

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR H R JOHNSON (CHAIRMAN)

Councillors Mrs C M H Farquharson, Mrs M J Overton, R A Shore and S F Williams.

External Members: Dawn Berry (Foster Carer), Jean Burbidge (Lincolnshire Community Health Services), Marillyn Graham-Williams (Foster Carer) and Ted Normandale (National Youth Advocacy Service).

Officers/invited guests in attendance: Karen Bailey (Looked After Children's Education Services Manager), Theresa Buhryn (Performance Development and Reviewing Manager), Dave Clarke (Secure Unit Principal), Colin Hopkirk (Principal Participation Officer), Tracy Johnson (Scrutiny Officer), Kerry Mitchell (Leaving Care Manager, Barnardo's), Hugh Sherriffe (Assistant Director, Barnardo's), Janice Spencer (Head of Regulated Services), John Stephenson (Complaints Officer), Meredith Teasdale (Head of Service – Children with Disabilities), Graham Watts (Democratic Services Officer) and Sue Westcott (Assistant Director, Children's Services).

13. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J D Hough and Miss A M Jenkyns.

Theresa Doughty (Chairman of the Children in Care Council) also submitted her apologies for absence.

14. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

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

15. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 21 JULY 2011

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 21 July 2011 be confirmed as a correct record, subject to an amendment to reflect that Councillor R A Shore submitted his apologies for absence.

16. CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Corporate Parenting Panel considered a report by the County Council's Head of Regulated Services, which provided Members with information relating to performance up to August 2011.

Discussion ensued on the following performance indicators that were included in the report: -

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- Looked after Children reaching level 4 in Mathematics at Key Stage 2;
- Looked after Children achieving 5 A* - C GCSEs (or equivalent) at Key Stage 4 (with Mathematics and English);
- adoptions of Looked After Children;
- foster/adoption of Looked After Children aged 10 to 16;
- Looked After Children per 10,000 population aged under 18;
- timeliness and stability of adoption of Looked After Children;
- stability of placements of Looked After Children: number of moves;
- participation of Looked After Children in reviews;
- stability of placements of Looked After Children: length of placement;
- Looked After Children cases which were reviewed within required timescales;
- Looked After Children absent from school.

The Chairman thanked officers for a very positive performance report.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

17. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE V4C (THE LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN COUNCIL) HELD ON 22 SEPTEMBER 2011

The County Council's Principal Participation Officer took Members through the minutes of the last meeting of the Looked After Children Council held on 22 September 2011, copies of which had been circulated to the Panel, and provided updates on the main issues raised at the meeting.

RESOLVED

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

18. V4C (THE LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN COUNCIL) ANNUAL REPORT

A report by the County Council's Principal Participation Officer was considered, which provided the Corporate Parenting Panel with an update on the work undertaken by the Looked After Children Council, as well as its Executive Group and Sub-Groups. Summaries of the following pieces of work were set out within the report: -

- 'The Big Conversation' event, hosted by the Looked After Children Council's Executive Group;
- the development of a Children in Care Kit for children with learning disabilities;
- Education Champions for Looked After Children and the Anti-Bullying Strategy;
- development of the C4YP website for the Looked After Children Council;
- contributions to the regional 'A National Voice' group.

It was noted that the Looked After Children Council in Lincolnshire created three sub-groups in 2011 so that it could extend its reach in the county. These were established in the Boston and Spalding area, the Lincoln and West Lindsey area and the East Lindsey area. The sub-groups met four to six times a year and would feed

into the long-standing Executive Group. The Executive Group was now an integral part of the new county Children and Young People's Voice Group, acting as a reference group to Lincolnshire's Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership.

During discussion reference was made to the 11 Million Takeover Day and it was noted that the County Council would be holding a mock meeting of its Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on 11 November 2011, where young people would be invited to attend and participate.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

19. EDUCATION CHAMPIONS SCHEME

The County Council's Assistant Director of Children's Services provided Members with an update on the Education Champions Scheme following discussion on the issue at the last meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 21 July 2011.

Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel and the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee had been invited to volunteer as Education Champions, however, the response to this had been low. Further consultation on Education Champions had been undertaken with Looked After Children, who felt that this additional role would be intrusive to their already complex day to day lives. The issue of the Education Champions Scheme was therefore discussed at the Children's Services Departmental Management Team where it was agreed that Councillors could support Looked After Children in different ways, such as overseeing whether the Pupil Premium was being used correctly and whether services were providing value for money. Members agreed that discussions with the relevant Executive Councillor and the Children's Services Departmental Management Team should take place prior to a report on this issue being submitted to a future meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel, setting out proposals as to how Councillors could support Looked After Children outside of the Education Champions Scheme.

RESOLVED

That a report on the ways in which Councillors can support Looked After Children in Lincolnshire, outside of the proposed Education Champions Scheme, be submitted to a future meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

20. VISITING MEMBERS QUARTERLY REPORT

The Council's Head of Regulated Services provided the Corporate Parenting Panel with a quarterly update on Members' visits to children's homes in Lincolnshire. A spreadsheet outlining the visits undertaken for the following care homes had been circulated: -

- 67 Albion Street, Spalding;
- Beacon, Grantham;
- 91 Eastgate, Sleaford;
- Haven Cottage, Boston;

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- 33 Northolme, Gainsborough;
- Strut House, Lincoln;
- Secure Unit, Sleaford.

It was reported that Councillor B G Singleton, who passed away earlier in the year, used to be the Visiting Member for the Secure Unit in Sleaford and a replacement had not yet been appointed. This meant that the Unit had not received a visit from a Member since May 2011 and therefore needed a Visiting Member to be allocated. Numerous members of the Corporate Parenting Panel volunteered to be the Visiting Member for the Secure Unit in Sleaford and officers agreed to consult with the relevant Executive Councillor so that the role could be allocated accordingly.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the update be noted.
- (2) That, following expressions of interest by Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel, a Visiting Member for the Secure Unit in Sleaford be appointed by the relevant Executive Councillor outside of the meeting.

21. VISITING MEMBERS – NEW ADMINISTRATION PROCESSES

The Council's Head of Regulated Services and Head of Service for Children with Disabilities jointly introduced this item and presented a document which set out the role of Visiting Members, a copy of the form that should be used by Visiting Members to report their findings when undertaking visits to children's homes and the administrative process that was followed for recording the outcomes of visits.

During discussion it was noted that training would be provided for any new Councillor that was appointed as a Visiting Member.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

22. REGULATION 33 QUARTERLY REPORT

This item had been withdrawn from the agenda and would be reported at the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

23. LINCOLNSHIRE LEAVING CARE SERVICE – UPDATE

An exempt report by the Assistant Director at Barnardo's was considered, which informed the Corporate Parenting Panel of the changes Barnardo's had made to the Leaving Care Service during 2011.

The Assistant Director took Members through the report and the Panel congratulated representatives from Barnardo's in attendance at the meeting for the very positive update report.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

24. REPRESENTATIONS/COMPLAINTS/COMMENTS ANNUAL REPORT

Consideration was given to a report by the County Council's Complaint's Officer, which provided the Corporate Parenting Panel with information on the complaints received regarding Looked After Children for the period 1 April 2011 to 30 September 2011.

Members were informed that during this six month period one complaint had been received from a child in Lincolnshire County Council care, which compared to thirteen complaints received in the previous six month period. The Complaints Officer provided the Panel with details relating to the specific complaint at the meeting.

The Panel agreed that the decrease in the number of complaints received reflected an increasing commitment by staff to work with both the National Youth Advocacy Service and the Complaints Officer to ensure that all issues raised by young people were addressed at an early stage by frontline workers. The Complaints Officer, the National Youth Advocacy Service Co-ordinator and the Barnardo's Area Manager were meeting on a quarterly basis so that any arising problems could be identified at an early stage in order that this improvement could be maintained.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

25. PLACEMENT ANALYSIS FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

Members considered a report by the Council's Head of Regulated Services, which provided the Corporate Parenting Panel with a copy of the Placement Analysis for Looked After Children 2006 – 2010.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

26. '10 QUESTIONS TO ASK IF YOU ARE SCRUTINISING SERVICES FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN'

An exempt report by the Head of Regulated Services was considered, which provided Members with an opportunity to discuss questions two, eight and ten of the guide produced by the Centre for Public Scrutiny on the ten questions to ask if services for Looked After Children were being scrutinised, as agreed at the last meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

Responses to questions two, eight and ten were set out within the report, which the Corporate Parenting Panel supported.

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It was agreed that questions five, seven and nine should be considered at the next meeting of the Panel.

RESOLVED

That questions five, seven and nine of the Centre for Public Scrutiny's guide on the ten questions to ask if services for Looked After Children are being scrutinised be considered at the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

27. REVIEW OF GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS AND TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

A report by the Scrutiny Officer was considered, which provided the Corporate Parenting Panel with an opportunity to consider a review of its governance arrangements and terms of reference.

A revised set of governance arrangements and terms of reference for the Corporate Parenting Panel was circulated which, it was proposed, would replace the previous set that had become out of date.

RESOLVED

That the revised governance arrangements and terms of reference for the Corporate Parenting Panel be approved.

28. WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Officer introduced this item and enabled the Corporate Parenting Panel to consider its work programme for 2011/2012, a copy of which had been circulated.

During discussion it was noted that the children's home at 67 St Albion Street in Spalding had received a result of 'outstanding' following its recent Ofsted inspection. Members were also informed that the Council's Fostering Service had undergone an inspection earlier in the year where it too received a result of 'outstanding'. The Corporate Parenting Panel congratulated the managers and staff involved in both 67 St Albion Street and the Fostering Service.

RESOLVED

That the work programme for 2011/2012 be approved, subject to the inclusion of additional items as set out in minute numbers 19, 22 and 26 above.

29. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**RESOLVED**

That future meetings of the Corporate Parenting Panel be held as follows: -

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- 2 February 2012 – 10.00 a.m.
- 19 April 2012 – 10.00 a.m.
- 19 July 2012 – 10.00 am.
- 4 October 2012 – 10.00 a.m.

Meeting closed at 12.15 p.m.