

**CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY
PANEL
24 JUNE 2015
5.00 - 7.18 PM**



Present:

Councillors Heydon (Chairman), Mrs Birch, Ms Hayes, Mrs Ingham and Mrs Temperton

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillor Mrs McCracken

1. Election of Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor Heydon be elected Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel for the municipal year 2015/16.

COUNCILLOR HEYDON IN THE CHAIR

2. Appointment of Vice Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor Mrs McCracken be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel for the municipal year 2015/16.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2015 be agreed as a correct record.

Matters Arising

- Adopt Berkshire was a model of good practice for the future, particularly for smaller local authorities.
- There had not been any response from young people when a visit had been made by Member Services to the Leaving Care Team regarding elections and registering Care Leavers to vote. The Chairman suggested that this be tried again in the future.

Sarah Roberts gave an update received from Sharon Hickson, LAC Nurse, on the key themes in the statutory guidance, *Promoting the health and wellbeing of looked after children*, published by the Department for Education and Department of Health in March 2015.

Key themes:

- The statutory duty remained with the local authorities to ensure health assessments were arranged and regular reviews took place;

- A joint approach between Local Authorities, Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), and providers was essential;
- There was a focus on the strength and difficulty questionnaire and its use in strategic planning as well as in the assessment of the child's health;
- The need for coordination of assessments and plans for children with special educational needs and aligning with the education, health and care plans was highlighted;
- Emotional and mental health of looked after children was a priority;
- Strategic planning was seen as key to ensuring the health needs of looked after children were met;
- Local Authorities should consider health when considering out of area placements, for example, how a child's health needs would be met;
- Local Authorities should audit themselves against the guidance.

Next steps:

- The leads within Social Care should read the guidance;
- Health of Looked After Children and Corporate Parenting Responsibilities on CPAP agenda for September 2015.

5. **Panel Announcements**

Introductions were made around the table. The Chairman welcomed Councillor Mrs Ingham to the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel.

Introduction to Peter Hodges, Head of Service for Looked After Children. Peter advised the Panel that A National Voice and the National Children's Bureau (NCB) would be running a series of six workshops for Children in Care Council members to attend with their Corporate Parents.

There would be three distinct workshops which would focus attention on:

- **Pathways to adulthood and independence** (including preparation and leaving care)
- **Raising achievements** (including education, arts and sports)
- **Diversity and inclusion** (hearing the voices and views of all young people in care)

The aim of the workshop would be to exchange ideas and challenges across local authorities, and for young people and corporate parents to work together on identifying ways to make improvements in their own areas. A Panel member was invited to attend, along with two officers and two members of SiLSiP. There were two events in London and one in Birmingham. Peter would liaise with the Chairman regarding this, and it was important that young people had the opportunity to attend.

(Action: Peter Hodges)

The Looked After Children Art Exhibition: A private view was held on 3 June 2015, 5pm – 7pm South Hill Park and the exhibition was on for a limited period of time following this.

The Looked After Children Achievement Awards were due to take place at 5.30pm to 6.55pm on 2 September 2015, with an arrival time of 5pm. Panel members requested for this information to be circulated again to them.

(Action: Amanda Roden)

For SiLSiP Summer Activities, young people suggested that there be a World Day with people from different countries doing different activities. There was also an

activity suggested at Horseshoe Lake and an art workshop. Two residential activities have also been planned.

The Chairman mentioned that Panel members had been supporting SiLSiP through the Members Initiative Fund and had helped to provide iPads for SiLSiP as well as funding the residential trips and an outing for care leavers.

6. Adopt Berkshire & Adoption Statement of Purpose and Annual Report

Alyson Graham, Adopt Berkshire and Kim Harris, Team Manager, Family Placement were present at the meeting to present a report on Adopt Berkshire & Adoption Statement of Purpose and Annual Report.

Adopt Berkshire had opened on 1 December 2014. This consisted of four local authorities joining together and it had been successful to date. It had got a good practice mention in a recent Department for Education (DfE) publication. There had been early successes in fostering to adopt and the placing of older children. Children could be adopted from birth if possible and the first child adopted from Adopt Berkshire was seven days old and adopted from hospital. Another placed was three months old; it was about managing risk.

There were adopters waiting to adopt children and this was a good position to be in. Adopters needed to understand the circumstances of children needing to be adopted and child profiles were shown at meetings once a month. Adopt Berkshire was a very experienced team and was making a positive impact.

There had been many changes to adoption over the years and the numbers of children waiting to be adopted had changed from 50 per year, to 100 per year, and was now back to between 50 and 70 per year for all Berkshire local authorities. The new Justice legislation had impacted on this.

Part of Alyson's role, as the manager of Adopt Berkshire was to review all adoption papers before they were considered by a panel. The aim was to place children as early as possible.

There was a wide enough gap geographically for placements within Adopt Berkshire and Bracknell Forest had access to a wider pool of adopters. It was a challenge to place siblings but there was a careful matching process to avoid an adoption breaking down.

An innovation funded project, Cornerstone, was linked to Adopt Berkshire and they would pilot helping to recruit and mentor adopters.

Post adoption support still remained with the Local Authorities. Kim presented the annual report and statement of Purpose.

The Panel were pleased with the implementation and progress of Adopt Berkshire and the support offered by the Local Authority.

7. Fostering Statement of Purpose and Annual Report

Kim Harris, Team Manager, Family Placement was present at the meeting to present on the Fostering Statement of Purpose and Annual Report.

It had been a busy year recruiting, assessing and supporting foster families. It was a lengthy, in depth process to become a foster carer. It had been another successful

year for recruiting foster carers. Ten new foster carers had been recruited this year and 52 assessments had been undertaken throughout the year. but more were still needed, particularly for teenagers and sibling groups. A target was set in the Foster Carer Recruitment Strategy relation to foster carers needed but people did resign or reached the end of the foster carer career.

Kim was due to meet with two people interested in being the Chairman and secretary of the Foster Care Association, which would mean the Association can be re-launched. Other areas had been introduced such as Staying Put.

8. Children Missing from Home and Care

Lilian Dickinson, Specialist Social Worker for Missing Children and Child Sexual Exploitation, presented a report on Children Missing from Home and Care.

Looked After Children (LAC) sometimes went missing and there were links between going missing and the risk of child sexual exploitation. The report focused on the six month period of Oct 2014 to March 2015 in which 9 looked after children were reported missing on a total of 20 occasions and 7 looked after children were absent from placement on a total of 29 occasions.

Some children were considered to be missing and some absent, some children could be considered to be both missing and absent, and there were some repeat offenders. 75% of these missing children went missing from residential placements. The profiles of residential homes, including their missing policy and location risk assessment, were considered before placing a child, and a child could be moved quickly if needed.

There could be different underlying reasons for children to go missing, such as substance misuse or mental health issues. Some carers might be quicker to report a girl missing than a boy, and there were more girls in residential placements. The average age for girls to go missing was 14 to 17 years and for boys it was 14 to 15 years.

The young people were engaging well with Keep Safe work and return interviews were usually undertaken within 72 hours of a child returning to a placement. This could be difficult if a child was placed out of the area and further away, but the quicker the return interview was undertaken the better for the child. Consistency was important and most of the children had engaged with the team.

Children tended to deny links to substance and alcohol misuse but three had been found to have links to this and they would be linked with a drug and alcohol worker as a result.

When a looked after child went missing for over 24 hours in Bracknell Forest, the Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning was advised of this.

9. Corporate Parenting Strategy

Sarah Roberts, Policy and Research Officer presented on the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

There was an overview of national and local context in the draft strategy and achievements over the last few years.

Sarah asked if Panel members wanted to consider widening the membership of the Panel and to have specific roles for Panel members. There were different models for

Corporate Parenting Advisory Panels; some had mixed membership, for example, a lay member, young people, or a foster carer representative. Individual members could take on a link role, for example with work experience, apprenticeships, education, and health.

Councillor Dr Barnard suggested that 3.1 and 3.2 of the report, in relation to membership and roles, could be trialled to see how they worked. Councillor Mrs Birch suggested that there could be representatives from the voluntary sector or health, or to have a lay member on the Panel. Councillor Mrs Temperton suggested that it would be good to have a foster carer representative on the Panel.

There was a need to think of confidentiality, and it was suggested that there could be recruitment from Reading University. Councillor Dr Barnard suggested that the foster carer representative could be someone from outside the area or who had wider care experience, so that children being discussed could not be identified. The link with young people was through the SiLSiP group. Panel members felt that formal meetings were not particularly appropriate for engagement with young people and that other methods might be more appropriate such as SiLSiP. Young people could be guests at some Panel meetings for particular issues.

Councillor Mrs Temperton volunteered for the education link, Councillor Dr Barnard volunteered for the care leavers link, and Councillor Mrs Birch volunteered for the placements and short breaks link. The three areas chosen should be linked up with the relevant Heads of Services. Roles and responsibilities should be reviewed in the Terms of Reference for the Panel and a meeting held with the volunteer Panel members.

(Action: Sarah Roberts)

It was suggested that some Panel members could pair up if they were interested in the same area, and that some protocols be piloted before the next meeting. The strategy should be adopted and reviewed in, for example, 12 months.

10. Inspection Briefing

Sandra Davies, Head of Service Performance Management and Governance, presented an Inspection Briefing.

Key messages from Ofsted included:

- Inspection improves lives and life chances;
- The bar has been raised – how well and what difference were central to the process;
- Good was the minimum standard to aim for.

What matters in the framework:

- How well you did things and the difference you made; what was your evidence?
- How Social Workers and others worked directly with families and managed the risks involved; what was the quality of this work?
- The quality of interventions in families, when risk remained or intensified.
- The quality of management oversight and decision making.

What matters in this framework:

- How well you helped, protected and cared for your children in your statutory service;

- How much you knew about the services you provided for children living in violent homes, where there was drug or alcohol misuse or mental ill health of a parent / carer;
- Leadership grip; all levels of management;
- Clear priorities, seeking and learning from feedback.
- Accountabilities; LSCB and operational practice.

Inspection framework overview:

- Universal, unannounced and on a three year cycle;
- Three key judgements: protecting children, looked after children and achieving performance, leadership, management and governance (+2 graded judgements adoption and care leavers) and an overall effectiveness judgement;
- Good was the minimum to aim for;
- The inspection would take place over a four week period, with one day's notice on the Monday of the first week, on site 9 days total;
- Eight HMI on site in weeks three and four;
- Components: Case file tracking, visiting children in residential out of area, observation of practice, adoption and fostering, meeting with children, young people, families, foster carers;
- Talking to key stakeholders.

Spotlight on:

- Children and young people missing from care, education and risks of sexual exploitation;
- Children and young people educated in alternative provision;
- Children and young people in need of child protection and the protection plans in place to support them;
- Promotion of education and schooling for children looked after.
- Children living in residential care out of area;
- Children and young people classed as Children in Need (CiN) (Section 17);
- Early help offer and assessment – includes assessment, step up and step down processes;
- Children and young people looked after through being accommodated (S20) or in care (S31);
- Young people leaving care;
- Children and young people who leave care to return home or living with Special Guardianship Order (SGO), Child arrangements order or adoption order.

There would be an LSCB Review, with a whole focus on the LSCB, i.e. partner members, and not just the Chairman. The review would be run in parallel with the Single Inspection, but would be a separate review. The review was introduced to identify the strategic and professional commitment and contribution of all statutory partners to early help, care and protection.

If Ofsted came in next week how confident would you be in explaining your corporate parenting role and what impact you have had? What are your strengths? What is your ambition for children and young people in care? What are our priorities in the coming months?

Guidance published recently showed that Prevent was a key area inspectors were looking at.

All Members needed to address Corporate Parenting roles and to revisit the Pledge.
(Action: Cllr Heydon)

11. Looked After Children Commissioning & Sufficiency Strategy

Peter Hodges, Head of Service Looked After Children, presented on the Looked After Children Commissioning & Sufficiency Strategy.

There was much data comparison, and page 131 of the agenda papers showed the legal status of looked after children in care. There was a high proportion of 10 to 16 year olds in the looked after children cohort. The aim was to recruit more foster carers for teenagers. The target was to recruit ten new foster carers this year. The strategy detailed types of placements and key priorities.

Page 138 onwards of the agenda papers showed a description of the current provision of services. There were action plans to manage cases. Page 161 of the agenda papers showed that the commissioning officer considered value for money. The life skills programme was being successfully rolled out.

12. Local Offer to Looked After Children Placed in Bracknell Forest by other Local Authorities

Sarah Roberts, Policy and Research Officer, presented on the Local Offer to Looked After Children Placed in Bracknell Forest by other Local Authorities.

There were new requirements for local authorities placing children and young people out of the area. There was a need to make sure that the host authority could provide adequately for them. Information sharing was facilitated by ADCS providing a single point of access. There was further information on the Borough Council's website.

13. 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).

14. Life Chances Annual Report

Peter Hodges, Head of Service Looked After Children, presented on the Life Chances Annual Report. Peter attended monthly meetings with Kashif Nawaz, Virtual School Head. A RAG (Red, Amber and Green) system was used to highlight the risk or concern identified by the Life Chances Team on the database. Support of partners was beneficial in this process.

15. Performance Management Information

Lorna Hunt, Chief Officer Children's Social Care presented the latest Performance Management Information. There had been many improvements but some aspects of the work was always a challenge, for example, in relation to placement changes.

There had been 15 Special Guardianship Order and adoptions granted each year, over the past two years, which was extremely positive with good outcomes for those

children. Some cases were just outside the 12 month period with the decision and placement. Encouraging looked after children to attend the dentist was an ongoing issue and was still difficult. Health assessments continued to remain high, with Health encouraging other Local Authorities to follow the example of Bracknell Forest.

16. Dates of Next Meetings and Forward Plan

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

- Educational Achievement and Destinations
- Larchwood Statement of Purpose and Annual Report
- Care Leavers:
 - o Beyond Care Councillor Guidance
 - o Highlights of Peer Review
 - o Accommodation survey update
- Health of LAC and Corporate Parenting Responsibilities
- Corporate Parenting Strategy
- Looked After Children in Custody

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 44 Annual Report
- Health of Looked After Children