

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

22 JULY 2021

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S P ROE (CHAIRMAN)

Lincolnshire County Council: Councillors K H Cooke, A G Hagues, Mrs J E Killey, C Matthews and M A Whittington

Added Members: Ann Wright (Foster Carer), Amy-Louise Butler [Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)], Amy Lavery (Children in Care Council) and Elizabeth Bunney (Lincolnshire Community Health Services)

Officers in attendance: -

Lisa Adams (Service Manager, Barnardos), Kiara Chatziioannou (Scrutiny Officer), Carolyn Knight (Quality and Standards Manager), Ben Lilley (Team Manager, Quality and Standards), Andrew Morris (Corporate Parenting Manager), Janice Spencer OBE (Assistant Director of Children's Safeguarding), Rachel Wilson (Democratic Services Officer), Sarah Cragg (Lawyer, Legal Services), Jodie Ogden (Senior Lawyer, Legal Services) and Deborah Crawford (Head of Service, Fostering, Adoption and Leaving Care)

1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

That Councillor S P Roe be elected Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Panel for the year 2021/22.

COUNCILLOR S P ROE IN THE CHAIR

2 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

That Councillor C L Perraton-Williams be elected Vice-Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Panel for 2021/22

3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor C L Perraton-Williams (who attended the meeting remotely, as an observer) and Polly Coombes (Foster Carer).

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It was noted that the Chief Executive, having received notice under Regulation 13 of the Local Government (Committee and Political Groups) Regulations 1990, had appointed Councillor Mrs J E Killey to the vacancy until further notice.

4 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor M A Whittington wished it be noted that his son was in receipt of leaving care services.

5 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11 MARCH 2021

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the Corporate Parenting Panel meeting held on 11 March 2021 be agreed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

6 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLOR AND LEAD OFFICERS

No announcements were received.

7 CORPORATE PARENTING RESPONSIBILITIES

The Chairman invited Janice Spencer OBE, Assistant Director-Children's Safeguarding to provide the Panel with an insight into the Corporate Parenting responsibilities of Lincolnshire County Council.

The Panel received a presentation, which made reference to: the Legal definition of a Corporate Parent; Corporate Parenting Principles; Members responsibilities; Sufficiency of Placements; Safeguarding; Safeguarding issues/child sexual exploitation/child exploitation; and Key Statutory Duties of Local Authorities.

During consideration of the presentation, the Panel made reference to the following comments:

- The time period for a child going missing and whether this was dependent on age. The Panel was advised that the time period would vary and would be child specific and would be dependent on the vulnerabilities of the child;
- The age for providing support for a care leaver up to the age of 25 was to help the young people transition into being an adult; and
- A suggestion was made for all members to receive a development session concerning their role as a corporate parent, to ensure that all members were aware of their responsibilities. The Panel noted that a Corporate Parenting workshop had been held for members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee and officers were happy to arrange further dates for all other members of the Council.

The Chairman on behalf of the Panel extended thanks to the Assistant Director-Children's Safeguarding for the presentation.

RESOLVED

That the Corporate Parenting Responsibilities presentation be noted.

8 FINAL REVIEW OF THE LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Consideration was given to a report from Andrew Morris, Corporate Parenting Manager, which invited the Panel to consider and comment on the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy and Action Plan.

It was reported that the Strategy was designed to support young people to become independent and proactive adults. The strategy highlighted the Council's aspirations: "*We want all Looked After Children and Care Leavers to feel safe, loved, be heard and to realise their potential, through nurturing, resilient parenting and support*". Details of how this would be achieved by working with partner agencies and communities were set out in the Strategy.

A copy of the Lincolnshire Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy 2018-2021 was appended at Appendix A to the report; and Appendix B provided a copy of the Action Plan for the Panel consideration.

The Panel received a joint presentation from Lisa Adams, Barnardo's, Service Manager for Lincolnshire's Leaving Care Service and Andrew Morris, Corporate Parenting Manager concerning Lincolnshire Leaving Care.

The presentation made reference to: the leaving care offer available to young people; specialist support available to young people with regarding to housing and mental health; access to education, training and employment opportunities; the Apprenticeship Scheme; the Supported Lodgings Scheme; and the independent living projects.

During consideration of this item, the Panel raised the following comments:

- The success of independent living projects and whether there were any plans to extend the project across the county. The Panel was advised that currently there were no aspirations to extend the project any further, as there was not the need at the moment;
- Whether any Lincolnshire Children in Care were being looked after by other care systems inside and outside of Lincolnshire. The Panel noted that there were some children were being looked after out of county but could still be within Lincolnshire. The Panel noted further that the council was currently looking at expanding its residential estate;

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- Transition into adults. It was reported that there were strong links between children's and adults' teams and the transition pathway was working well; and
- Whether notification was received from agencies the Council worked with regard to possible apprenticeships. Officers confirmed that information was being received.

RESOLVED

That the report and presentation on the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy and the Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service be noted.

9 CHILDREN IN CARE PERFORMANCE MEASURES - QUARTER 4 (JANUARY - MARCH 2021)

Consideration was given to a report from Janice Spencer OBE, Assistant Director Children's Safeguarding, which provided key performance information for Quarter Four 2020/21, relevant to the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

Appendix A to the report provided details of the Children in Care Measures for the Panel to consider.

It was reported that there were 16 measures in total which related to Children in Care, and that of these measures seven were outside of the target set by the services, details of which were shown on pages 79 to 81 of the report pack.

The Panel were invited to consider and comment on the performance information, and during discussion the following comments were noted: -

- Whether fostering placements met the needs of the young person. Reassurance was given that everything was done to meet the needs of a young person; and that wherever possible a young person would be placed in a family environment. The Committee noted even with the competitive market, a child would be placed within independent sector, if that placement best met the needs of the child. The Panel was advised that the independent sector was governed by the same regulations as the council and were Ofsted inspected; and that any child in an outside placement would receive visits to meet their needs;
- When it was anticipated there would be some improvement on the slippage that had occurred during the pandemic. It was reported that at the moment it was difficult to predict when things would return to normal. However, reassurance was given that performance was continually monitored, some monitoring was done daily, some weekly, some monthly; and where performance had seen a decrease, investigations would be undertaken, and appropriate resources would be targeted accordingly;
- Challenges faced in recruiting and retaining foster carers. The Panel noted that the transformation programme was currently re-thinking how to make the foster care service more attractive; looking at service provision; the support provided to foster carers; and the retention of foster carers. It was highlighted that the marketplace

was currently very competitive. The service had however seen a rise in interest from perspective foster carers from March 2020; and it was hoped that the interest generated would see an increase in the number of foster carers into the service. Appreciation was extended to the foster carers in Lincolnshire and to supporting staff for all their hard work in maintaining the service; and

- The opportunity for the Panel to receive further information concerning the marketing side of the foster caring.

RESOLVED

That the Children in Care Performance Measures for Quarter 4 2020/21 (January to March 2021) be received and noted.

10 LINCOLNSHIRE LEAVING CARE - ANNUAL REPORT

This was covered as part of agenda item 8 (Minute number 8).

11 LEGAL SERVICES LINCOLNSHIRE END OF YEAR REPORT - APRIL 2020 TO MARCH 2021

The Corporate Parenting Panel received a report and detailed presentation which provided details of the Legal Services Lincolnshire End of Year Report – April 2020 to March 2021.

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

- It was queried whether Legal Services Lincolnshire would be involved with any young people who may be sectioned. It was confirmed that they did sometimes have involvement with young people with mental health issues.
- In response to a question, it was noted that the Myle Cross Centre was not currently used as a court hub.
- It was queried whether the mixture of online and in-person meetings and hearings would take away some of the worry for the young people attending.
- It was commented that there had been a backlog of cases for the courts at the beginning of the pandemic and it was queried when it was expected that caseloads would return to normal levels. Members were advised that it was the aim to have conclusions for the children as soon as possible, however one of the challenges currently being faced was judicial availability.
- It was confirmed that members of the public were not permitted to sit in on family court hearings.

RESOLVED

That the report and presentation be noted.

12 VOICES FOR CHOICES (V4C) UPDATE REPORT

Consideration was given to a report which provided a summary and overview of activities with regard to V4C between February 2021 – June 2021; future V4C planning and progress, including consulting with children and young people within residential settings; and soundLINCS V4C music sessions for children and young people.

It was reported that V4C was Lincolnshire's Children in Care Council with the aim being to share experiences of being looked after in Lincolnshire and to inform teams who support Children in Care what does and does not work for them. V4C meetings were held within Children's Services locality quadrants and were delivered by Senior Youth and Community Development Workers and supported by Children's Services Participation Officers.

It was reported that a Big Conversation event had taken place, and a provisional booking had been made for the next one in October which would be taking place at the Lincolnshire Showroom and it was hoped that invites would be sent out to members and officers shortly.

The report evidenced some good examples of engagement and there had been some successful moves to reintroduce face to face meetings. Positive feedback on the soundLINCS programme had also been received. It was confirmed that there would continue to be opportunities for hybrid meetings to take place.

RESOLVED

That the Corporate Parenting Panel noted the report and activities undertaken and was supportive of the future plans for V4C meetings and activities.

13 INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER YEARLY REPORT

(NOTE: Councillor M A Whittington left the meeting at 11.52am and did not return)

Consideration was given to the yearly report on the Independent Chair's Service. It updated members of the Corporate Parenting Panel on the work undertaken between April 2020 and March 2021. The report also included an update on priorities identified for 2020-21 and new priorities for 2021-22. The Panel also received a presentation.

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

- In relation to IRO's having access to legal advice, it was noted that the authority was not permitted to use its own legal services teams. It was noted that there was an agreement with Chambers in Nottingham, but this was rarely used, and so there was a need to revisit the contract and check that it was still in place.

- For a young person to enter secure care, there would be a need to go to court to obtain a secure care order. It was noted that there was an excellent secure unit in Sleaford.
- In relation to the negative feedback highlighted in the report, it was commented that there was an issue with young people not knowing who their IRO was, but sometimes young people had so many people in their life they may not know who they were based on their role.

RESOLVED

That the yearly report on the Independent Chair's Service be noted.

14 REGULATION 44 INDEPENDENT VISITORS REPORT

Consideration was given to the Regulation 44 Independent Visiting Service yearly report which updated members on the work undertaken between March 2020 and April 2021. The report also updated the Panel on the work of the Independent Visitor.

RESOLVED

That the yearly report on the Regulation 44 Independent Visiting Service be noted.

15 CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to a report which enabled the Panel to comment on the content of its work programme for the coming year to ensure that scrutiny activity was focused where it could be of most benefit.

It was noted that no changes to the work programme had been received since it was published. During discussion of the work programme the following was noted:

- A report on adoption recruitment and marketing to be added to a future agenda;
- Quarter 1 performance for fostering to move from 11 November 2021 meeting to the 9 September 2021 meeting;
- The Private Fostering Annual Report to move from 11 November 2021 meeting to the 9 September 2021 meeting.

It was also suggested that training around corporate parenting should be suggested to the Councillor Development Group.

RESOLVED

That the work programme and changes highlighted above be noted.

The meeting closed at 12.22 pm