Corinne gave an example of one of her successes, her first young person who returned to her parents after several years.
- The Association of Foster Carers supported foster carers and held events.
- Good training was available to people wishing to become foster carers. The process took about 6 to 8 months to give people the time to seriously consider what they were undertaking. Foster carers had a supervising social worker who visited at least monthly.

- There was an out of hours phone line till 11pm, for any problems and of course there was 24 hour EDT cover.
- Foster carers had to be resilient, optimistic and have a sense of humour.

The Panel thanked Corinne for an interesting insight into life as a foster carer.

4. **The Roles and Responsibilities of Corporate Parents**

Sarah Roberts, Policy and Commissioning Officer, presented on the roles and responsibilities of corporate parents, attached to the minutes. Frank Dobson defined the role in 1998:

“For children who are looked after, your council has a legal and moral duty to try to provide the kind of loyal support that any good parents would give to their children ...you should do your utmost to make sure that children in the public care get a good start in life...”

Levels of responsibility were outlined and the roles attached to those levels:

- All members of the Council had universal responsibility.
- Members of CPAP and managers in Children’s Social Care had targeted responsibility
- The Executive members for Children and Young People and CPAP Chairman had specialist responsibility.

Hearing the views of the Children in Care Council was an important part of the role.

Governance was how an organisation controlled its actions. Every Child Matters outcomes measured the quality of the service. The five measures were:

Be healthy; be safe; enjoy and achieve; make a positive contribution; achieve economic well-being.

Outcomes generally for looked after children compared to the wider population of children were lower and it was important to try to reduce these discrepancies.

5. **The Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel Terms of Reference**

The recently reviewed terms of reference were noted.

6. **Children and Young People's Participation**

Several handouts were collated for members to take away from the meeting. The participation of children and young people was encouraged and members of SiLSiP, Say it Loud, Say it Proud, attended the CPAP meeting in December.

Louise Hopkinson, Children’s Participation Officer, organised events for 11-15 year olds and was hoping to set up something for the younger age range. She was also trying to engage with care leavers and was currently investigating the possibility of a young person or care leaver being on the Foster Panel.

Photographs were shown of a recent residential stay, a very popular event.

7. **Using Management Information to Scrutinise Our Performance**

Management information was available on the profile of looked after children; placements; education; and health. Alex Walters, Interim Chief Officer: Children’s Social Care advised that:

- Referrals were up by 68% in 4 years.
- There was a significant increase in care proceedings.

Both had an important effect on resources and staffing.

It was important that CPAP members questioned the data and these were set out in the presentation slides.

The Performance Monitoring Report as at March 2011 was tabled. Members noted that the number of children in care with disability had decreased significantly, possibly as a result of good support for the family with schemes such as Aiming High.

The balance of boys/girls was questioned. The information was not available at the meeting and Sarah Roberts would check if the balance was the same as national figures.

For some children residential placement was necessary and that would always be outside of the borough.

8. **Dates of Future Meetings and Proposed Forward Plan.**

The next meeting was on 6 July 2011 when placement sufficiency would be on the agenda.

Final annual performance figures would also be submitted.

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