

**CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY  
PANEL  
9 DECEMBER 2015  
5.00 - 7.10 PM**



**Present:**

Councillor Peter Heydon  
Councillor Mrs Jennifer McCracken  
Councillor Mrs Gill Birch  
Councillor Ms Suki Hayes  
Councillor Mrs Sandra Ingham  
Councillor Mrs Mary Temperton

**Co-opted Members:**

Councillor Dr Gareth Barnard

**32. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**33. Minutes and Matters Arising**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2015 be agreed as a correct record.

Matters Arising

Dates for the new programme of Do You Know training had been published and the Chairman had discussed with Kirsty Hunt how this training should be promoted to all Members.

**Leaving Care Service Peer Review**

Karen Roberts updated Members on the Leaving Care Service Peer Review. The review of the service had taken place over two days in November and the results showed that Bracknell had more strengths than areas which required development. Some Members were interviewed as part of the review and focus groups were carried out with staff from the service and senior leaders in the Council. Strengths identified in the service were:

- A good organisational culture
- Commitment of staff
- Good PAP arrangements were in place
- The Service was person-centered
- A high percentage of care leavers went to university
- Health Passports had been developed for care leavers
- The participation of SiLSiP was very good
- Arrangements for Staying Put were very good

Areas that required development included:

- Pathway planning needed some work
- Tighter management of complex cases including transition arrangements
- Improve the amount of data collected and shared
- Progression of accommodation pathway
- Participation of care leavers
- More support to asylum seekers

An action plan had been developed in response to the review and would be presented to March CPAP along with the full report of the review.

**(Action: Karen Roberts)**

The action to write to MP Philip Lee in relation to an individual Care Leaver facing deportation was still in progress.

The Chairman requested that presentations for future meetings were circulated to Members prior to meetings.

#### 34. **Urgent Items of Business**

There were no urgent items of business.

#### 35. **Panel Announcements**

The “Taking it to the next level” workshop took place on 21 November. The Chairman commented that it had been a very valuable workshop and it had been good to interact with other LAs.

The Elected Members’ Christmas Collection was progressing well and a number of unexpected donations had been received including gardening equipment. Approximately £400.00 had been raised so far.

Councillor Mrs Birch had met with two youth workers and with Fusion and reviewed the Looked After provision. Items discussed included the life skills required to embark on a foreign holiday. Consideration was being given to putting together a programme of life skills which could be achieved in a practical way on holidays. This had been done with young people aged 16 and over, including those with special needs and had taken place over a 6 month period prior to a holiday. The programme included learning skills such as applying for a passport, packing a suitcase and checking in at the airport. Some young people who had taken part in the programme had developed skills which had then enabled them to take a holiday without parents. The Chairman requested a short report with further detail be circulated to Panel Members.

**(Action: Cllr Mrs Birch)**

Councillor Mrs Temperton advised that she had watched a video of asylum seekers who had been forced to return to the country they had fled from. 10% of them were care leavers and one young person had been shot shortly after going back because he was so westernised. There was concern amongst the Muslim community for asylum seekers facing deportation who had nowhere to go and Councillor Mrs Temperton said she would be meeting with Nora Dudley and Lorna Hunt to discuss this further.

**(Action: Cllr Mrs Temperton)**

The Chairman advised that he was liaising with the Council, Town Council and local business regarding apprenticeships for young people leaving care. Kashif Nawaz advised that 10 year 11 pupils required help from Members to act as mentors for them as they needed input from experts who could look at their destination and help develop meaningful pathways for them.

Lorna Hunt advised Members that the Safeguarding Practice Diagnostic would take place between 19 and 21 January and would be led by an ex-Director of another local authority. The diagnostic would look at all areas of the service and it was hoped the report would be ready for the March CPAP.

The Chairman thanked Panel Members for their support and hard work.

### 36. **Children Young, People & Learning Participation Annual Report 2015**

Sarah Roberts, Policy and Research Officer, presented the Children, Young People & Learning Participation Annual Report 2015.

The report set out the activity undertaken since January and its impact when measured against the goals of CYP&L in line with the Hear By Right standards.

The first Big Ballot event for Looked After Children took place in May, the purpose of which was for young people to vote on issues where they would like to see changes and improvement. The vote was for SiLSiP to focus on Looked After Children being bullied and contact with family and friends. Sarah said the introduction of the Big Ballot had given structure to the work of the department with SiLSiP and had supported the re-launch of the Pledge.

There had been a low level of participation in staff recruitment by young people and the report highlighted the priority to review the best way of involving children in recruitment. The report stated that the times of interviews did not support the participation of young people as most took place during the school/work day and as such HR and recruitment had not supported the participation of young people well.

With regard to the style of leadership, Sarah said this had been made easier by the commitment from CPAP Members to SiLSiP. The report highlighted the actions taken by CPAP during the year which demonstrated their commitment to hearing the voices of young people and representing them to the wider Council. Sarah commented that the Council had a culture of listening from the top down.

Plans for the future included undertaking an audit on the number of staff and carers who have attended the Do You Know training and to carry out a survey to see how the training has impacted on them. Do You Know training would continue to be provided in 2016 and special sessions would be arranged for designated teachers and school governors.

A three month trial for Advocacy for Initial Child Protection conferences would be undertaken whereby young people would automatically be referred for advocacy unless they chose to opt out. Sarah said the pilot would enable costs and outcomes to be measured with a view to rolling this out more widely.

Sarah said the use of Skype and video conferencing was being looked at as options for keeping in contact with young people placed out of the area. The report stated this was in particular reference to children and young people attending the children in care council and participating in meetings with senior managers, so that those placed out of area could meaningfully influence service development and planning.

In relation to Independent Visitors, Sarah clarified they were not advocates for young children but acted more as a befriender who may, for example, take the child out once a month. Not every Looked After Child had an Independent Visitor but they were entitled to have one if they wanted to. Sarah said she would circulate examples of good practice by Independent Visitors.

**(Action: Sarah Roberts)**

In relation to assessments carried out by the Looked after Children's Nurse, Sarah said young people and children could change the timings of when their assessment was carried out but could not refuse to have an assessment.

### 37. **Say It Loud Say It Proud Presentation**

Members from the Children in Care Council gave a presentation on what had been achieved in 2015 and how they felt about the opportunities they had been given to participate and influence the work of the Department.

CICC members said they enjoyed helping to deliver the Do You Know training. They said their participation helped the trainee understand what it was like to be a child in care and to understand their emotions and feelings.

CICC members said they liked it when they had 'goodbye visits' from their social workers and they had designed a form for their new social worker to fill in which gave the young person details about them, such as where they had worked before and what their favourite television programme was. They had also put together a form which they filled in for new foster carers, they did this because they felt that sometimes it was easier to write down their likes and dislikes rather than say them. In addition, foster carers now had a form to complete which gave information to the young person about house rules and their likes and dislikes.

CICC Members talked about the Big Ballot and how they had decided they wanted work to be undertaken on Looked After Children being bullied and contact with family and friends. Other suggestions from young people included teachers being given information to assist them in delivering lessons to help others understand how young people might feel and for a workshop to be arranged for young people in care so they could share ideas and get new skills to help reduce the chance of being bullied.

Children and young people in care had taken part in lots of activities throughout the year such as art and cooking groups, non-combat martial arts and Bhangra dancing. They said that participating in activities gave them confidence and made them feel part of the community.

A video was shown to Panel members of a residential trip attended by some Looked After Children in August 2015. The video showed the young people enjoying a wide variety of activities which included canoeing, baking, abseiling and bush craft. One young person from CICC told Panel members that the residential week away had been a very positive experience and had given the participants life skills and boosted their confidence. They said the helpers on the residential week had been really kind to give up their time to help the young people and had encouraged them not to give up if they found the activities very challenging or difficult.

A CICC and Corporate Parenting workshop had taken place in London and the focus had been to decide the issues that needed further investigation. The top 3 issues to come out of the workshop had been trips abroad, educational trips and investigating what BFC could do to develop life story work for young people.

Councillor Mrs Birch commented that the Do You Know training was important and powerful because it helped people understand what it was like to be a looked after child and she congratulated CICC members for implementing the introduction forms for young people, foster carers and social workers.

Do You Know training for 2016 would take place at Easthampstead Baptist Church on:

- 18 February – 11am to 1.00pm
- 18 May – 6pm to 8pm
- 25 August – 11am to 1pm

On behalf of Panel members the Chairman thanked the members from the Children in Care Council for attending the meeting, for their excellent presentation and said the film of the residential week had been very enjoyable to watch.

### 38. **Youth Service Provision for Looked-After Children Presentation**

Judy Galvin presented a report on the Youth Service Provision for Looked After Children for April to December 2015. Key points included:

- Of the 39 Looked After Children aged 11 and over, 26 had engaged with services including support and advice for substance misuse, the Youth Council and The Wayz.
- The service provided a weekly surgery to Children's Social Care professionals which was felt by those working with Looked After Children to be very useful and helpful.
- SILSiP and the Youth Council were working together more closely to include provision of joint training. The Chairman said he would arrange a meeting to explore what further opportunities were available for joint working between SiLSiP and the Youth Council.

**(Action: Cllr Heydon)**

- Residential and holiday activities which helped children and young people learn life skills and develop confidence would continue to be provided. Darren Berry said it could be difficult to track the progress and outcomes for children in terms of their confidence but was easier when measuring the development of life skills such as cooking. The provision of these activities would be reviewed to ensure young people achieved the best outcomes.

The Chairman requested that a copy of the Youth Services presentation be circulated to Members and extended thanks and appreciation to the service for its hard work.

**(Action: Lizzie)**

### 39. **Virtual School Annual Report**

Kashif Nawaz, Virtual School Head for Vulnerable Children, presented the Annual Report on the work of the Virtual School 2014/15.

The Virtual School lead officer in Bracknell Forest was responsible for ensuring the educational experiences and outcomes of Looked After Children and other vulnerable groups of children were improved. The report focused on Looked After Children and

Care Leavers and the outcomes of work undertaken to ensure that the children's chances were not compromised by where they were placed. Key points included:

Children in care for longer performed better across all Key Stage 2 measures. Performance in Writing was slightly lower in 2015 than in 2014, however expected progress had been achieved with the implementation of special lesson planning by teachers. To maintain progress in this area, designated Teaching Assistants would be considered to help pupils that required ongoing support.

Children in care for longer performed better at Key Stage 4 on the headline attainment measures.

Work had been undertaken to ensure the appropriate use of the Pupil Premium Grant to allow additional educational resources to be bought for either group work or to support an individual. The report stated that increasingly more examples of the effective use of the grant were being reported.

Personal Education Plans (PEPs) were monitored very closely and reviewed every 6 months by education and social work professionals. In addition, PEP meetings were held and chaired by a member of the Virtual School at times of transition, such as the child's transfer to secondary school.

Some Looked After Children's art work had been exhibited at South Hill Park in June 2015. The event had been attended by a number of Bracknell Forest Elected Members, council staff and young people. It had been a great success and nearly all of the works had been sold. Exhibitor's talent and achievements were recognised at the Annual Achievement Event in September 2015.

Work continues to support young people to enter and remain in Higher Education. Two applications for a university placement had been unsuccessful despite the fact that financial support including tuition fees would be met by Bracknell Forest. Kashif advised that the council's Legal department would be asked to investigate whether case law existed which would support future applications and challenge barriers to Looked After Children entering University.

The Chairman thanked Kashif for his presentation and for the work undertaken by the Virtual School.

#### 40. **Health of Looked-After Children Annual Report**

Sharon Hickson, Designated Nurse for Looked After Children and Young People, presented the 2014/15 Annual Report on the Health of Looked After Children.

The report described the achievements, progress and challenges of the Berkshire East Health Team for Looked After Children in meeting the health needs of children and young people looked after by Bracknell Forest Council, Windsor and Maidenhead and Slough Councils.

Sharon said that children and young people that are looked after were at the heart of service delivery. Services provided by the team included health assessments, support and advice regarding sexual health and substance misuse and ensuring children's emotional and mental health needs were met.

Sharon explained that comparative data for the profile of Looked After Children was reported to 31 March 2014 as national statistics were only available up to that date. At that time Bracknell Forest Council was responsible for 113 children although the

report stated it had responsibility for 115 children because national data was rounded up or down in multiples of five. This figure was an increase of 9.5% from the previous year and 28% from 2010.

The Team were not commissioned to provide services for children placed in East Berkshire by LAs outside of Berkshire. Whilst the team tried to accommodate these children by providing services in additional hours, a more sustainable resolution was being sought.

The timeliness of the completion of initial health assessments in Bracknell improved steadily over the year and led to 100% of initial health assessments being completed within timescales and sustained in quarter 3 and 4. This year-end result was 100% higher than in Windsor and Maidenhead and higher than in all other Berkshire LAs.

Bracknell Forest performed well with regard to immunisations, dental care and the number of completed health assessments for children who had been looked after for more than one month. The percentage of children who had received dental care was slightly lower in Bracknell Forest than in Slough and Windsor and Maidenhead and had been identified as an area for improvement.

Sharon said the team had identified opportunities to have more direct contact with young people through health directed events which had included a "health day" in Bracknell, a session on first aid provided by the St Johns Ambulance and a cooking course held in Bracknell which had been facilitated by the Specialist Nurse for Bracknell Forest.

Feedback on services provided by the team was sought via the NHS Friends and Family Test (FFT) which gave patients the opportunity to feed back on the quality of their care and treatment. Sharon said the feedback results had been positive and good comments had been made about the Nurses.

Sharon advised Members that there were resource issues within the Berkshire West LAC team and she was covering a post there. Sharon said she was monitoring whether this would have an impact on services provided in Berkshire East. The Chairman said he would write to ?? to express his concern that this may impact on the outcomes for Looked After Children in Berkshire East.

**(Action: Cllr Heydon)**

With regard to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) for Berkshire, data held on the NHS ICT system for Berkshire had recently been merged. This meant practitioners now had access to all notes and reports made by health professionals involved with Looked After Children. This had ensured that referrals to and from CAMHS were made and held in one place and could be picked up and monitored more easily. Sharon said an update from CAMHS would be given at the March CPAP.

**(Action: Sharon Hickson)**

#### **41. Six Monthly Adoption Reports**

Alyson Graham, Service Leader Adopt Berkshire, presented the half year report – April to September 2015 – for Adopt Berkshire.

Adopt Berkshire had gone 'live' on 1 December 2014 as a shared service for The Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead, Wokingham Borough Council, Bracknell Forest Council and West Berkshire Council. All staff had worked very hard to improve the time taken to secure placements for the children referred to the service

and this had been achieved even during a 6 month period when the service had been subject to 3 separate Ofsted inspections. Alyson said joining the individual services together had worked well and that Adopt Berkshire was gaining a national reputation and had been recognised by the Department of Education as an example of good practice.

There were plans to expand the Service to include Slough and Reading Borough Councils in the next 1-2 years and potentially Oxford and Milton Keynes at a later date.

There had been a clear vision from the beginning of the merger and whilst there had been challenges, staff retention had been high and staff were committed to working together and to the delivery of good outcomes for children referred to the service.

Alyson said the key benefit of merging the separate local authority adoption services had been the sharing of information and resources which formed part of the Government driven agenda in reducing the high number of small adoption agencies.

The Panel noted that the average number of days between Placement Order and formal match was higher than the other LAs in Adopt Berkshire. Alyson said this related to children who had very high needs, including medical issues and the length and scope of training undertaken by adopters. However, all children referred to the service had been placed and a contributing factor in this success had been due to some adopters changing their preferred age range.

In response to a question about the difference between a child being matched with adopters or being match identified, Alyson clarified that match identified meant the service was working with identified adopters towards confirming the match at Panel.

A Life Appreciation Day was held when children aged 3 years or more were placed for adoption. Consideration was being given to holding a Life Appreciation Day for all children aged 12 months and over. This was when everyone who had known the child since they had been in care get together and was an opportunity for adopters to hear anecdotal information about the child and obtain clarity on information held on file which may be lacking in detail.

Lorna Hunt advised that a payment for loss of earnings was decided on a case by case basis if financial hardship would be experienced due to the need for a prospective adopter to remain at home to meet the needs of a child during the settling in period.

Peter Hodges, Head of Service (LAC), advised that post adoption services, which included support, advice and training to adoptive families, remained with Bracknell Forest Council.

The Chairman extended congratulations to the entire team at Adopt Berkshire for their hard work and commitment.

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

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

Some specifics were discussed. 85% of Looked After Children were in foster care in family homes. More foster carers were needed for adolescents and/or those with



challenging behaviour. Peter Hodges said a campaign to recruit carers would be undertaken and the help of the Police and Youth Services would be sought for this.

50% of Looked After Children were aged 10 years and older. Family-focused work by Children's Social Care enabled younger children to remain with their families. Looked After Children under the age of 10 had a good chance of being placed with a forever family including with members of their extended family.

Payment of allowances was discussed. These were available to foster carers and also to adopters and for Special Guardianship. The decision to grant an allowance to adopters and for Special Guardianship was made on a case by case basis.

There were currently three young people staying with foster carers under the Staying Put policy. A full update would be given at the March CPAP but various training had been undertaken and the feedback from young adults and their carers was that the arrangements were working well.

**43. Any Other Business**

Councillor Mrs Birch said the invitations to attend the foster carer's Christmas Party had been sent out very late and as a consequence a number of people were unable to attend. In addition, it was requested that invitations for the awards ceremony for foster carers to be held on 5 February 2016 should be sent out now to allow for as full attendance as possible. The Chairman said he would feed back to the Foster Carer's Association.

**(Action: Cllr Heydon)**

**44. Date of Next Meeting and Forward Plan**

The next meeting was to be held on Wednesday 9 March 2016 at 5pm in the Council Chamber at Easthampstead House.

The agenda would include the Regulation 33 Annual Report

**CHAIRMAN**