

**CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY
PANEL
27 MARCH 2013
5.00 - 7.00 PM**



Present:

Councillors Mrs Barnard (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Birch, Ms Brown, Heydon and Mrs McCracken (Substitute)

Also Present:

Councillor Dr Barnard

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillor Ms Hayes

31. Election of Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor Heydon be elected Chairman.

COUNCILLOR HEYDON IN THE CHAIR

32. Apologies for Absence/Substitute Members

The Panel noted the attendance of the following Substitute Member:

Councillor Mrs McCracken for Councillor Ms Hayes

33. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

34. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2012 be agreed as a correct record.

35. Care Leavers' Charter

Fiona Gibbins, Team Manager Over 11s and Leaving Care, provided an update on the work of the Over 11s and Leaving Care service against the expectations set by the Care Leavers Charter and to provided information on the Education provision for Care Leavers.

The Care Leavers Charter was issued by Government in Autumn 2012. Local Authorities were asked to use the principles set out in the Charter when they made decisions about young people's lives. The Charter for Care Leavers was designed to raise expectation, aspiration and understanding of what care leavers need and what the government and local authorities should do to be good Corporate Parents.

Local authorities were keen to adopt to Charter for Care Leavers, work had begun regarding this and targets had been set to evidence what was in the Charter.

It was suggested that five sentences: 'Believe in you, Listen, Inform you, Support you, Be a lifelong champion' be added as bullet points at the beginning to summarise the main points of the Charter and for young people reading the Charter to understand its purpose. The Charter had been shown to a care leavers group, and it was felt that an easy read version would be useful. There was a need to consider the impact of the Charter as it would be used to hold services for care leavers to account.

It was suggested that the wording be amended to read 'support you to find a home', rather than 'find you a home'. Young people would be persuaded to remain looked after between the ages of 16 and 18 years. Securing suitable accommodation for care leavers after the age of 18 years could be a challenge.

Care leavers should be encouraged to participate in a wider range of education options such as apprenticeships and vocational qualifications but it was noted that the fees associated with university may not present a desirable option.

The Panel:

- i. **SUPPORTED** the adoption of the Care Leavers Charter as a standard benchmark for Bracknell Forest Council;
- ii. **NOTED** the information provided in attached reports (Appendix B & C) on the current position of Care Leavers against the standards set in the Charter;
- iii. **ENDORSED** the plans to further develop the Virtual Care Leavers multi-agency meeting.

36. **Participation of Children and Young People Annual Report**

Sarah Roberts, Policy and Research Officer, presented a report informing and updating the Panel on progress made in developing children and young people's opportunities and capacity to participate within Children's Social Care.

The Panel noted the Children's Social Care Participation Strategy published in 2010 and a participation action plan, developed annually, with progress made against the 2012/13 Action Plan.

Progress against the 2013 Action Plan included shared values, ensuring participation, participation and advocacy, strategies and structures, systems, and skills and knowledge.

37. **Update on National Adoption Reform Agenda**

Sheila McKeand, Head of Service Looked After Children, presented a report informing and updating the Panel on the Adoption Improvement Reform legislation.

The Adoption Reform legislation had been introduced in 2013 with a view to implementation in law by 2014. However, there was an expectation that aspects of the legislation would be put into practice from April. A grant had been made to all local authorities to assist in improving local practice and encourage innovative developments to meet the increased demand for adoptive placements for children.

Of the £300,000 grant funding, provided for Bracknell Forest Council to increase levels of recruitment via adoption agencies, approximately £85,000 was ring-fenced and £203,000 was not ring-fenced. There was a requirement for the ring-fenced grant

to be spent. It was noted that adoption was just one route for permanence for young people. The aim for the grant to act as a catalyst, to speed up the process of adoption but placements would still be based on need and careful assessment.

38. **LAC Commissioning Strategy**

Sheila McKeand, Head of Service Looked After Children, gave a presentation providing an update on progress on development of the Commissioning Strategy for Looked After Children, Young People and Care Leavers 2013 – 2015.

It was suggested that the vision be amended as follows:

‘Children and young people grow into adults

Our aim is to provide support and service that will enable looked after children and young people to develop the life skills and ability to function as healthy, independent adults who are able to make positive relationships, achieve their full potential, contribute to society and, potentially, become good parents’.

It was suggested that there could be a focus on Early Intervention as an overarching theme and SiLSiP could be one way of incorporating the voice of young people. NEET children could be monitored, provided with access to greater opportunities and training, and encouraged to stay in education or employment. The Looked After Children’s (LAC) Team would now be responsible for assessing care leavers aged 21 to 25 years.

The LAC Team worked well to recruit foster carers within Bracknell Forest and Berkshire rather than in different counties further away, so more children could be placed closer to the Borough.

Challenges included: increased demand, the ages of children becoming looked after and locating affordable and appropriate housing for care leavers. There were changes to legislation regarding housing and benefits which would affect young people, and cultural changes including substance misuse, particularly Mephedrone, and young people remaining dependent for longer.

It was suggested that domestic violence/ abuse and medical needs should be considered, and the impact of the economic climate, for example, that it was more difficult for young people to find employment. Different cultural norms could lead to children being looked after.

The LAC sufficiency plan would be reviewed as it was general practice to offer a choice of two or three placements. An independent/ life skills training pack could be useful for young people and care leavers, and a measure to assess if they achieved certain standards by particular ages.

The presentation slides with the suggested changes would be circulated to the Panel.

39. **Update on Social Workers' Case Loads**

Janette Karklins, Director of Children, Young People and Learning, presented a report on work pressures in relation to Social Workers’ Case Loads.

Actions had been undertaken across Children’s Social Care to address the workload pressures, and innovative new work had been developed. There was some funding

for work regarding Early Intervention and adoption, and the impact of interventions would be monitored. Care and provision would be managed to a high level.

There were more in-house foster carers and social workers had shorter distances to visit looked after children. Plans were being established to recruit more social workers; experienced social workers were particularly difficult to recruit. There were two costs: staff and resources such as placements; and there was a contingency funding arrangement.

40. **"A tool for life: Helping looked after children achieve their potential".**

The Panel noted "A tool for life: Helping looked after children achieve their potential" a letter from Edward Timpson MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families.

41. **Ofsted Report - "Edging away from care - how services successfully prevent young people entering care"**

The Panel noted the Ofsted Report: "Edging away from care – how services successfully prevent young people entering care".

42. **Exclusion of Public and Press**

That pursuant to Regulation 21 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) Regulations 2000 and having regard to the public interest, members of the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of item 13 which involves the likely disclosure of exempt information under the following category of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972:

(3) Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person.

43. **Performance Management Information**

The Panel considered the latest performance management information.

There were currently 104 looked after children and the number remained steady at around 100. There were 11 new looked after children in January and February 2013. Some children achieved permanence. Data showed that looked after children were more likely to come from larger families or families with different ethnic groups within them. In-house foster placements had increased but independent foster agencies were still needed.

A different format for the performance management information would be considered.

The Panel requested further information on trends identified in the performance management information in relation to Ward data of Looked After Children and reasons for refusal of dental checks.

44. **Life Chances Team Annual Report**

Sheila McKeand, Head of Service Looked After Children, presented a report on the process, performance and impact of the multi-agency Life Chances Virtual Team for Looked After Children.

Action plans would be monitored and there was now a CAMHS Family Therapist. The work of the Life Chances Team was being extended.

The Panel:

- i. **NOTED** the work of Life Chances Team and the positive impact and outcomes for looked after children;
- ii. **NOTED** that a similar model of multi-agency working had been established for Care Leavers;
- iii. **NOTED** the proposed actions and developments for the Life Chances team set out in paragraph 22 during the financial year 2013 -2014.

45. **Dates of Next Meetings and Forward Plan**

26 June 2013	Report on trends identified in Performance Management Information
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