

**CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY  
PANEL  
18 DECEMBER 2013  
5.00 - 7.05 PM**



**Present:**

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

**Apologies for absence were received from:**

Councillors Dr Barnard and Mrs Barnard

**30. Apologies for Absence/Substitute Members**

The Panel noted the attendance of a substitute member:

Councillor Mrs McCracken for Councillor Mrs Barnard

**31. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**32. Minutes and Matters Arising**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 2013 be agreed as a correct record.

Matters Arising

- The Chairman requested a review at the next meeting of the Panel in March 2014 of the auditing arrangements in relation to Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust.
- It had been proposed that a child friendly version of the IRO Report be created. An interview with an IRO (Independent Reviewing Officer) would be published in SiLSiP's quarterly newsletter to fulfill this requirement.

**33. Panel Announcements**

On 7 February 2014, the annual foster carers achievement awards would be held at Easthampstead Park Conference Centre in the evening. Panel members should contact Sheila McKeand by the end of January 2014 if they wished to attend the event.

Helen Fenton, Team Manager Family Placement, was nominated for Team Manager of the Year as part of the national Social Worker of the Year Awards; she did not win but was one of six finalists. The Chairman sent his congratulations to Helen and requested that arrangements be made for the Council to acknowledge this achievement.

An Ofsted inspection had been undertaken at Larchwood and Larchwood was judged to be 'Good' with 'Outstanding features'. The final inspection report was awaited and would be brought to the next meeting of the Panel in March 2014.

#### 34. **Family Justice Review**

Mairead Panetta, Head of Safeguarding and Clare Owen, Team Manager Under 11s presented a report on the Family Justice Review.

The Family Justice Review (FJR) was commissioned by the Department of Education (DfE) in January 2010 to consider how the Family Justice System could better meet the needs of the children and families who came into contact with it.

Recommendations were made to tackle problems in the system such as delay and poor performance. The Government had put forward a number of reforms including legislative changes and a programme which would use evidence based good practice to inform structures, processes and decisions of the court.

The modernisation programme had two phases and each phase would take approximately one year. There would be a maximum time limit of 26 weeks for the completion of care and supervision proceedings. Work would be more child focused as delay had a detrimental impact on children. There would be less use of expert witnesses in court and social workers would be considered the experts. It was felt that social workers knew cases in depth and so should not have any problem answering questions in court confidently.

The 26 week deadline had a significant effect on the timescales for reports and paperwork produced by social care teams for courts. These needed to be filed early, so social workers actually had 18 weeks to complete them.

There were a high number of care proceedings at present both locally and nationally. A minimum of between 14 and 16 families were currently involved in care proceedings in Bracknell Forest. Bracknell Forest Council (BFC) had undertaken extensive training for staff regarding the changes and training was ongoing.

The Panel expressed concern for social workers in light of the changes given their already busy workload. There was an impact on social workers who must manage the possibility of reunification with parents alongside seeking permanency for children at an early stage. Parents sometimes requested last minute assessments for placement with extended family members which caused delay. The aim was for parents to identify relevant family members for assessment at the initial stage of the process.

The changes created an ongoing challenge for the teams involved and much management input was needed as there were high expectations. A judge had recently commended a social worker's report and BFC provided high quality reports for court hearings. Monitoring of progress would be undertaken and there were regular meetings with BFC's legal team.

Two systems were being run side by side at present due to the changes and additional staff had been recruited to assist with the work. It was difficult to recruit experienced staff to posts and the aim was to manage risk in relation to temporary agency staff. There would be an update on financial risk as the situation became clearer.

### 35. **SiLSiP Annual Report**

Louise Hopkinson, Children's Participation Development Officer and members of the Bracknell Forest Children in Care Council were present at the meeting in relation to the SiLSiP Annual Report.

Representatives of SiLSiP met with the Executive Member and the Director for Children Young People and Learning to share views to help to improve things for all looked after children. SiLSiP Juniors had started this year for 8-12 year olds, giving younger children a chance to have their say and five regular members met once every six weeks.

SiLSiP felt that adults did not always understand what it was like to be a looked after child and proposed training for adults to help see things from their point of view. They had participated in a 'Train the Trainer' project so young people could develop some training and learn new skills to deliver it. Workers were asked to participate in training and groups developed their own training activities 'Tiptoe', 'Luck of the Draw', and 'Frustration'.

The young people thanked Louise for organising the training. Two sessions had been delivered over the summer and 16 staff had now taken part in the training. Good feedback had been received from the sessions and the young people had enjoyed the training. A new logo, 'Do you Know?', had been created by the team for use on T-shirts. It had been agreed that the training would be added to the staff and foster carers training, and dates were being planned for 2014.

SiLSiP made a list of qualities which they thought made a good social worker and presented it to managers. This was now incorporated in staff recruitment packs and had been noted by applicants. SiLSiP asked for more activities for looked after children and were put in charge of money to pay for activities which would help children meet others in care, have fun and build confidence to have a say. Activities chosen by SiLSiP for the summer included Go Karting, Ready Steady Cook, Oakwood Activity Day with mountain boarding and a climbing wall, and a Cake Bake Fundraiser.

Residential activities were popular with young people in care as they were seen as a chance to meet new people and learn new things. Young people who took part in the activities were asked if they would come again and most replied that they would. New ideas for future activities included a trip to Bournemouth. Activities made young people in care feel better and not alone after meeting others in care. SiLSiP Juniors and Seniors also made lists of qualities which they thought made a good carer and managers agreed that the lists should be used as part of recruitment packs for new carers and on the webpage for carers.

There was now a specialist youth worker for looked after children and it was anticipated that the Youth Service would lead on residential activities. These would contribute to independence skills training for looked after children. The young people would continue to have access to a budget so that they could plan activities but there were conditions for spending the money, for example, the activities needed to have a purpose and provide opportunities for young people to meet and work together. Benefits for the young people could also be gained from managing and balancing this budget.

There were plans to get more young people interested in SiLSiP but it was difficult to find other young people with a genuine interest in the group's work. All looked after children were invited to activities to try and encourage others to become involved.

The Panel commented that the work SiLSiP had undertaken was very imaginative and congratulated them. The Panel were impressed that there was now a junior section to SiLSiP. The Chairman requested an update on SiLSiP's activities at the next meeting of the Panel in March 2014.

**(Action: Louise Hopkinson)**

SiLSiP members left the meeting.

There was due to be an increase in pupil premium from April 2014. A Panel Member suggested that pupil premium could be used for residential activities for young people in care. The basis of pupil premium was to meet core standards but this could be investigated further, however not every looked after child would wish to participate in residential activities.

**(Action: Janette Karklins)**

A life skills programme was being developed and Kashif was part of the working group regarding this. The capacity of young people, in terms of educational development, social and independence skills could be assessed in part through residential and other SiLSiP activities. The post of Virtual School Head was to become statutory and would be responsible for determining how pupil premium was spent. The Chairman requested a verbal update on this at the next meeting of the Panel in March 2014.

**(Action: Kashif Nawaz)**

It was important for young people to be part of the universal service and a youth worker had been appointed to support looked after children to access community activities. The value of the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme was noted and the request that steps be taken to encourage young people to engage in this scheme. A survey of the activities of looked after children in the Borough was in process and a report on this would be brought to the next meeting of the Panel in March 2014.

**(Action: Liz Hassocks)**

The date of 5 February 2014 was suggested to Panel members to participate in 'Do You Know' training. This would be e-mailed to Panel members for training to be arranged.

**(Action: Sarah Roberts)**

### **36. Bracknell Forest Council Pledge to Looked After Children Progress Report**

Sarah Roberts, Policy and Research Officer, presented a progress report on Bracknell Forest Council's Pledge to Looked After Children.

In 2009, Bracknell Forest Council (BFC) undertook a significant consultation event with looked after children, young people and care leavers. BFC worked with looked after children, young people and care leavers to develop 'The Pledge', a set of nine promises, published and distributed to all looked after children, young people and care leavers, to which they could hold the council to account. The Pledge was now complemented by the Care Leaver's Charter.

There was evidence that looked after children had been listened to at a strategic level and a personal level and that the Council upheld the principles expressed in the Pledge.

The proposal in 2014-15 was to refresh the language in the Pledge document, and a set of practice standards were being developed with measures to track progress against this. There would be an audit on how well this work was going and a report would be brought back to the Panel in December 2014.

**(Action: Sarah Roberts)**

### **37. Looked After Children Educational Achievements and Destinations**

Kashif Nawaz, Assistant Virtual School Head, gave an update on Looked After Children's educational achievements and destinations.

Highlight figures were provided in the report, including the results at the Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1, Key Stage 2, and Key Stage 4. Some looked after children had achieved a greater level of progress than expected in, for example, reading, writing and mathematics.

It was anticipated that the Virtual School Head (VSH) would have more leverage in future regarding holding schools to account, for example, in relation to pupil premium funding. At present how pupil premium was spent was at a school's discretion but there would be clearer lines of accountability to the VSH in the future. It was difficult to determine trends as each child brought his or her own challenges and had different needs and attachment issues.

Pupil premium went directly to schools and the Virtual School Head had a budget as well. School based needs were expected to be met by the pupil premium however there were different interpretations of the guidance across different schools and counties, and it was noted that money was not the solution for every child.

Adoptive parents needed to apply directly for pupil premium and were advised of this at the point of adoption. There were different arrangements, however, for children who were not adopted from care, including those adopted from overseas. Pupil premium could be sought for children adopted in the UK only at present. Pupil premium was available for the period a child was adopted.

Post-adoption support was available and the Local Authority were responsible for financing this for three years following the making of the Adoption Order. There were likely to be issues and the need for extra support, educational or otherwise, at some point in an adoptive child's development. It was up to adoptive parents to inform a school if their child was adopted.

### **38. Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing of Looked After Children**

Sheila McKeand, Head of Service Looked After Children, presented a report on the mental health and emotional wellbeing of looked after children. This report was requested by the Panel at the last meeting in September 2013.

All children who become looked after were likely to have some level of emotional trauma, due to the range of experiences from severe physical or sexual abuse, neglect or being separated from familiar carers to whom they had an attachment. Occasionally children had a diagnosis of mental illness but more became known to adult mental health services later in life, when the infrastructure of support and help might have reduced, thus increasing their vulnerability to emotional breakdown.

The provision from CAMHS of a Tier 2 mental health worker for looked after children was due to cease from March 2014. Current resources and how needs would be met from this point onwards was under consideration. The work of the Life Chances Team

was ongoing, and in future the youth service and Family Placement Team would undertake more work around emotional wellbeing. Provision for child mental health and emotional wellbeing was an issue across the community, not just for looked after children.

The Chairman requested an update on this work at the next meeting of the Panel in March 2014.

**(Action: Sheila McKeand)**

**39. Exclusion of Public and Press**

**RESOLVED** that pursuant to Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and having regard to the public interest, members of the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of the following item which involves the likely disclosure of exempt information under the following category of Schedule 12A of that Act:

(1) Information relating to any individual (Items 40 to 42).

**40. Adoption Six Monthly Report**

Sheila McKeand, Head of Service Looked After Children, presented a report on a six month review of the Adoption Service.

To comply with the Care Standards Act 2000 and the National Minimum Standards for Local Authority Adoption Services 2003, the department had a statutory responsibility to report on the work of the Adoption Service to the Director of Children, Young People and Learning and Elected Members on a six monthly basis.

The report highlighted the progress being made by the Family Placement Team in achieving the plans set out in the Annual Statement of Purpose for Adoption.

The Adoption Service was progressing well and children were being placed in homes in a timely manner. The gap left by a worker who had CAMHS experience had an impact on the service, but an experienced worker would join the team in the New Year. The team were working hard and the model was successful. Much had happened in the field of adoption and special guardianship orders. Attention would be focused on post adoption.

The Annual Report would be presented to the Panel in June 2014.

**(Action: Helen Fenton/ Sheila McKeand)**

**41. Care Leavers Not in Education, Employment or Training**

Steve Lambert, Head of Post 16 Education, Training and Skills, presented a report on Care Leavers Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).

Under the Education Act 2008, from September 2013, all young people aged 16, on completion of their compulsory schooling, must remain in education, employment or training until the end of the academic year in which they turned seventeen. In 2015, this would rise to eighteen but at the point of turning eighteen, young people could leave, rather than waiting until the end of the academic year. They did not need to remain at school or college, although many chose to do so.

The requirements for participation included full time study in a school sixth form or college, an apprenticeship, full time employment with part time training, volunteering (as long as it is over 15 hours per week) or a re-engagement programme.

Young people could be regarded as NEET regardless of whether they were looked after. The team was currently working with 99 young people who fell into this category. Trend data showed that this was the lowest in the Borough for three years. A combination of techniques had been applied including working with training providers.

Young people were encouraged to take up apprenticeships and not just traditional ones such as building work or hair and beauty. A transition co-ordinator helped young people to find opportunities with employers and other initiatives were used, such as the City Deal programme.

Adult Services at Bracknell Forest Council (BFC) had employed young people on apprenticeships. It was understood that there was a need for employers to be flexible and sympathetic. A number of care leavers were being supported and work was being undertaken with all care leavers, 17 to 19 years old and NEET. Work was undertaken through various services and the best journey for young people to take to reach their goals was considered. Participation group meetings supported young people on their journey.

The number of young people regarded as NEET who were parents would be investigated and numbers and percentages provided.

**(Action: Steve Lambert)**

Some colleges had onsite crèches or nurseries and many colleges offered a bursary payment for access to these. A trend was that young people might have a child and return to education or training when older.

It was now a statutory requirement to extend support for care leavers until 25 years of age should they wish to re-engage in education. It was a challenge when young people turned 19 years of age as the funding criteria changed after this age and education needed to be part funded by young people themselves.

#### 42. **Performance Management Information**

Lorna Hunt, Chief Officer: Children's Social Care, presented the latest performance management information.

There was stability and figures were in line with national figures at present. There would be a further update at the next meeting of the Panel in March 2014. There had been two more adoption orders and special guardianship orders, and targets were being met.

There were a high number of placements at present, approximately 64%, and around 108 looked after children. This number had risen over recent months to up to 114. There was a real challenge in relation to the needs of looked after children and their families.

There was a stronger Family Placement Team (FPT) and the majority of looked after children were being placed in long term placements. This was a challenge for the FPT and front line teams in relation to court work. A number of families with problems and a history of involvement with Children's Social Care had moved into the area.

The recruitment of foster carers was a priority and a significant challenge. New legislation would enable young people to remain in their foster home from 18 years to 21 years, and would reduce foster places available and impact on the care leaver service. Accommodation and pathway plans were good, and the number of foster carers who could take up to three separate children was increasing.

The panel queried how children could be incentivised to undertake dental checks and it was suggested that they could be offered voucher incentives or be taken to appointments.

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

26 March 2014	Regulation 33 Visits Participation Strategy Annual Review Review of Auditing Arrangements in relation to Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust SiLSiP Activities Progress Pupil Premium – its uses and the new role of the Virtual School Head NEET – statistics on those who have children Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing of Looked After Children Update Survey of Looked After Children’s engagement in universal youth activities across the Borough Briefing on Preparation for Ofsted Inspection of Children’s Social Care
25 June 2014	Adoption Service Statement of Purpose and Annual Report Foster Care Statement of Purpose and Annual Report
24 September 2014	Health of Looked After Children Annual Report
10 December 2014	Pledge to Looked After Children – audit on progress