

PRESENT:

Councillors Mrs C M H Farquharson, J D Hough, A P Williams and S F Williams.

External Members: Jean Burbidge (Lincolnshire Community Health Services).

Officers/invited guests in attendance: Karen Bailey (Looked After Children's Education Services Manager), Theresa Buhryn (Performance Development and Reviewing Manager), Samantha Edwards (Locality Co-ordinator Looked After Children – Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust), Jan Gunter (Consultant Nurse, Safeguarding – NHS Lincolnshire), Tracy Johnson (Scrutiny Officer), Dr Folasade Johnson (Designated Doctor), Kerry Mitchell (Leaving Care Manager, Barnardo's), Hugh Sherriffe (Assistant Director, Barnardo's), Janice Spencer (Head of the Family Assessment and Support Team), Graham Watts (Democratic Services Officer) and Sue Westcott (Assistant Director, Children's Services).

30. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

That Councillor S F Williams be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

COUNCILLOR S F WILLIAMS IN THE CHAIR

31. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors H R Johnson, Mrs M J Overton and R A Shore.

Miss T Doughty (Looked After Children Council), Mrs M Graham-Williams (Foster Carer) and Mr T Normandale (National Youth Advocacy Service) also submitted their apologies for absence.

The Chief Executive reported that having received notice under Regulation 13 of the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups Regulations 1990), he had appointed Councillor A P Williams as a replacement member on the Panel, in place of Councillor Miss A M Jenkyns, for this meeting only.

32. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor J D Hough declared a personal interest in relation to minute number 37 as his partner was a Non-Executive Director for Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust and he was a Member of the Trust.

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That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 20 October 2011 be confirmed as a correct record.

34. REQUEST FOR MEMBERSHIP ON THE CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

Members considered a report which set out a request from the Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust for membership on Lincolnshire County Council's Corporate Parenting Panel.

It was reported that there was currently a vacancy on the Panel for an external member. The Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust had submitted a request to be represented on the Corporate Parenting Panel. Subject to approval by the Panel, Samantha Edwards, Locality Co-ordinator for Looked After Children, had been nominated by the Trust to fill the external vacancy.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the request by Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust to be represented on the Corporate Parenting Panel as an external member be approved.
- (2) That Samantha Edwards be appointed as Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust's representative on the Corporate Parenting Panel.

35. PERFORMANCE REPORT

The County Council's Assistant Director of Children's Services introduced this item and circulated performance data for quarter two of 2011/2012 in respect of Lincolnshire County Council's looked after children.

It was noted that the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 2 December 2011 had expressed concerns due to a number of performance indicators relating to looked after children not meeting their targets. The following indicators in particular were highlighted at that meeting: -

- the percentage of looked after children with a Personal Education Plan;
- the number of looked after children achieving level four in English and Mathematics at Key Stage Two;
- the number of looked after children achieving five GCSE grades A* to C at Key Stage Four including English and Mathematics;
- the number of care leavers in suitable accommodation;
- the number of care leavers in education, employment or training;
- the percentage of looked after children with an up-to-date health check;
- the percentage of looked after children with an up-to-date dental check;
- the percentage of looked after children with up-to-date routine immunisations.

The Panel was informed that targets for educational performance indicators in respect of looked after children had been set too high. This was due to the way in which they had been historically set, with the target increasing every year in an attempt to improve the attainment of looked after children. Targets had to relate to the cohort of looked after children at the time they were set, especially for educational attainment, therefore these targets were in the process of being reconsidered to more accurately reflect the current cohort.

In terms of the suitable accommodation performance indicator, it was reported that performance was improving and lots of work had taken place by Barnardo's to action this. All young people currently not in suitable accommodation had action plans in place and it was emphasised that none of these people in Lincolnshire were under 18 years of age.

A number of projects had been set up to work with care leavers and assist them in accessing education, employment or training opportunities, as well as apprenticeship schemes. Members were informed that all care leavers had education, employment and training plans in place. It was agreed that an update report on these projects should be submitted to a future meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

It was noted that this Panel and the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee would continue to closely monitor the looked after children performance report for the next quarter.

In closing, a Member of the Panel referred to the supported accommodation that Barnardo's offered young people in the county and recommended that all Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel took some time to visit the excellent facilities they provided.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

36. MINUTES OF THE LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN COUNCIL EXECUTIVE MEETINGS

The Corporate Parenting Panel received the minutes of the Looked After Children Council's Executive meetings held on 27 October 2011, 15 December 2011 and 19 January 2012, for information.

It was reported that Councillor Miss A M Jenkyns used to attend these Executive meetings of the Looked After Children Council in her capacity as a member of the Corporate Parenting Panel. In view of the fact that she was no longer a member of the Panel, Councillor A P Williams agreed to attend future meetings on behalf of the Panel.

Reference was made to minute number three of the meeting held on 15 December 2011 in respect of the 11 Million Takeover Day and, in particular, the mock meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee put on by the County Council. Young people, officers and Councillors involved in the meeting had submitted extremely positive feedback to the Council's Democratic Services team,

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however, the minutes of the meeting on 15 December 2011 stated that the Chairman's experience was more negative. It was agreed that the Chairman of the Looked After Children Council should be contacted to ascertain her concerns so that they could be taken into consideration for similar events in the future.

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the Looked After Children Council's Executive meetings held on 27 October 2011, 15 December 2011 and 19 January 2012 be noted.

37. HEALTH OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

The Designated Doctor introduced this item on behalf of United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust, and circulated a copy of the annual report for 2010/2011 in respect of Lincolnshire's looked after children.

The report covered the period 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011 and set out the following: -

- the profile of looked after children in Lincolnshire: -
 - number admitted into care;
 - number of care leavers;
 - reason for admission into care;
 - placement of looked after children;
 - gender;
 - ethnicity;
- an evaluation of health service delivery to looked after children: -
 - joint partnership approach;
 - health care of looked after children;
 - audit of the health needs of looked after children;
- advice on the quality of health assessments carried out: -
 - the current model of health services;
 - the health assessment process;
 - monitoring of the health assessment;
- advice on improving health services to children and young people in Lincolnshire.

In conclusion, the report stated that, overall, the current model of health assessment was an effective and holistic tool to identify and flag up the health needs of each looked after child, with the ultimate aim of improving the health outcomes for looked after children in Lincolnshire. It also referred to the fact that there was room for improvement in the health assessment process and in conducting the health assessment so that an outstanding health service for looked after children could be achieved, together with minimising health inequalities and improving their quality of life.

A number of recommendations were included in the annual report, which set out how improvements could be made to the health service in respect of looked after children.

It was reported that the Primary Care Trust had commissioned the health assessment for looked after children to General Practitioners. The statutory guidance on promoting the health and wellbeing of looked after children required that all health professionals performing health assessments and contributing to health planning had the appropriate skills and competencies by receiving appropriate training. In response to this requirement, training update sessions were organised for General Practitioners that had agreed to continue to participate in the holistic health assessment for looked after children in Lincolnshire. The Panel was disappointed to be informed that only 20 General Practitioners in Lincolnshire had expressed an interest in attending these sessions.

Lincolnshire County Council's Assistant Director of Children's Services stated that this report had been considered at a meeting of the Children's Services Departmental Management Team, where significant concerns were raised regarding the fact that the health needs of individuals could not be identified. As a consequence, their interventions could not be tracked, which caused further concerns as the report did not provide any indication of what, if anything, was happening to these vulnerable young people. The Departmental Management Team also felt that an audit of 32 young people could not fully represent the health needs of all looked after children in Lincolnshire and questioned the need for these young people to be allocated with a Designated Doctor when they could be assessed by their own General Practitioners.

In response, the Designated Doctor and Consultant Nurse for Safeguarding from NHS Lincolnshire stated that they felt the audit was representative of looked after children in the county and that their health needs were not currently being met through assessments being undertaken by their respective General Practitioners. A further audit was currently being held, which would investigate a 51% sample of looked after children in Lincolnshire. It was hoped that a final report on the health needs of all of Lincolnshire's looked after children would be presented to the Panel in due course. It was also emphasised that General Practitioners were under no statutory obligation to attend the training update sessions. Members were informed that every looked after child in Lincolnshire was registered with a General Practitioner. When a health assessment was undertaken, the Designated Doctor and the General Practitioner would be in close liaison and it was emphasised that the process was very inclusive. Information regarding an individual's health needs and subsequent interventions would be identified in their respective health plans, which could also be accessed by the young person's Social Worker.

During discussion, the following comments were made by Members of the Panel: -

- there seemed to be a lack of collaborative working in respect of the health of Lincolnshire's looked after children and that there was no one willing to take responsibility for this serious aspect of provision;
- the key issue was intervention and whether or not looked after children in Lincolnshire were getting the care they needed;
- an action plan or timescales would be required, setting out when information about interventions would be available;
- as a corporate parent, the County Council needed to be able to track the interventions of looked after children for its own reassurance. A system therefore needed to be put in place to identify who required support and what measures had been put in place to address their needs.

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The Panel was informed by those in attendance from health organisations that the audits represented the first stage of reviewing the health of looked after children in Lincolnshire, by identifying their health needs. The second stage was currently underway, which involved identifying the interventions that health organisations knew were in place for the majority of looked after children in the county and include any interventions that were not in place within health plans for individual children and young people. It was agreed that this second stage was exactly what the County Council and the Corporate Parenting Panel wanted to receive reassurances about.

Reference was made to the Looked After Children Steering Group, which met regularly and was well attended by senior representatives of the County Council and health organisations in Lincolnshire. It was agreed that the issue of health assessments would be referred for consideration to that forum, in order that the suggestion of a system of tracking interventions in respect of the health of Lincolnshire's looked after children could be taken forward. In closing, it was agreed that an update on this issue should be reported back to the Corporate Parenting Panel in six months.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Looked After Children Steering Group be asked to consider the introduction of a system to track the interventions relating to health issues for Lincolnshire's looked after children.
- (2) That an update report on this issue be submitted to the Corporate Parenting Panel in six months.

38. VISITING MEMBERS QUARTERLY REPORT

A report of the County Council's Interim Head of Regulated Services and Team Manager Fostering Services was considered, which provided the Corporate Parenting Panel with an update on quarterly visits by the County Council's Visiting Members.

The Panel was informed that all four homes were visited by County Councillors in this quarter and no concerns were reported in relation to the visitor's log or incident record systems. A copy of the log of visits to the County Council's Children's Homes was appended to the report.

During discussion, Members highlighted that Care Homes for children with disabilities had not been included as part of this report. This was an oversight and it was agreed that information on these visits would be included as part of future quarterly reports for Visiting Members.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

39. REGULATION 33 QUARTERLY SUMMARY

A report was considered by the Performance Development and Reviewing Manager was considered, which set out the half-yearly report on the Regulation 33 Service.

The report included updates on the following key issues: -

- staffing;
- establishment of Care Homes in terms of how many beds were occupied;
- referrals;
- health and safety;
- training;
- engagement and participation;
- positive activities;
- complaints;
- children who went missing;
- education attendance;
- disabilities;
- key workers.

Members of the Panel made reference to the number of children who went missing, as at one Care Home it was noted that there had been 80 incidents whereby a child had been classified as missing. It was emphasised that this high figure was down to the interpretation of the policy and most of the 80 cases related to the same individual failing to adhere to a curfew by a matter of minutes. Having noted that, however, Members were concerned that such interpretations could perhaps mask a serious incident relating to a missing child. The Panel was informed that the Regulation 33 Officer, when meeting Care Home Managers, would ensure that performance reporting was consistent across all homes in Lincolnshire and highlight this particular performance measure.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

40. CHILDREN'S SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT ON PRIVATE FOSTERING

The County Council's Head of Service for the Family Assessment and Support Team introduced this item and circulated a copy of the Children's Services annual report on Private Fostering, for information.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

41. PRIVATE FOSTERING – STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The County Council's Head of Service for the Family Assessment and Support Team introduced this item and circulated a copy of the Private Fostering Statement of Purpose, for information.

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RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

42. ADOPTION SERVICE SIX MONTH REPORT – APRIL 2011 TO SEPTEMBER 2011

The County Council's Head of Service for the Family Assessment and Support Team introduced this item and circulated a copy of the Adoption Service's six-month report from 1 April 2011 to 30 September 2011, for information.

It was reported that the County Council had received 'outstanding' for all sections of its recently undertaken Ofsted inspection of the Adoptions Service. The Corporate Parenting Panel took this opportunity to record its congratulations to all members of staff involved in the Adoptions Service for this achievement.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

43. RESPIRE CARE TIME LIMITED SUB-GROUP – ACTIONS

A report by the County Council's Head of Service for the Family Assessment and Support Team was considered, which outlined the key actions resulting from the work of the Respite Care Time Limited Sub-Group.

The Sub-Group was established to look into an issue raised by a young person regarding respite care and placement moves. It met on three occasions and a policy document had been developed to reflect the needs of young people requiring or requesting respite and to acknowledge the occasional needs of families to access this resource. A copy of the policy document was appended to the report.

It was agreed that the exercise had provided a positive outcome in supporting both young people and carers moving forward.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

44. EDUCATION CHAMPIONS FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

A report by the County Council's Looked After Children's Education Services Manager was considered, which provided Members with an opportunity to consider an updated proposal for the role of Education Champions for Looked After Children following the previous report that was considered by the Corporate Parenting Panel on 20 October 2011.

It was reported that the original proposal was not favourable to young people who suggested that, rather than championing individual looked after children, elected members should champion looked after children at school level. It was therefore proposed that this could be facilitated by the Council's School Improvement Service

in conjunction with the Looked After Children Education Service following the submission by schools of their annual designated teacher reports. A list of designated teachers for all maintained schools in Lincolnshire was appended to the report.

The School Improvement Service would be compiling an annual countywide report based on the individual schools' designated teacher reports, a copy of which would be presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel in due course.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

45. CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL WORK PROGRAMME 2012

The Scrutiny Officer introduced this item and provided the Corporate Parenting Panel with a copy of its work programme for 2012.

In closing, the Corporate Parenting Panel extended its best wishes to Sue Westcott, Assistant Director of Children's Services, who would be leaving the authority shortly to take up an Assistant Director post at Peterborough City Council.

RESOLVED

That the Corporate Parenting Panel's work programme for 2012 be approved, subject to the inclusion of the items agreed earlier in the meeting at minute numbers 35, 37 and 38.

Meeting closed at 12.15 p.m.