

**CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL
18 SEPTEMBER 2014**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR D BRAILSFORD (CHAIRMAN)

Councillors A G Hagues, J R Hicks, J D Hough (Vice-Chairman), R J Hunter-Clarke, P J O'Connor and L Wootten.

Added Members: Mary-Beth Pepperdine (V4C The Children in Care Council).

Officers/invited guests in attendance: Karen Bailey (Looked After Children Educational Services Manager); Kieran Barnes (Virtual Head of Looked After Children); Clive Chambers (Barnardo's); Lee Crisp (Homes Manager, Spalding); Judith Gilbert (Democratic Services Officer); Jan Gunter (Consultant Nurse Safeguarding – NHS Lincolnshire); Samantha Harrison (Principal Performance Officer); Colin Hopkirk (Participation Officer); Laura Hyatt (Regulation 33 Officer); Tracy Johnson (Scrutiny Officer), Carolyn Knight (Acting Team Manager Independent Chairs); Janet Morris (Team Manager – Fostering Services North); Richard Porter (Principal Performance Officer) and Janice Spencer (Assistant Director Children's Safeguarding).

13. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Theresa Buhryn (Performance Development and Reviewing Manager); Jean Burbidge (Lincolnshire Community Health Services); Dave Clarke (Secure Unit Principal); Polly Coombes (Foster Carer); Sheridan Dodsworth (Children's Service Manager – SEND); Samantha Edwards (Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust); John Harris (Children's Service Manager Regulated – North and Fostering); Tara Jones (Children's Service Manager Regulated - South and Adoption); Kerry Mitchell (Barnardo's); Jinny Niven (Customer Relations and Complaints Manager) and Ted Normandale (National Youth Advocacy Service).

At this point in the meeting, the Chairman invited introductions from Kieran Barnes (Virtual Head of Looked After Children); Carolyn Knight (Acting Team Manager Independent Chairs) and Lee Crisp (Homes Manager, Spalding).

14. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations of Members' interests were made at this stage of the proceedings.

15. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 5 JUNE 2014

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Meeting held on the 5 June 2014 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record subject to the following amendment:

"the Panel was informed that the Independent Reviewing Officers would be reviewing each Looked After Child every six *months*".

The Panel also received confirmation that the Care Nurse would be recruited to undertake a wide range of duties as well as taking responsibility for the "Red and Blue" books.

16. V4C THE LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN COUNCIL QUARTERLY MINUTES AND WEB APPLICATION

The Participation Officer presented to the Panel Minutes from the V4C meetings held on 24 June and 22 July 2014.

The Panel was informed that young people felt it important that time be built into the FAB Awards which would give them an opportunity to chat and socialise with old friends.

The Panel was also informed that some members of the V4C group worked with Manchester Metropolitan University to design their own "Step Up" course which had been focussed on what it felt like to be a Looked After Child from a child's perspective. The young people also worked alongside Social Workers in order that the Social Workers had a greater understanding of the impact that their actions and decisions had on Looked After Children. The young people worked together in teams and voiced their concerns and their views on how they felt issues could be more appropriately addressed and resolved by Social Workers. It was felt that the quieter members of the Group joined in discussions enthusiastically. Members of the team had been invited to visit Manchester Metropolitan University again on 1 October 2014.

The Panel received reassurance that all Social Workers in Lincolnshire received regular training sessions and were receiving regular updates on how they were being perceived by Looked After Children.

It was noted that work was progressing with a new logo which was currently being designed by young people.

The Panel was informed that a newsletter was being designed which would be circulated to every Foster Carer in Lincolnshire. The newsletter would include information about the young people in their care and the staff currently looking after them.

(Councillor R J Hunter-Clarke joined the meeting at 10.25 pm)

The Panel was informed that work was ongoing with the Digital Engagement Team to develop a new Web Application which was expected to be launched by Christmas.

RESOLVED

That the reports be noted and Lincolnshire County Council ensure that formal responses be given to V4C on any issues raised by them.

17. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN PERFORMANCE INDICATORS – SIX MONTHLY UPDATE – (JANUARY 2014 – JUNE 2014)

The Panel received Looked After Children Performance Indicators from January 2014 to June 2014.

The Panel was informed that the number of Looked After Children had increased to 628 in Lincolnshire and foster placements were becoming increasingly a choice for children entering the care system. The Panel received reassurance that performance targets were always carefully monitored and officers felt the current performance target to be very satisfactory.

The Panel was also informed that this quarter had shown a significant increase in the number of Looked After Children. This continued the increasing trend of the previous quarter's target. It was noted that the majority of children who were placed in foster care, and the number of carers available, had not kept pace with the increase in demand. It had not always been possible to identify the optimal match for each individual child and, as a result of this, placement moves had occurred. Furthermore, the Panel was informed that the service was also managing young people with increasingly complex needs. It was reported that there was much competition from independent foster carers in Lincolnshire and the Fostering Team had been given £300,000 to further develop a Recruitment Strategy to attract carers into the service. It was reported that 77 foster carers had been recruited last year and 44 foster carers had already been recruited this year. It was confirmed that if Looked After Children were living with family relatives then the family relatives would receive the same financial payment as foster carers.

The Panel was informed that the target for Looked After Children who had received an up-to-date health check reduced during the month of July. However, the target at the end of the year was still expected to be achieved despite this dip in July. Proposals had been made for the development of dedicated clinics, where all initial health assessments would be conducted by Paediatricians, which would improve the timeliness of assessments and improve the quality of the Health Plans for young people. It was confirmed that performance target information continued to be monitored on a weekly basis.

The Panel noted that the target for Looked After Children who had a Personal Education Plan was disappointing as the target had been narrowly missed. It was, however, noted that significant effort and resources had been applied to improve the number of completed Personal Education Plans along with an aim to improve the quality of these plans. The Panel was informed that generally Looked After Children

found the Personal Education Plans boring with too many repetitive questions as well as them being too time-consuming to complete. It was agreed that the Looked After Children Educational Services Manager should revisit the form and it be made more user-friendly.

Officers reported that they were aware of all Looked After Children who had mental health problems who were leaving care along with the challenges of finding suitable employment for them. It was also noted that some young asylum people were unable to find employment as they had no right to work in the United Kingdom.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted and the Personal Education Plans be revamped to ensure that they are more user-friendly.

18. CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY

Colin Hopkirk, Participation Officer, presented the Corporate Parenting Strategy for any final comments and sign-off by the Panel. The Panel was informed that comments had been received by V4C and a young people's version of the Strategy would also be produced. Colin was thanked for all his hard work in producing and delivering the Strategy and it was confirmed that he would take responsibility in ensuring the aims of the Strategy were adhered to.

The Panel voiced concerns as to the best way to promote the Corporate Parenting Strategy within Lincolnshire County Council. It was suggested that if possible the Corporate Parenting Strategy should form part of the Full Council Agenda in order to be able to target all Councillors who had a responsibility within the Strategy. It was noted, however, that the Corporate Parenting Strategy had formed part of a Councillor Development Session which was attended by eighteen Councillors who had received the Strategy very positively. It was felt that this should form part of any future Councillors' Induction training.

The Panel was informed that training would be available for Councillors who visited children's homes to ensure that any future visits they made were as successful as possible. It was felt that a residential staff member should also attend any future Councillor training as staff members were fully conversant with the young people they looked after. It was also suggested that training should be considered which highlighted the lifestyles of young people along with some of the issues which were faced by them.

RESOLVED

1. That any reference in the Corporate Parenting Strategy to Working Groups be changed to Committees.
2. A Corporate Parenting Strategy aimed at young people be produced and circulated to all partner agencies.
3. The Corporate Parenting Strategy be presented to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on a yearly basis and to the Corporate Parenting Panel on a six monthly basis.

4. That the Corporate Parenting Strategy be circulated to all partner agencies.
5. That the possibility of the Corporate Parenting Strategy being presented to full Council be investigated.

19. DUKE OF EDINBURGH AWARDS AND LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

The Panel was informed that 32 Looked After Children aged between 14 and 24 started the Duke of Edinburgh Awards between April 2012 – April 2014 and, out of the 32 who commenced, eleven young people completed the Awards. The Panel was informed that feedback from Looked After Children, who had completed the Awards, found that the Awards enhanced and strengthened their relationship with peers and that the Awards improved their confidence level.

The Panel agreed that the Duke of Edinburgh Awards should be included as part of the Looked After Children's Personal Education Plan. The Panel was informed that not all schools in Lincolnshire promoted the Duke of Edinburgh Awards and some schools were even over-subscribed for the Awards.

RESOLVED

1. That the report be noted and the Duke of Edinburgh Awards be included in the Looked After Children's Personal Education Plans in order to try to increase the participation rate of the Awards.
2. That the recording of information relating to the number of Looked After Children participating in the Awards be investigated.

20. VISITING MEMBERS' QUARTERLY REPORT AND VISITING MEMBER FEEDBACK

The Panel was informed that there were errors in the Log of Quarterly Visits to Children's Homes April 2014 – March 2015 as some visits which had taken place had not been recorded or had been recorded incorrectly. The Panel felt that one single point of contact would alleviate the errors which had previously occurred.

Councillor A G Hagues gave a verbal update to the Panel on his visit to 91 Eastgate, Sleaford, on the 26 August 2014. He reported that the children were in good spirits on his visit and were excited about their impending visit to the cinema. The Panel was informed that there was good interaction between the children and the staff and there was a general feeling of 91 Eastgate being a happy home. The visitors' log was completed on arrival and departure, the home was very clean and tidy and the building and grounds appeared to be in a good state of repair. The Panel was informed that the office accommodation appeared to be very cramped and there was little desk space for the staff to work comfortably.

RESOLVED

That Tracy Johnson, Scrutiny Officer, act as Co-ordinator to receive the Visiting Members' reports and that a Visiting Member be invited to give a

presentation on their visit to a Children's Home to the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

21. BARNARDO'S LEAVING CARE SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT

The Panel received the Care Service Annual Report from Barnardo's who was commissioned by Lincolnshire County Council to deliver Leaving Care provision for all young people in Lincolnshire who were eligible as determined by the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2010.

The Panel was informed that most young people in care leave by the time they were 18, compared to their peers who stayed at home until their mid-20s. It was, however, noted that the Staying Put initiative, which had been piloted in Lincolnshire, was having a positive impact in enabling Looked After Children to remain living with foster carers beyond their 18th birthday where this was agreed to be in the young person's best interests.

The aims of the Leaving Care Service were to:-

- help care leavers achieve their full potential as they made the transition into adulthood;
- ensure care leavers had suitable accommodation and were well prepared for independent living;
- ensure that care leavers were in Education, Employment and Training and were able to financially support themselves without additional state benefits;
- support care leavers in being good citizens and making a positive contribution to society; and
- support care leavers in being good parents ensuring that they were supported in meeting their children's needs.

The Panel was informed that Barnardo's had commissioned training for some services in the use of "Five to Thrive", a model for promoting positive parenting messages. In recognition of the additional challenges that becoming a parent can have for young people, staff from the Leaving Care Service had been one of the first cohorts trained. It was also confirmed that the agreement referred to in the report regarding addressing barriers to young people accessing education or training had been implemented.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

22. BARNARDO'S BEYOND CARE CAMPAIGN – A GUIDE FOR COUNCILLORS ON CARE LEAVERS' ACCOMMODATION

The Panel received a briefing report informing them that Barnardo's was campaigning to improve the accommodation and support given to young people as they left care across the country.

The Panel noted that when young people left care, the local authority was responsible for helping them find somewhere safe and suitable to live. The Panel was informed that bed and breakfast accommodation was only used in an emergency situation in Lincolnshire.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

23. REGULATION 33 REPORTS – SIX MONTHLY SUMMARY – (FEBRUARY 2014 – JULY 2014)

The Panel received the Regulation 33 report which informed them that Health and Safety case records and disclosure checks were up-to-date. It was also noted that training was taking place to meet staff requirements and the need for development particularly with regard to the safety of young people.

The Panel was informed that managers and staff in homes had built excellent relationships with the young people they supported and they worked very hard to ensure that the care of the young people was paramount. The Panel noted that staff often worked extra hours to ensure that the young people were well looked after and the Panel received an example of this when a young person was in hospital on his birthday and staff arranged to visit him and hold a birthday picnic for him at the hospital.

It was noted that activities and days out were arranged on the preferences of the young people and the Panel was informed that the young people from Albion Street and Eastgate had been particularly engaged on the National Arts Award at Bronze level.

The Panel was informed that young people had engaged well with the National Arts Award at Bronze level in the Albion Street and Eastgate homes.

The Panel was also informed that the demand for short-term respite care at Strut House was oversubscribed and parents were encouraged to consider the Haven for short-term respite care.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

24. COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS - SIX MONTHLY UPDATE – (JANUARY 2014 – JUNE 2014)

The Panel received a report informing them that four complaints had been received from children in Lincolnshire County Council care from 1 January 2014 to 30 June 2014. It was noted that one of these complaints had now been progressed to a Stage 2 complaint. No compliments or comments had been received from Looked After Children during this period.

As there were no officers in attendance to present the report, the Chairman asked for any comments the Panel had to be recorded and forwarded to the report writer.

These included:

- future reports should refer to children and young people and not just young people;
- future reports should indicate the length of time it had taken to resolve any complaints as well as the statutory timescales in order that the Panel was able to ascertain if complaints were resolved in statutory timescales;
- a comparison be made to the number of complaints received in previous years.

The Panel was informed that a new complaints leaflet was currently being formulated and the Panel was invited to comment on the versions which would be circulated to them in due course.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted and any future reports presented to the Panel to contain the additional information as outlined above.

(Councillor A G Hagues and Jan Hunter left the meeting at 12.55 pm)

25. FOSTERING SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT

The Panel received a report which informed them of the work of the Fostering Service in accordance with the requirements of the Care Standards Act 2000, Fostering Services 2011, and Fostering National Minimum Standards which provided key service performance and developments over the past twelve months.

The Panel was informed that Lincolnshire County Council had made an investment to recruit additional Foster Carers which proved to be challenging. A Recruitment Team was also being developed to undertake this work.

It was noted that there was now much demand for the "Kinship Care" scheme which involved the care of young people by carers known to them well but not necessarily related to the young person.

It was queried why there was no training provided to foster carers on the education of Looked After Children. It was noted that post approval training on education was offered once a term but was not included in the list within the Annual Report. It was also noted that there was other training provided which was not included in the list. The Panel requested that a comprehensive list of all training provided to foster carers be included in the Annual Report and emphasised the importance of Looked After Children being supported by foster carers in all their educational needs.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted and that a comprehensive list of all training provided to foster carers be included in future Annual Reports.

26. FOSTERING SERVICE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Panel received a report informing them of the requirements of the Care Standards Act 2000, Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and the National Minimum Standards 2010. The report also provided a clear written Statement of Purpose which set out the aims and objectives of the Fostering Service and the facilities and services which it provided.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted and any comments the Panel wished to make to be sent directly to Janice Spencer, Assistant Director Children's Safeguarding, as soon as possible.

27. ADOPTION STATEMENT OF PURPOSE 2014

The Panel received a report informing them of the Adoption Service in accordance with the requirements of the Care Standards Act 2000, National Minimum Standards 2003, and the Adoption and Children Act 2002. The report set out the relevant performance information and identified the key developments within the service over the last twelve months.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted and any comments the Panel wished to make to be sent directly to Janice Spencer, Assistant Director Children's Safeguarding, as soon as possible.

28. CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL WORK PROGRAMME 2014/2015

The Scrutiny Officer introduced this item and it was agreed that Barnardo's Compliments and Complaints annual report be presented at the same meeting as the Compliments, Complaints and Comments annual report which would be received at the March 2015 meeting. It was agreed that a six monthly update on the Corporate Parenting Strategy would also be discussed at the March 2015 meeting.

RESOLVED

That the Work Programme presented be amended accordingly.

29. PROPOSED DATES FOR 2015 CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL MEETINGS

The Panel received and agreed proposed dates for the 2015 Corporate Parenting Panel Meetings.

RESOLVED

That the Corporate Parenting Panel meetings in 2015 be held on the following dates:

Thursday 12 March 2015 – 10 am

Thursday 11 June 2015 – 10 am

Thursday 10 September 2015 – 10 am

Thursday 10 December 2015 – 10 am

The Chairman closed the meeting at 1.15 pm.