

**CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY PANEL
23 SEPTEMBER 2015
5.00 - 6.45 PM**



Present:

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

Apologies for Absence were received from:

Councillor Ms Hayes

17. Apologies for Absence/Substitute Members

The Panel noted the attendance of the following substitute member:

Councillor Brossard for Councillor Ms Hayes

18. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

19. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 24 June 2015 be agreed as a correct record.

Matters Arising

The agenda item for Health of Looked After Children would be deferred to the December meeting on the Panel.

There would be a regular update on Adopt Berkshire covered by the six monthly adoption reports, which would be considered at the next meeting of the Panel in December.

20. Panel Announcements

The Annual Looked After Children Achievements Awards Ceremony was held in September. Councillor Mrs Birch thanked everyone involved in planning the event and for valuing what looked after children did. Councillor Dr Barnard commented on a genuine sense of achievement at the event. Councillor Mrs Ingham agreed that it was important for looked after children to celebrate their achievements. The Chairman commented that it was good for other Members to attend the event, and suggested that other achievements from looked after children could be celebrated, rather than just high achievers. Councillor Mrs McCracken thanked Kashif Nawaz and his team for their work on the event.

There was a plan to exhibit some looked after children's art work at the Education Centre and Council Offices. Kashif advised that there were a number of pieces of art work available for purchase. This would be discussed further with the Chairman.

(Action: Kashif Nawaz/ Cllr Heydon)

SiLSiP summer activities included two residentials, one for younger children and one for older children, a World Day to experience activities from different cultures (Capoeira - martial art infused dance and an Indian drumming workshop) and a watersports day. The residentials were a result of joint working between youth services, the participation officer and CSC. Elected Members, as a result of meeting with Young People, responded to their request for additional funding for two residentials this year, which the YP thoroughly enjoyed and benefitted from. There would be further detail on this as SiLSiP were due to attend the December meeting of the Panel.

The new program of Do You Know Training is available. The training is open to staff, foster carers and Members. Members have found this extremely useful in understanding what it is like to be a YP in care and encourage new Members to attend. There would be mixed groups and it was a participatory event. Dates and further information would be circulated to Panel Members.

(Action: Amanda Roden)

The Chairman would discuss with Kirsty Hunt, Member Services, how this training should be promoted to all Members.

(Action: Cllr Heydon)

21. **IRO Annual Report**

Carol Lamkin, Independent Reviewing Officer, presented the Annual Report of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Service.

The team had remained relatively stable over the year, however the Team Manager had left in August and the post was being advertised. Nicola Johnston, CP Chair was currently acting up as team manager until this post was filled. Consistency of the IRO Service was assured.

There had been a slight decrease in the numbers of looked after children It had been just over the 100 mark for the last few years. The number of children placed under Section 20 provision has dropped. Adoption figures remained high and the introduction of Adopt Berkshire had a positive effect on this.

The IRO Service had undertaken 307 looked after children (LAC) reviews within timescales, and participation rates continued to be excellent with young people taking part in reviews. Sometimes there would be a pre-LAC review meeting for children, for example, who lived far away.

Parental participation was encouraged in review meetings, and there were good relationships with partner agencies and schools. Carol attended life chances meetings, and supporting the stability of placements was a key aspect of the IRO Service. Carol went to SiLSiP and was pleased that young people were asking her relevant questions when she was there. Panel Members were pleased to note the comments from the YP in the report and the efforts made to enable them to participate in their reviews.

There had been challenges by the IRO service over the past year. The dispute resolution process had been strengthened.

22. **Chief Officers Response to IRO Annual Report**

Lorna Hunt, Chief Officer: Children's Social Care, presented the response to the IRO Annual Report.

There have been a high number of adoptions and Special Guardianship Orders this year. Special Guardianship was when a young person was no longer looked after and a legal order was granted by the court. This was not an adoption and there was still a connection to the birth family.

There were currently five young people staying with foster carers under the Staying Put policy.

The dispute resolution process had been used in relation to challenges or care plans not being progressed quickly enough. All the challenges had been resolved. Sometimes it was not straightforward to progress things quickly as some processes were outside of officers' control. The formal challenge referred to at 6.4 on page 27 of the agenda papers was dealt with in approximately 6 – 8 weeks, and the IRO was in charge of the timescale.

There had been changes and turnover of social workers but it was hoped that the extra staff and pay increases agreed by the Executive would help to recruit and retain social work staff moving forward. The IRO was often a constant, providing a further element of stability in a looked after child's life.

Recruitment of foster carers was a six month process but could be fast tracked in certain circumstances. There were key priorities in relation to carers for teenagers as they were sometimes more difficult to place.

Councillor Mrs Birch commented that there were some good practice examples and joint working featured in the report and was pleased to note the active recruitment of carers. The impact of placing children out of area was discussed.

Carol advised that in some situations young people had regular contact with, for example, grandparents who would act as informal advocates and it would depend on who young people felt comfortable with

In relation to concern regarding the impact of changes in CAMHS provision in Bracknell, there had been some developments. An on line counselling service KOOTH had been commissioned to work with young people. 132 young people from Bracknell Forest were currently registered with the online service and if there was more funding in the future, it was possible that face-to-face work would be undertaken as well.

23. **Care Leavers Update: Including Accommodation and Life Skills Consultation Report**

Nora Dudley, Assistant Team Manager, Leaving Care gave an update on Care Leavers.

A consultation on Housing needs and preferences had been undertaken with Care Leavers and the outcome was being presented as requested by the Panel. There had been a questionnaire, by electronic and postal means, and focus group but there had been a limited response rate to the questionnaire (14 responses). Young people who participated expressed concerns in relation to safety for young people leaving care and living in HMO (house of multi-occupancy) accommodation. They felt it was important that young people leaving care had a choice about where they lived after

leaving care but many were prepared to share accommodation with other people. This was unexpected.

It was important to young people in care that they received the right information at the right times and were advised of their options. There was much work to be undertaken in this area and young people were asking to be more involved in the process. Participation by young people was an issue which was being addressed. A Facebook page might be set up with this in mind. A Go Karting event and award ceremony for Care Leavers is planned, with an opportunity for them to sign up to football training and life skills course. The aim was to build a sense of community.

Pages 39 and 40 of the agenda papers showed the action plan for the Leaving Care Service for the year. It is a challenge for care leavers to find private rented accommodation in Bracknell which would accept housing benefits as landlords often preferred to have the full market rent. Some properties which would accept housing benefits were not considered to be suitable for young people leaving care. In addition to this, a guarantor for a care leaver needed to earn a minimum of £33,000 per annum in order to be a guarantor. Projects were being undertaken and it was hoped that flats at Waymead would be refurbished and available at the end of next year.

Councillors undertook to write to MP Philip Lee, particularly in relation to an individual Care Leaver who is facing deportation..

(Action: Nora Dudley)

Cllr Mrs Temperton offered to write a letter as well, however it was mentioned that letters needed to have different themes, otherwise they could be counted as the same submission.

A peer review of the Leaving Care Service is due in October 2015. The Chair requested that the findings be brought to December CPAP.

24. Educational Achievements and Destinations of Looked After Children

Kashif Nawaz, Virtual Head, presented a report on Educational Achievements and Destinations of Looked After Children.

Reference was made to the end of Key Stage 2 performance in comparison with the end of Key Stage 1 performance. 57% of children were making more than the expected level of progress and 85% of looked after children made at least the expected level of progress by the end of Key Stage 2. There will be more data in the annual report which is on the December panel agenda. Key Stage 4 was a small cohort but outcomes were equally significant and broken down by subjects.

The Virtual School Head discouraged schools from taking children off the main GCSE programme including English and Mathematics, and giving them softer subjects, as this was thought to be demotivating. Resource and support was given to young people where needed, and support continued to be provided to children with, for example, Post-16 offers.

Comparison was not made between looked after children's performance and the national average of other children in their peer groups as it was thought to be unfair to compare this. There was a focus on narrowing the gap between Bracknell Forest vulnerable children and vulnerable children nationally.

Mrs Temperton commented that congratulations were in order for looked after children who achieved 5 GCSEs at the end of their schooling.

Bracknell Forest was in the lowest 14 in the country in relation to the number of looked after children attending schools judged to be either Good or Outstanding by Ofsted. There was a 1.5% increase in attendance each year and no permanent exclusions. The Fair Access Panel was involved, there were managed moves, and careers guidance and advice provided to avoid exclusions and absence. There were also vocational offers in relation to apprenticeships and traineeships. The Duke of Edinburgh programme, and a foster carers reading programme was also available.

25. Larchwood Statement of Purpose and Annual Report

Lorna Hunt, Chief Officer Children Social Care presented the Larchwood Statement of Purpose and Annual Report.

Larchwood had received an Outstanding grade in its recent Ofsted Inspection The Ofsted inspector commented that Larchwood were addressing the recent changes to the Residential Homes Regulations very promptly in comparison to other homes he had inspected.

26. Regulation 44 Visits Six Month Report

The sixth month Regulation 44 Report for Larchwood was received for information.

27. Update on the Pledge

Sarah Roberts, Policy and Research Officer, reported that the new format Pledge had been sent to all Members in July 2015. An event had been held in July launching the revised pledge to Children's Social Care staff where a participation lead had been identified from each team.

Following the consultation in April SiLSiP had started work on the two themes chosen by Looked After Children i.e. bullying, and contact with family and friends. Members asked for an update on progress at the next meeting

28. Corporate Parenting Strategy Update

Peter Hodges, Head of Service Looked After Children gave an update on the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

Mark Farmer had been asked if he would liaise with universities locally to see if a looked after child outside Bracknell Forest would sit on the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel (CPAP) in Bracknell. There would be an update on this when more was known.

A Member had been assigned to different Heads of Service to take a focus on certain service areas between CPAP meetings. Heads of Service thought it was a positive step for Members to contribute at a strategic level on policy, strategy and direction for Children's Services. There would be support for the recruitment of foster carers.

Karen Roberts would work with Cllr Mrs Temperton and Cllr Gareth Barnard on Asylum seekers and Care Leavers Accommodation respectively. Karen Frost would work with Cllr Mrs Birch on Youth and Leisure services for looked after children and care leavers. Peter Hodges would work with Cllr Mrs McCracken and Cllr Mrs Ingham on Placements, Kashif Nawaz would work with Cllr Hodeges on apprenticeships, work experience for Looked After Children,. Cllr Ms Hayes would likely work on Regulation 44 visits. The Heads of Service would contact the Members to set up meetings at the strategic level.

It was suggested that the two new Members of CPAP could attend Do You Know training sessions.

29. **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 15).

30. **Performance Management Information**

Lorna Hunt, Chief Officer Children's Social Care presented the latest Performance Management Information.

Some specifics were discussed. If a child was in foster care on a short term basis and both parties wanted to make it a long term arrangement, the case would be taken to foster panel which was good practice to have an external assurance of the arrangement long term, before going to the ADM. At present, some older children tended to be more challenging to place, and monitoring was undertaken of stability of placements. Four older children over 6 years of age had been adopted, some with special needs, which is an excellent outcome for them. 85% of children in care lived in a family environment, such as foster care. Timeliness of health assessments were at high 98.6% with looked after children attending dental appointments slightly lower.

The Performance Management Information included care leavers who were NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training). A care leaver peer review was planned for next month and four people from different authorities would be in attendance. A wide range of subjects would be looked at over two days and the findings would be reported back to CPAP when ready.

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

Wednesday 9 December 2015, 5pm, Council Chamber, Easthampstead House

- Participation Annual and SiLSiP Annual Report
- Foster Carers Association
- Staying Put
- Youth Service Provision for LAC
- Health of Looked After Children
- Six Monthly Adoption Report

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

- Regulation 33 Annual Report