

**CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL
 11 JUNE 2015**

PRESENT:

Councillors D Brailsford, A G Hagues, J D Hough, P J O'Connor and L Wootten.

Added Members: Jean Burbidge (Lincolnshire Community Health Services), Mrs Polly Coombes (Foster Carer), and Mary-Beth Pepperdine (V4C The Children in Care Council).

Officers/invited guests in attendance: Rebecca Andrews (Principal Lawyer), Kieran Barnes (Virtual Head of Looked After Children), Dave Clarke (Secure Unit Principal), Katrina Cope (Team Leader – Democratic and Civic Services), Annie Fletcher (Children's Service Manager Lincolnshire Services - Barnardo's), Jan Gunter (Designated Consultant Nurse Safeguarding & Looked After Children), John Harris (Children's Services Manager Regulated – North and Fostering), Colin Hopkirk (Participation Officer), Tracy Johnson (Scrutiny Officer), Tara Jones (Children's Services Manager Regulated - South and Adoption), Carolyn Knight (Independent Chair Manager) and Ron Oliver (Assistant Director - Barnardo's).

Observer: Yvonne Shearwood (Senior IRO Manager/Independent Chair).

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

That Councillor D Brailsford be elected Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Panel for 2015/16 and 2016/17.

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

That Councillor J D Hough be elected Vice-Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Panel for 2015/16 and 206/17.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Theresa Buhryn (Independent Chair Manager), Mrs M Graham-Williams (Foster Carer), Samantha Edwards (Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust), Councillor R J Hunter-Clarke and Janice Spencer (Assistant Director Children's Safeguarding).

4. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

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

5. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12 MARCH 2015

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 12 March 2015 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

6. CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY

The Participation Officer advised the Panel that the Engagement Plan was nearly complete and that it was hoped to re-publish an updated Plan in July 2015.

It was highlighted that the Corporate Parenting Strategy had been endorsed by full Council in December 2014, and that for the next meeting it was hoped that a full list of Looked After Children/Care leaver Champions would be made available to the Panel. It was further highlighted that the title Champion would be changed to Representative.

The Panel was advised that training would be provided to the Representatives, and; a further invitation would be extended to them to attend existing Joint Development Days in the North and South of the County at dates to be arranged.

The Participation Officer also asked Members of the Panel if they were prepared to have a photograph taken after the meeting for displaying on the Corporate Parenting Panel web page on the teeninfoincs website. Members agreed to this request.

It was reported that lots of work had been undertaken by officers to ensure that the issue of Corporate Parenting was embedded across the authority.

It was further reported that it was hoped to get a Young People's version of the Plan and a one slide version for the teeninfoincs website.

It was queried how many hits there had been on the teeninfoincs website. The Participation Officer agreed to look into this and report back to the Panel.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

7. PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 4 2014/15

Consideration was given to a report from Janice Spencer (Assistant Director of Children's Safeguarding), which provided the Panel with the full quarter performance report relating to Looked After Children.

In the absence of the Assistant Director, the Children's Service Manager Regulated - North and Fostering presented the report to the Panel, making particular reference to

the fact that all performance indicators were within tolerance and invited members of the Panel to comment on the report presented.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- Page 3 - Fostering/adoption of Looked After Children age 10 to 16. A question was asked as to whether the target was achievable. The Panel was advised that the demographics of Looked After Children was very complex and as result some children had required placement within a residential home, as fostering had not been considered as the best option to meet their needs. It was also reported that there had been an increase in the number of children placed at home on care orders. It was noted that for the majority of children within this indicator, that fostering was the best placement option;
- Page 6 - Stability of placements of Looked After Children; length of placement. A question was asked whether there was an explanation concerning the downward trend. The Panel was advised that the performance had stabilised this quarter. However, a piece of work had been commissioned to help the service better understand the reasons behind the deterioration. The Panel was further advised that the report was due to be completed at the end of June, which would then be made available to the Panel at a future meeting. In the interim period it was reported that training was being given to foster carers to help them deal with more complex behaviours, and foster carers would also be able to use the Safe Base training, previously made available to adoptive parents;
- Page 12 - Looked After Children persistent absence rate. It was reported that Lincolnshire was performing below the national average, but when compared to the previous year's performance, some improvement had been made. The persistent absence rate was now set at 90% to ensure earlier intervention from the Virtual School. The Panel was advised that attendance was discussed at all ePEP meetings with weekly contact being made from the Virtual School Business support to monitor the progress of students with attendance below 90%;
- Page 13 – Looked After Children reaching Level 4 in Maths in Key Stage 2. Some concern was expressed regarding the fact that out of the 14 young people, 7 had between 71% and 100% chance of achieving a level 4 and the other 7 having between 0% and 26% chance of achieving level 4. The Panel was advised that most of the young people were in special schools, and some of those did not have the same outcomes for young people. The main issue was that there needed to be more intervention at Key Stage One, and as a result more work was going to be done with three to six year olds, with special teacher services working alongside the school; and
- The frequency for ePEP meetings. The Panel was advised that ePEP meetings took place three times a year, but with some schools it was on a daily basis for Looked after Children. It was noted that schools were free to design their own processes for expected progress.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

8. VIRTUAL SCHOOL INTERIM REPORT

Consideration was given to a report from the Virtual Head of Looked after Children, which advised the Panel that improvements were being made to the way academic information was collected regarding Looked After Children.

It was reported that with regard to Early Years approximately 50% of the Reception Early Years Cohort was expected to achieve a good Level of Development in the coming year.

At key stage 2 outcomes relating to attainment had remained disappointing in terms of raw data, but the gap was closing with regard to national averages.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- That more schools were now engaged with regard to Looked After Children and that more data was now being gathered from schools;
- That training from the virtual team had been provided to which fifteen teachers had attended out of hours;
- The need for more intervention from birth to six to help the young people. It was highlighted that some children had lots of difficulties, and the schools needed to be trained better to deal with those difficulties;
- Key stage two improvements. The Panel was advised that this was a major challenge and that specialist teachers were being used to help those disadvantaged children; and
- Concern was expressed as to how the Council knew that fewer under Fives were attending nursery. It was highlighted that work was being done with foster carers and through the FAST teams. The Panel was informed that the health assessment had identified that some under-fives were not attending nursery. It was agreed that attendance at nursery school was an important part of a child's development, but it was noted that some young people because of their complex needs were unable to attend nursery. It was agreed that more work needed to be done with regard to this matter and that a further report should be presented to the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel. It was agreed that the Children's Services Manager Regulated – South and Adoption would look into getting a Birth to Five representative to attend the Corporate Parenting Panel on a regular basis, and also look into the widening of the role of the Health Visitor to provide additional support to foster carers.

RESOLVED

1. That a further report concerning Birth to Five be received at the next meeting.
2. That a representative from the Birth to Five Service be invited to attend future meetings of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

9. V4C THE LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN COUNCIL SIX MONTHLY UPDATE AND QUARTERLY MINUTES

The Panel gave consideration to a report from the Participation Officer, which provided the Panel with an update on the V4C Executive Group.

In guiding the Panel through the V4C Half Yearly report, reference was made to:

- Membership of the V4C. It was noted that there were now 13 permanent members;
- It was reported that the FAB Award had been a great success. It was highlighted that a young apprentice care leaver would be sitting on the project board for FAB 2016, to help directly manage the event;
- The BIG Conversation Event;
- That the Coming in-to Care App was now working with enquiries from other authorities;
- Development of the Lincolnshire Independent Reviewing Officer Service;
- Reviewing documentation for Looked After Children;
- Supporting the roll out of the V4C active programme;
- The inclusion of music activities through Soundlincs; and
- Challenges and Opportunities for 2016/17.

Full details relating to the bullet points listed were shown in the Half Yearly report.

Copies of V4C Executive Group Minutes from meetings held on 24 March 2015 and 21 April 2015 accompanied the half yearly report for the Panel's consideration.

The Panel was advised that after two and half years of being Chair, Cassie Hanley-Ball was going to be stepping down to allow her to continue with her studies. The Chairman on behalf of the Panel extended his thanks to Cassie for all her hard work and wished her well with her future studies. All Panel members were invited to email their thanks onto Colin Hopkirk (Participation Officer).

During discussion reference was made to Duke of Edinburgh Awards. The Panel was advised that the Frieston Centre was due to close at the end of year, which would make completion of the Duke of Edinburgh Awards more challenging. It was reported that dialogue was ongoing at the moment, and it was hoped that the Awards would continue. Reference was also made to the need to involve the new Representatives in the work of the V4C.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

10. VISITING MEMBERS – LOG OF QUARTERLY VISITS TO CHILDREN'S HOMES FOR 2104/15 AND 2015/16 AND VISITING MEMBER FEEDBACK

The Children's Service Manager Regulated – South and Adoption gave consideration to the Visiting Members – Log of Quarterly Visits to Children's Homes from April 2014 to March 2015 and April 2015 to March 2016.

Particular reference was made to the need for Behaviour Management Plans and for further training of staff at The Beacon. **Page 133**

It was highlighted that there were some gaps in the reports received from members' following their visits. Members were reminded that reports needed to be sent Tracy Johnson (Scrutiny Officer) following their visit. It was agreed that a reminder would be sent to the Visiting Members about their records.

The Panel was advised that new Children's Homes Regulations had come in to force from 1 April 2015, which advised that the minimum standard had now gone which had been replaced by quality standards in line with the OFSTED Framework. It was noted that Regulation 33 reports would now be Regulation 34 and that there was new evidence and standard outcomes for children. As a result of the new Regulations, it had been a very busy time for residential homes.

Discussion ensued, from which reference was made as to how the new Regulations would work and whether they would improve the quality of care for the children. The Panel was advised that the quality of Care would be improved for each Looked After Child, as each child would have a care plan in their home, so that their care was more individualised. It was noted that the Lincolnshire team was currently working with OFSTED with regard to measuring the outcomes from this approach. Members were also advised that the use of electronic data was now acceptable.

One member highlighted that on a recent visit to the Haven, a member of staff had made them aware that some staff at The Haven had not been paid correctly. Members were advised that some problems had occurred as a result of the AGRESSO implementation; and that staff had been asked to let managers know if they had been paid incorrectly so that a hardship payment could be arranged. The Panel felt that this was not acceptable for more junior members of staff.

The Children's Service Manager Regulated – South and Adoption agreed to look in to this matter.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

11. FOSTERING ANNUAL REPORT

Consideration was given to a report from the Children's Services Manager Regulated – North and Fostering, which provided the Panel with an overview of the Fostering Service Annual Report for 2014/15. Detailed at Appendix A was a report which contained information about the Fostering Service; in relation to performance indicators and measuring good outcomes, and the work of the Fostering Service and regulations relating to the Fostering Service.

It was reported that in 2014/2015, Lincolnshire had continued to utilise few external foster placements, remaining at under 5% of those placed in foster care. The number of children placed in commissioned placements had remained at 28 in March 2015.

It was reported that there had been a continued increase in the number of children looked after, from 599 in March 2014 to 637 in March 2015, an increase of 60% in the total looked after population in Lincolnshire. Following a tailored recruitment campaign, the total number of initial expressions of interest for the year April 2014 –

March 2015 for fostering was 281, of which 70 applications had been received. However, four foster carers had been lost within 12 months of approval this year.

The members were advised that the Foster Panel had met on 25 occasions between April 2014 and March 2015 and there had been 68 Regulations 25/15 (connected persons) and carers considered by both Fostering and Adoption Permanence Panels. Officers highlighted the hard work carried out by the Panel.

It was highlighted that Kinship was a developing area for Children's Services and for the Fostering Service. The service had achieved credibility with the court process in meeting all requirements relating to kinship assessments, but the volume had detracted officers from the core business of the Fostering Service, and as a result of persistent high demand the Fostering Services would be reconfiguring to most effectively meet the growing demand.

It was noted that representatives from the Foster Carers Association who had attended the FAB Awards in May had been very positive and they had actively introduced themselves to foster carers.

During discussion, particular reference was made to Children Asylum Seekers, and the Panel was advised that the Children would be placed in larger conurbations i.e. Leicestershire so that there was wider cultural support.

It was queried what training was offered to foster carers around education. The Panel was informed that this was under review and a meeting with the Virtual School had been arranged to discuss what support was available around education.

The Panel extended their thanks to officers for the excellent report and the continued development of foster carers.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

12. HEALTH ANNUAL REPORT FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN – ACTION PLAN IN RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS

Consideration was given to a joint report from the Designated Consultant Nurse Safeguarding and Looked After Children, South West Lincolnshire CCG and the Named Nurse Vulnerable Children and Young People's Team, Lincolnshire Community Health Services, which provided the Panel with a progress report against the action plan for the Health Annual Report for Looked After Children 2013/14.

The Panel were guided through the report presented with particular reference being made to:-

- Page 2 – recommendation 15 – It was noted that a multi-agency group was developing the data for Looked After Children in a Peer Group which help in assessing the service, and
- Page 3 – recommendation 15 – It was highlighted that the timeliness of health assessments had not been met for 2014/15. Work was ongoing at looking at other models, one was GP's providing the service and being overseen by a designated professional. It was reported that some GPs were not renewing

their contracts and as a result the timescales for health assessments could not be accommodated. It was reported that in Wales they operated a nursing model, but the English guidance was for a medical practitioner to conduct the assessments. A question was asked as to whether nurses would be capable of doing the checks. The Panel was advised that they would, but that they would need additional training and development. If it was to be a nursing role it would have to be a senior level nurse, quality assured by a paediatric consultant supervisor. It was also noted that in some areas nurses took the initial health assessments. It was felt that if nurses did perform the reviews it would provide the service with more flexibility. The Welsh Model was being looked at as an option and it was highlighted that these issues were not just isolated to Lincolnshire.

During discussion, particular reference was made to the continued development of the Tier 3 CAMHS service specification, which was being led by Sally Savage, (Chief Commissioning Officer – Children's). Officers were able to advise that work was ongoing to meet the four week target for fast tracking to specialist CAMHS service; but unfortunately Quarter Four performance information had not yet been received to support this statement. It was agreed that an update on the Quarter Four Performance would be circulated to the Panel.

In conclusion, it was felt that the overall quality of the reviews was improving and that the reporting process would be able to provide information as to the journey and health of the Looked After Children. It was felt that 20 days was too short a period to assess a Child's needs, and that the Local Authority marker of 35 days was more appropriate.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

13. INDEPENDENT CHAIR SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT

Consideration was given to a report from the Independent Chair Manager, which provided the Panel with an overview of the Independent Chair Service for 2014/15.

Appendix A to the report provided the Panel with a copy of the 'Independent Review Service Annual report 2014/2015'.

In guiding the Panel through the report the Independent Chair Manager advised that following the secondment of David McWilliams to Rotherham in November 2014, interim management arrangements had been confirmed and Yvonne Shearwood had been appointed as Senior Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) for the service.

It was reported that Birmingham University had been approached to deliver a Post Qualifying module to staff in the Independent Chair Service. This module would provide IROs with bespoke training around a critical understanding of the distinctive role and necessary skills of Independent Chairs. This training was due to start in July and run until November 2015.

It was reported that the Independent Chair Service had recently been made aware of a pilot that had been undertaken in Sheffield, to make Looked After Children (LAC) Reviews more Child Centred. It was noted that it was hoped to implement a similar process in Lincolnshire. It was highlighted that the Signs of Safety model was being embedded in Children's Services. This system was a strength based, solution focussed approach to practice in keeping with the Munro recommendations around empowering practitioners, evidence based practice, and encouraging constructive working relationships with children and families.

During discussion particular reference was made to the Care Plans as some young people and families had not seen the contents of their Care Plan which was unacceptable. The Panel was advised that there was a Care Plan Pledge and that better information about young people's views of their Care Plans would be available for the next quarter with data from Mosaic. The work was ongoing and it would take at least a year to put in place and that young people would be involved in the process.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

14. UPDATE ON THE NATIONAL YOUTH ADVOCACY SERVICE (NYAS)

The Children's Services Manager Regulated – North and Fostering advised that the contract with NYAS would end on 30 June 2015 and that from 1 July 2015 Barnardo's would be the new provider.

The Panel extended their thanks to Ted Normandale for his attendance and support over the last 8 years and the Chairman agreed to send a letter of thanks to Ted on behalf of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

The Panel was advised that going forward Barnardo's would not be invited to become a member of the Panel, as they would be providing a service for Lincolnshire County Council; and it was thought that this would result in a conflict of interest.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

15. ADOPTION SERVICE SIX MONTHLY UPDATE

The Panel gave consideration to a report from the Children's Service Manager Regulated – South and Adoption, which provided an update on the work of the Adoption Service during the last six months.

Detailed at Appendix A to the report was a copy of the Adoption Service 6 Month Report April 2014 to September 2014.

In guiding the Panel through the report, particular reference was made to:-

- That from April 2014, all school children adopted from care now benefitted from £20m of additional Pupil Premium to get the support they needed to thrive at school;

- In June 2014, the new Adoption Support Fund had been launched with ten prototype authorities ahead of the National roll-out for England. It was highlighted that Lincolnshire had already received confirmation to access the Fund;
- It was noted that the average time between entering care and being placed for adoption had decreased to 511 days in Lincolnshire with the all England average having decreased to 628 days;
- That during the last three years, the number of adoptions in England had increased by 63%, which was a record level. It was noted that over the last nine months there had been a drop in the number of placement orders as a result of the key Supreme Court and Court of Appeal judgements in 2013, particularly Re B and Re BS, which reiterated the need for adoption decisions to be based on a robust analysis of all realistic options, and set out that adoption was a measure only to be pursued where it was necessary for the child's welfare. It was also highlighted that following this judgement there had been an increase in Kinship placements under a Special Guardianship Order, and a reduction in Placement Orders;
- That there were six children awaiting adoption;
- That the Adoption Panel had seen a number of changes as the previous Chair, Pam Duncan, had retired; and a new Chair, Hazel Halle, had been appointed. It was also noted that a new Panel Advisor, Nicola Brangam, had been appointed, who had taken up, her post at the end of September 2014;
- Services available post Adoption. The Panel noted that adopters and adopted children had access to the Council's adoption website; the adoption helpline; and adoption support groups.

During discussion, reference was made to the need for Special Guardianship support. Officers agreed that the support given for an Adoption could be replicated for Guardian support. It was also highlighted that there was still a time lapse with the processing of Placement Orders. The delay seemed to be when transferring over from adoption to Looked After Children. It was further highlighted that there were issues around who to report to when a Looked After Child had special needs and whether it should be the Children with Disabilities Team or the Looked After Children Team. It was suggested that the Children with Disabilities Team should be brought into the process for care assessments. Officers agreed to look into the issues outside of the meeting.

RESOLVED

That the Adoption Service Six Monthly Update be noted.

16. LEGAL SERVICES – ANNUAL REPORT

Consideration was given to a report from the Principal Lawyer, Legal Services Lincolnshire, which provided an overview of children in care proceedings for 2014/15.

The Panel was advised that a more comprehensive report would be made available for the next meeting.

It was reported that between April 2014 and March 2015 that 198 care proceedings had been issued, which consisted of 186 applications for Care Orders and 14 applications for Supervision Orders.

The Panel was advised that due to the Commissioning restructure, Legal Services was now part of Environment and Economy and that the Directorate was currently under review, the results of which would be known at the start of October 2015.

It was reported that Lincolnshire was now fifth in the Country for the average timescale of 26 weeks to get a case through the legal system. It was noted that the effect of the Supreme Court and Court of Appeal judgements in 2013, particularly Re B and Re BS had resulted in some cases going beyond 26 weeks. This was mainly due to an increasingly large number of East European cases where assessments were required on family members living overseas, and also to cases where family members who have a realistic chance for permanence come forward late in proceedings, often as a result of changing their minds, and the timescales extended to carry out assessments on them.

A further factor that had had an effect on timescales had been a change in the Designated Family Judge, as the previous one had retired and had been replaced by three Judges, which had resulted in a more inconsistent approach. The Panel was advised that it was now more difficult to prepare cases for consideration as a result of the inconsistency of the Judges approach.

It was highlighted that only one case had recently gone to the Court of Appeal.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

17. CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL WORK PROGRAMME 2015

Consideration was given to a report which provided the Panel with an opportunity to consider its work programme for the coming year.

It was noted that the six monthly update on the Corporate Parenting Strategy would be removed from the agenda for 10 September as a revised Strategy and Action Plan were due to be presented to this meeting

RESOLVED

That the Work Plan be approved as set out in the report subject to the inclusion of items highlighted at Minute numbers 8 and 16 above.

The meeting closed at 1.15pm.

This page is intentionally left blank