



## CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL 9 NOVEMBER 2023

### **PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S P ROE (CHAIRMAN)**

**Lincolnshire County Council:** Councillors A G Hagues (Vice-Chairman), Mrs N F Clarke, Mrs J E Killey, C Matthews, N Sear and M A Whittington

**Added Members:** Polly Coombes (Foster Carer) and Elizabeth Bunney (Lincolnshire Community Health Services)

Officers in attendance:-

Kiara Chatziioannou (Scrutiny Officer), Tara Jones (Head of Service, Children in Care Transformation and Partners in Practice Programme), Andrew Morris (Head of Service - Leaving Care, Semi-Independent Living and Unaccompanied Children), Emily Wilcox (Democratic Services Officer), Nicola Brangam (Fostering Team Manager South), Sharon Clarke (Interim Team Manager, Adoption), Carolyn Knight (Head of Service - Quality and Standards and Principal Social Worker), Sarah Lane (Virtual School Team Manager), Ben Lilley (Team Manager, Quality and Standards), Emily McAllister (Fostering Team Manager), Juliet Slater, Richard Stone (Team Manager - Quality and Standards), Kim Murray (Team Manager - Independent Chairs) and Julie Vincent (Independent Reviewing Officer)

### 25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

An apology for absence had been received by Ann Wright (Foster Carer).

### 26 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were declared.

### 27 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 7 SEPTEMBER 2023

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 7 September 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### 28 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN AND CHIEF OFFICERS

The Chairman announced that he had attended the 'Big Conversation' Voices4Choices meeting, which was well attended and a successful event.

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The Chairman and the Head of Service for Leaving Care, Supported Living and Unaccompanied Children continued their visits to District Councils to give training on Corporate Parenting and the Panel was expecting District Councillors to observe a future meeting.

The Assistant Director – Children’s Safeguarding was delighted to announce that Paul Fisher had been appointed as the Corporate Parenting Manager.

29 INDEPENDENT REVIEWING SERVICE SIX MONTHLY UPDATE REPORT (1 APRIL 2023 - 30 SEPTEMBER 2023)

Consideration was given to a report by the Team Manager – Quality and Standards, which invited the Panel to consider a six-monthly update report on the Independent Reviewing Service.

During the discussion the following points were recorded:

- The action to move to a hybrid working approach was a Countywide objective outlined in the smarter working policy. Independent Reviewing Officers had been provided with Logitech Conference Cameras to operate meetings virtually, whilst hybrid facilities were still being developed.
- Funding for an additional Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) to support the rising number of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) was being used to support capacity within the wider IRO team whilst two officers focussed mainly on supporting UASC.
- Specialist officers supporting UASC were IRO’s who had further knowledge and experience in supporting UASC and understanding their circumstances. These IRO’s would also support other children in care. UASC living out of County would continue to be supported by Lincolnshire County Council. Officers emphasised that all Children in Care were supported equally.
- A lack of local providers meant that UASC between the ages of 15-18 were often placed in registered regulated supporting living options in Peterborough, Derby and Nottingham, whilst continuing to be supported by Lincolnshire. Officers were working with colleagues in NACRO in supporting the young people in coming back to Lincolnshire once their status was agreed by the Home Office.
- The Panel was assured that a rise in sickness absence was mainly to do with planned sickness such as planned operations. Although it was acknowledged that aspects of the role could be stressful, assurance was provided that the service operated a flexible working approach and staff were well supported through supervisions and other means.
- Officers continued to work collectively with partners who were all committed to getting timescales for court proceedings back on track. Officers were pleased to report that several legacy court cases had made their way through the system and cases would meet the 26-week timescale for the completion.

RESOLVED:

That assurance be given that Independent Reviewing Officers are fulfilling their duties and obligations in line with statutory guidance set out in the IRO handbook, working with the Quality and Standards service framework to support the Local Authority to deliver good quality services, develop practice and promote good outcomes for children in Care.

30      REGULATION 44 INDEPENDENT VISITORS REPORT

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Service, Quality and Standards and Principal Social Worker, which invited the Panel to consider the Regulation 44 Independent Visitors Report.

During the discussion the following points were recorded:

- There was a national issue with recruitment in residential services. Officers welcomed the proposed reforms which would professionalise the roles within residential care and focus on quality and standards.
- The dedication of residential care staff in Lincolnshire was significant. Issues with the recruitment of managers at The Beacon children's home was ongoing however officers were optimistic that the recruitment to the management posts would be successful and emphasised that the rest of the staff team was stable.
- Staff at children's homes worked positively with children in forming and maintaining important friendships and encouraged visits to friends. Visits within children's homes had to be managed due to group living situations, but the Panel was assured that these were well managed and there was a high focus on relationships at every level.
- Officers were pleased to report that only one Children in Care review had been completed outside of the set timescales.
- Officers would always avoid rearranging reviews, however there were some instances where this was necessary. Rearranged reviews would always consider the impact of the child and the family, but it was essential to ensure that plans had been adequately reviewed and were realistic.
- The Foster Carer Representative emphasised her experience that the children are always the priority and timescales were adhered to.
- Parents to children in care continued to maintain their parental responsibility through agreements which were formed during planning meetings. In most circumstances, parents remained involved throughout the process and child specific plans were established on how family time and contact with parents was maintained.
- Risk assessments would be carried out as part of the care plan, with many starting with supervised contact, which may change over time depending on circumstances.
- Staff actively worked with parents to address the reasons their child had been placed into care.

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RESOLVED:

That assurance be given that the Independent Visitors are fulfilling their obligations in visiting the Local Authority homes each month as required and inspecting against the nine quality standards as outlined in Part six, regulation 43 of the Children's Home Regulation 2015.

31 FOSTERING QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT - QUARTERS 1 AND 2

Consideration was given to a report by the Fostering Team Manager, which invited the Panel to review the performance of the Fostering Service for Quarters 1 and 2 of 2023/24.

The Foster Carer Representative gave her view on the Fostering Service, which had seen large changes throughout her 20 years of fostering. The importance of relationships and connection and working therapeutically to overcome challenges were emphasised. Foster carers were supported by social workers each month where they discussed supporting the child and the family. The support offered to Foster Carers in building relationships was welcomed.

On behalf of the Panel, the Chairman expressed pride in Foster Carers and thanked them for their contributions.

RESOLVED:

That the report be accepted as an accurate overview of the Fostering Service.

32 PRIVATE FOSTERING ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023

Consideration was given to a report by the Fostering Team Manager (South), which invited the Panel to consider the Private Fostering Annual Report 2022-23.

During the discussion the following points were noted:

- There was a requirement for parents to notify the local authority of any private fostering arrangements six months before the arrangement was made, but it was acknowledged that this was not always the case.
- The service relied on partner agencies to be curious to the possibility of private fostering arrangements and many of the notifications received were from schools. Awareness was raised with health colleagues in identifying children.
- Officers were confident that they were aware of most private fostering arrangements for asylum seeking children, however they would have further conversations with partners on this issue.
- It was clarified that unaccompanied asylum-seeking children became children in care and were not privately fostered.

- Members thanked Officers for their work on identifying and supporting private fostering placements.

RESOLVED:

That the Private Fostering Annual Report for 2022-23 be endorsed.

33 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY

Consideration was given to a report by the Assistant Director – Children’s Safeguarding, which invited the Panel to consider the Annual Report of the Regional Adoption Agency.

During the discussion the following points were recorded:

- Education Passports helpfully provided personal information about the additional support a child may need or how they may need to be supported differently, such as a child’s likes and dislikes, including behaviour triggers, as well as information on adoption and post adoption support and signposting. Passports were reviewed annually and at every transition point and did not replace any existing education or health care plan.
- Members were pleased to see that the adoption process was improved and focussed and there was much to offer around post adoption support. Officers were congratulated for a fantastic service.

RESOLVED:

That the Family Adoptions Links Annual Report 2022-23 be endorsed as a correct record of activity across the Family Adoption Links partnership operating as a Regional Adoption Agency.

34 LINCOLNSHIRE CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL - VOICES FOR CHOICES (V4C) UPDATE REPORT

Consideration was given to a report by the Practice Supervisor – Children’s Services (Quality and Standards), which invited the Panel to consider the Lincolnshire Children in Care Council – V4C update. The Practice Supervisor – Children’s Services (Quality and Standards) thanked frontline managers in giving support to help the growth of the Children in Care Council.

During the discussion the following points were recorded:

- The Panel was delighted that work was focussed on finding new ways to deal with issues, such as attending sporting clubs and other activities to help them grow.
- The Practice Supervisor – Children’s Services (Quality and Standards) was pleased to announce that Lincolnshire Children’s Service, with help from Nottinghamshire, would be involved in the production of videos and online resources on their views on

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certain issues to be shared with professionals and incorporated to online training. The Panel welcomed the opportunity to view the videos.

- The Panel supported the excellent work of Officers and the Children in Care Council.

RESOLVED:

1. That satisfaction be given to the V4C activities and meetings undertaken with the reporting period;
2. That support for the ongoing work by officers to engage with young people and to improve the attendance at V4C meetings and events be recorded.

### 35 CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to a report by the Senior Scrutiny Officer, which invited the Panel to consider it's work programme, as set out on pages 145 to 150 of the agenda pack.

During the discussion the following points were recorded:

- Members of South Kesteven District Council were planning to attend the next meeting of the Panel.
- The Chairman thanked the Lincolnshire Community Health Service, NHS Trust Representative for her contribution and attendance ahead of her retirement. The Lincolnshire Community Health Service, NHS Trust Representative expressed her views on the brilliant care provided to Lincolnshire's young people and children in care and her enjoyment in working in partnership with the Council to support children and young people.
- The Panel was advised that discussions were ongoing about the operation of the Panel and welcomed thoughts or suggestions to make the Panel more effective, with the hope to invite young people to meetings of the Panel.
- Suggestions included meeting room and timing of meetings to engage young people and encourage attendance; inviting younger children to ensure their input was included and have focussed agendas for meetings including young people. Comments would be taken into consideration in ongoing discussions.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be agreed.

### 36 PRIVATE FOSTERING STATEMENT OF PURPOSE 2022-2023

The Panel noted the Private Fostering Statement of Purpose 2022-23.

The meeting closed at 12.33 pm