

**CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY  
PANEL  
24 SEPTEMBER 2014  
5.00 - 6.57 PM**



**Present:**

Councillors Heydon (Chairman), Mrs McCracken (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Birch, Mrs Angell (Substitute) and Mrs Temperton (Substitute)

**Apologies for absence were received from:**

Councillors Ms Brown and Ms Hayes

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

The Panel noted the attendance of the following substitute members:

Councillor Mrs Temperton for Councillor Ms Brown  
Councillor Mrs Angell for Councillor Ms Hayes

**19. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**20. Minutes and Matters Arising**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 25 June 2014 be agreed as a correct record.

Matters Arising

Places for the Corporate Parenting and Children in Care Councils Event were not available for the event in London on 13 December 2014, so Panel members were unable to get places on this date.

Heather Brown, Sarah Roberts and Councillor Heydon had met to discuss the research commissioned by the Regional Corporate Parenting Network and had considered future planning regarding this.

**21. Panel Announcements**

Looked After Children Awards Ceremony 25 September 2014

Many Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel members and officers were due to attend the Looked After Children Awards Ceremony. More children were nominated this year than last year, and there had been much support from children's social care staff. A Paralympian was due to attend the event as a special guest. This year post 16 year olds were included in the awards, whereas last year they had a separate event for care leavers.

### 'Do You Know?' Training

Panel members should have received an invite to 'Do You Know?' training. Two panel members confirmed that they had attended the training.

## 22. **Review of Member Briefing**

Panel members considered a review of the Member Briefing on Corporate Parenting Looked After Children which was held on 11 July 2014.

Overall feedback ratings regarding expectations, knowledge, planning and structure, delivery and presentation, learning tools, venue, timing, and the information provided were Good or Excellent.

The Chairman thanked the speakers who attended the briefing. It was thought that the briefing helped to increase Members' understanding and 'every child matters' was a concept gained from the training.

Attendance at 'Do You Know?' training was encouraged.

It was suggested that a Member Briefing on Corporate Parenting could be scheduled every one or two years, and it would be considered by the Member Development Charter Steering Group as to whether to include Corporate Parenting in Members' Induction. It was considered to be important that the roles and responsibilities of members included a continuing spotlight on children's social care.

Panel members suggested that there should be a further Corporate Parenting briefing in June 2015, with future briefings on an annual basis regarding statutory obligations, responsibilities and functions. A cue card would be prepared for the next meeting of the Panel.

**(Action: Sarah Roberts)**

## 23. **LAC Educational Achievements and Destinations - September 2014**

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

A, B, C in the table of Key Stage results referred to the level which a pupil had achieved in different subjects. There was a summary under each set of results and all pupils in this year's cohort had benefited from their full allocation of the Pupil Premium Grant.

The Local Authority average for Key Stage 1 was 16.2 points. There were three young people at Key Stage 1 who had progressed in line with individual targets which was the trend aimed for. There were programmes at the end of Key Stage 1 which included a phonics test. Phonics screening results could be used in the future. Guidance and support from schools was clearly demonstrated in targets and PEPs.

Observations and outcomes in relation to the Key Stage 2 results included that the expected level of attainment was Level 4; 80% of the cohort had achieved Level 4 in Reading, Writing and Mathematics (the Local Authority average was 78%) compared with 67% in 2012-13; 20% had achieved Level 5 in Reading; and 60% of the cohort had made more than the expected level of progress between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.

Historical attainment was part of the PEP and it was vital that secondary schools were aware of this information. Sometimes there were circumstances beyond the control of the secondary school which could effect attainment and it was important that pupils always had access to support.

The involvement of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel in engagement with young people helped. There had been significant progress in Key Stage 4 over the last twelve months and young people thrived off positive encouragement.

Pupils with special educational needs all had a post-16 destination which was considered to be good and had the potential to achieve good results. Measures had been put in place but it was still sometimes difficult for looked after children to believe in themselves. A positive role model could effect change from primary school.

Councillor Mrs Temperton suggested that there needed to be a link in secondary schools similar to positive links available in primary schools with a continuous focus on every child achieving their potential.

Bracknell Forest had one of the highest numbers of looked after children in university amongst neighbouring Local Authorities, which was a credit to colleges and universities being flexible and providing support and advice through the interview process. Over the last twelve months no looked after child had changed their course; they had all stayed on their courses for the twelve month period.

The Chairman thanked Kashif for the update.

#### **24. Larchwood Statement of Purpose and Annual Report**

Sonia Johnson, Head of Service, Specialist Services presented the Statement of Purpose and Annual Report for Larchwood Short Break Unit.

There had been a number of amendments to the Statement of Purpose (SoP) from last year and next year there would be a complete re-write of the SoP. The SoP reflected that Larchwood continued to be good and that it was significant in helping to keep young people at home with their families. Work had been undertaken with young people approaching adulthood and programmes had been started which involved developing skills.

Work would be undertaken with Youth Services in future. A significant review of Larchwood was needed regarding the direction of work in the unit, opening hours and whether the unit was meeting the needs of the young people using it. There had been a small internal staffing review in June 2014 and a bigger piece of work was planned as a result of this. A project plan was being established and children from Manor Green may be included, although nursing staff were needed to support these children.

Larchwood provided respite and support to families and had evolved into a very effective short break unit with some outreach work. Communications and safeguarding were important areas in terms of meeting needs. SiLSiPs involvement with Larchwood was thought to have had a positive impact.

#### **25. Regulation Visits to Larchwood**

Sarah Roberts, Policy and Research Officer gave an update on Regulation 33 Visits to Larchwood Short Break Unit, April to September 2014.

There had been changes in Regulation 33 Visits to ensure independence. Members of the Performance and Governance team were now undertaking visits on alternative months which had been positively received. There was a new regime with themes and actions arising from the visits.

An invite had been sent inviting Panel members to a coffee morning at Larchwood in October. The date of this would be checked and the invite re-sent to Panel members.  
**(Action: Sarah Roberts)**

It was planned that the views of families be fed into Regulation 33 reports and these could be gathered at an informal event, such as the coffee morning.

## 26. **Audit of Looked After Children Placed Out of Area**

Sarah Roberts, Policy and Research Officer presented a report on the thematic review of children placed at a distance.

The Performance and Governance Service were undertaking an internal audit of children placed at a distance, with the focus being on residential care 20 miles or more away from a child's home community. The methodology of Ofsted was replicated and used, and the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel was invited to comment on the review.

Panel members' discussion recognised that distance from home was a real issue for children in care and there needed to be an opportunity for Members to understand their role in relation to children in care placed at a distance. Panel members considered the number of children in care placed at different distances from their home community. The percentage of children placed within five miles was 68% in July 2013 and 74% in July 2014. More children were being placed closer to their home community than in previous years.

The aim was for more children to be placed with local foster carers, and the 'Duty of Sufficiency' advised that children should be placed within borough boundaries as far as was reasonably practical. The Sufficiency Strategy was addressed within the Looked After Children Commissioning Strategy and progress reports within the action plan. Sometimes it was important to place children at a distance and there were good reasons for this. There were no residential homes within Bracknell Forest and for some children, residential placements were needed. Residential placements varied in time length; some were for two to three years and others were more short term.

Placements depended on the nature of a child's needs; some may go through a few foster homes and need more specialised help. Young people would have assessments and the aim was to move them once their needs were known. An officer checked the police database in relation to crime in the area and this had been developed over the past year. Information regarding missing children and Ofsted ratings were also checked before placements were made.

The Chairman requested further information on the Family Placement Team's recruitment strategy and asked that it be considered at a future meeting of the panel.  
**(Action: Heather Brown)**

Recruitment of foster carers was a strong focus at present with a campaign about to commence with Tesco and further work with the local churches. Panel members suggested that Waitrose would be a good place to have flyers regarding this. Barriers in meeting the sufficiency duty included an increased number of children in care over the past few years and higher numbers of children in care than foster carers

available. Sibling groups were difficult to place, especially sibling groups of three and four children and there was a potential impact of older looked after children staying in placements post-18 affecting the number of placements available.

Older looked after children had complex needs and resource was needed to meet these needs. Bracknell Forest was part of the residential consortium arrangement managed by Buckinghamshire. A request had been made for them to consider expansion to have crisis interventions with the aim of placing children closer to home.

Ensuring Panel members were effective Corporate Parents included feedback from SiLSiP, the annual IRO report, Health data, 'Staying Put' work, and the different needs of young people who were slightly older. Young people's views would be included in the audit and there would be a report back on this at the March 2015 meeting of the Panel.

**(Action: Sarah Roberts)**

There were approximately 65 to 70 looked after children placed in Bracknell Forest from other Local Authorities at present, some IFAs in the area and some placed but not yet adopted. These children would be known to the Virtual school and in receipt of pupil premium were relevant. There was one residential establishment within Bracknell Forest for young males with specific needs

There was a regional IFA contract and agencies needed to be 'good' or 'outstanding' to be considered for this. When concerns were raised the appropriate action was taken. Bracknell Forest were part of the Buckinghamshire consortium and had benefitted much by working with Buckinghamshire and liaising with providers locally. There was also better buying power in groups in relation to procurement of services.

A draft of Panel members' comments on the Audit of Looked After Children Placed Out of Area would be circulated to Panel members.

**(Action: Sarah Roberts)**

## **27. Independent Reviewing Officer's (IRO's) Annual Report**

Carol Lambkin and Alison O'Donovan-Troth, IROs (Independent Reviewing Officers), presented the eighth Annual Report of the Independent Reviewing Officer Service.

Sandra Davies, Head of Performance Management and Governance, gave an introduction to the report and advised that there was statutory guidance in the IRO handbook which was being followed, and that there was a close link between IROs and health.

Carol Lambkin advised that it had been a busy year and there was a summary of the key areas in the report. The IRO handbook had been introduced three years ago, and the dispute resolution process was working well. The IRO Service could be used across services such as health and Children's Social Care, and areas of issues could often be resolved before there was a formal challenge.

Matching the right child to a foster placement to avoid movement of placements was important, and children needed to feel wanted, comfortable and able to develop. A difference was seen in young people when they were matched with the right foster placement.

The IROs caseload was high but there was now another officer in the team on a part-time basis for one year and this had helped. It was hoped that this contract would be

extended as it allowed other IROs the time to visit young people placed out of the area. IROs usual caseload might be 60 to 70 cases for a full-time role.

There was oversight in relation to Children's Social Care and IROs were observed. The aim was to undertake an audit of the services. Participation was high in relation to young people and IROs; the team had been consistent and had been together for a long time which helped. It was critical that young people had someone to go to if their social worker changed and IROs proved valuable in this capacity. An agency social worker might cover cases until a new social worker was appointed but the aim was to keep changes in social worker to a minimum.

The impact on the family justice system was significant as social workers were being asked to undertake more assessments which in the past had been undertaken by other people. IROs were independent but still worked well with social workers and other teams.

**28. Chief Officer's Response to IRO Annual Report**

The Panel noted the report on the response by the Council to the Annual Report prepared by the Independent Reviewing Officer Service. Apart from good practice noted, one of the areas noted was change in social workers. There had been change in the Over 11's Team in Children's Social Care and some staff stability was an issue. Agency staff could be paid higher salaries and it was sometimes a challenge to hire agency staff as they were so sought after by authorities. Some authorities had more funding to use for agency staff as a significant percentage of staff in social care were agency staff.

**29. Health of Looked After Children Strategy and Annual Report**

Sharon Hickson, LAC Nurse was, at the last minute, not able to be present at the meeting.

Officers and Panel members would have queried the late notifications indicated as reasons for delay in relation to initial health assessments. Some data needed further explanation and there was no data in relation to health responsibility for delays. There were IT issues which may have impacted on some of this data. The Life Chances team Co-ordinator was now responsible for ensuring review information was completed well in advance and there were more robust systems in place. Whilst there was not a dedicated Tier 2 CAMHS worker for Looked After Children, there were other resources available with more training for staff at Tier 1 and 2.

**30. 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 (Item 31).

**31. Performance Management Information**

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

Stability of placements was up to 53% and there were very good reasons sometimes why changes needed to take place. Adoptions and Special Guardianship Orders continued to rise and there were reasons why children with complex needs could take longer to be placed or be adopted, and older children being placed was a big undertaking for a family.

Foster carers were unable to take all siblings where there were four children or more which needed to be placed. Homelessness of families could contribute to this need arising. Health assessment completions were high but a few could be overdue because of arrangements needed and some children refused to visit the dentist. A health assessment usually involved a more in depth assessment including areas such as sexual health, drugs and alcohol, and was more holistic.

There was good transition and working with Adult Social Care, with joint training and identifying young people coming through.

If Members had any questions regarding the QSRs they could forward them to Lorna.

### 32. **Dates of Future Meetings and Forward Plan**

10 December 2014    Pledge to Looked After Children  
Participation and SiLSiP Annual Reports  
Care Leavers  
Fostering Association

25 March 2015        Regulation 33 Visits  
Children Placed Out of Area Audit