

**CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL  
17 JANUARY 2013**

**PRESENT: COUNCILLOR H R JOHNSON (CHAIRMAN)**

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

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

Officers/invited guests in attendance: Theresa Buhryn (Performance Development and Reviewing Officer), Clive Chambers (Assistant Director Children's Services, Barnardo's Midlands Region), Dave Clarke (Unit Principal, Lincolnshire Secure Unit), Sheridan Dodsworth (Head of Service for Children with Disabilities), John Harris (Joint Head of Service for Regulated Services) Tracy Johnson (Scrutiny Officer), and Kerry Mitchell (Leaving Care Manager, Barnardo's).

**31. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J R Hicks, R A Shore and A P Williams and Samantha Edwards (Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust).

Apologies for absence were also received from Councillor Mrs P A Bradwell (Executive Councillor for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning) and Councillor D Brailsford (Executive Support Councillor for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning)

The following officers also submitted their apologies: Janice Spencer (Assistant Director Children's Services), Colin Hopkirk (Participation Officer) and Tara Jones (Joint Head of Service for Regulated Services)

**32. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTEREST**

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

**33. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11 OCTOBER 2012**

**RESOLVED**

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 11 October 2012 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**34. PERFORMANCE REPORT**

Consideration was given to a report presented by the Joint Head of Service for Regulated Services which provided the Panel with a summary of information in relation to the performance against indicators in Quarter 3 2012/13. The performance of a number of indicators was highlighted to the Members.

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The Panel was provided with the opportunity to ask questions to the officers present in relation to the information presented and some of the points raised during discussion included the following:

- 2042SC - There had been a steady increase throughout the year of children becoming looked after to 563 by 31 December 2012. However, when this was compared and contrasted with other authorities the number was lower than other authorities;
- Members were pleased that there hadn't been an escalation of the numbers of children becoming looked after due to the financial crisis;
- NI148 – This had shown a pleasing increase from the figures three months earlier;
- CS144 – it was thought that this was under target as there had been an increase in the amount of leave which was taken during November and December by GP's, and there was a limited number of GP's who were trained to carry out the health checks;
- More GP's had been trained recently, but it was also important that practice administrators were aware of this to enable them to make the appointments for Looked After Children;
- It was important to always be mindful of safeguarding issues when processing adoptions;
- ;
- It was suggested that an action plan should be brought to the Panel setting out how the issues around respite and support for foster carers could be tackled;
- There were six new supportive lodging providers which were going through health and safety checks, but there was a need for more in the south of the County. Resources had been extended and there would be two supportive lodging workers and so more care leavers could be worked with.

#### **RESOLVED**

- (i) That the information presented be noted.
- (ii) That an action plan to tackle issues around support and respite for foster carers be brought to the Panel at a future meeting.

#### **35. VOICES FOR CHOICES (V4C) MINUTES (THE LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN COUNCIL)**

As the relevant officers were not able to attend the meeting to present the minutes, it was suggested that the minutes be noted and any comments or questions should be reserved for the next meeting.

#### **RESOLVED**

That the minutes be noted.

#### **36. VISITING MEMBERS LOG 2012-13**

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

The Panel was informed that all visiting member visits which were scheduled had been carried out, and the visiting members shared their experiences of the visits they had undertaken.

It was noted that there did not seem to be a report on the visit to Strut House by Councillor A Williams but officers were sure that the visit had taken place, and this would be confirmed. It was noted that the report for the visit to Northolme had not yet been received.

It was commented that children in homes tended to require extra assistance, whether that was external or otherwise.

It was queried whether the visiting member reports were useful, and it was noted that there was a need for members to be explicit regarding the issues which were being observed. Lincolnshire was good at engaging with other organisations on a multi-agency basis.

## RESOLVED

That the report presented be noted.

### 37. LEAVING CARE QUESTIONNAIRE

Consideration was given to a report which provided a summary of the responses from the Leaving Care Questionnaire which was designed to provide information on how well young people felt they were prepared for independence by the residential home they lived in. A Residential Care Officer was allocated to take the questionnaire to all the young people that 33 Northolme was still in contact with and asked them to complete the form.

The Panel was informed that there were some clear learning outcomes which had been highlighted, and in particular more work was needed around budgeting and preparing young people for independence.

It was important that young people leaving care were given realistic expectations, and that they were made aware that this transition was going to take place.

It was noted that the biggest thing that no-one could prepare the young people, either Looked After Children or children from a family, was the loneliness of living on their own compared to being surrounded by people at all times. It needed to be recognised that this was the most vulnerable time for these young people. Clear transition plans were being put in place to make this a smoother and more gradual process.

Barnardo's was trying to set up a mentoring service, as young people were most likely to listen to their peers that had been through the same process.

The Panel was informed that the questionnaire would next be taken to Eastgate and Albion Street and then all the results would be collated together. It was agreed that the final results would be brought back to the Panel once collated, analysed and reviewed.

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**RESOLVED**

That the report be noted.

**38. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (LAC) ANNUAL REPORT**

The Corporate Parenting Panel received the Looked After Children Annual Report for 2011-2012, and it was reported that this was an overview of the Service. It was evidence that the Service had worked hard and had achieved a lot for young people, and continued to do so.

Data was not collected regarding how children managed on a long term basis, but the way that information was reported to the government was to be changed, which would assist with looking at longer term outcomes.

**RESOLVED**

That the report be noted.

**39. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (LAC) PLACED IN OUT OF COUNTY INDEPENDENT CARE HOMES**

Consideration was given to a report which provided an update on children placed in Lincolnshire by other Local Authorities. It was reported that as at 31 December 2012, Lincolnshire County Council's Children's Services had been notified that there were 310 children/young people placed by other local authorities within the county.

The Corporate Parenting Panel was informed that of 52 children which had been placed in private or independent Children's Homes, 21 of them had been placed at Kisimul School. It was noted that the authority had a good working relationship with this school, and that compared to other counties, Lincolnshire had a relatively manageable number of children who were placed from out of county.

The latest figures showed that there were 16 independent or private children's homes in Lincolnshire and a lot of the children had very complex difficulties.

It was suggested that Janice Spencer (Assistant Director Children's Services) carry out an investigation to determine what impact children being placed within Lincolnshire from out of county has had on local resources.

**RESOLVED**

That the contents of the report be noted.

**40. LEAVING CARE SERVICE – INTERIM REPORT AND ACTION PLAN**

The Corporate Parenting Panel received an update from the Leaving Care Manager (Barnardo's), on Barnardo's Leaving Care Service in terms of performance against the national indicators.

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Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel were provided with the opportunity to ask questions to the officers present in relation to the information contained within the report, and some of the points raised during discussion included the following:

- NI148 – the number of young people who were in education, employment or training had increased from 43 (74%) to 46 (79%);
- ARE referred to those young people who were All Rights Exhausted (generally asylum seekers);
- The Head of Service for Children with Disabilities was asked to contact the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Board to determine whether it was undertaking any work in relation to young people who were seeking asylum;
- Some of the activities which young people from Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service took part in included a sailing trip around the Lincolnshire coastline, SUMO (shut up and move on) workshops, residential trips and life skills courses;
- Lincoln City Council had written into its new contract with Kier, a building company which supported Barnardo's nationally, that they needed to support young people in Lincoln, highlighting care leavers as a target group. Barnardo's had recently begun working with Kier providers to develop work placements. Kier had also indicated that in their next round of recruitment, they would aim to provide a care leaver with an apprenticeship;
- BEET referred to Barnardo's Education, Employment and Training;
- More work was being carried out around raising the participation age;  
There are long running issues about suitable accommodation in Lincolnshire for care leavers and it was suggested that an update on the housing situation for care leavers should be brought to the Panel.

**RESOLVED**

- (i) That the report be noted.
- (ii) That an update on suitable accommodation for care leavers be brought to a future meeting of the Panel.

**41. NATIONAL YOUTH ADVOCACY SERVICE (NYAS) – INTERIM REPORT  
APRIL TO DECEMBER 2012**

Consideration was given to the interim report for April – December 2012 which was presented by Ted Normandale from the National Youth Advocacy Service. It was reported that the first quarter was disappointing with only 12 new referrals, however, there were many new referrals being made by social workers.

All advocates had undertaken training in safeguarding procedures and were up to date. In terms of visits, there had been no common issues raised, and most problems were able to be resolved during the visit. Only one complaint had been received, and the matter was fully investigated to a satisfactory conclusion. The report and conclusions were forwarded to the Lincolnshire Local Authority Designated Officer.

It was agreed by Members that this was a very comprehensive report.

**RESOLVED**

- That the report be noted.

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42. QUARTER TWO REPORT ON THE FOSTERING SERVICE JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2012

The Corporate Parenting Panel received a report from the Joint Head of Service for Regulated Services which outlined the activity in the fostering service during Quarter two from July to September 2012.

There had been 77 enquiries received from members of the public who were interested in becoming foster carers, which had resulted in 11 applications. This, however, was a lower ratio than the previous quarter.

It was reported that during this period an increase in respite placement requests was traditionally seen, which resulted in a reduced carer base. This may explain decrease from last quarter of children placed with in-house foster carers.

In terms of recruitment, the Service had continued to recruit successfully within this period, however, this needed to be monitored and there was a continued need for the dedicated recruitment and marketing officer to renew campaigns regularly and keep up to date with the latest recruitment strategies and methods of alternative providers.

**RESOLVED**

That the report be accepted as a record of the Service for the quarter.

43. COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS RECEIVED FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (LAC)

**RESOLVED**

That this item be deferred until the April 2013 meeting.

44. IMPROVING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL WORKERS AND CHILDREN/YOUNG PEOPLE

The Joint Head of Service for Regulated Services presented a report which provided an update on the work project – Improving the relationship between social workers and children/young people. The Panel was informed that the Takeover Day in November 2012 had been identified as an opportunity to bring this work to a conclusion and agree the content and design of a written agreement.

One of the outcomes of the day was the suggestion of a commitment between LCC and the child of what they should expect from their social worker. The feedback from the Takeover Day events had been really positive. It was queried how the commitment between social worker and child would be monitored in the future. Members were assured that there would be regular meetings with the IRO (Independent Reviewing Officer), and so any patterns with particular social workers would be highlighted.

It was queried whether it was possible to do any analysis of why visits were cancelled, and it was unclear whether that information was captured. It was noted that if a social worker did keep cancelling visits, then this would become a management issue.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

45. ACCOMMODATION FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES AND RESPITE CARE

Consideration was given to a report presented by the Head of Service for Children with Disabilities which provided the Panel with information on the accommodation provided in Lincolnshire for Children with Disabilities who become Looked After. It also described the accommodation provided for those children with disabilities who were assessed as being in need of Short Break provision (respite care).

Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions to the officers present in relation to the information presented within the report and some of the points highlighted during discussion included the following:

- The Beacon, in Grantham, was the Local Authority's long term home for children with disabilities, who were placed there either by agreement with their parents or by court order. All children which were resident at the Beacon had regular contact with their parents, which it was noted was very positive. The children at this home had complex care needs and provided highly personalised care plans for each young person resident in the home;
- There were currently four young people with disabilities who were Looked After and placed out of county due to the complexity of their needs;
- Strut House and Haven Cottage provided residential care for those children assessed as needing 'Short Breaks'. The number of overnight stays per year for young people would start with a minimum of 12, and go up to a management of 50;
- How soon should the authority be providing Short Breaks for children?
- The prevalence of disabilities was increasing;
- The respite would benefit the whole family, as well as the child;
- The authority was in the first tranche of introducing personal budgets for children, they had been offered to 24 families but only taken up by 7. A piece of work had been requested to examine why the families declined the offer of a personal budget;
- Personal budgets could make a significant difference;
- There was a small amount of capacity at Strut House and Haven Cottage, and some of the young people that attended had turned 18. The demand was not exceeding the resources at the moment, but there were new referrals coming through.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

46. STAYING PUT PILOT UPDATE

The Corporate Parenting Panel received a report from the Joint Head of Service for Regulated Services which provided an update on the Staying Put project which had enabled up to 30 young people to remain with their foster carers beyond the age of

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18. The scheme developed locally and the initial target of 15 had been exceeded year on year.

The Corporate Parenting Panel was provided with the opportunity to ask questions to the officers present in relation to the information contained within the report, and some of the points raised during discussion included the following:

- It was hoped that this report had shown how successful the pilot had been;
- The stability had helped to engage some young people in education, employment and training;
- Lincolnshire was one of 10 authorities which had taken part in this pilot which had been very successful;
- There was a substantial number of young people not in the scheme;
- The real cost was if the young person did not stay with their foster carer after they turned 18, as they were likely to experience more complex transition pathways and housing instability;
- The authority would always advocate the young person staying with their foster carer as long as possible;
- The expenses paid to the foster carer would be lower, as the young person would be classed as an adult;
- It was a positive step that the scheme was no longer a pilot, but had been integrated into the fostering service and mainstreamed into the service budget.

#### **RESOLVED**

That the report be noted.

#### **47. CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL WORK PROGRAMME 2013**

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

The Panel was informed that the next meeting was scheduled to take place on 4 April 2013 at 10.00am in Committee Room 5.

#### **RESOLVED**

That the work programme as presented be approved.

The meeting closed at 1.10 p.m.