

**CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY
PANEL
12 DECEMBER 2012
5.10 - 6.40 PM**



Present:

Councillors Mrs Barnard, Ms Brown, Heydon (Substitute for Ms Hayes) and Mrs McCracken

Also Present:

Councillor Dr Barnard and Mrs Temperton

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Mrs Birch and Ms Hayes

21. Election of Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor Heydon be elected Chairman for the duration of the meeting.

COUNCILLOR HEYDON IN THE CHAIR

22. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

23. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2012 be agreed as a correct record.

Matters Arising

a) Leading Improvements for Looked After Children (LILAC) Presentation to Council

Members praised the members of SiLSiP (Say it Loud Say it Proud) who had attended the Council meeting on 19 September to present the Council with a certificate of accreditation against all seven LILAC standards, for the impressive way in which they had handled the occasion.

b) Conference

Further to Minute 18 of the previous meeting, Sheila McKeand reported that the conference to be hosted by the Life Chances Team would be held on 8th February 2013 at Easthampstead Baptist Church. Invitations would be sent out soon.

c) Information on Life Chances Team's Work

Further to Minute 18 of the previous meeting, Sheila McKeand reported that the information had been sent but that she would resend it if necessary.

24. Say It Loud, Say It Proud (Children In Care Council) Annual Report

Louise Hopkinson, Children's Participation Development Officer, was present at the meeting with 5 members of SiLSiP to discuss their annual report.

The children gave a presentation which detailed SiLSiP's achievements and activities since May 2011 and in particular:

- Meetings with the Director, Chief Officer, Executive Member and Head of Service on 13 June and 6 November 2012.
- The establishment of a service level agreement with a budget of £5,000 to enable SiLSiP to organise activities.
- The Ready, Steady, Cook event for 8-11 year olds.
- The making of a film, "Life in care, by the people who know" to help adults understand young people's perceptions of life in care. The film was to be included in a training package for staff and Members.

The Panel congratulated the representatives on their presentation and on SiLSiP's achievements.

25. Independent Reviewing Officers' Annual Report

Carol Lamkin and Rachel Dawson, Independent Reviewing Officers, presented their interim report for the period 1 September 2011 – 31 March 2012.

The report identified a number of areas of good practice and the Panel noted that:

- Placement stability had increased from 60% to 76.2%.
- There was good communication between the Youth Offending Service and social workers in respect of looked after children.

The Panel noted the report and thanked Carol and Rachel for their report.

26. Chief Officer's Response to the Independent Reviewing Officers' Annual Report

Lorna Hunt, Chief Officer, Children's Social Care, presented the Council's response to the Independent Reviewing Officers' interim report. which updated the Panel on steps being taken to address issues contained in the report.

She reported that the Council welcomed the report and noted the many positive comments in relation to good practice, good systems and good management. She also updated the Panel on steps being taken to address issues contained in the report relating to parental involvement, timeliness of reports, contact with families and equality issues. It was noted that all individual concerns raised about practice had been resolved satisfactorily.

The Council's response was noted.

27. **Bracknell Forest Adoption Service Half-Yearly Report**

Helen Fenton, Team Manager, Family Placement Team, presented the Bracknell Forest Adoption Service's Half-Yearly Report.

Arising from Members' questions and comments, the following points were noted:

- The reasons why the placement of a Bracknell child matched to adopters had not proceeded to adoption were reported. The child had subsequently been matched to other adopters and the case was due to go to the Adoption Panel tomorrow.
- Since the Ofsted Inspection in March 2012, a great deal of work had been done to reduce timescales. However this needed to be done in a measured way to maintain a thorough vetting process so reducing the risk of placements breaking down.
- The recent changes to the regulations and processes had been implemented. It was too soon to judge their effect but this would be kept under review.
- The increased number of children needing adoptive families had led to a shortfall in the number of prospective adopters. The greatest impact of this shortfall was for children over three years old and for children with complex needs.

Helen, tabled the Adoption "score card" which highlighted the Council's performance in various aspects of meeting children's needs in a timely way.

28. **Report on Potential Implications of Budgetary Pressures on Services to Looked-After Children**

Further to Minute 20 of the meeting held on 26 September 2012, the Director of Children, Young People and Learning submitted a report on the potential implications of current budgetary pressures on services to looked after children.

The Panel was informed that there had been a 25% increase in the number of looked after children in Bracknell between 2009/10 and 2011/12, whilst the Children's Social Care budget had been reduced by £1.6m over the same period. Current data indicated that, without action, it was likely that the numbers of looked after children would continue to rise, placing considerable financial pressure on this demand led service.

The report outlined the range of strategies that had been developed to slow the rate of increase and, over time, reduce the number of looked after children.

It was noted that the caseloads of social workers had increased as the numbers of children on Child Care Protection Plans and subject to care proceedings had increased. The issue was being addressed via the recruitment of additional staff.

It was agreed that an update on social workers' caseloads be submitted to the next meeting.

29. **Performance Management Information**

Performance management information up to and including October 2012 had been circulated.

The Panel welcomed the improvements in performance and the generally positive data.

30. **Date of Next Meeting and Forward Plan**

27 March 2013

Health of Looked After Children Annual Report
Participation of Children and Young People Annual Report
Life Chances Team Annual Report
LAC Commissioning Strategy 2013-15
Care Leavers Charter
Update on Social Workers' Caseloads

CHAIRMAN