

**CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL  
 9 JUNE 2016**

**6PRESENT: COUNCILLOR D BRAILSFORD (CHAIRMAN)**

**Lincolnshire County Council:** Councillors J D Hough (Vice-Chairman), A G Hagues, R A H McAuley, P J O'Connor and L Wootten.

Ron Oliver (Barnardo's) attended the meeting as an observer.

Officers in attendance:-

Kieran Barnes (Head of Virtual School, Looked After Children), John Harris (Service Manager Regulated North and Fostering), Tara Jones (Service Manager Regulated South and Adoption), Ildiko Kiss (Regulation 43 Visitor), Alison Poxon (Youth Hub Manager), Yvonne Shearwood (Quality and Standards Manager), Katrina Cope (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Tracy Johnson (Senior Scrutiny Officer), Rebecca Andrews (Principal Lawyer, Legal Services) and Tanya Marten (Customer Relations and Complaints Manager).

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Marilyn Graham-Williams (Foster Carer), Mrs Polly Coombes (Foster Carer), Mary-Beth Pepperdine (Children in Care Council) and Jean Burbidge (Community Health Service).

Apologies were also received from Annie Fletcher (Barnardo's) and Nicola Leaning (Legal Services Lincolnshire).

It was reported that Mrs Marilyn Graham-Williams (Foster Carer) had resigned from the Panel. The Chairman reported that he would write a letter of thanks to Mrs Graham-Williams on behalf of the Panel.

2 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were no declarations of members' interest made at this point in the meeting.

3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 MARCH 2016

Pursuant to Minute No 51 from the minutes from the last meeting, the Chairman confirmed that after receiving information from Barnardo's he had decided not to pursue contacting 'dual hatters' with regard to access to housing for Care Leavers. Instead, he had written a letter to one District Council Leader expressing his concerns with regard to access to housing for Care Leavers. The Chairman advised that an update would be provided regarding this issue to a future meeting of the Panel.

## RESOLVED

That the minutes of the Corporate Parenting Panel meeting held on 10 March 2016 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

4 LEGAL SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT

The Panel received an end of year report on Legal Services Lincolnshire from Rebecca Andrews (Principal Lawyer, Legal Services). The report covered care proceedings issued between April 2014 and March 2015 in respect of 210 children, consisting of 195 applications for Care Orders, and 15 for Supervision Orders; and from April 2015 to March 2016, data relating to care proceedings issued in respect of 170 children, consisting of 166 applications for Care Orders; and 4 for Supervision Orders.

The Panel was provided with background information relating to the changes to Judges during the last two years, which had resulted in an inconsistency of judiciary outcomes. As a result of the changes, cases were now taking longer to process, and Lincolnshire had gone from being at the top of the Leader Board to now being ranked nineteenth. The result was disappointing but legal services were working hard to turn things round. It was highlighted that the Court was trying to appoint Judges with experience in family proceedings, so it was hoped that things would improve going forward, and that the authority would go back up the rankings.

It was also highlighted that a number of cases involved contacting other countries, to look into realistic options for permanent placements. The Panel was advised that procedures were being reviewed in relation to these cases as other countries approached social care differently. The Panel was further advised that this was a challenge that was growing.

During consideration of the report, reference was made to:-

- The number of final Orders granted by the Court for 2014/2015, which were detailed on page 16; and the post proceedings position for the local authority for 2014/2015;
- It was highlighted that the authority had appealed against a number of decisions, but appeals were a very expensive option for the authority;
- Some members of the Panel thought that training on how the legal system worked would help them understand the procedure better;
- The Panel was advised that 40% of cases now had an international element;
- A question was asked as to whether the authority was getting things right. It was highlighted that the Court Service decided on the Care Plan and then Children's Services make sure that the plan is adhered to. The best interests of the child being uppermost at all times; and
- A question was asked as to whether the Council could prevent a child being taken out of the Country? The Panel was advised that if the Council

anticipated that the child would be at risk, then an Order could be sought to get the child back into local authority care.

It was highlighted that on 22 April 2014, the Public Law Outline was enshrined in law; and that the focus was now on the child's timetable and the need for urgent decisions regarding their future. It was noted that all S31 Children Act 1989 proceedings had to be completed within 26 weeks (Except in exceptional circumstances). It was reported that for 2014/2015, the timescale for proceedings was 23 weeks and that the average timescales for proceedings in 2015/16 was 26 weeks. In exceptional circumstances, the Court had granted an extension of up to eight weeks. Further details relating to Lincolnshire issues that had given rise to exceptional circumstances were detailed at the bottom of page 25 of the report.

The Panel also received an update pertaining to the Parental Substance Misuse Intervention Programme, which was to provide co-ordinated multi-agency services for parents whose children were at risk of removal from their families where one of the significant things is the effect of parental drug or alcohol misuse on the safety of children in the household. The Panel was advised that a case was currently on going at the moment, and that a case study would be made of this, to see what can be done better.

#### RESOLVED

1. That the Legal Services Annual Report be noted.
2. That training on legal processes be arranged for members of the Panel.

#### 5 COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS & COMPLAINTS RECEIVED FROM LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN - ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16

Consideration was given to a report from Tanya Marten (Customer Relations & Complaints Manager), which provided the Panel with performance indicators relating to Looked After Children for the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016.

It was reported that during the 12 month period there had been two complaints from children/young people in Lincolnshire County Council's care and two from young people who had left the Authority's care. Details relating to the complaints /compliments received were explained within the report presented.

It was reported that it was encouraging to see that the number of formal complaints were being maintained at a similar level, and that the Looked After Service maintained its focus and commitment to dealing with and resolving complaints at an informal level.

During consideration of the report, the Panel made reference to the following issues:-

- One Panel member's experience from visiting Looked After Children, was that one issue that was always raised from a young person was where were their siblings; and the fact that they were not able to see their siblings as much as

they would like. Another issue raised was that the young person was not able to see their social worker as much as they would like;

- A further question asked was if a young person was unhappy with their social worker, were they aware of the process available to them to seek help. Officers advised that from the Tell Us Survey, some young people were still not aware of the Advocacy Service, and as a result more work needed to be done to make sure all Looked After Children were aware of the service available to them. The Panel noted that some very positive feedback had been received with regard to social workers; however some comments raised had been that they wanted the social worker to get back to them quicker on some occasions. It was highlighted that social workers were not expected to be on call 24 hours a day. If a young person did have a problem there was also an emergency out of hour's number available for them to call. All young people had the Advocacy number, but as mentioned previously this needed to be promoted better. Reassurance was given that the Advocacy Service was promoted, but that it appeared that there was a small cohort of young people who had not taken on board the message, it was felt that possibly some of these could be new Looked After Children. The Panel was advised further that Advocacy was provided by Barnardo's and it was suggested that a report regarding this issue could be presented to a future meeting of the Panel; and
- That in relation to Complaint 3, Officers agreed to provide an update at a later date.

#### RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

#### 6 PERFORMANCE - QUARTER 4 FULL REPORT

A joint presentation was received from Tara Jones, (Children's Service Manager – Regulated South and Adoption), John Harris (Children's Services Manager – Regulated North and Fostering), Yvonne Shearwood (Quality and Standards Manager) and Kieran Barnes (Head of Virtual School Looked After Children) concerning performance indicators relating to Looked After Children.

Officers provided the Panel with an update on the following indicators:-

- Stability of Placements of Looked After Children: length of placement -The Panel noted that the service continued to monitor stable placements to ensure that any risks to placements were identified and appropriate support was made available to foster carers. It was noted further that the fostering/adoption of Looked After Children aged 10 to 16; and Stability of Placements of Looked After Children: number of moves; and Care Leavers in suitable employment, education and training measure were all within tolerance;
- Looked After Children reviews within timescale and Participation of Looked After Children in reviews – The Panel noted that measures were within tolerance;

- Percentage of Looked After Children with an up-to-date health check; Percentage of Looked After Children with an up-to-date dental check; and Percentage of Looked After Children with an up-to-date immunisations. All three indicators were within tolerance. It was noted further that Looked After Children nurses were conducting reviews, which had reduced the number of refusals;
- Looked After Children reaching Level 4 in Maths at Key Stage 2; and Level 4 in Writing at Key Stage 2; and Looked After Children with a Personal Education Plan were within tolerance. Looked After Children reaching Level 4 in Reading at Key Stage 2 – The Panel was advised although the Virtual School had introduced a programme of Literacy assessment, intervention and support through the Specialist Teacher Team it was difficult at this time to ascertain as to whether this had had a positive impact on outcomes;
- Looked After Children achieving A\*-C GCSEs in English and Maths – It was reported that performance for 2014/2015 was down from 15% in the previous year. It was highlighted that the key targeted group of 12 students for 2015, only five had achieved a C or above in both English and Maths. It was acknowledged that the attainment was unacceptable; and that the Virtual School was continuing to support and challenge all schools to provide high quality teaching and learning support to Looked After Children to improve performance. It was highlighted that attainment results were very dependent on the make-up of the cohort of Looked After Children;
- 16 – 18 year old Looked After Children who are participating in learning – The Panel was advised that further development of the post - 16 personal development plan had seen compliance rates above 90%, for the first time in April 2016; and
- Care Leavers in suitable accommodation – It was reported that performance continued to show improvement. It was reported further that there were five young people for whom the leaving care service was attempting to address the suitability of accommodation; and that two young people were in the process of securing suitable housing.

During discussion, the Panel raised the following issues:-

- Concern was expressed at the lack of achievement of Looked After Children achieving A\* – C in English and maths and whether any additional support was needed. The Panel was advised that the Virtual School had put measures in place to support Looked After Children, which included identifying cases where academic progress was below expectation and working with schools and providers; referring schools causing concern to Ofsted, Regional School Commissioner, Secretary of State as appropriate; set academic targets within the ePEP and review termly; and ensure that there was early intervention to avoid exclusion. A suggestion was made for the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to set up a working group or task and finish group to see what other Councils had in place to improve Key Stage 4 attainment of Looked After Children;
- One member expressed concern regarding the stability of placements. It was highlighted that the indicator had improved significantly since the previous year, which suggested an improvement in placement stability. A suggestion

was made for the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to consider the establishment of a working group to look into stability of placements.

#### RESOLVED

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee be asked to consider the establishment of two working groups to look into:-
  - What other Councils had in place regarding Key Stage 4 attainment of Looked After Children; and
  - The stability of placements for Looked After Children.

#### 7 UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM SEEKERS

The Panel gave consideration to a joint report from John Harris (Children's Service Manager Regulated – North and Fostering) and Yvonne Shearwood (Quality and Standards Manager), which provided information as to the process which was adopted for unaccompanied children arriving in the county. The report also provided some information with regard to the countries of origin.

It was highlighted that the number of unaccompanied asylum seekers had risen recently, with Kent County Council having the largest influx. The Panel was advised that all local authorities were encouraged to enter into a voluntary scheme to disperse unaccompanied asylum seekers throughout the country taking into consideration where any relatives were currently resident and existing migrant populations.

It was noted that there was a national funding incentive from the Government available to local authorities entering into the scheme.

The report provided the Panel with information relating to the assessment process; actions following age assessments; details of the number of young people assessed and the age of young unaccompanied asylum seeking children

It was highlighted that up to 31 March 2016, there had been 65 unaccompanied asylum seeking children, 42 of which had been over the age of 16. The Panel was advised that where a young person was identified as being under 16 they would be placed within a foster home for such time as they reached their age of majority. When a young person was identified as being between 16 and 18, the young person would be placed in one of two semi-independent living arrangements. It was noted that the young person would receive a small allowance, from which a small deduction was made for accommodation and utilities. The young person would also be encouraged to attend colleges. The young person would be looked after for the first 13 weeks and subject to reviews, after the period of 13 weeks, the young person would then be transferred to the leaving care team who would continue to support the young person until they reached the age of 25. The Panel was advised that the cost per year for an unaccompanied child was £50,000 and that the Council had a legal

and moral responsibility for any child coming into care. It was highlighted that it was anticipated that government funding was going to be available for the next two to three years.

Officers advised that Lincolnshire's per head cost for Looked After Children was one of the lowest in the country at a cost of £697 per week.

Members extended their congratulations to officers for the terrific job they were doing.

One member requested further information concerning the outcomes of the unaccompanied asylum seekers that had come into Lincolnshire.

#### RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

#### 8 VIRTUAL SCHOOL INTERIM REPORT

Consideration was given to a report from Kieran Barnes (Head of Virtual School - Looked After Children), which provided the Panel with an interim report for June 2016. The report briefly summarised academic outcomes for the Lincolnshire Children and Young People in care in 2015. The report also focussed upon predictions for 2016 covering national changes relating to assessment including a focus on age related expected progress for the current cohort.

It was reported that the current predictions for early years was that 43% of reception early years cohort was expected to achieve a good level of development this year. The figure however would still be below the national average for children in care in the previous year which was 66%. This would for the second year reflect a significant improvement in the achievements of the key group of learners having moved from 18% in 2014, to 32% in 2015.

For Key Stage 1, it was reported that 60% were expected to pass their phonics this year, last year this figure was reported to be 62%, and the national average for Children in Care was 53%. It was highlighted for the new measure of "Age Expectations" no comparison information was available. For 2016 the Age Related Expectation performance for 2016 was 52% Reading; 40% Writing; and 48% Maths. Work was being done to enhance engagement; performance and development through the Wellcom project.

The Panel noted that young people in the 6 - 14 age group all went through base line assessment with a base line teacher, and that progress was monitored up to Year 6.

This process was very similar for Year 7, where young people were not all at the same level, a review process was conducted and a specialist teacher then helped to fill in the gaps to bring the young person up to the same level.

The Panel was reassured that intervention measures were in place, which included supporting schools through specialist teachers; academic targets set within the ePEP; early intervention to avoid exclusion; and engaging schools and providers.

**RESOLVED**

That the report be noted.

**9 V4C THE LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN - 6 MONTHLY UPDATE AND QUARTERLY MINUTES**

Consideration was given to the V4C six monthly update – May 2016; and Executive V4C minutes from the 15 March and 19 April 2016 meetings.

In the absence of Mary-Beth Pepperdine (Representative of the V4C Children in Care Council), Alison Poxon (Youth Hub Manager) guided the Panel through the report, making particular reference to:-

- Membership – The Panel was advised that the V4C Executive Group had increased to 13, and that three further enquiries had been received;
- V4C Active – It was noted that there had been 2 Active Events so far in 2016 with five more events planned;
- V4C South - The Panel noted that the two meetings of the V4C South had been held; and that going forward the group would meet every two months;
- Big Conversation 9 – The Panel was advised that Looked After Children and Care Leavers were looking at Mental Health and Foster Care training. The group had talked about sign-posting and access to mental health services. One issue raised was the importance of having someone to talk to about low-level mental health issues. It was noted that the new website would be promoted through teams. With regard to foster care training, it had been agreed that members of the V4C Executive would be contributing to training both in person and by video;
- Other issues raised by the Big Conversation 9 included LGBT awareness; and bullying;
- FAB – The Panel was advised that the V4C Executive Group had been involved in the FAB Awards held on 5 March 2016, which had been a resounding success. It was noted that planning had started on the 2017 event; and
- Tell Us Surveys – It was noted following input from the group, the survey was being redesigned with revised questions and response options.

During discussion, it was agreed that a plan of future works would be available for the next meeting.

The V4C group were congratulated for their positive attitude in wanting to get involved and in making things better for Looked After Children. It was agreed that representatives from the V4C should be used as educational mentors to other Looked After Children to see what can be achieved.

RESOLVED

1. That the report be noted.
2. That a plan of future works be presented to the next Corporate Parenting Panel meeting.
3. That steps be taken to looking into getting representatives from the V4C to become educational mentors to other Looked After Children.

10 VISITING MEMBERS QUARTERLY REPORT

Consideration was given to a report from Tara Jones, (Children's Services Manager Regulated – South and Adoption), which provided a copy of the Visiting Members – Log of Quarterly Visits to Children's Homes April 2015 – March 2016.

Officers advised that the system of receiving Visiting Members logs was improving.

A suggestion was made for a reminder process to be put into operation. Officers agreed to look into this matter.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

11 INDEPENDENT REVIEWING SERVICE SIX MONTHLY REPORT

The Panel gave consideration to the Independent Reviewing Service Six Monthly Report, which provided an overview on Looked After Children for the period between October 2015 and March 2016 from the perspective of the Independent Reviewing Service.

Yvonne Shearwood (Quality and Standards Manager) offered apologies that the report was not an annual one, but just covered a six month period from October 2015 to March 2016.

In guiding the Panel through the report particular reference was made to:-

- The Lincolnshire Independent Reviewing Service;
- Qualitative information about the Independent Reviewing Service – Particular reference was made to Tell Us Survey, which provided feedback from children and young people on their perception of their Independent Reviewing Officer;
- That a pledge was being developed from the Independent Reviewing Service to 'Looked-After' Children to ensure that there are clear expectations; and
- That work would continue to ensure that the voice of the child informed practice and service provision.

During discussion, the Panel raised the following issues:-

- The participation rates of young people in their reviews – The Panel was advised that the process to get young people involved had been slow; and that more work was being done to get young people to acknowledge that the review meetings were their meetings to talk about their personal development plan. It was noted that a piece of work was being carried out with a number of young people to develop a review meeting model, which would be more akin to the Sheffield model. It was noted further that this was being piloted with a small number of meetings. The Panel was advised that positive feedback had been received and that this method would be used more widely over the next few months; and
- The Tell Us survey – It was noted that the survey had also provided feedback in terms of children and young people's views of their Independent Reviewing Officer. The Panel was advised that the forms had indicated that there were still too many young people who were not aware of who their Independent Reviewing Officer was. The Panel was reassured that more work would be done in this area over the next twelve months.

## RESOLVED

That the annual report be noted.

12 ADOPTION SERVICE - 6 MONTHLY UPDATE

The Panel gave consideration to a report from Tara Jones, (Children's Services Manager Regulated – South and Adoption), which provided an update on the adoption service. Appendix A to the report presented detailed performance information, panel activity and key developments within the service over the last six months.

It was highlighted that the new Adoption Support Fund had been rolled out to all local authorities. The fund offered a fast, simple service for local authorities to apply to, which meant that adoptive families could access the support they needed, as and when they needed it.

Reference was also made to the East Midlands Adoption Consortium which had submitted a successful bid for government development funding to progress plans for an adoption agency to bring together four local authorities, three unitary authorities and two voluntary agencies into a new regional adoption agency, across the East Midlands area. The Panel was advised that Lincolnshire was a member of the Consortium and was supporting the development of the project.

It was noted that Lincolnshire was taking the lead with regard to the re-organisational opportunities, and that in doing so would ensure that the project worked for the East Midlands. One member expressed the need to maintain local input into the process. The Panel was advised that work was being undertaken to scope out best practice across the country.

## RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

13     REGULATION 44 REPORTS - 6 MONTHLY SUMMARY OF  
INDEPENDENT VISITING SERVICE

Consideration was given to a report from Ildiko Kiss (Regulation 43 Visitor), which provided the Panel with a six monthly update on the work of the Independent Visitor.

The Regulation 43 Visitor advised that during the last six months each residential home had had their challenges, but all homes were making a great effort to maintain a high standard of care to young people. The Panel was advised that the children and young people living in the County Council children's homes continued to receive a good standard of care. Staff at the homes worked very closely with other professionals in order to maintain the high standards.

The Panel was advised that Albion Street had received a 'Requires Improvement' grading. Following the development of a robust plan of action the interim inspection had found Albion Street had improved in effectiveness. It was noted that staff morale had been low, but it was hoped with the appointment of a new manager, this would now improve.

It was reported that the reporting format had been further developed to incorporate the expectations from Ofsted. Also, there was a signs of safety summary at the end of the report, which allowed for a greater focus on significant areas of concern and actions required. It was also highlighted that there was an expectation that the Independent Visitor would seek views from parents of children living in the homes and other professionals involved in their care.

During a short discussion, some concern was raised with regard to times when children had gone missing. Officers advised that the homes had a very good relationship with the police and that communication channels were always two ways.

A further concern was raised with regard to the Advocates from Barnardo's and to the fact that the service was still being developed. The Panel noted that it was envisaged that the service would ensure that the feedback from the young people was fed back to the staff in the home.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

14     CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL WORK PROGRAMME 2016/17

The Panel gave consideration to a report, which invited the Corporate Parenting Panel to discuss and agree its work programme for 2016.

A copy of the work programme was appended to the report at Appendix A.

**12**  
**CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL**  
**9 JUNE 2016**

The Senior Scrutiny Officer agreed to email the V4C Executive Meeting dates to all members of the Panel, so that Panel members could advise which date(s) would be suitable for them to attend a meeting.

**RESOLVED**

That the work programme as detailed in Appendix A to the report presented be agreed.

The meeting closed at 12.55 pm.

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