

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR H R JOHNSON (CHAIRMAN)

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

External Members: Dawn Berry (Foster Carer), Jean Burbridge (Lincolnshire Community Health Services), Theresa Doughty (Looked After Children Council) and Ted Normandale (National Youth Advocacy Service).

Councillors R G Davies and A P Williams (Executive Support Councillor for Children's Services and Adult Learning) were also in attendance.

Officers/invited guests in attendance: Karen Bailey (Looked After Children's Education Service Manager), Theresa Buhryn (Performance Development and Reviewing Manager), Chris Fowler (Head of the Virtual School for Children in Public Care), John Harris (Fostering Team Manager), Colin Hopkirk (Principal Participation Officer), Tracy Johnson (Scrutiny Officer), Kerry Mitchell (Leaving Care Manager, Barnardo's), Hugh Sherriffe (Assistant Director, Barnardo's) and Graham Watts (Democratic Services Officer).

Prior to the commencement of formal proceedings, the Chairman informed the Panel that this would be Chris Fowler's last meeting as he was shortly due to leave the authority. Mr Fowler has been the Head of the Virtual School for Children in Public Care for a number of years and the Panel thanked him for the valuable work that he had undertaken during that time and wished him well for the future.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Members were informed that Councillor Mrs C M H Farquharson had been appointed by the County Council to fill a vacancy on the Panel.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs C M H Farquharson and Miss A M Jenkyns.

2. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

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

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 7 APRIL 2011

In considering the minutes of the previous meeting as a correct record, the following issues were raised: -

- Minute number 58 – Respite Care Time Limited Sub-Group. It was reported that the final report from this Sub-Group would be presented to the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel;
- Minute number 60 – Quarterly logs by Visiting Members. A Councillor expressed concerns due to the fact that reports he had written following visits to one of his allocated care homes had been lost by officers in the Children's Services Directorate, on more than one occasion. The Councillor recently

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attended a constructive meeting with the Head of Regulated Services regarding this issue, but highlighted the problems he had experienced in relation to the administration of quarterly logs by Visiting Members. It was agreed that a report would be submitted to the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel on this issue;

- Minute number 61 – Corporate Parenting Panel Performance Report. In answer to a question, it was noted that there were no issues at this time regarding the performance of National Indicator 101 – ‘Looked After Children achieving 5 A* - C GCSEs (or equivalent) at Key Stage 4 (with English and Maths)’;
- Minute number 63 – Education Champions. Following the last meeting of the Panel, expressions of interest had been sought from those Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel and the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to volunteer to become Education Champions. Only two expressions of interest had been received, which was not enough to go ahead with the scheme. The following suggestions were made in order to move this scheme forward: -
 - i) to re-submit a report to the next meeting of the Panel to identify how the scheme should work and operate;
 - ii) more effectively promote the role of the Education Champion and involve all County Councillors and senior officers;
 - iii) re-submit a report to the Looked After Children Council and seek its views on how to proceed.

Members agreed that this scheme was unlikely to commence in September, as originally anticipated, and would more likely take place at the early stages of 2012.

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 7 April 2011 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

4. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN COUNCIL HELD ON 22 JUNE 2011

The Chairman of the Looked After Children Council took the Panel through the minutes of the meeting of the Looked After Children Council held on 22 June 2011, copies of which had been circulated to Members, which comprehensively set out the issues that had been discussed at the meeting and the subsequent action that would be taken.

Reference was made to the 11 Million Takeover Day, which was now known as the Children’s Commissioners Takeover Day and would be held on 11 November 2011.

Discussion ensued on Education Champions, following an earlier discussion in the meeting at Minute number 3 above, and it was agreed that the aim of the role would be to ‘fight the child’s corner’. Members felt that this message should be portrayed in any publicity material when seeking expressions of interest.

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Research undertaken by Barnardo's had identified three areas where it would aim to investigate and undertake more work with young people. These were noted as follows: -

- better choices around accommodation;
- better choices and support around education, employment and training;
- young people getting more involved in staff recruitment and development.

It was agreed that a plan showing timescales and anticipated completion dates would be circulated to the Panel in due course.

Members suggested that the Chairman of Corporate Parenting Panel should be invited to attend a future meeting of the Looked After Children Council, which was welcomed by the Chairman of the Looked After Children Council.

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Looked After Children Council held on 22 June 2011 be noted.

5. COMING INTO CARE KIT – VERSION FOR CHILDREN WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

The Council's Principal Participation Officer introduced this item and provided the Corporate Parenting Panel with a verbal report on the Coming into Care Kit for children with learning disabilities. A written update report would be circulated to Members of the Panel in due course.

Work was currently taking place to ensure that the information contained as part of the Coming into Care Kit was accessible to children and young people with learning disabilities, their parents, carers and social workers. Timescales had fallen behind due to the cancellation of a number of important meetings with people such as Headteachers of Special Schools and foster carers. Consequently, the final product would be agreed towards the end of the year with its implementation now scheduled for the beginning of 2012.

It would not be clear exactly what the final form of the kit would look like until all feedback had been collated from foster carers, schools, young people and staff, however, possible options at this stage included a paper document, a supporting DVD and an on-line version of the kit.

During discussion, a suggestion was put forward to look into the requirements of the Government's 'Children's Guide' alongside the kit, as there would be a substantial amount of crossover in relation to the content of both documents.

In closing, the Panel was reminded that the form for Visiting Members included a section that could be used for commenting on the use of Coming into Care Kits.

RESOLVED

That the verbal report be noted.

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The Council's Fostering Team Manager introduced this item and apologised to the Panel that a report marked 'to follow' on the agenda had not been circulated. The report would be sent to all Members on the Panel in due course.

Further to minute number 3 above in relation to concerns raised about how the administration process for Visiting Members worked, it was reiterated and agreed that a report would be submitted to the next meeting of the Panel in order to address this.

RESOLVED

That a report on the administration process for Visiting Members be submitted to the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

7. REGULATION 33 – ANNUAL REPORT

A report of the Regulation 33 Officer was presented by the Council's Performance Development and Reviewing Manager, which provided a summary of Regulation 33 visits to Local Authority Children's Homes in Lincolnshire and to the Lincolnshire Secure Unit for the period January to March 2011.

Examples of proactive good practice were included within the report and the Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Panel expressed his personal compliments in respect of the outstanding services provided at 67 Albion Street, Spalding, where he was a Visiting Member.

The issue of staff undertaking effective handovers was referred to and it was agreed that this needed to be monitored. The handover log was something else that Visiting Members could look into when conducting their visits of Care Homes.

A question was raised regarding the sharing of good practice between Care Homes and whether there was any evidence that this occurred. It was highlighted that all of the County Council's Care Homes had received very good inspection results, however, recognition was given to the point that they should all aspire to become 'outstanding'. The Section 33 Officer undertook reviews on a monthly basis of all of the Council's Care Homes and any good practice picked up as part of this process was shared with managers across the county. Regular manager meetings were also held where positive and negative issues were shared. It was agreed that minutes from managers meetings should be circulated to Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel, so that they could monitor whether the good practice being shared was being implemented.

A further question was asked in relation to the number of children and young people leaving care in the last twelve months that were not in education, employment or training. Officers agreed to circulate this information to Members of the Panel.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

8. NATIONAL YOUTH ADVOCACY SERVICE – ANNUAL REPORT

The Corporate Parenting Panel's external member from the National Youth Advocacy Service introduced this item and presented Members with the service's Lincolnshire Children's Rights Annual Report, covering April 2010 to March 2011, which had been circulated to the Panel.

Members were taken through the report, which provided comprehensive information under the following headings in relation to the services provided by the Advocacy Service's Lincolnshire Children's Rights Service: -

- background service information;
- monitoring information;
- Children's Rights Officer activities;
- quality of service;
- consultation;
- outcomes;
- value for money;
- value added elements to the service;
- legislative requirements.

The Panel discussed aspects of the Advocacy Service and the Lincolnshire Children's Rights Service as part of being taken through the report. It was noted that the service was completely child-led in that children and young people had to indicate their choice to receive services from the Advocacy Service. If a child or young person did not wish to receive these services it was emphasised that they would not be provided.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

9. '10 QUESTIONS TO ASK IF YOU'RE SCRUTINISING SERVICES FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN'

Consideration was given to a report by the Panel's Scrutiny Officer, which provided Members with a guide produced by the Centre for Public Scrutiny on the ten questions to ask if services for Looked After Children were being scrutinised. The guide was one of a series of similar guides produced on a range of topics, a copy of which was appended to the report.

The Panel was reminded that all County Councillors took on the role of 'corporate parents' to children who were looked after by Lincolnshire County Council. The Corporate Parenting Panel had the responsibility of scrutinising and reviewing the services available for Looked After Children. The guide set out ten questions to consider when scrutinising services for Looked After Children and also included some case studies from other local authorities.

During discussion, it was highlighted that none of the ten questions referred to a child or young person's happiness.

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Members agreed to examine each question in detail and would commence with questions ten, two and eight of the guide, specifically in that order, on the agenda for the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

RESOLVED

That questions ten, two and eight of the guide, in that specific order, be included on the agenda for consideration at the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

10. INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICERS SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT

The Panel considered a report by the Council's Performance Development and Reviewing Manager, which provided Members with an annual report of the work of the Independent Reviewing Officer Service.

The annual report set out a context to the role and work of the Independent Reviewing Officers Service and highlighted the activity of the service in relation to the development of good practice and improving outcomes for Looked After Children. It also identified areas of development scheduled to be progressed throughout 2011/2012.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

11. WORK PROGRAMME

Members were given the opportunity to consider the Corporate Parenting Panel's work programme for 2011, a copy of which had been circulated.

It was noted that an item entitled 'outcomes from health assessments' would be considered at the next meeting of the Panel. A number of other items had been added to the Panel's work programme as a result of earlier deliberations at this meeting.

RESOLVED

That the Corporate Parenting Panel's work programme for 2011 be agreed, subject to it being amended to include an item for consideration at the next meeting on 'outcomes from health assessments' and the inclusion of additional items as set out in minute numbers three, six and nine above.

12. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**RESOLVED**

That future meetings of the Corporate Parenting Panel be held on the following dates: -

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- Thursday 20 October 2011;
- Friday 27 January 2012;
- Friday 27 April 2012;
- Friday 27 July 2012;
- Friday 12 October 2012.

Meeting closed at 12.40 p.m.