

**CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL
 7 JULY 2022**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S P ROE (CHAIRMAN)

Lincolnshire County Council: Councillors A G Hagues and C Matthews

Added Members: Polly Coombes (Foster Carer), Ann Wright (Foster Carer) and Elizabeth Bunney (Lincolnshire Community Health Services)

Officers in attendance:-

Lisa Adams (Service Manager, Barnardos), Kieran Barnes (Virtual School Head Teacher), Kiara Chatziioannou (Scrutiny Officer), , Rachel Freeman (Interim Head of Service, Children's (Safeguarding)), Ben Lilley (Team Manager, Quality and Standards), Andrew Morris (Corporate Parenting Manager), Janice Spencer OBE (Assistant Director - Children's Safeguarding) and Emily Wilcox (Democratic Services Officer)

Officers in attendance via Microsoft Teams:-

Sarah Cragg (Lawyer, Legal Services) and Jodie Ogden (Senior Lawyer, Legal Services)

1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED:

That Councillor S P Roe be elected as the Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Panel for 2022-23.

2 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED:

That Councillor C L Perraton-Williams be elected as the Vice-Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Panel for 2022-23.

3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M A Whittington and K Cooke.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

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5 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 12 MAY 2022

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 12 May 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS AND CHIEF OFFICERS

As requested by the Panel, the Corporate Parenting Manager had compiled a list of proposed benefits to be added to the core offer for looked after children. Briefings had been arranged between the Chief Executives and the Executive Councillors at District Councils to liaise with them about possible benefits that could be added to the core to align the offer across all districts. It was hoped free access to travel for all care leavers could be obtained in future.

8 CHILDREN IN CARE PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 4

Consideration was given to a report by the Assistant Director – Children’s which invited the Panel to consider key performance information for Quarter 4 of 2021/22 that was relevant to the work of the Panel.

Of the 18 measures reported, 10 had not met their target and two were ahead of the target set by the services. Performance continued to be impacted by the effects of the pandemic.

Details of those measures that had not met their target were provided and were detailed within the report.

The Panel noted the difficulties in recruiting foster carers following the pandemic due to lifestyle changes.

Despite not meeting the targets, the number of children with up-to-date health checks, immunisations and dental checks was improving.

The impact of the pandemic on Children in Care had seen a disruption to learning, impacting on targets. It was hoped that performance in this area would begin to improve.

Consideration was given to the report and during the discussion the following points were noted:

- The covid-19 pandemic and lockdown had increased the challenges presented by young people, however there was also seen to be a trend in the increase in challenges presented generally, which had begun to be addressed. Reassurance was provided that the Council were supporting young people who could not be safely

placed in foster care placements. A disability respite facility with a residential home and therapeutic care was available for children posing more difficult behaviours. Residential staff were being supported to stabilise and regulate the emotions of the children with the hope of placing them back into a family environment.

- The Council were in the process of increasing their residential estate to eliminate the need to place children in out of county care provision.
- The Panel recorded their total support to staff working under extremely difficult times. The dedication and passion of foster carers and residential staff was commended.
- It was questioned why numbers had of children in learning had not increased despite the Virtual Schools participated in the National Department for Education (DfE) Post 16 pilot which was completed at the end of March 2022. The Panel were reassured that despite the figures, the project had been extremely impactful, and it was hoped further funding could be provided to continue the work.
- It was recognised all young people had individual challenges and it was important that their needs were met in a holistic and individual way, which only saw small increases in numbers within targets. It was also noted that as the cohort of children fluctuated regularly, data was difficult to report on.
- It was requested that the Panel receive further details of the impactful work of the DFE project at a future meeting.
- Reassurance was provided, that children in care had full and timely access to mental health support. The Lincolnshire Care Quality Commission (CAMHS) service had received a score of outstanding at a recent Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection. However, it was acknowledged that mental health issues in children were increasing. Support was being provided to foster carers to help support with mental health issues at an early stage.
- It was explained that due to a lag in the reporting of data through the DfE, the absence rates for children in care detailed within the report were from the period of September 2020-July 2021. During this period of the pandemic, it was expected that looked after children would continue to attend school. However, in such challenges times, education was heavily disrupted and foster carers were making the decisions whether or not to send children to school, given the risks posed, which had impacted on the target for the period. Assurance was provided, that attendance had now improved.
- The Panel were disappointed that 10 out of the 18 measures had not met the target but acknowledged that there were exceptional circumstances.
- Support and recognition were given to all those looking after children and the Panel thanked them for efforts.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be received and endorsed.
2. That satisfaction be recorded on the performance reported and the assurance and reasoning provided on areas where the targets had not been achieved.

8 LINCOLNSHIRE LEAVING CARE SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22

Consideration was given to a report by the Service Manager – Barnardos which invited the Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service Annual Report 2021/22.

Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service offered advice, support and assistance in relation to accommodation options for young people aged 16-25, Children in Care and 16- and 17-year-old homeless and Care Leavers.

The report highlighted the key work of the leaving care service during 2021-22, which included the supported lodging scheme, help accessing and maintaining appropriate education employment and training opportunities, improving participation and funding opportunities.

A number of new initiatives had also been introduced including the recruitment of a Mental Health Specialist and a well-being worker to work with Lincolnshire Care Leavers who would benefit from additional input to improve their mental health and wellbeing.

Lincolnshire County Council had also agreed to the recruitment an additional 2 posts into the service that will be based in the South of the County to support unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who had been placed within the County.

Several Care Leavers from Lincolnshire were working with the organisation 'My Pocket's' on an animation project that will help children in care transition into the service.

The service was run by a stable management team who continued to work hard and work with local authority to recognise Lincolnshire's young people at heart of what they aimed to deliver.

Consideration was given to the report and during the discussion the following points were noted:

- Leaving Care workers and specialist workers continued to stay in contact and support young adults transitioning out of care to support with employment and training and ways to create opportunities for the young people.
- Assurance was provided that young people would always be offered a range of housing options before becoming choosing to become street homeless. In exceptional circumstances, young people were sometimes placed into Bed and Breakfast accommodation on a short-term basis before housing was made available and this would require sign off from the Corporate Parenting Manager and the Assistant Director – Children's.
- It could be the case that some young people were deemed as being in unsuitable accommodation, despite that accommodation option being their desired choice. The 6% out of the cohort were either missing, in prison, or choosing to stay with family or friends in accommodation not deemed 'suitable' by the standards of reporting.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be received and endorsed.
2. That satisfaction be recorded with the service provision to Care Leavers.

9 LEGAL SERVICES LINCOLNSHIRE END OF YEAR REPORT (APRIL 2021 TO MARCH 2022)

Consideration was given to a presentation by the Senior Lawyer – Children’s Services and the Lawyer – Children’s Services, which invited the Panel to consider the Legal Services Lincolnshire end of year report 2021-22.

The presentation outlined the role and work of the legal services team in relation to provide safeguarding support to children’s services and offer legal advice relating to children in the county, including court liaison. Legal advice for permanence planning for children was also offered.

The importance of developing positive working relationships with other partners was emphasised and efforts were made wherever possible for early intervention to manage risks outside of needing judicial oversight.

Details of the future focus for the team was provided and included information on the transition back to hearings in court buildings, the development of LWG Best Practice Guidance/ Build Back Better DfE Initiative and close liaison with the case managers, TIME Project and the development of the FPL online system.

RESOLVED:

1. That the update be received.
2. That satisfaction be recorded with the efforts of the Legal Team, and that our comments from the discussion as recorded are taken under consideration

10 VOICES FOR CHOICES (V4C) UPDATE REPORT

Consideration was given to the Practice Supervisor – Quality and Standards which provided an update on the activities regarding V4C between February – June 2022 and the actions taken to support future V4C planning and progress.

During the reporting period the delivery of V4C groups had been continuing to focus on holding face-to-face meetings following the easing of Covid restrictions. A summary of the V4C sessions by locality was provided. There were ongoing attempts to raise awareness of V4C to increase attendances.

19 children and young people attended the latest Big Conversation meeting, which was held on Wednesday 1st June in Skegness at the Storehouse Conference Centre. Discussions with

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senior managers and elected members were held with feedback provided by some children and young people.

Two of Lincolnshire Leaving Care's young people had been invited to the Department of Education to meet with the head of Care Review Josh McCallister having contributed to the Care Collaborative. The young people had a tour of the Houses of Parliament and a trip on the London Eye with Lunch. The Panel viewed a clip of a Lincolnshire care leaver participating in an interview for BBC Newsround.

The Chairman had attended the Big Conversation event and commended the involvement of the children at the event which raised some importance points of improvement, which had been taken away for consideration by Officers.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be received, and comments made be recorded;
2. That satisfaction be recorded with the overall activities and meetings undertaken.

11 CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the Scrutiny Officer, which invited the Panel to review its work programme, as set out on pages 53-55 of the agenda.

The Chairman announced that continued to informally attend children's homes across the County and the Sleaford Secure Centre and commended the positive relationships and interaction between staff members and children.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be noted.

The meeting closed at 11.43 am