

**CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY
PANEL
7 MARCH 2012
5.00 - 7.30 PM**



Present:

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

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Dr Barnard, Mrs Barnard, Ms Hayes and Kendall

36. Substitute Members

The Panel noted the attendance of the following Substitute Member:

Councillor Heydon for Councillor Mrs Barnard

Councillor Kendall was to have substituted for Councillor Ms Hayes but had sent his apologies.

37. Introductions

Introductions were made around the table. A Care Leaver attended the meeting for item 6, Care Leavers: Initiatives and Progress.

38. Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2011 be agreed as a correct record.

39. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

40. Larchwood Inspection Report and Regulation 33 Visits

Larchwood Inspection

Simon McKenzie, Head of Service: Learning Difficulties and Disability, presented the report of the Interim Inspection of Larchwood Short Break Unit undertaken on 12 January 2012. The unit was judged to be making good progress since the last inspection on 15 August 2011. At that inspection one requirement was in relation to the content of the Statement of Purpose and one recommendation was made in relation to fire safety arrangements. The Statement of Purpose had been updated and substantial work had been carried out to improve fire safety arrangements.

The one recommendation identified in the most recent Inspection was to improve the quality and standards of care further, by updating the restraint record to include duration of any form of physical intervention.

The Chairman congratulated Simon and all the staff for a very positive Inspection report.

Regulation 33 Visits to Larchwood

Simon McKenzie tabled a paper relating to unannounced Regulation 33 visits, currently primarily undertaken by himself. The Panel at their last meeting asked him to review the process and prepare a proposal to enable the involvement of elected members. There was no legal requirement for elected members to visit but it was considered good practice. Continuity in visitors would be advantageous.

The Panel agreed that –

- (i) Councillors Mrs McCracken and Ms Brown be nominated to participate in the regulation 33 visits.
- (ii) One or both nominated members would attend with the Head of Service on a quarterly basis to meet with young people and inspect the premises.
- (iii) Within three weeks of the visit, members would provide brief notes of their observations to the Head of Service, to be included in the regulation 33 report submitted to Ofsted.
- (iv) An annual visit to Larchwood be arranged for Panel members when the young people were not present, to view the premises and meet the staff.
- (v) An item be included on the next agenda to consider the appointment of a member as Advocate for Disabled Children and Young People.

41. Care Leavers: Initiatives and Progress

A Care Leaver who was also a member of the Care Leavers Focus Group attended the meeting for this item.

41.1 Accommodation

Clare Dorning, Head of Housing Strategy and Needs, gave an update on initiatives relating to accommodation. The Housing Team had a specialist worker who assessed homelessness, the housing needs of young people and various types of accommodation arrangements.

Joint working was being undertaken between the After Care Team and Housing Strategy and Needs Team to improve housing outcomes for young people leaving care. Strands of this work were:

- To look at the historical demand for housing over the last two to three years. This piece of the work should be completed by the end of March.
- To look at the varied housing needs of the young people leaving care. This piece of work should be completed by the end of April.
- At completion by the end of May, there would be an information pack for the young people which would contain practical information, including how to access services. Clare would welcome any ideas for matters for inclusion in the pack

Other work being undertaken included:

- Assessing the demand for different types of accommodation provision for young people in the transition between being cared for and independence. Young people's needs could vary considerably.
- Reviewing the floating support service.

- A multi-agency panel was looking at the housing needs of under 25s and the housing opportunities and solutions.

Arising in discussion:

- The young people's input into shaping developments.
- In response to a question about what support foster carers were given to help young people to become independent, the Panel noted that it was included in foster carers' training and the Pathway Plan looked in detail at what could be done to assist this transition.
- If a foster carer received benefits, a foster child reaching 18 impacted on those benefits. Such funding gaps needed consideration. The results of a 'staying put' pilot were to be evaluated.
- A view was expressed that young people in foster care needed more help from their foster carers rather than their social workers.
- The need to assess each young person individually and have a good menu of housing options.
- Larchwood Short Break Unit had some flexibility to take post 18 year olds for short breaks. Packages of care and housing related support could be put in place for disabled young people going into adulthood.

41.2 Pathway Planning

Fiona Gibbons, Over 11s Team Manager, and Rene Baron, Leaving Care Team Assistant Manager, gave an update on Pathway Planning. An anonymised pathway plan was passed around the table. The officers undertook to create a fictitious plan and send it to Councillor Ms Brown.

The pathway planning process commenced when the young person was 15 and was reviewed six monthly. The plan identified the young person's needs and set out what the Council had to do and what the young person had to do.

The care leaver present at the meeting told the Panel that this was a helpful process and the young person received a lot of support. The Panel noted, however, that this could be a challenging process for those who did not want to engage. At the request of the Panel, the officers undertook to look into the possibility of the process being done any differently:-

- At Kennel Lane the young people put their ideas into a box, to be looked at later.
- It was also suggested that consideration be given to whether the relaxed atmosphere of the residential visits undertaken with the Participation Officer could play a part in pathway planning.

The officers referred to difficulties with the lack of suitable accommodation for care leavers, meaning some had to move into expensive privately rented accommodation. The Panel noted that the piece of work being undertaken by Clare Dorning's department was fundamental in attempting to address this situation.

Another problem highlighted to the Panel was the accommodation difficulty for university students during the holidays. Ideally they should return to their original placement but it was not possible to hold places open for them and they returned to a different placement. Some universities operated schemes under the Butler Trust, providing accommodation for 52 weeks of the year. The Panel acknowledged that

support was necessary for care leaver university students who faced a challenge in terms of accommodation and costs.

There had been some progress in supporting Care Leavers into the apprenticeship scheme within the Council and one department was now employing a Care Leaver as an apprentice. Such employment could have an impact on eligibility for benefits, a situation that Children's Social Care had under review.

The Panel noted that the Care Leavers' Focus Group had been established as care leavers did not attend the Children in Care Council. The notes of the first meeting held on 28 February 2012 were tabled at the meeting. One of the suggestions to be discussed by the focus group was organising fundraising activities for care leaver events. The Chairman would liaise with the officers about her attendance at the focus group meetings.

41.3 Academic Achievement

Poonam Modhwadia, Connexions, updated the Panel on:

- The apprenticeship scheme which was progressing well. The case of a care leaver on an apprenticeship was outlined. Apprenticeships were a great opportunity to get good experience but the small wage was a problem.
- The work being carried out with Bracknell and Wokingham College to address the historically high drop out rate of care leavers from college. The college had developed a successful support plan to sustain placements and had identified needs that had previously been overlooked.
- Work was underway to track academic progress. The role of virtual school head for Looked After Children was created three to four years ago and was filled by Bob Welch.

Arising in discussion:

- A good variety of college courses were offered but different levels were required with more foundation courses. The young people needed to learn the skills to manage their time and organise their homework.
- Last year taster sessions were held for care leavers during the summer recess prior to enrolling at college in September. Taster sessions would be beneficial to most young people. The Panel agreed that this would be a good suggestion and should be put to the college as a direct recommendation from the Panel.
- The care leaver referred to lack of motivation. She found the extra support of a session at the end of the college day to do homework and see tutors on a one to one basis really helpful. Poonam thought it would be helpful to work with the college to cascade the information down through the college to all tutors.

41.4 Employment

Steve Lambert, Learning Development and Commissioning Manager 14+, had been unable to attend. Poonam Modhwadia updated the Panel on employment matters.

A multi-agency Participation Group working with young people who were NEET or at risk of becoming NEET were working on creating placements. Bracknell Forest's current NEET rate of 5.1 was the lowest for some time.

The Chairman thanked everyone for coming and contributing to these updates.

42. **Health of Looked After Children Annual Report**

Sharon Hickson, Designated Nurse for Looked After Children, Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, presented the annual report 2010-2011 on the health of looked after children in Berkshire East.

Sharon particularly highlighted:

- The current service offered had been evaluated against the guidance issued by NICE in October 2010. A health team action plan had been developed for those recommendations that had only been partially complied with and a joint action plan was to be developed with Bracknell Forest.
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations (England) 2010 had a significant impact because they included specific timeframes for notification of children becoming looked after and changing placement.
- The health team were currently forging closer links with counterparts in West Berkshire following the inclusion of Berkshire East Community Health Services in Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust.
- In March 2011 RIO, an NHS electronic patient management system, was introduced in Berkshire East Community Services. With RIO there would be one health record for the community services involved in the care of looked after children. Reports had been developed to ensure tighter monitoring of the health assessment process and timescales.
- Next year looked after children would be taken out of the Care Quality Commission safeguarding inspection.
- In Berkshire East all 17 year old looked after children were offered their health history at their final assessment.
- The Ofsted Inspection of Bracknell Forest's Safeguarding and Looked After Children rated as good the overall health of looked after children and the outcomes of looked after children's health. Two areas were identified for improvement – the health needs of young people who had left care and the involvement of looked after children in service developments. The health team were not commissioned to provide services to young people who had left care and this service development would be discussed with NHS Berkshire commissioners.
- The Health team took on responsibility to initiate the review health assessments. Out of area review health assessments were dependent on the placement area's policies.
- A longitudinal audit was currently being undertaken by the health team and the Clinical Development Unit to assess –
 - The extent to which health and social service professionals were adhering to current best practice in the management of looked after children;
 - The extent to which any actions resulting from the initial health assessment had been followed through ;
 - The impact of the Integrated Care Pathway generally and its components in particular on the child's physical and mental well-being.

The number of children becoming looked after in Berkshire East had risen in line with national increases. The Panel noted that there was a capacity issue, currently under negotiation with the Commissioners, as half of looked after children in Berkshire East

were placed out of area. The Panel expressed its concerns about this issue and the effect on the health needs of children placed out of area.

It was agreed that the Chairman would write to the Health Commissioners on behalf of CPAP, to express its concern and request a response.

The Chairman thanked Sharon for an interesting report.

43. Children's Social Care Participation Strategy Annual Report 2012 and Action Plan

This item was deferred to the next meeting of the Panel.

44. Performance Management Information

The report of the Director of Children, Young People & Learning on the Performance Management Information was presented in the new format which was easily understood and would enable the Panel to monitor on a monthly basis.

The report included statistics on:-

- The number of looked after children
- NI 63 – the stability of placements of looked after children: length of placement
- NI 62 – the stability of placements of looked after children: number of placements
- C23 – adoptions of looked after children
- NI 61 – Timeliness of placements of looked after children for adoption following decision to place for adoption
- Ward data of originating home address of looked after children
- Number of children becoming and ceasing to be looked after
- After care services
- Annual health assessments
- Dental checks
- Emotional and behavioural health
- NI 147 – care leavers in suitable accommodation
- NI 148 – care leavers in education, employment or training

The Panel noted

- More foster carers were needed. The new Bracknell Forest Fostering Panel had been launched. The Foster Carer initiative had been successful and there had been an increase in the number of foster carers. It was necessary to build up the resilience of foster carers to deal with challenging teenagers.
- The increase in the number of looked after children. The threshold had not been altered. To be kept under review.
- Work on prevention and early intervention was being developed. An earmarked fund of £500,000 was available. This would enable the Council to consider opportunities and try things to measure their impact.

45. Youth Offending Service Overview

Karen Roberts, Head of Youth Offending Service, attended the meeting to present a case study of a Looked After Child who the Youth Offending Service recently worked with. The report contained exempt information and was therefore emailed separately

to members. Two YOS ASSET assessments, looking at the factors influencing a young person to offend, were tabled at the meeting - one taken at the beginning of the Referral Order and one at the end.

The Panel noted that:

- This was a fairly typical case.
- The risk factors that resulted in coming into care were the same factors that influenced to offend.
- The offender apologised to the victim (restorative justice) and undertook a process of reparation.
- After being fearful of working with male workers and originally not liking being alone with a man, it was significant that the offender built a relationship with a male worker.
- The YOS worked closely with Children's Social Care and the foster carer.

Karen advised the Panel that the YOS team was all female except for one day a week and needed male role models. Councillor Heydon referred to a possible candidate, the details of whom he would pass to Karen Roberts.

The Panel thanked Karen for an interesting report.

46. **Future Meetings and Forward Plan**

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| 27 June 2012 | Fostering and Adoption Annual Report Fostering Association Report Private Fostering Annual Report Placement Sufficiency Care Proceedings: The Process |
| 11 July 2012 | CPAP Training |
| 26 September 2012 | Education of Looked After Children and Care Leavers' Exams Life Chances Team Report |
| 12 December 2012 | SiLSiP Annual Report IRO Annual Report Adoption Half Yearly Report |

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