

**CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY
PANEL
30 SEPTEMBER 2009
5.00 - 7.10 PM**



Present:

Councillors Mrs Ryder (Chairman), Simonds (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Birch and Mrs McCracken

Also Present:

Councillor Dr Barnard, Executive Member: Children & Young People

In Attendance:

Janet Berry, Recruitment Strategy Manager, Corporate Services

Nora Dudley, Assistant Team Manager, After Care Team

Janet Hughes, Manager, Connexions

Sheila McKeand, Head of Service, Looked After Children

Penny Reuter, Chief Officer: Children's Social Care

Emma Silverton, Democratic Services Officer

Martin Surrell, Senior Advisor, Secondary

Poonam Modhwadia, Personal Adviser, Connexions

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Mrs Shillcock and Beadsley

20. Apologies for Absence/Substitute Members

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Beadsley and Mrs Shillcock.

21. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Panel held on 13 May 2009 be agreed as a correct record.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Training Session held on 8 July be agreed as a correct record.

Possible visit to supported accommodation

The Panel agreed that a visit to Holly House supported accommodation would be arranged. Members would be contacted regarding their availability (**Action:Sue Hills**).

Mentoring Scheme in Lincolnshire

The Panel had requested further information on the mentoring scheme in Lincolnshire. A copy of the delegate pack from 'The Future of Corporate Parenting' Conference which included a section on the mentoring scheme had been sent to Members.

Leisure Card Scheme for Care Leavers

The relaunch of the leisure card scheme for care leavers took place on the 2 July 2009. The event was successful with a good take up from care leavers.

22. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

23. Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business.

24. Post-16 Education, Employment and Training

The Panel received a report which provided an overview of the education, training and employment activities of looked after children and care leavers aged 16+ in Bracknell Forest.

Care Leavers are defined by the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 as either, eligible children, relevant children or former relevant children. In Bracknell Forest as at 31 July 2009 there were a total of 27 eligible young people, 20 of which were in Education, Employment or Training (EET) and 7 of which were Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). There were 8 relevant young people, 2 of which were EET, 5 were NEET and 1 was in custody. From a total of 37 former relevant young people, 16 were EET, 16 were NEET and 5 were in custody.

A range of services were available, or were being developed locally to support care leavers in Bracknell Forest.

The Senior Advisor, Secondary, gave a presentation on Post-16 education, employment and training. Provisional exam results from the academic year 2008-09 were positive with 64% of students achieving 5 or more A*-C grades.

Bracknell Forest had a variety of Post-16 opportunities available. The provision needed by looked after children would depend on how they performed. Whilst there were many areas of strength locally, there were some gaps in the provision. It was hoped that the 14-19 reform agenda would provide a wider range of opportunities for young people, particularly NEETs. The new range of opportunities would respond to individual need, recognise diversity and improve motivation for education, employment and training in young people.

Many of the 14-19 reform provisions would provide better opportunities in the long term. To address issues in the short term there were currently a number of opportunities being developed for young people.

Connexions provide personal advisers who worked with individuals to help them decide what area they wanted to pursue and identify opportunities to do so. A Personal Adviser from Connexions presented the Panel with a case study of a young person.

Contact between the young person and the personal advisor was first established during a placement review. Having spoken to the young person about his aspirations, strengths and motivations, he decided that he would like to pursue art. The young

person was originally located in Kent but returned to Bracknell Forest and at this point became easier to engage. An application for Bracknell and Wokingham College was completed.

The young person then changed his mind and decided that he wanted to seek employment and not to return to college. His personal advisor spent time going through the positives and negatives of both education and employment after which the young person still wished to pursue employment.

To identify employment opportunities the young person was booked sessions with an employment advisor. Having looked at producing a CV the young person realised he had no qualifications to put on his CV. He then became disengaged and did not attend anymore sessions.

The personal advisor recommended the Engagement Project which would provide the young person with 1-2-1 support. However after initial enthusiasm he again disengaged from this. The young person then realised that he needed qualifications to be able to get the job he wanted. To address this the young person joined the Entry to Employment (e2e) scheme which initially went well. He then disengaged from the scheme after 3 weeks and then no longer attended his meetings at Connexions.

The young person had also been working with the Youth Offending Team (YOT) for some offences he had committed. Through YOT he was required to start attending his meetings with his personal advisor at Connexions again. He then decided that he wanted to seek employment and not return to education. It took a long time for the young person to accept that he could achieve qualifications and gain experience which would then help him seek employment.

The young person joined the Local Employment Access Projects (LEAP) scheme which he engaged with. LEAP helped him to gain confidence in his ability which helped him to approach a college and apply for a course. The young person is now attending a college course to study art.

The case study showed how difficult it can be to work with some young people and find opportunities to engage them. Young people in Bracknell Forest were given high quality and continuous support.

Arising from Members' questions and comments the following points were noted:

- LEAP was a European Social Fund project. Bracknell Forest had the LEAP Project for 12 weeks and would not have the project again until January 2010.
- The Engagement Project delivered intensive 1-2-1 support to young people. The aim was to meet with young people where they felt comfortable to work through issues, problems and barriers they faced that prevented them from returning to education, employment or training.
- The e2e scheme was now located in Wokingham. This move from Bracknell did initially seem to put off some young people. However many were now attending the scheme thanks to word of mouth from the young people who did attend. The majority of young people on the scheme were from Bracknell Forest.

Bracknell Forest were currently developing two schemes to support care leavers. Both nationally and locally, immediate access to meaningful work was lacking. The government had now started to focus on the employability of young care leavers.

Bracknell Forest had signed up to the national Care to Work initiative. The scheme worked with large organisations to increase employment routes for care leavers by providing short work experience placements. Bracknell Forest's After Care Team were developing a local scheme, with support from Janet Berry, Recruitment Strategy Manager, who now co-ordinates the range of work experience opportunities within the Council to run along side the national initiative.

25. **2009 Examination Results for Looked After Children**

The Panel received a report detailing the provisional academic year 2008-2009 examination results for looked after children.

At 30 September 2009, 15 young people had been looked after continuously for 12 months or longer. This group would be the cohort for the OC2 statistical return which would provide the basis for the National Indicator. Of the 15 young people, 9 had a statement of educational needs (SEN).

There were very few young people at Key Stage (KS) 4 who had not been continuously looked after in the last academic year. These 4 students would not be included in the statistical return.

Of the 4 Post-16 students, 2 were starting a degree course, 1 was starting a BTEC and the other was restarting her post-16 courses with a view to going on to university.

The Panel noted that young people who were in very stable and supportive placements tended to have higher achievement rates than those who were not. Placement stability was a very important factor in outcomes for looked after young people.

A day of achievement for looked after children was to be held on 30 October 2009. Members of the Panel were to be invited to this event (**Action: Sheila McKeand**).

26. **The Pledge**

The Panel received an oral update on The Pledge. The Pledge was approved by Council in April 2009 and was now being distributed to all young people in care via their social workers to allow The Pledge to be discussed. Clarity would be provided regarding the exact number of young people who had received The Pledge (**Action: Sheila McKeand**).

A Care Leaver Event was held at the John Nike Centre, Bracknell where The Pledge was presented as an activity. A further activity day was being planned for 27 October 2009 at South Hill Park. The day would be for all vulnerable young people and would be based on the arts. The event would bring a number of different opportunities together and would be a chance for young people to give their opinion on key themes in the Pledge.

The feedback from this event would be put alongside hard data about The Pledge and would be used in discussion with SILSIP at the Panel's December meeting.

The Pledge put more responsibility on social workers, however it had not been viewed as a negative. Social workers were keen for young people to have a voice.

It was agreed that The Pledge would be added as an item for the Panel's meeting in December.

27. **Explanation of Inspection Regime**

A report providing an explanation of the inspection regime as it relates to looked after children and the services provided by the Council was presented to the Panel.

In April 2007, Ofsted took over the regulation and inspection of Children's Social Care providers. Ofsted now inspect children's homes, local authority and independent fostering and local authority and independent adoption.

From April 2009, Ofsted would be leading 3 yearly inspections of local area safeguarding and services for looked after children. Notice of an inspection would be 2 weeks. The purpose of the inspection in relation to looked after children was:

- To evaluate the impact of local authority services and their partners in achieving better care and better outcomes for looked after children and care leavers.

Ofsted would provide an annual performance rating for children's services for the local authority as part of the new Comprehensive Area Assessment. The judgement would contribute to the overall rating for the Council. As part of the inspection Ofsted would look at the effectiveness of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel.

28. **Performance Report**

The Panel received the regular performance monitoring report providing statistics at 30 September 2009. The report provided details of:

- Overall number of looked after children
- Number of children being looked after and ceasing to be looked after
- Children looked after by category of need
- The current trend in placement stability
- Number of children placed outside of the borough

The Panel noted that the number of looked after children had fallen in July 2009. Although there were 2 new looked after children, 7 had ceased to be looked after. The biggest category of need for looked after children was abuse or neglect which accounted for 45% of all children.

At the end of July 2009, 10.5% of looked after children had moved placement three times or more. There was concern about the high number of placement moves which occurred. There was a mixture of reasons for this which included; emergency placement of children which were not always successful, not wanting to place children outside of the area, the complex issues and needs of some children and cost.

All 8 of the children who had moved placement 3 or more times were aged 11 and over. The Panel noted that if a child went missing for 24 hours this was counted as a placement move even if the child then returned to the original placement.

29. **Future Programme of Meetings**

<u>Meeting Date</u>	<u>Agenda Items</u>
2 December 2009	Independent Reviewing Officer Report Annual Performance Report The Pledge SILSIP
17 March 2010	Foster Care Association Review of Terms of Reference

30. **Future Meetings**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel would take place on 2 December 2009 and would begin at the earlier time of 4.30pm.

CHAIRMAN