

**CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY
PANEL
25 MARCH 2015
5.00 - 6.56 PM**



Present:

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

Also Present:

Councillor Dr Barnard

46. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

47. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2014 be agreed as a correct record.

48. Panel Announcements

The Director of Children, Young People and Learning introduced the new Head of Service for Look After Children, Peter Hodges, to Panel Members, and thanked Heather Brown for her work as interim Head of Service for Looked After Children.

Cue cards for Corporate Parents were ready for circulation. The Chairman would investigate the possibility of the cue cards being circulated from the Leader.

(Action: Cllr Heydon)

Cllr Mrs McCracken commented that it was her last Panel meeting before the Elections in May 2015; she had been on the Panel for a number of years and the subject matter discussed was important to her. Cllr Mrs McCracken thanked everyone involved in the work of the Panel over the years.

The Director commented on being pleased with the outstanding grade by Ofsted for Larchwood. There had been a monitoring inspection within two months of this and the grading was endorsed in relation to progress made.

There had been a Thank You card for Councillors for the funding given to looked after children. A scanned version of the card would be circulated.

(Action: Sarah Roberts)

The official launch of 'Adopt Berkshire', the joint adoption service across four Berkshire authorities, had taken place recently. There was a Looked After Children Art Exhibition on 3 June 2015 and it was suggested that the Communications team be involved to promote this event.

(Action: Janette Karklins)

49. **Care Leavers Accommodation**

Nora Dudley, Assistant Team Manager, Care Leavers Service presented a report on Care Leavers' Accommodation, taking into account current provision in Bracknell Forest and analysing the future need of the Leaving Care Service.

The report had been compiled in early February 2015 and the figures were subject to change. There were a range of accommodation options for care leavers and part of the Leaving Care Service work was to expand on these but there was some difficulty in providing the range of accommodation needed for the needs of young people.

10% of care leavers were in university accommodation whilst studying and credit was given to Mark Farmer, Education Support Officer from the Virtual School, for his work supporting Care Leavers into University.

The main priority was to expand the range of accommodation available. The private rented sector was not a realistic option and was competitive; young people were in general looking for a room in a shared property but there were not many of these available.

Housing benefits legislation nationally included a decrease in benefits for young people leaving care when they reached 22 years of age, which in real terms meant a change from being able to live in a one bed flat on enhanced benefits to only being able to afford a room in a shared property. There was a presumption that young people would be earning enough by 22 years to be able to support themselves but this was not a helpful strategy for vulnerable young people and those in low paid positions or on zero hours contracts.

There were developments being progressed with regard to local provision for young people leaving care. Two young people were due to leave residential care soon as they were due to turn 18 years. There was a cohort of approximately 7 young people per year with similar high needs. Staying Put was to enable young people to stay in their current placement post 18 years.

Risk was managed and assessed by the Care Leavers Team via pathway plans in relation to gaps in provision. The pathway plan was a support plan and was undertaken every six months. It was used to assess risks and provide services and was linked to a personal adviser who was seen at least every three months but possibly once a week for high needs care leavers. Care leavers out of the area might have a reciprocal arrangement with other Local authorities' Leaving Care Teams.

There was a consultation event with care leavers on 26 March 2015 to gather their views on accommodation needs; questionnaire's had been sent out by post and online. There would be a focus group style meeting which care leavers had been invited to, and a report on this would be presented at a future meeting of the Panel.

A meeting was planned with regard to taking forward the possible use of Waymead self-contained flats for young people leaving care. The flats were situated next to where the Leaving Care Services were based so support could be provided if needed.

The Care Leavers Team had been separated from the Over 11s Team in the service and there was a focus on care leaver cases for officers.

Nora queried whether it was possible for someone to come and talk to care leavers about getting involved in the electoral process and was advised that people could register to vote online. A visit to care leavers would be investigated further.

(Action: Amanda Roden)

50. **Health of Looked After Children Strategy**

Sharon Hickson, Designated Nurse for Looked After Children, gave a presentation on the Health of Looked After Children Annual Report 2013 to 2014.

Significant national and local developments included Ofsted in Slough, a serious case review following the death of a child in the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, from which there had been much learning, and a revised service specification. The current team structure involved a Designated Doctor for Looked After Children five sessions per week, a Designated Nurse for Looked After Children 0.9 whole time equivalent, a Specialist Nurse for Looked After Children 2.6 whole time equivalent, a Co-ordinator 0.8 whole time equivalent, and an Administrator 0.6 whole time equivalent.

The aims of the team were to ensure health needs were identified and met, and to assist Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG's) and local authorities to meet statutory duties. There had been revised funding from CCGs and young people were visited further afield such as outer London or Swindon. The service model involved Initial health assessments, review health assessments, placement change and discharge, and children placed in East Berkshire by other local authorities. There were audit and governance arrangements. The Department of Health had released new guidance; Sharon would review this and let Panel Members know the differences.

(Action: Sharon Hickson)

Participation was sought via feedback forms, texting, and Children in Care Councils; there had been positive feedback from this and a good return rate. Performance monitoring was undertaken via Initial health assessments and review health assessments. Placements included: 426 children looked after by Berkshire East's Local Authorities, 207 lived within Berkshire, 101 lived within the 20 mile border of their Local Authority, and 118 lived beyond the 20 mile border of their Local Authority. The timeliness of health assessments was monitored. Using external providers for out of area placements beyond 20 miles from the Bracknell border could cause delays in assessments, although this was not a risk as such.

However, Bracknell Forest were the best in Berkshire for timeliness of health assessments with a clear streamline process using the Life Chances team Co-ordinator as the main contact point. Sharon was encouraging other Local Authority's to do likewise.

Access to universal and specialist services included: Sexual Health, Family Nurse Partnership, unaccompanied asylum seekers, substance misuse, emotional and mental health, and children placed out of area. There was a gap in CAMHS provision, for example, at Tier 3 which was being addressed.

The Life Chances conference gave practical solutions to behaviour issues and had helped, and focus areas would be developed further. For out of area placements, young people with profound needs were of the most concern with regard to finding a suitable placement.

Ambitions and priorities included: children and young people to be at the heart of service delivery, monitoring of statutory timescales, outcome focused action plan,

emotional and mental health of looked after children to be a priority, protocol for difficult to engage young people, and effective leadership.

51. Fostering Recruitment and Publicity Strategy 2014- 2017

Kim Harris, Team Manager, Family Placement presented the Fostering Recruitment and Publicity Strategy 2014-2017. Panel members attention was drawn to Appendix A. Marketing campaigns were being undertaken and new posters designed. People were being recruited to key roles and there was a plan for 2015-16. Challenges included young people using the Staying Put option.

52. Looked After Children Placed Out of Area Audit

Sarah Roberts, Policy and Research Officer presented the Looked After Children Placed Out Of Area Audit. The outcomes had been reported to DMT recently and there were positive findings with good monitoring of the quality of providers.

There had been recommendations following this, some of which were procedural changes for example there was now a system in place for alerting young people of a change in Social Worker

It was recommended that young people automatically had an advocate for Child Protection conferences and Looked After Children Reviews unless they opted out. Care plans should include a contingency plans, and there was a strong emphasis on the use of technology to support young people's participation. There would possibly be some specific wording included in the Pledge regarding young people placed out of the area.

53. Regulation 33 Visits

Sarah Roberts, Policy and Research Officer presented a report on Regulation 33 Visits. There had been some changes in the regulatory framework, with streamlining and focus on certain areas. Regulation 33 visits had been undertaken over the past six months and Panel members could attend some visits.

54. Review of The Pledge

Sarah Roberts, Policy and Research Officer presented a report on a review of the Pledge which included an update on actions. There would be an event on 29 May 2015, 11am to 1pm, for the formal signing of the Pledge by the new Head of Service for Looked After Children with looked after children, foster carers, social workers and Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) invited. SiLSiP would be present at the event also, and invites would be circulated to Panel members.

The Director of Children, Young People and Learning and the Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning had met with SiLSiP who had been invited to take part in work which informed services for SiLSiP and this had been effective. It was one way to get young people involved in decision making.

55. Local Offer to Looked After Children placed in Bracknell Forest by other Local Authorities

Sarah Roberts, Policy and Research Officer gave an update on the Local Offer to Looked After Children placed in Bracknell Forest by other Local Authorities. There was a published list of services available to young people placed in Bracknell Forest by other authorities. A letter was tabled regarding this and there was further

information on the Council's website. There would be an agenda item at the next meeting of the Panel with regard to observations on this.

56. 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 14, 15 & 16).

57. Child Sexual Exploitation

Karen Roberts, Head of Youth Offending and Leaving Care Services presented a report on Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). There had been two Member Briefing Seminars on CSE; to the Executive and to a larger group of Members.

The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) had overarching responsibility for CSE; there was a strategic group chaired by Karen Roberts and an operational group which met on a monthly basis and included representatives from the police. There was a high level action plan and it was progressing well. Learning had been gained from high profile enquiries nationally to improve the service in Bracknell Forest.

There was some concern about cases the service was unaware of but there was emphasis on continuing to raise awareness, for example, among hoteliers. The operational group considered children who had gone missing as well as CSE cases. A return interview was undertaken within 72 hours of a child returning after being missing; this time frame was a national standard. Work was developing and showing good results.

There could be barriers to disclosure after returning from being missing, and criticisms included CSE not being taken seriously at the highest level, for example, by elected members and managers.

58. Performance Management Information

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

There was information regarding stability of placements and recruitment of more foster carers would help with this. There had been a small number of movements between placements this year, whilst adoptions/SGO's had increased to 17.6%. There had been 6 adoptions and 9 Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) this year. Some foster carers had been lost through adoptions and SGOs. Sometimes children returned to their parents after a short period of time.

The Care Leavers Team had moved to be managed by Karen Roberts, Head of Youth Offending Service in December 2014 and staff in this team now focused solely on leaving care cases.

Staffing was still a challenge within Children's Social Care in some teams, which the Programme board was looking at. This board, chaired by the Director of Children, Young People and Learning, had four strands of work being developed including improving IT, structure, systems and processes, and workforce development. An

independent panel consisting of an iESE consultant who has carried out efficiency reviews in other councils and has a knowledge of structural models; a representative from Koru Consulting Ltd, with experience in systems and process reviews, and an independent social worker with previous involvement in Bracknell Forest Children's Services' practice projects including Health Checks and quality assurance had met with front line staff to look at the current issues and make recommendations.

Representatives from the Programme Board Team went to Cambridge and received presentations on the work of other local authorities in Cambridge, Essex and Hampshire. There would be a report regarding this to the Executive after the Elections in May 2015.

59. **Staff Recruitment and Retention**

The Panel received a verbal report from Lorna Hunt, Chief Officer Children's Social Care regarding staff recruitment and retention.

Comparisons were made with salaries across Berkshire local authorities, however, even with the Golden Handcuffs offered by Bracknell Forest other Berkshire local authorities had raised their salaries to above that at Bracknell. Salary was important and it was hard to compete with the higher salaries of neighbouring authorities.

The Leaders of Berkshire local authorities were looking at salaries of neighbouring authorities. There had been some successful recruitment of managers at Bracknell, for example, Peter Hodges, new Head of Service for Looked After Children.

Heather Brown commented that it had been a pleasure working with everyone whilst she had been in post as Interim Head of Service for Looked After Children.

Cllr Dr Barnard commented that the contribution of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel was good and complimented the scrutiny role, and informed budget decisions and work with SiLSiP.

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

Wednesday 24 June 2015, 5pm, Council Chamber, Easthampstead House

- LAC Commissioning Strategy (inc Placement Sufficiency)
- Fostering Statement of Purpose and Annual Report
- Adoption Statement of Purpose and Annual Report
- Life Chances Team Annual Report
- Children Missing from Home and Care
- Corporate Parenting Strategy
- Local Offer to Looked After Children placed in Bracknell Forest by other Local Authorities

Wednesday 23 September 2015, 5pm, Council Chamber, Easthampstead House

- Educational Achievement and Destinations
- Larchwood Statement of Purpose and Annual Report
- Wednesday 9 December 2015, 5pm, Council Chamber, Easthampstead House
- Participation Annual and SiLSiP Annual Report
- Foster Carers Association
- Staying Put

Wednesday 9 March 2016, 5pm, Council Chamber, Easthampstead House

- Regulation 33 Annual Report
- Health of Looked After Children

This page is intentionally left blank