

**CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY PANEL**  
**02 DECEMBER 2009**  
**(4.30 - 7.10 pm)**

Present: Councillors Mrs Ryder (Chairman), Simonds (Vice-Chairman),  
Mrs McCracken and Mrs Shillcock

Also Present: Councillors Beadsley  
Councillor Barnard, Executive Member for Children & Young People

Apologies for absence were received from:  
Councillors Mrs Birch

**Vice Chairman in the Chair**

**31. Minutes and Matters Arising**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2009 be agreed as a correct record.

Matters arising:

Visit to Holly House - it was confirmed that the visit would proceed on Wednesday 9 December from 2.00-4.00pm. Members were to meet at Holly House at 2.00pm.

**Chairman in the Chair**

Award Ceremony for Looked After Children – many members attended the Award Ceremony held at Easthampstead Baptist Church. The Chairman, on behalf of the Panel, congratulated Tony Mansfield and his team for organising this event which made the Looked After Children feel special and thanked members for attending.

Care Leaver Activity Day – this event held at South Hill Park was well organised but not attended by many young people.

**32. Introductions**

The Chairman welcomed Sarah Roberts, Policy and Commissioning Officer, to her first meeting.

**33. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**34. Independent Reviewing Officer Service**

The Panel considered and noted the annual report of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO), Jan Poole, and the response of the Council which had been approved by the Executive Member for Children and Young People. The IRO is required under statutory guidance in the Adoption and Children's Act 2002 to provide an annual report to the Executive Member for Children's Services.

Jan Poole particularly highlighted the following information –

- 230 Looked After Children (LAC) reviews took place.
- 97.8% of reviews were carried out within statutory timescales.
- Child participation in reviews was recorded at 98.4%, an improvement on the previous year (90%).
- The expectation of young people chairing their own reviews was included in new guidance.
- Parental involvement in reviews continued to improve and in 63% of reviews parental contributions were taken into account.
- 31 short break care reviews took place and these were given equal importance to those children who were looked after full time.

Arising in questions or discussion –

- Youth Offending Service contribution to reviews had been more effective.
- Pathway Plans were part of the future plans for young people, some of whom may leave care at 16/17. These plans were reviewed regularly and essentially became their care plan until they ceased to be a LAC.
- The Public Law Outline process was introduced in 2008 to reduce the delay in care proceedings.
- Officers were not aware of any difficulties in allocating children's guardians.
- The delay in providing a disabled young person with the necessary equipment.
- The external placement of children with complex needs.
- Children placed at a distance from the borough.
- The challenges to be faced if the draft IRO handbook was accepted in its entirety. However much suggested was already implemented in Bracknell Forest.

From the Council's response, Penny Reuter highlighted –

- The priority of the provision of timely, local and appropriate placements.
- The increase in the use of in-house foster placements.
- The need for more local provision of supported lodgings.
- The use of boarding school in some cases.
- The revision of the Education of Looked After Children Policy and Procedures.

The Executive Member had accepted the report and emphasised that the Council should not be complacent. One particular area was the need to constantly do all possible to raise awareness of the need for foster carers.

The Panel agreed that in future reports a glossary of terms would be useful.

The Chairman thanked the officers for an interesting and important report.

## **35. Children in Care Council: 'Say it Loud, Say it Proud'**

### **35.1 Presentation on the work of SILSIP**

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Amy, Ellie-May and Jacque Child. Amy and Ellie-May, who had both been part of SILSIP since its beginning and had represented SILSIP on several occasions, gave a presentation on the work of SILSIP:-

- Attendance at the Science Museum for a national consultation on Children in Care Councils led by Roger Morgan, Children's Rights Director for England. The day included a buffet lunch, 'Under the Sea' 3D film and was attended by 121 young people.
- The Education Award Ceremony for Looked After Children took place at Easthampstead Baptist Church on 30 October, at which Amy and Ellie-May made a speech. It was an opportunity to celebrate educational successes and achievements. 31 Looked After Children received their awards from the Mayor, followed by bowling and food.

Two exercises were handed out to the Panel which required proposals to be placed in the order of importance determined by the young people at the CICC consultation. It proved to be an interesting exercise. The young people's most important considerations were –

- More money for young people in care who went on to university.
- Helping to stay with foster carers or in residential placements until 21, if they wanted to.
- Not moving 15/16 year olds so they don't have to move schools at an important stage in their education.
- Social workers spending more time with each child.

The least important considerations were –

- Having one particular health worker.
- Having more choices of placements.
- Unless they had to, never placing children outside the Council area.
- Having an independent special personal adviser for each child in care who needed one.

A copy of Say It Loud, the magazine for young people in care, was tabled. A copy was sent to every young person in care. Included in the autumn edition was a copy of the NSPCC booklet 'Worried? Need to talk?' concerning young people's worries on a range of problems including bullying.

The Chairman congratulated Amy and Ellie-May on producing a very professional looking magazine and thanked them for coming to the meeting to speak to the Panel. She also referred to the very good example that Amy and Ellie-May set to other young people and hoped more young people would join SILSIP. The Chairman congratulated Amy on her success in achieving a place at Agricultural College next year.

The Panel noted that Jacque Childs would be leaving the Council's employment and the Chairman thanked Jacque for all she had done in support of SILSIP.

### **35.2 The Development and Progress of The Pledge**

Sheila McKeand tabled a letter from Ed Balls to all children in care about improvements the Government was making to improve the care they received. The five major changes were –

- Asking for the views of children in care before making any major changes that affect them.

- Asking Councils to set up Children in Care Councils.
- Improving the support available at school.
- Asking local authorities to work with the local health service to ensure children in care quickly get the support they need.
- Help when young people leave care.

Sheila updated the Panel on development of The Pledge:-

- Sheila would write to all children in care outlining how The Pledge would be implemented.
- The Pledge would be translated for foreign speakers.

The Panel noted that –

- There had been no complaints from young people since April 2009 and two complaints made on behalf of young people had been resolved.
- Over half of the young people had been with their carer for over 2.5 years.
- Between April and November 2009 77% of placements had been within 20 miles of Bracknell.
- There were three part-time workers for looked after children in the education service and a designated teacher in schools. However, it was noted that the looked after children did not want to stand out as different to other children.

Arising in discussion –

- The Council should look into ways of young people bringing forward issues.
- The need for somewhere private for the young people to talk about issues.
- The importance of involving the young people in their review.
- The importance of having the same social worker.
- Working closely with managers of independent fostering agencies to encourage them to provide accommodation in this area.
- The difficulties of matching young people to placements when the supply of placements was short.
- The concerns about attending health checks and the dentist. A survey of health needs of care leavers was being worked on.
- All care leavers were in adequate accommodation, had pathway plans and allocated workers. Work was being undertaken to set up schemes to offer employment opportunities.

### 36. **Performance Report**

Penny Reuter presented her report giving an overview of performance of Children's Social Care for looked after children during 2008/09 and providing regular monitoring information.

Arising in discussion –

- 48% of children looked after were in the category of abuse or neglect.
- Attention was drawn to paragraph 4, current trend in placement stability. At the end of October 2009, 13 of 79 children had moved placement three or more times, a poor result. Only four of these 13 had been placed with a Bracknell Forest foster carer. These 13 cases tended to be young people between 11 and 17 where other factors contributed to placement breakdown.
- It was thought unlikely that the performance in this indicator for March 2010 would be improved.

Penny Reuter was asked to send the Chairman and Councillor Beadsley information on the performance indicator NI148, care leavers in suitable education, employment or training.

**37. Future Programme of Meetings**

The Panel noted the programme of meetings from February to December 2010.

**38. Date of Next Meeting**

Wednesday 17 March 2010.

**39. Mayor's Certificate of Achievement**

The Chairman would approach the Mayor about certificates for achievement.

**CHAIRMAN**

This page is intentionally left blank