

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR H R JOHNSON (CHAIRMAN)

Councillors Miss A M Jenkyns, J D Hough, Mrs M J Overton and S F Williams.

Councillor A P Williams (Executive Support Councillor for Children's Services and Adult Education) was also in attendance.

External Members: Dawn Berry, Marillyn Graham-Williams and Ted Normandale.

Also in attendance: Theresa Buhryn (Performance Development and Reviewing Manager), Chris Fowler (Head of the Virtual School for Children in Public Care), Cheryl Hall (Democratic Services Officer), Colin Hopkirk (Principal Participation Officer), Tracy Johnson (Scrutiny Officer), Kerry Mitchell (Leaving Care Manager, Lincolnshire (Barnardo's)), Hugh Sherrife (Assistant Director, Barnardo's), Janice Spencer (Head of Regulated Services) and John Stephenson (Complaints Manager).

54. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor R A Shore.

Apologies for absence were also received from Theresa Doughty and Jean Burbidge.

Councillor Mrs P A Bradwell (Executive Councillor for Children's Services and Adult Education) also submitted an apology for absence.

55. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations of Members' interests were declared at this stage of the meeting.

56. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL HELD ON 20 JANUARY 2011

The Panel considered the minutes of the previous meeting held on 20 January 2011.

A discussion took place regarding Minute 47, where the Panel was advised that its suggestion to appoint additional visiting members to each home would, logistically, prove to be too difficult and it was therefore suggested not to implement this process.

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2011 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

57. BRIEF MINUTES OF THE V4C, THE LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN COUNCIL, HELD ON 18 JANUARY AND 23 FEBRUARY 2011, FOR INFORMATION

The Panel considered the minutes of the previous meetings of Voices4Choices (V4C) held on 18 January and 23 February 2011.

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The Panel was informed that members of V4C attended a meeting of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership on Wednesday, 16 March 2011. Members of V4C were challenging in terms of the proposed cuts to Children's Services, in particular whether the Council was proposing any changes to the way in which looked after children or V4C were supported and in relation to the abolition of the Education Maintenance Allowance. A further meeting with the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership was scheduled to be held on Tuesday, 5 July 2011.

Further to the Panel's concerns raised at its meeting held on 20 January 2011 (Minute 43 refers), it was advised that the project hosted by Barnardo's had been salvaged. However, concerns were raised with regard to the support provided by the University of Lincoln. It was suggested that once the data from this project was available, it should be presented to the Panel for information.

A V4C Awards Ceremony was scheduled to be held on Sunday, 9 April 2011, at the Drill Hall, Lincoln, commencing at 10.00 a.m. Members were advised that they were welcome to attend this event.

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meetings of the V4C, The Looked After Children Council, held on 18 January and 23 February 2011, be noted.

58. RESPIRE CARE TIME LIMITED SUB-GROUP

Consideration was given to a verbal update by Janice Spencer (Head of Regulated Services), which provided the Panel with an update on the progress to establish the Respite Care Time Limited Sub-Group.

Councillors Miss A M Jenkyns, H R Johnson, A P Williams and S F Williams and Marilyn Graham-Williams had previously volunteered to sit on the Sub-Group.

Following consultation with those Members, it was agreed that the first meeting of the Sub-Group would be held on Friday, 13 May 2011 at 2.00 p.m.

RESOLVED

That the first meeting of the Sub-Group be held on Friday, 13 May 2011 at 2.00 p.m.

59. UPDATE ON THE PROGRESS WITH V4C, THE LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN'S COUNCIL IN LINCOLNSHIRE

Consideration was given to a report by Colin Hopkirk (Principal Participation Officer), which provided the Panel with an opportunity to consider an update on the progress with Voices4Choices (V4C), the Children in Care Council.

A discussion took place regarding the 'Coming into Care Kits', in particular now that the mainstream versions of the kits had been developed, Children Services were in the process of developing a version that could be used by children with learning disabilities and their carers. Work had completed with staff and children at the

Beacon and consultation meetings were scheduled to be held with a range of children, young people, carers and other staff, over the coming months. Dawn Berry volunteered to assist with the development of those kits.

The Panel was informed that the Chairman of V4C had been nominated by the Participation Team for a Diana Award this year for her contributions to V4C and her volunteering work in the Gambia.

RESOLVED

That the report and verbal update be noted.

60. VISITING MEMBERS' – LOG OF QUARTERLY VISITS APRIL 2010 – MARCH 2011

Consideration was given to a report by Janice Spencer (Head of Regulated Services), which provided the Panel with an update on the Visiting Members' Log of Quarterly Visits for 2010-11, where the following points were noted: -

- The Panel requested that, as a matter of urgency, the Head of Regulated Services contacted the Visiting Member for Beacon, Grantham, to establish whether any visits had been undertaken since 20 October 2010;
- Councillor A P Williams, Executive Support Councillor for Children's Services and Adult Education, informed the Panel that he would contact the Visiting Members for Beacon, Grantham and 33 Northolme, Grantham, to establish whether any further visits had been undertaken;
- A further visit had been undertaken at the Secure Unit, Sleaford, on 19 January 2011;
- The Regulation 33 Officer produced a quarterly summary. It was agreed that these reports should be presented to the Panel once they were available;
- It was requested whether each Visiting Member could allocate themselves a 'buddy'. The 'buddy' could then attend a visit if the visiting member was unavailable. The Panel supported this concept and it was suggested that each visiting member should inform the Head of Regulated Services who their 'buddy' was. Further to this discussion, Councillor S F Williams expressed an interest in becoming a 'buddy' for Councillor H R Johnson at 67 Albion Street and Councillor Mrs M J Overton informed the Panel that she could become the 'buddy' for both homes in Sleaford.

RESOLVED

1. That the report be noted.
2. That 'Regulation 33 Quarterly Summary' be included on the Panel's work programme as a standard item.
3. That each Visiting Member be requested to inform the Head of Regulated Services who their designated 'buddy' is.

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APRIL 2010 – JANUARY 2011**

The Panel considered a report from Janice Spencer (Head of Regulated Services), which detailed performance for April 2010 – January 2011 in respect of Looked After Children Services.

Concerns were raised in relation to the performance of National Indicator 101 'Looked After Children achieving 5 A* - C GCSEs (or equivalent) at Key Stage 4 (with English and Maths)'. It was queried whether this target could be reset so it was aspirational, yet achievable. The Panel was informed that if this target was reset, it could, nationally, be interpreted that Lincolnshire had lower aspirations. It was queried as to what could be done to improve the education of Looked After Children. Members suggested that one to one tuition and early intervention would significantly improve the performance of this target.

RESOLVED

1. That the performance for April 2010 – January 2011 be noted.
2. That a report on how to improve the education of Looked After Children be brought to a future meeting.

62. PROVISION FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN – GIFTED AND TALENTED

Consideration was given to a report by Chris Fowler (Head of the Virtual School for Children in Public Care), which provided the Panel with an update on the policy and principles which were used to support Looked After Children who had been identified as having a special gift or talent.

The term 'Young, Gifted and Talented' was introduced by the Department for Children, School and Families in 2005 as part of the National Strategies in 2006/07. School Young, Gifted and Talented related specifically to learners aged between 4 - 19 years, who attended maintained primary and secondary schools and colleges.

The aims and policies of Children's Services were, and continued to be, to positively support all Looked After Children as a key part of its Corporate Parenting function, seeking life enhancing activities for them and in particular, seeking to nurture and support any identified special interest and/or motivation toward positive activities or achievement.

Discussion ensued, from which the following points were noted: -

- Additional costs for supporting a Looked After Child identified as gifted or talented had been appropriately met and allocated from budgets within Children's Services upon application;
- Children's Services was currently setting its budgets for 2011/12. It was suggested that once information relating to the budgets for the Virtual School and other services for Looked After Children was available, it should be presented to the Panel for information;

- It was queried whether the meetings for the completion or reviewing of the Electronic Personal Education Plan could be combined with Statementing. It was suggested that a letter could be sent to all Head Teachers to that effect.

RESOLVED

1. That the report be noted.
2. That information on the Children's Services Budgets for 2011/12 relating to the Virtual School and other services for Looked After Children be presented to the Panel at a future meeting.

63. EDUCATION CHAMPIONS SCHEME FOR LINCOLNSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

The Panel considered a report by Chris Fowler (Head of the Virtual School for Children in Public Care), which invited Members to consider a proposal for elected members becoming Education Champions.

The Panel was reminded that this idea arose from a recommendation/request from the Corporate Parenting Panel at its meeting held on 12 November 2010. It was based upon an Education Champions Strategy introduced by the London Borough of Barnet where a scheme of this nature was attributed to increasing academic performance of Looked After Children during 2005/06.

The Head of the Virtual School for Children in Public Care advised the Panel that Phase One of the implementation would commence during September 2011 and could begin by targeting Key Stage 2 looked after students, then repeated in subsequent years so that over time a high rate of coverage could be achieved across the full age ranges in Key Stage 2, 3 and 4 looked after students.

The Panel was provided with an opportunity to ask questions, where the following points were noted: -

- This role required an element of training and it was therefore suggested that this training should go through the Councillor Development Group;
- This role would require long-term commitment;
- Officers could also undertake this role. The Panel suggested that a least two officers should become an Education Champion, as part of this scheme.

RESOLVED

1. That the appropriate resources to support the scheme's introduction be put into place.
2. That a one year pilot commences in September 2011 and a phased roll-out plan targeting increased numbers of Looked After Children over the subsequent three years be introduced.
3. That the views of the Children in Care Council be sought prior to the scheme's implementation and at each milestone.

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4. That the Education Champions be provided with training and support prior to its commencement in September 2011 and that training be endorsed by the Councillor Development Group.

NOTE: - At this stage of the proceedings, the Panel adjourned its meeting for lunch. On return, the following Members were present: -

Councillors H R Johnson, J D Hough, Miss A M Jenkyns and S F Williams.

Councillor A P Williams (Executive Support Councillor for Children's Services and Adult Education) was also in attendance.

Dawn Berry (Foster Carer), Mairilyn Graham-Williams (Foster Carer) and Ted Normandale (National Youth Advocacy Service Representative) were also in attendance.

Officers in attendance: - Theresa Buhryn (Performance Development and Reviewing Manager), Cheryl Hall (Democratic Services Officer), Tracy Johnson (Scrutiny Officer), Kerry Mitchell (Leaving Care Manager, Lincolnshire (Barnardo's)), Hugh Sheriffe (Assistant Director, Barnardo's), Janice Spencer (Head of Regulated Services) and John Stephenson (Complaints Manager).

64. STABILITY OF PLACEMENTS FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

Consideration was given to a report by Janice Spencer (Head of Regulated Services), which invited the Panel to consider information in relation to Lincolnshire's performance compared with statistical neighbours and all England authorities, with regard to placement stability for Looked After Children.

Placement stability was a critical factor in ensuring that care was a positive experience for Looked After Children. Stability was associated with better outcomes and improved life changes. Placement instability was often a key barrier to improving educational outcomes.

Members were provided with an opportunity to ask questions, where the following points were noted: -

- The average length of time a Looked After Child remained in a foster care placement was approximately 4.5 years;
- The foster care service had been relatively protected within the re-organisation of the authority;
- A report was scheduled to be presented to Children's Services Departmental Management Team, which requested additional investment into professional carers. These carers fostered children with complex behaviours;
- Concerns were raised by the Panel as 45 out of 520 Looked After Children moved placements three or more times during 2009/10. The Panel was reassured that the majority of these were positive moves.

RESOLVED

1. That the content of the report and comments made be noted.
2. That a report on Placement Analysis and professional carers be brought to a future meeting.

65. COMPLAINTS RECEIVED FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

The Panel considered a report by John Stephenson (Complaints Manager), which provided information on the complaints received regarding Looked After Children for the period of 1 August 2010 to 28 February 2011.

During this period there were thirteen complaints, twelve were resolved by the Children's Services Management Team and one proceeded to an independent investigation at Stage 2 of the Directorate's complaints procedure. Of the complaints resolved locally, six were substantiated, two partially substantiated, and four unsubstantiated. All complainants had the right to an advocate through The National Youth Advocacy Service.

The Panel was informed that a proposal had been put forward to Children's Services Management Team to establish a Complaints Review Group, which would consist of representatives from the Complaints Team and Children's Services Management Team.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

66. LEAVING CARE SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT

Consideration was given to a report and verbal update by Hugh Sheriffe (Assistant Director, Barnardo's) and Kerry Mitchell (Leaving Care Manager, Lincolnshire (Barnardo's)), which provided the Panel with an opportunity to consider the Leaving Care Service Annual Report.

NOTE: - At this stage of the proceedings, Councillor J D Hough declared a personal interest as his partner was a Non-Executive Director for Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust and he was a Member of the Trust.

Discussion ensued, from which the following points were noted: -

- A Joint Complaints Procedure had now been implemented between Barnardo's and Lincolnshire County Council;
- Auditing was being undertaken on a regular basis to ensure individuals' voices were being heard and spot checks on safeguarding had been implemented;
- The Panel requested that it received a copy of the Section 11 Audit report once it had been undertaken.

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RESOLVED

That the report and verbal update be noted.

67. CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL WORK PROGRAMME 2011

Consideration was given to a report by Tracy Johnson (Scrutiny Officer), which provided the Panel with an opportunity to consider its own work programme for the coming year.

RESOLVED

That the Work Programme be approved subject to the inclusion of any amendments made at the meeting.

68. FUTURE MEETING DATES

The Panel was informed that future meetings would be held on the following dates: -

21 July 2011 at 10.00 a.m. – Committee Room 3;
20 October 2011 at 10.00 a.m. – Committee Room 3.

RESOLVED

That the dates of future meetings be noted.

The meeting closed at 13.50 p.m.