



**CORPORATE PARENTING SUB
GROUP
7 DECEMBER 2017**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR D BRAILSFORD (CHAIRMAN)

Lincolnshire County Council: Councillors S R Dodds, R L Foulkes and Mrs C L Perraton-Williams (Vice-Chairman).

Added Members: Jean Burbidge (Lincolnshire Community Health Services), Polly Coombes (Foster Carer), Amy-Louise Butler (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)) and Katerina Hardy (V4C representative).

Officers in attendance:-

Michelle Andrews (Service Manager Early Years and Childcare Support), Rebecca Andrews (Principal Lawyer, Legal Services), Kieran Barnes (Virtual Head Teacher), Katrina Cope (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Andrew Garbutt (Participation and Engagement Team), Jenny Harper (Interim Designate Nurse Safeguarding, South West Lincolnshire CCG), John Harris (Children's Service Manager - Regulated - North and Fostering), Andrew Morris (Corporate Parenting Manager), Janice Spencer (Assistant Director Safeguarding), Daniel Steel (Scrutiny Officer) and Mark Rainey (Commissioning Manager – Commercial), Anne Johnson (Adoption Team Manager) and Nicola Brangam, (Children's Services Agency Advisor, Fostering and Adoption).

24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Mrs K Cook.

An apology had also been received from John Herbert (Youth Development Practice Supervisor).

25 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTEREST

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

26 MINUTES OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING SUB-GROUP HELD ON 21 SEPTEMBER 2017

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2017 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

27 LEGAL SERVICES CARE PROCEEDINGS

The Sub-Group received a presentation from Rebecca Andrews, Principal Lawyer, Legal Services Lincolnshire, which provided an overview of legal care procedures relating to Looked After Children.

The presentation made reference to the following:-

- How children came into care under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989; and Care Proceedings under Section 31 of the Children Act 1989;
- To help the Sub-Group understand the process, the Sub-Group were able to follow a case study, which provided a chronological version of events.
- The following terms were explained to the Sub-Group:-
 - Care proceeding issued – This was when legal services lodged an application. The application would be accompanied by evidence, which would include for instance a statement by the social worker and the most recent assessment. It would also be accompanied by a chronology which concentrated on the last two years; and an interim care plan. It was highlighted that this would take place on day one;
 - Allocation Directions – It was noted that this was when the court considered the documents lodged with the court, from which it would make directions, such as appoint a children's guardian, and consider the parents file in response to the local authority's case; arrangements for an Advocates Meeting; and to also arrange a date for the Case Management meeting. This meeting would take place on day two;
 - At least two days before the Case Management meeting an Advocates meeting would take place. This would usually be conducted via a conference call. The Sub-Group noted that only legal representatives would be in attendance at this meeting. The meeting would identify the issues, identify the timetable for the child; discuss whether further evidence was required; and agree a timetable going forward. The local authority lawyer would then draft a proposed order the day before the hearing;
 - Case Management Hearing – It was noted that this would normally take place between day 18 and 20; and its main purpose was to timetable the case through to an Issues Resolution Hearing. It was noted further that an application for an interim order or an ISO could also be made at this stage; also dates and times might be agreed for the filing of evidence. It was highlighted that if the case was being twin-tracked for adoption, then direction might be given regarding placement. Directions might also be given for an expert report if required; as could direction for any further assessment including family members. At this hearing, a date would be fixed for the Issues Resolution Hearing, or if necessary for a further Case Management Hearing;
 - Further Case Management Hearing – The Sub-Group noted that the purpose of this meeting would be different for each case, an example

- given was that it might be to decide if an expert was required following the consideration of medical records;
- Issues Resolution Hearing – The hearing would normally take place between 18 and 20 weeks. An Advocates meeting would be held two days before. The Hearing would establish if any issues could be resolved, whether further evidence was required; whether a final order could be made; and identify any issues still outstanding for the final hearing; and
 - The final hearing should take place before the end of 26 weeks. This hearing would likely receive oral evidence. The local authority would be heard first, followed by the parents then the Children's Guardian. The Advocate would provide a summing up speech. If it was a Magistrates Court, the Justices would give their decision along with facts and reason. If it was a Judge, then a detailed Judgement would be delivered. It was highlighted that all parties at this stage had a right of appeal.

The Committee was advised that some cases were very complex, particularly in cases of neglect. Sometimes the local authority was criticised for leaving children at home too long. The Corporate Parenting Sub-Group commended the work of social workers.

During a short discussion, the Sub-Group raised the following issues:-

- Whether DBS checks were carried out on parents. The Sub-Group was advised that Police checks were carried out. The Sub-Group was advised further that the Legal Department had a protocol with the police;
- One member enquired as to whether the lack of paperwork at various stages caused any problems. The Sub-Group was advised that the Children's Guardian would not make any comments until after hearing the parents evidence; and
- The length of time in some cases, when the child or children were still at home. It was highlighted that each case was different and therefore the length of time was dependent on the circumstances.

RESOLVED

That the presentation relating to Legal Services Care Proceedings be received.

28 PRIVATE FOSTERING

The Sub-Group received a presentation from Nicola Brangam, Agency Advisor for Fostering and Adoption, which provided an overview of private fostering.

The presentation made reference to the following:-

- Definition of Private Fostering – The Sub-Group was advised that a private fostering arrangement was essentially one that was made privately (without the involvement of a local authority) for the care of a child under the age of 16

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(under 18, if disabled) with someone other than a parent or close relative with the intention that it should last for 28 days or more. It was noted that the period for which the child was cared for and accommodated by the private foster carer should be continuous, and that continuity was not broken by the occasional short break;

- Legitimate arrangements – The Sub-Group was advised that an arrangement would only be legitimate if the parent had given informed consent; and when the local authority knew about and had agreed with the arrangement;
- Clarity was given what was not a legitimate arrangement. For instance, in circumstances when children lived with and were cared for by aunts, uncles, brother, sisters or grandparents without outside involvement was not classed as Private Fostering; and
- Examples of Private Fostering – Some examples of private fostering arrangements were mentioned which included situations where children had been sent to England, for education or health care, by parents who lived overseas; or a teenager living with a friend's family because they were unable to get on with their own family.

The Sub-Group was advised that privately fostered children were often made more vulnerable, as a result of their living circumstances, and by their status not being identified, and by them not being reported to the local authority. An example of a child in private fostering non-legitimate arrangement brought to the Sub-Groups attention was that of Victoria Climbié. The Sub-Group was advised that since this case, subsequent guidance had emphasized the duty of local authorities to safeguard privately fostered children.

It was highlighted that it was the responsibility of everyone who came into contact with children through their work etc., to report instances of private fostering.

Health members of the Sub-Group gave reassurance that professionals were aware of private fostering; and it was part of their daily routine.

Some members extended some concerns, as this was an area of fostering that they were not aware of. Officers advised that there had been a media campaign; there was a private fostering week; and information had been circulated in a variety of forms for example through County News and, through schools. The Sub-Group was advised further that the admission form for schools had also been changed to ensure that data was collected as to who a child lived with.

RESOLVED

That the presentation relating to Private Fostering be received.

29 VISITING MEMBERS OVERVIEW OF RESIDENTIAL CARE

Consideration was given to Visiting Members – Log of Quarterly Visits to Children's Homes April 2017 to March 2018.

After viewing the log, it became apparent that there were some inadequacies regarding the recording of the visit information.

RESOLVED

That the Scrutiny Officer would speak to the Children's Service Manager – Regulated – North and Fostering after the meeting regarding the processing of Visiting Member log forms.

30 V4C (VOICES 4 CHOICES) / QUARTERLY REPORT (SEPTEMBER 2017 - DECEMBER 2017)

Consideration was given to a report from John Herbert, Youth Development Practice Supervisor, which provided an update on the work of the V4C (Voices for Choices), Lincolnshire's Children in Care Council.

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Katerina Hardy, V4C Representative.

In the absence of the Youth Development Practice Supervisor, Andrew Garbutt from the Participation and Engagement Team presented the report. The Sub-Group was advised that attempts were still being made to improve numbers attending the V4C Quadrant meetings. It was reported that Lincoln, West Lindsey and North and South Kesteven groups continued to have worthwhile numbers attending; and that when the Boston and South Holland groups had met recently approximately half a dozen young people had attended. It was also noted that unfortunately, due to other commitments the scheduled meeting of the East Lindsey group had been cancelled. Some proposals to encourage young people to attend the meetings were shown on pages 13/14 of the report presented.

The Sub-Group noted that the groups had been very grateful for Councillors attending a number of groups during the last quarter, as it gave the children and young people the opportunity to ask questions; and their attendance had shown commitment from the Council.

It was reported that the Big Conversation had been very successful and a list of what had been included in the Big Conversation 14 were detailed on page 14 of the report. The Sub-Group noted that Big Conversation 15 was due to be held on Wednesday 14 February 2018, at Myle Cross, 11.00am to 12.30pm. The Sub-Group was advised by the V4C representative that personally the Big Conversation event had been very useful; and would have helped her if she had known about some of the items when she was in care. Particular reference was made to: 10 things people wanted from their social worker and foster carer profiles.

The Chairman extended thanks to Katerina Hardy, V4C representative for attending the meeting and for sharing her views.

RESOLVED

That the report presented be received.

31 LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN PLACEMENT SUFFICIENCY STRATEGY 2018 - 2022

The Sub-Group gave consideration to a report from Mark Rainey, Commissioning Manager, Commercial, which provided the Sub-Group with an update on the Looked After Children Placement Sufficiency Strategy 2018 – 2022.

It was reported that Section 22G of the Children Act 1989; and the Statutory Guidance on Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked After Children (2010) was explicit in placing a duty on Local Authorities to act strategically to address gaps in provision by ensuring that they included in their relevant commissioning strategies, plans for meeting the sufficiency duty.

The following documentation accompanied the report for the Sub-Group to consider:-

- Appendix A – provided a copy of the refreshed Commissioning Excellence: Meeting the Sufficiency Duty 2018 to 2022;
- Appendix B - Commissioning Excellence: Meeting the Sufficiency Duty 2018 to 2022 Action Plan;
- Appendix C – Commissioning Excellence: Meeting the Sufficiency Duty 2018 to 2022 – Understanding Needs and Performance;
- Appendix D - Commissioning Excellence: Meeting the Sufficiency Duty 2018 to 2022 - Service Overview;
- Appendix E - Commissioning Excellence: Meeting the Sufficiency Duty 2018 to 2022 – Stakeholder Feedback; and
- Appendix F – Equality Impact Assessment

During discussion, a number of issues were raised:-

- Page 25 – Paragraph 1.2 advised that Lincolnshire's number of LAC and rate per 10,000 were increasing faster than both statistical neighbours and the national average. The national average was forecasted at 8% per year, but at the Budget Briefing on Monday 4 December, a slide had been shown assuming a budgeted growth for Lincolnshire of just 5%. Officers clarified that the 5% growth figure was reflective for Lincolnshire;
- Page 27 - Paragraph 4.4 – A question was asked relating to whether there would be sufficient places. The Sub-Group was advised that if the figures were inadequate, as it was a statutory duty, the local authority would cover any extra need. It was also noted that the increase over the last four years had been slow; however, there had been a spike in the previous year, what was needed would be managed;
- Page 30 – Fifth bullet point, Clarity was sort regarding the wording of the bullet point. Officers advised that it was the 20 miles from home that was the important factor; and not the reference to out of county;
- Page 66 – Table 3.17 – Percentage of LAC that are UASC, reference was made to the figure of 70,440. Officers confirmed that this figure represented England as a whole for 2015/16.
- Page 45 second to last bullet point – App for care leavers. The Sub-Group was advised that an App had been launched, which was working well. The Sub-Group was also advised that the information was also on the Barnardo's website along with other useful information. The information specific to the

leaving care service was also replicated on the Council's website. Officers agreed to send a link to all members of the Sub-Group after the meeting. Overall, it was felt that the information needed to be made more publicity available to care leavers;

- Page 26 - A suggestion was made to encourage more engagement to the V4C from LAC out of area; and
- Page 48 – Recommissioning of the online counselling support service. It was reported that the services was being re-commissioned to meet demand.

Due to time pressures, the Chairman asked the Sub-Group if all remaining questions could be emailed to Janice Spencer, Assistant Director Children's, Safeguarding. The Assistant Director Children's Services would then send any responses to all members of the Sub-Group.

RESOLVED

1. That support be given to the 'Commissioning Excellence: Meeting the Sufficiency Duty 2018/22' Strategy for Looked After Children.
2. That all remaining questions from the Sub-Group in relation to this item be sent to Janice Spencer, Assistant Director of Children's Safeguarding; and responses to the said questions be sent to all members of the Sub-Group.

32 LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17

The Sub-Group gave consideration to the Looked After Children Annual Report for 2016/17.

The Children's Service Manager – Regulated – North and Adoption introduced the Annual Report and advised that the report had been jointly produced by the Looked After teams from Lincolnshire Local Authority and services for looked after children within Lincolnshire Community Health Services (LCHS), Lincolnshire Partnership Foundation Trust (LPFT) and Lincolnshire Clinical Commissioning Groups. It was noted that the document had been written to meet the requirements of the Department of Health statutory guidance on Promoting the Health and Well-being of Looked After Children 2015.

The Sub-Group was advised that for the second year running health data was available to be incorporated within the report. Pages 134 and 135 provided the Sub-Group with information relating to health assessments for Looked After Children corporately parented by Lincolnshire County Council and children placed within Lincolnshire by external Local Authorities. It was noted that initial health assessments completed within timescales remained a challenge for health, but work was ongoing to improve the timeliness of health assessments.

During a short discussion, some members felt that more resources needed to be put into the initial health assessments. One main issue raised was the availability of doctors to carry out the initial assessments. Officers highlighted that not all Local Authorities were following the same model as adopted in Lincolnshire. It was

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highlighted by some members that the services operated in Lincolnshire were supported by NHS England.

Page 137 provided the Sub-Group with information pertaining to GP Registration. It was reported that 98% of all looked after children resident within Lincolnshire were registered with a GP.

Members of the Sub-Group welcomed the report and the data contained within it.

One member enquired as to how many young people were missed in the transition from children's to adults. Officers advised that work was currently being undertaken to identify this information; and would be available in the next few months. Officers agreed that this information once compiled would be circulated to members of the Sub-Group.

RESOLVED

That the Looked After Children Annual Report for 2016 – 2017 be received.

33 CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY UPDATE

The Assistant Director Children's, Safeguarding advised the Sub-Group that the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2014 – 2017 needed reviewing. Members of the Sub-Group were invited to take part in a workshop/working group to help shape the new strategy going forward.

It was agreed that all members of the Council should be invited to participate in a workshop/working group.

RESOLVED

That the Scrutiny Officer be tasked with emailing all members of the Council inviting them to participate in the Corporate Parenting Strategy refresh workshop/working group.

34 CORPORATE PARENTING SUB-GROUP WORK PROGRAMME 2018

Consideration was given to a report from Daniel Steel, Scrutiny Officer, which invited the Corporate Parenting Sub-Group to discuss and agree its work programme for 2017.

The Scrutiny Officer advised the Sub-Group that as a result of a backlog of items for consideration, a Virtual Meeting had been arranged for 1 February 2018. Page 171 of the agenda listed the items for consideration. The Sub-Group was advised that the agenda and reports would be sent out to the Corporate Parenting Sub-Group on 1 February 2018 inviting the Sub-Group to raise any questions through the Assistant Director, Safeguarding within a 10 day period. The questions raised and their responses would then be sent to all members of the Sub-Group for their information.

RESOLVED

That the work programme presented be approved.

The meeting closed at 12.30 pm

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