

**CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL
 25 JULY 2019**

Lincolnshire County Council: Councillors D Brailsford, R L Foulkes, S R Parkin and M A Whittington.

Added Members: Polly Coombes (Foster Carer), Ann Wright (Foster Carer) and Amy Lavery (Children In Care Council).

Officers in attendance:-

Katrina Hewitt (Project Officer Participation Team, Young Inspectors), Sarah Lane (Virtual School Team Manager), Lisa Adams (Service Manager, Barnardos), Michelle Andrews (Head of Early Years), Katrina Cope (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Carolyn Knight (Quality and Standards Manager), Kerry Mitchell (Assistant Director Barnardo's (Lincolnshire), Andrew Morris (Corporate Parenting Manager), Janice Spencer OBE (Interim Director of Children's Services) and Daniel Steel (Scrutiny Officer).

1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

That Councillor D Brailsford be elected as Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Panel for 2019/20.

COUNCILLOR D BRAILSFORD IN THE CHAIR

2 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

That Councillor C L Perraton-Williams be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Panel for 2019/20.

3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A G Hagues, C L Perraton-Williams and R Trollope-Bellew.

An apology for absence was also received from Amy-Louise Butler (Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust).

4 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTEREST

No interests were declared at this stage of the proceedings.

2

**CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL
25 JULY 2019**

5 FUTURE MEETING DATES

RESOLVED

That the following meeting dates and times be agreed for the Corporate Parenting Panel for 2020.

Thursday 23 January 2020 at 10.00am;
Thursday 12 March 2020 at 10.00am;
Thursday 14 May 2020 at 10.00am;
Thursday 23 July at 10.00am;
Thursday 17 September 2020 at 10.00am; and
Thursday 19 November 2020 at 10.00am.

6 REVIEW OF THE LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVER
STRATEGY ACTION PLAN

Consideration was given to a report from Andrew Morris, Corporate Parenting Manager, which invited the Panel to review the progress made against the priorities and actions identified in the Looked After Children & Care Leavers Strategy Action Plan.

Detailed at Appendix A was a copy of the Looked After Children & Care Leavers Strategy 2018/2021 Priorities, Actions and Progress Action Plan.

It was noted that the action plan was designed to track the activity to achieve the aspirations set out in the strategy. It was noted further that this strategy was the first of its kind to be developed on a multi-agency basis; and was supported by Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership (LSCP).

During consideration of the action plan, the Panel raised the following issues:-

- The status of the strategy – The Panel was advised that the strategy would be monitored by the Corporate Parenting Panel and the Quality Assurance Board. It was highlighted that the purpose of the strategy was to hold the service to account;
- A question was asked as to whether other agencies were using Signs of Safety. Confirmation was given that all agencies understood and were using Signs of Safety. The Panel was advised that the Ofsted Inspection had found that Signs of Safety was well embedded. It was also noted that Early Help was currently being refreshed to prevent momentum being lost; and to ensure that areas were constantly reviewed;
- It was highlighted that success needed to be celebrated - It was agreed that there needed to be an area within County Offices to display some of the achievements of Lincolnshire's young people. It was agreed that the Corporate Parenting Manager would look into this matter further;
- Clarification was given that young people in an emergency situation were not waiting to be seen, they would be seen by crisis response team;

- Sharing of information – The Panel was advised that Mosaic was accessed by Social Care, some health services; the leaving care service and adult social care. It was noted that the aspiration was for all relevant records to be viewed by all involved;
- Care leavers being exempt from paying council tax until they were 25 years of age. The Panel was advised that currently care leavers were exempt from paying council tax in all seven districts up to the age of 21; and that negotiations were underway to increase the age to 25. Dual hatted Councillors advised that they would promote the matter with their respective district councils. It was highlighted that North Kesteven District Council had already increased the age to 25. The Scrutiny Officer agreed to provide the Corporate Parenting Manager with a list of dual hatted members;
- Housing provision for the most challenging young people. It was highlighted that sometimes this proved to be a challenge as some district councils were not in charge of their housing stock. It was suggested that more contact needed to be made with local landlords and housing associations. Some members offered help to the Corporate Parenting Manager in approaching housing associations in their areas. The Panel noted that all districts had signed up to being Corporate Parents; and were aware of the need to continually promote the need of care leavers;
- Vulnerability of care leavers and Looked After Children who were often influenced by outside pressures. The Panel was advised that there was the Joint Diversionary Panel, which recognised the vulnerability of young people and provided diversionary routes to avoid young people entering the criminal justice system;
- One member enquired as to when the amber indicators would become green. Officers advised that work was on-going and that when the Panel considered the item next, some progress would have been made.

In conclusion, the Panel welcomed the report and requested that a further review of the action plan should be undertaken in 12 months' time.

RESOLVED

1. That a further report on the Looked After Children and Care Leaver Strategy Action Plan be presented to the Panel in 12 months' time.
2. That the Corporate Parenting Manager be authorised to look into finding a 'Celebration Wall' to display information relating to the achievements of Looked After Children and Care Leavers.

7 ANNUAL REPORT ON THE INDEPENDENT CHAIR'S SERVICE

Consideration was given to a report from Carolyn Knight, Quality and Standards Manager, which invited the Panel to consider the Annual Report on the Independent Chair's Service.

The Quality and Standards Manager presented the report and advised that Panel that every child who was 'looked after' by Lincolnshire County Council had to have a Care

**CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL
25 JULY 2019**

Plan. It was highlighted that this document detailed the long-term plan for the child's upbringing and the arrangements made by Lincolnshire Children's Services to meet the child's day-to-day needs. The Panel was also advised that there was a legal requirement for every child who was looked after to have an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) appointed to them under Section 118 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002. Details of the statutory duties of the Independent Reviewing Officer were shown at the bottom of page 33.

The Panel noted that it was a statutory requirement to provide an annual report in respect of the Local Authority's Independent Reviewing Service. Appendix A to the report provided a copy of the Annual Report on the Independent Chair's Service for the Panel's consideration.

The Panel was advised that the actions from the previous year were either complete, or in the process of being completed. The report provided an update on what had been done throughout the year; the number of Looked After Children and the IRO Service; Child Protection; Quality Assurance of the IRO Service; and the priorities for 2019/20.

The Panel were invited to consider the Annual Report and endorse the priorities for 2019/20.

During discussion, the Panel raised the following issues:-

- Stability of Staff within the Service – One member highlighted the positive effect stability of staff had on the service. The Panel was advised that the vacancy rate in Children's Services was currently at 3.7%;
- One member suggested that the report needed comments from Looked After Children; and pictorial evidence to bring the document alive;
- Page 61 – Children's views about their review and conferences. One member felt that the paragraph was too short to identify any general issues. The Panel was advised that action plans were in place to address any concerns. The Panel was advised further that the young inspectors were doing some work regarding young people being in control of their meetings; and some specific training was being developed on how young people should chair their own meeting. Panel members requested an update on the work being undertaken by the young inspectors being presented to a future meeting; and
- Page 63 – Priorities for 2019/20 – second bullet point – Clarification was sort as to whether the 'To engage parents more pro-actively' referred to birth parents. The Panel was advised that this priority was referring to birth parents. One member highlighted that having a birth parent engaged was very important for the child.

In conclusion, the Panel welcomed the report and the progress made.

RESOLVED

1. That the Annual report of the Independent Chair's Service be received and that the priorities for 2019/20 as detailed in the report be endorsed.

2. That an update on the work of the Young Inspectors with regard to reviews be received by the Panel at a future meeting.

8 REGULATION 44 INDEPENDENT VISITING SERVICE REPORT

The Panel received a report from Carolyn Knight, Quality and Standards Manager, which provided an update on the work of the Independent Visitor.

The Panel was advised that Independent Visitors conducted monthly visits to the seven children's homes within Lincolnshire and produced reports to the management team which were also shared with Ofsted.

It was reported that in addition, the service had recently begun to visit Denton Avenue supported accommodation on a quarterly basis.

Attached at Appendix A was a copy of the Independent Visiting Service report covering the period from October 2018 to June 2019.

It was noted that visitor reports reflected the implementation of Signs of Safety across the authority, which ensured consistency of practice within a framework that all staff utilised within children's services.

The Panel was advised that overall the level of care provided in the homes was good and in some instances was exceptional. It was reported that there was an ethos of reflective practice and approaches within the homes, which ensured that learning was shared across teams. It was highlighted that staff had been resilient and had remained motivated even when there had been staffing issues; and management challenges.

The report highlighted that the staff and manager's commitment to providing good quality service to the young people in spite of the challenges was to be commended.

The Panel was advised that good quality training was being delivered and that access was being provided to a range of courses to aid the on-going development of staff. It was highlighted that some training was tailored to meet individual children's needs; an example given was a CAMHS Psychologist delivering training to a team meeting focusing on the impact of trauma on a child's development.

It was highlighted that transport at times was a challenge, due to the amount of time a young person spent travelling from the home to school; and that some escorts did not fully understand the needs of the young person. It was highlighted that in these instances staff had been proactive in advocating the needs of the young people.

It was reported that the homes offered a variety of activities to enable the young people to meet their needs and interests.

**CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL
25 JULY 2019**

The Panel noted that a number of modernisations were on-going or in the process of being completed. Particular reference was made to the significant refurbishment at Albion Street.

Reference was also made to the swift and supportive response from Beacon, Strut and Haven to the emergency admissions of young people arising from the suspension of a private children's home provider.

The Panel was advised that 4 of the homes were rated as 'outstanding', 2 were rated as 'good' and one (Albion Street) 'required improvement'. The Committee was reassured that a plan was in place to address the issues at Albion Street.

During discussion, the Panel raised the following issues:-

- One member expressed thanks to staff for the provision of an excellent sensory garden at the Haven; and
- Some concern was expressed relating to the refurbishment of Albion Street, and to the fact that there should not be any slippage in the programme of works. Reassurance was given that a comprehensive action plan was in place to ensure that the work was completed on time.

The Chairman extended thanks on behalf of the Panel to officers for an excellent report.

RESOLVED

That the Regulation 44 Independent Visiting Service Report be received.

9 LINCOLNSHIRE LEAVING CARE SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT

The Panel received a report from Lisa Adams, Service Manager, Barnardo's Leaving Care Services, which invited comments on the Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service Annual Report.

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Lisa Adams, Service Manager, Barnardo's and Kerry Mitchell, Assistant Director, Barnardo's.

The Panel was advised that the current contract for the Lincolnshire County Council's Leaving Care Service was delivered by Barnardo's. It was highlighted that the current contract would be in place until 31 March 2020.

In guiding the Panel through the report particular reference was made to: accessing and maintaining suitable, safe accommodation. It was highlighted that the service offered advice, support and assistance in accommodation options for the over 18's. It was reported that Barnardo's now had a dedicated Accommodation Worker who helped young people at 18 to register for social housing and to navigate through the bureaucracy attached to having a property. The Officer was also supporting young people applying for supported accommodation through the Avenue and Youth Housing; creating a portfolio of information regarding social and private provision;

working very closely with providers to improve how the Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service shared information prior to allocation; and acting as a single point of contact between providers and the Leaving Care service.

The Panel noted that Barnardo's had recently commissioned a review of the Lincolnshire Supported Lodgings Scheme to ensure that it remained a flexible and viable option for a number of young people transitioning into adulthood. It was noted further that the scheme had seen some brilliant outcomes with 23 placements at the moment.

Details relating to accessing Education, Employment and Training opportunities were shown on pages 83 and 84 of the report. The Panel was advised that the Care Leavers Apprenticeship Scheme and the Work Preparation and Work Experience Scheme continued to offer Lincolnshire Care Leavers a pathway into work and financial self-sufficiency. Details of bespoke packages of support were shown on page 83 of the report. It was highlighted that currently there were 10 young people attending university. Page 84 of the report provided information as to the role of the Leaving Care Worker.

The Panel was advised that Barnardo's had hosted a national event in March 2019 to which two young people from Lincolnshire had been given the opportunity to attend and have professional photographs taken and produce some videos for the event. It was noted that the young people had then attended a dinner, with the support from staff from the service; and the supported lodgings scheme. The Panel was advised further that two nominations had also been put forward from the Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service for the Excellence Awards Ceremony held in London in December 2018. The Panel was advised that the Supported Lodgings Team had made it to the 'Top 3' for the Impact Award and that a young carer had been nominated and was subsequently awarded the 'Young Achiever Award' for the East Region.

The Service was also looking to expand the opportunities to work with young people both in Lincolnshire and with the group of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking young people living in Peterborough.

The report highlighted that from April 2018, all Leaving Care Services across the UK had been asked to extend Personal Advisor Support for all 21-25 year olds, which had included all the young people who had previously been closed to the service, but fell within the age range. It was noted that the extension to the service had been quickly picked up and an additional staffing resource was now taking this piece of work forward.

During discussion, the Panel raised the following points:-

- That Barnardo's was able to replicate the normal parent/child relationship even when the young person was living independently or out of the scope of help from Barnardo's;
- What could be done more to encourage private landlords to have more understanding of Care Leavers. Reassurance was given that in most cases with help from the Accommodation Worker, there were very few situations

**CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL
25 JULY 2019**

when a solution could not be found. It was also highlighted that some young people chose to live in unsuitable accommodation; in these instances Barnardo's would constantly review them. The Panel was advised that the Corporate Parenting Manager was looking at how best to create a housing forum that pulled together a number of providers who

- could then offer greater choice and range of support for Looked After Children and Care Leavers; and
- Availability of Offices – The Panel noted that due to the rural nature of Lincolnshire, offices were based in Lincoln, Louth, Peterborough and Sleaford. The Panel noted further that it was more economical for officers to travel, rather than to acquire any further office space.

RESOLVED

That the Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service Annual Report be received.

10 LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN PERFORMANCE MEASURES QUARTER 4

Consideration was given to a report from Caroline Jackson, Commissioning Manager – Performance Services, which provided key performance information for Quarter 4 2018/19 relevant to the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

Attached at Appendix A to the report was the Looked After Children measures.

The Interim Director – Children's Services presented the report and guided the Committee through Appendix A, making specific reference to the performance indicators that had not been achieved, which were:

- Fostering/adoption of Looked After Children (LAC) aged 10 to 16 years old – The Panel was advised that performance had improved slightly at year end, but remained under target. The Panel noted that the vast majority of children looked after within this age group were placed in foster care settings. However, it was highlighted that there had been an increase in the number of children placed in residential care; and there had also been a concentrated focus on reuniting children with their birth families, and that some of this group were awaiting revocation of their care orders. The Panel was advised that officers were satisfied with the actions being undertaken;
- Stability of Placements of LAC: Number of moves – The Panel noted that the reduction in performance was indicative of children with more complex needs becoming looked after; and that there had been a reduction in the number of foster placements available to match effectively at the point of the initial placement;
- Stability of Placement of LAC: length of placement – It was reported that a considerable amount of work had been done to ensure that foster carers were well supported and that any potential problems were identified early. It was noted that the national and local shortage of foster carers who wanted to care on a long term basis was also a contributing factor. It was felt that this indicator needed refreshing; and

- Care leavers in Education, Employment and Training – The Panel noted that there had been a small dip in the number of care leavers employed or in education and training. The reason for the dip at this stage was unknown. It was highlighted that the Care Leaver Apprenticeship Scheme was being reviewed, so that it could respond to the increased educational requirement implemented by the government to access apprenticeships. It was hoped that a new offer would help young people with fewer qualifications access the Care Leaver Apprenticeship Scheme.

Some concern was raised regarding whether there was any scope in setting a higher performance target for English and Maths. The Panel was advised that the target set was aspirational, and that the challenge was dependent on where the cohort of young people were in the learning cycle. It was noted that Caring to Learn was helping young people identify their skills and interests. It was noted further that the pupil premium was being used to build on an interest or out of school activity. It was highlighted that PEPS provided an aspirational range of options; the challenge was getting the young person to gain a passion for learning in the first instance which then helped with the overall emotional wellbeing.

RESOLVED

That the Looked After Children Performance Measures for Quarter 4 be received.

11 COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS & COMPLAINTS RECEIVED FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

Consideration was given to a report from the Corporate Project Support Officer, which provided the Panel with information on the Compliments, Comments and Complaints for Looked After Children for the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019.

The Panel noted for the 12 month period there had been one complaint from a young person in Lincolnshire County Council care and that the outcome had been unsubstantiated. It was also highlighted that no compliments had been received regarding Looked After Children during the period.

Details of the statutory complaints process was shown on page 113 of the report.

The Panel noted that complaints had now been brought back in-house from the start of March 2019, and that this would provide the authority with greater control in shaping the future of the complaints process. It was also highlighted that a new case management system (Lagan) had been introduced from 1 April 2019, which would enable detailed reporting to be undertaken, and provide in-depth analysis of complaints being made to the authority.

In conclusion, it was highlighted that due to the small number of complaints in relation to Looked After Children, it was very difficult to pin-point any areas that needed reviewing. It was noted that moving forward the team would be able to obtain

10
CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL
25 JULY 2019

comprehensive information before a case was progressed to the first stage of the complaints process, which would help to resolve issues at a lower level.

RESOLVED

That the Compliments, Comments & Complaints report received for Looked After Children be noted.

12 **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL WORK PROGRAMME**

Consideration was given to a report from Daniel Steel, Scrutiny Officer, which enabled the Panel to consider and comment on the content of its work programme for the coming year to ensure that scrutiny activity was focused where it could be of greatest benefit.

The work programme was detailed on pages 118 to 121 of the report presented for the Panel to consider.

RESOLVED

That the work programme for 2019/20 as detailed on pages 118 to 121 of the report presented be approved, subject to inclusion of the item raised at Minute Number 7 (2).

13 **CONSIDERATION OF EXEMPT INFORMATION**

RESOLVED

That in accordance with section 100(A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of the following item of business on the grounds that if they were present there could be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended.

14 **V4C UPDATE REPORT (MARCH AND JUNE 2019)**

RESOLVED

That the actions as detailed in the Exempt report be agreed.

The meeting closed at 12.35 pm