

PRESENT:

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

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

Councillor D Brailsford (Executive Support Councillor for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning) was also in attendance.

Officers/invited guests in attendance: Graham Aisthorpe-Watts (Democratic Services Officer), Theresa Buhryn (Performance Development and Reviewing Officer), Clive Chambers (Assistant Director, Barnardo's), Jan Gunter (Consultant Nurse, Safeguarding – NHS Lincolnshire), Laura Hyatt (Regulation 33 Officer), Liz Jones (Scrutiny Officer), Tara Jones (Joint Head of Service for Regulated Services), Kerry Mitchell (Leaving Care Manager, Barnardo's), Janice Spencer (Assistant Director of Children's Services), Michelle White (Team Manager – Children with Disabilities) and Tim Whittingham (Education Officer).

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

That Councillor H R Johnson be elected as Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Panel for the 2012/2013 municipal year.

COUNCILLOR H R JOHNSON IN THE CHAIR

Upon being elected, the Chairman read out a letter from John Hayes MP, Minister of State for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning, which congratulated the County Council on receiving a Quality Mark Award in recognition of its contribution and commitment to improving the employability for young people leaving care.

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

That Councillor S F Williams be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Panel for the 2012/2013 municipal year.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

Theresa Doughty (Looked After Children Council) and Samantha Edwards (Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust) also submitted their apologies for absence.

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4. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

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

5. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 19 APRIL 2012

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 19 April 2012 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

6. PERFORMANCE REPORT

A report by the Assistant Director of Children's Services was considered, which provided the Corporate Parenting Panel with performance information for quarter four of 2011/2012.

It was noted that the date of this meeting meant that performance data for quarter one of 2012/2013 was not available, but would be reportable in a couple of weeks. Members agreed that future meetings of the Panel should be arranged around the availability of quarterly performance reports.

In going through the performance report, Members noted that some of the indicators were performing just below target. Officers emphasised that Lincolnshire's performance in comparison to the national average and statistical neighbours was very high and the reason why some indicators were short of the target was due to targets being very aspirational for certain areas. It was also explained that, for some indicators, the way in which they were measured impacted on their overall performance. An example was given whereby the indicator for care leavers in suitable accommodation included data for young people in custody. These individuals had to be classified as being not in suitable accommodation, which had a negative impact on performance even though there was nothing Barnardo's could do to influence this aspect of the indicator's performance. The Panel agreed that the performance of other authorities, including Lincolnshire's statistical neighbours, should be presented with future performance reports for comparable purposes. In addition, Members requested the inclusion of health related data in future performance reports, together with further explanation in the narrative to explain why indicators were below target.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the report be noted.
- (2) That future meetings of the Corporate Parenting Panel be scheduled around the availability of quarterly performance reports.
- (3) That future performance reports include information on the performance of statistical neighbours and the national average, for comparable purposes.

- (4) That the Corporate Parenting Panel requests the inclusion of health data as part of future quarterly performance reports.

7. 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 19 April 2012, 24 May 2012 and 28 June 2012.

A member of the Panel reported that he had recently met with the Chairman of the Looked After Children Council, who felt that the formal format of Corporate Parenting Panel meetings put looked after children off engaging with the process. They were very keen to engage with elected members and other stakeholders and suggested a more informal mechanism to facilitate this. Officers agreed to investigate this further and also look into ways in which Panel members could visit looked after children in different areas of the county, rather than at County Offices in Lincoln.

Discussion ensued on minute number six of the minutes of the meeting held on 24 May 2012, in relation to Education Champions. The Looked After Children Council's Executive expressed that there had been confusion with the Education Champions proposal. Contrary to previous reporting, the group was fully supportive of the idea but suggested that, rather than focussing on individual children's cases, it could be more effective for Councillors involved to take on a group of schools and work with respective Headteachers and Governors on how they included and supported looked after children. Officers therefore agreed to work with the Looked After Children Council and investigate how the Education Champions proposal could be moved forward.

It was noted that the Corporate Parenting Panel used to have a representative attend meetings of the Looked After Children Council's Executive meetings, but this practice stopped when a particular Councillor left the membership of the Panel. It was agreed this should be reintroduced as an important way of the Corporate Parenting Panel engaging with the Looked After Children Council.

Reference was made to the Big Conversation event, scheduled to be held on 27 July 2012 in Lincoln. All members of the Corporate Parenting Panel had been invited and were encouraged to attend and take advantage of this opportunity to engage with young people in care and care leavers.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the minutes of the Looked After Children Council's Executive meetings on 19 April 2012, 24 May 2012 and 28 June 2012 be noted.
- (2) That officers be requested to investigate a more informal process for the Corporate Parenting Panel to engage with the Looked After Children Council.
- (3) That officers be requested to investigate the Educational Champions proposal further, as outlined above.

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- (4) That the Corporate Parenting Panel sends a representative to attend future meetings of the Looked After Children Council's Executive meetings.

8. VISITING MEMBERS QUARTERLY REPORT

The Head of Service for Regulated Services presented the Corporate Parenting Panel with the quarterly report for visits to care homes by the Council's Visiting Members.

Concerns were expressed in relation to The Beacon in Grantham and Haven Cottage in Boston, neither of which, according to the report, had been visited by their designated Visiting Members for the whole of the quarter. The Panel agreed to formally complain to the Executive Councillor for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning regarding this issue and request the appointment of new Visiting Members for the two homes.

In closing, the Panel agreed to write to all of the Council's care homes and thank the staff for the valuable work they undertook and for working to such high standards. It was also suggested that an article could be written in the Council's County News publication to celebrate the level of service provided at each of the homes.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the report be noted.
- (2) That a complaint regarding the lack of visits by the designated Visiting Member for The Beacon in Grantham and Haven Cottage in Boston be sent by the Corporate Parenting Panel to the Executive Councillor for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning and that the Executive Councillor be requested to appoint new Visiting Members for the two homes.
- (3) That a letter be written by the Corporate Parenting Panel to all of the Council's care homes, thanking the staff for the valuable work they undertook and for working to such high standards.

9. LEAVING CARE SERVICE – ANNUAL REPORT

NOTE – during consideration of this item, Councillor J D Hough wished it noting that his wife was a Non-Executive Director of Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, and that he was also a Member of the Trust.

Consideration was given to a report by the Leaving Care Manager from Barnardo's, which provided the Corporate Parenting Panel with an opportunity to consider the Barnardo's Midlands Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service Annual Report for April 2011 to March 2012.

A copy of the Annual Report was circulated as an appendix and included information under the following main headings: -

- finance;
- education, employment and training;
- accommodation;
- participation;
- service updates;
- volunteering;
- audit and quality assurance;
- stakeholder feedback;
- future planning.

The Panel noted the significant improvements made in respect of accommodation outcomes for all care leavers and congratulated Barnardo's for its success in this respect.

In terms of the care leavers apprenticeship scheme, it was reported that Barnardo's was looking into funding options for its growth and would be engaging with Lincolnshire County Council as part of this process. The Panel agreed that this should be supported and requested an update report in due course.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the report be noted.
- (2) That an update report on the growth of the care leavers apprenticeship scheme be submitted to a future meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

10. NATIONAL YOUTH ADVOCACY SERVICE – ANNUAL REPORT

The Corporate Parenting Panel's National Youth Advocacy Service representative presented Members with the Annual Report for the Lincolnshire Children's Rights Service of the National Youth Advocacy Service for 2011 to 2012.

A copy of the Annual Report was circulated as an appendix and included a range of statistical information relating to the young people that had accessed the advocacy service.

In a general discussion about publicity of the service, it was noted that the majority of young people accessing the service found out about it via 'word of mouth'. It was suggested that an article could be written for the Council's County News publication to assist in the promotion of the Youth Advocacy Service.

RESOLVED

- That the report be noted.

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A report by the Assistant Director of Children's Services was considered, which provided the Corporate Parenting Panel with information on complaints, compliments and comments received regarding looked after children for the period 1 April 2012 to 30 June 2012.

It was noted that in the three month reporting period there had been one complaint from a child in the Council's care. Details of the particular complaint were included within the report, which was currently being investigated through the Council's complaints procedure.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

12. '10 QUESTIONS TO ASK IF YOU'RE SCRUTINISING SERVICES FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN' – QUESTIONS FIVE AND NINE

The Corporate Parenting Panel considered a report by the Head of Regulated Services, which provided Members with an opportunity to discuss questions five and nine 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.

Responses to questions five and nine were set out within the report, which the Panel supported. It was suggested that the response to question five should be forwarded onto the Council's Adoptions Panel, for information.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

13. TRANSRACIAL ADOPTIONS

A report by the Head of Regulated Services was considered, which had been written in response to a request by a member of the Panel in relation to the County Council's policies around transracial adoptions, and set out the timeliness of children placed for adoption together with the Government's proposed action plan.

In discussing transracial adoptions, reference was made to consideration given to religion or other parental requests or preferences when placing a child for adoption. The Panel was reassured that such circumstances were always taken into account as part of the adoption process when seeking to place a child. In answer to a question regarding invasive treatments to children, such as circumcision for example, it was noted that this issue was currently being debated nationally from a public health and safeguarding perspective. It was suggested that an update report at the appropriate time should be submitted to a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

14. DESIGNATED TEACHER EDUCATION CHAMPIONS

It was agreed that this item had been covered as part of minute number seven above, in respect of the Education Champions proposal.

15. SPECIAL GUARDIANSHIP ORDERS

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Regulated Services, which provided Members with information on how the County Council achieved secure and permanent arrangements for children and young people who did not have a plan of adoption.

It was noted that one of the most successful means of securing children and young people's exits from care was the commitment to support family and foster carers financially to seek Special Guardianship Orders for the young people they were caring for. This meant that they would obtain full parental responsibility for the young person. Special Guardianship Orders not only provided placement stability, security and improved outcomes for children and young people, but also reduced the number of children and young people remaining or becoming looked after.

A range of information regarding Special Guardianship Orders, including performance data and outcomes for children and young people, as well as Special Guardians themselves, was appended to the report.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

16. CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL WORK PROGRAMME 2012/2013

A report by the Scrutiny Officer was considered, which invited the Corporate Parenting Panel to consider its work programme for the coming year.

RESOLVED

That the work programme be approved, subject to the inclusion of an item on the care leavers apprenticeship scheme as outlined in minute number nine above.

17. REGULATION 33 QUARTERLY REPORT

The Regulation 33 Officer presented a report to the Corporate Parenting Panel, which set out the quarterly report of the Regulation 33 Service for April to June 2012.

Clarity was sought in respect of the high number of vacancies at The Beacon in Grantham in comparison to the Council's other care homes. It was agreed that an update on staffing numbers for this particular home would be included as part of the quarter two Regulation 33 report.

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RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

Meeting closed at 1.00 p.m.