

**CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL
 10 SEPTEMBER 2015**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR D BRAILSFORD (CHAIRMAN)

Lincolnshire County Council: Councillors J D Hough (Vice-Chairman), A G Hagues, P J O'Connor and L Wootten.

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

Councillor: M S Jones (Executive Councillor for Finance and Property), Annie Fletcher (Children's Services Manager, Barnardo's) and Ron Oliver (Assistant Director – Barnardo's) attended the meeting as observers.

Officers in attendance:-

Michelle Andrews (Children's Services Manager - Early Years), Kieran Barnes (Virtual Head of Looked After Children), Katrina Cope (Team Leader Democratic and Civic Services), John Harris (Children's Services Manager - Regulated North and Fostering), John Herbert (Youth Development Hub Manager), Tracy Johnson (Scrutiny Officer), Tara Jones (Children's Services Manager - Regulated South and Adoption), Janice Spencer (Assistant Director Safeguarding), Dave Clarke (Secure Unit Principal) and Yvonne Shearwood (Senior IRO Manager / Independent Chair).

18 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor R J Hunter-Clarke and Mrs M Graham-Williams (Foster Carer).

19 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTEREST

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

20 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL HELD ON 11 JUNE 2015

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 11 June 2015 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

21 VISITING MEMBERS - LOG OF QUARTERLY VISITS TO CHILDREN'S HOMES FOR 2015/16 AND VISITING MEMBER FEEDBACK

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Councillor M Jones (Executive Councillor for Finance and Property).

Councillor Jones was invited to provide an update to the Panel concerning his visits to Strut House.

Councillor Jones advised the Panel that Strut House was located near South Park in Lincoln, and was situated in a residential street which enabled the house to blend in with its surroundings. The Panel was advised that the house had five bedrooms, and provided short break accommodation to children and young people between the ages of 5 to 18 who had a disability.

The children and young people received bespoke care which was tailored to meet their individual needs.

Overall, the house provided the children and young people staying there with a welcoming and normal family home environment. It was reported that staff were very instrumental in creating the welcoming environment; and they were also encouraged to put forward new ideas to the management team.

The Panel was advised that Strut House had been judged by OFSTED as being outstanding in all areas of judgment.

In conclusion, Councillor Jones advised that it was always a pleasure to visit Strut House.

During a short discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- Activities provided by Strut House. The Panel was advised that Strut House provided lots of activities for the children and young people, some of which included visiting the Venue to watch a family film, day trips and other engagement activities through the Arts programme; and
- The Panel was advised that Strut House management welcomed visits, as they valued any comments raised and were keen to do even better.

The Assistant Director Children's Safeguarding extended her thanks to all visiting Councillors as it was their feedback which helped service provision continually improve. It was highlighted that reports received from Councillors were very important.

The Panel was also advised that the Secure Unit had been judged as being Outstanding, Beacon had been judged as Good; and Northolme had been judged as Good in all areas with no recommendations. It was reported that the judgements relating to Albion, Eastgate and Haven would be known shortly.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

22 CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY - REVISED ENGAGEMENT AND BUSINESS PLAN

Consideration was given to a report from the Assistant Director of Children's Safeguarding, which advised the Panel of the revised Corporate Parenting Strategy where the Engagement and Business Plans for the Corporate Parenting Panel had been updated.

The Panel was advised that the main part of the Strategy remained unchanged, but the Engagement and Business Plans had been updated to bring them up to date in terms of the calendar of meetings and in the case of the Engagement Plan, some streamlining had been done to cut out duplication and more alignments had been made to existing activities. An example of such an activity was the inviting of Looked After Children/Care Leaver Representatives on scrutiny committees to existing development events. A list of the nominated said representatives were detailed within the report presented.

It was noted that the Engagement Plan was on target to achieve its goal. To get more engagement from the 77 elected councillors it was proposed to have a couple of further development days. It was agreed that the Scrutiny Officer would arrange for the necessary invites to be forwarded onto to the elected members.

One member enquired as to what progress had been made in getting the wider 77 members involved more locally across the County. The Panel was advised that local meetings were only held in Sleaford and Lincoln. A suggestion was made that the 77 members could all receive a news bulletin; as well as a further suggestion being made for members being invited to attend a carers meeting. It was agreed that the Scrutiny Officer would work with other officers outside of the meeting to get members more involved.

A further issue was raised with regard to regular attendance at the V4C meetings, as it was evident from the minutes from the last three meetings that a member of the Panel had not been in attendance. It was agreed that dates of the V4C meetings, the Big Conversation Events and other events should be made available to members so that arrangements could be made in advance to ensure that someone from the Panel attended.

RESOLVED

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the Scrutiny Officer would:
 - Arrange for necessary invites to be forwarded onto the elected members for training;
 - Work with other officers outside of the meeting to try to get members more involved locally; and
 - Look into obtaining the dates of the V4C meetings, the Big Conversation Events and other events, and circulate these to

**CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL
10 SEPTEMBER 2015**

members so that arrangements could be made to ensure that a Panel member attended such events.

**23 CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL PERFORMANCE REPORT -
QUARTER 1 2015/16**

The Panel gave consideration to a report from the Assistant Director Children's Safeguarding, which provided Quarter One exceptions Performance report relating to Looked After Children for review.

The Assistant Director for Children's Safeguarding brought to the Panel's attention the following:-

- Fostering/adoption of Looked After Children aged 10 to 16 – page 47. The Panel was advised that this indicator was only slightly outside the tolerance figure. It was noted that the majority of children within this range had foster placements as the preferred option. It was noted that the council continued to accommodate a small number of children whose behaviours had proven difficult for a family setting and as a result there had been a sustained increase in the number of young people placed in residential placements. Also, a number of children with care orders had returned to live with their parents;
- Looked After Children per 10,000 population aged under 18 – page 48, It was noted that there were currently 665 Looked After Children and that over the year this figure had remained relatively static;
- Stability of placements of Looked After Children: length of placement – page 49. The Panel was advised that there had been a steady decline and that a piece of work was currently underway to look into the makeup of the cohort. A discussion took place as to how this indicator was reported, and the fact that the Panel needed to see the true figure; this would be confirmed once the commissioned piece of work was completed.

One question asked was in a situation where there was a third placement how were these being picked up. The Panel was advised that an additional review had been introduced, and there would now be two a year. The foster carer representative advised the Panel that some foster carers might see placement changes as a failure as they would not like to admit that they could not manage. It was also reported that there was a multi-agency co-ordinated approach to review as part of the Health Assessments. It was further reported that the consistent approach with Community nurses had made a big change to foster carers.

- Training for foster carers – The Panel was advised that investment was being made to provide various forms of training to foster carers. The foster carer representative commented that some of the training was hit and miss as it was dependent on numbers. It was felt that a fairer way would be to identify the more vulnerable first. Overall, it was highlighted that all foster carers were keen to receive training. A further suggestion made was that it would be very useful to foster carers if more practical courses were available i.e. how to manage behaviour; and

- Looked After Children with A Personal Education Plan – page 50. The Panel was advised that performance for this indicator was below target as a result of technical issues with the ePEP system. It was reported that 99% were compliant; this had been achieved through engagement through the internet, and buy in from social care. It was highlighted that there would be training for foster carers to have access to the ePEP system. The figures were therefore very positive. Other figures quoted were that early years as at April were 89% compliant; Post 16 from January was 90% compliant. It was highlighted that the building blocks were in place, but there was still further work to be done to tie assessment with the outcomes for Looked After Children with their ePEPS; and engagement with foster carers to take things forward.

In conclusion, the Panel was advised that the team were working hard to make a difference to carers.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

24 VIRTUAL SCHOOL - UPDATE

The Virtual Head of Looked After Children provided the Panel with a verbal update on the Virtual School, which made reference to the following:-

- Early Years Foundation Stage. It was reported that there had been a good level of development during 2015 as this figure was now at 32% compared to 18% in the previous year. The gap for Looked After Children (LAC) nationally closed by 14% compared to the previous year's data. The literacy gap for LAC nationally had closed by 13% in reading and 14 % in writing;
- Key Stage 1 – Student progress – For Year 1 for Phonics in the previous year had been 49% but for 2015 it was 62% for LAC. The Panel was advised that Lincolnshire was 9% above the national average and that the data came through the school, the DfE and then back to the Council. Individual monitoring of children was by the schools and OFSTED. When a young person was struggling, the Looked After Team would go in, liaise with the school and get them to track the young person's progress, using the pupil premium to do that;
- It was reported that Key Stage 1 - Year 2 Literacy Reading, was at 62% compared to 41% in the previous year;
- Key Stage 2 – Year 6 reading levels. The Panel was advised that there had been some progress as this figure was now at 60% compared to 53% in the last year;
- Key Stage 2 - GPS/Writing was the same as in the previous year at 43%;
- Key Stage 2 - Maths, had also remained the same as the previous year at 40%; and
- Key Stage 4 – Secondary – It was highlighted that 46 Students had been entered as being on the roll for examination purposes. Of the 46 12 had been predicted by schools to achieve 5A* - C including English and Maths. The

**CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL
10 SEPTEMBER 2015**

Panel noted that the actual percentage achieving 5 good GCSE's including Maths and English was 4 students out of the 12. This was obviously quite a difference from what was predicted in October 2014. It was highlighted of the original 12, 9 were at a good school or better. The Panel was reassured that all the LAC candidates were provided with additional support which had included catch up sessions for English and maths provided by the virtual school, exam practice sessions, holiday time tuition, learning mentoring for academic/emotional stability; special consideration from exam boards etc. To follow up, it was reported that each individual case would be reviewed by the Virtual School team, and work would also be done with schools regarding the remarking of exam papers. Schools would also be contacted and a plan put in place to monitor more precisely during the year. The Panel was also advised that only the most effective tutors would be used going forward and that early intervention would now happen from year 10.

During a short discussion, some concern was expressed that some factors could rest with the school and not with the ability of the children. The Panel noted that the Regional Director at OFSTED had been contacted to look at LAC. The team would be writing to the head teachers to the schools involved.

One member advised that lots of schools had student support officers who had received no training with regard to the needs of LAC.

The Panel was advised that a letter would be sent to all LAC congratulating them on their results.

RESOLVED

That the verbal update be noted.

**25 V4C THE LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN COUNCIL - QUARTERLY
MINUTES**

The Panel received a verbal update from Mary-Beth Pepperdine, the Children in Care Council representative who advised that the Big Conversation item was Mental Health Awareness, as further work was needed in schools, to ensure that young people know that there is help out there. Particular reference was made to the Care App; foster carer training to make them more aware of mental health issues; and the promotion of the mentoring and budding system currently being delivered by Barnardo's.

The group had also taken part in the making of a video to show to foster carers, from children that have been in foster care.

The Panel was advised that the next V4C meeting was to be held on 22 September 2015, where it would be discussing the Big Conversation agenda.

During discussion, one member enquired as to whether the issue of Children and Young People's Plans were being followed up, as page 52 (Minutes of the V4C

meeting held on 19 May 2015) had highlighted that some young people had not had a copy of their own plan, or even knew where to find it. The Panel was reassured that this matter was being followed up as a member of staff had been appointed to look at care planning across LAC. It was noted that a report was due to go to DMT with the initial findings of the audit plan in October; a report would then be presented to a future meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

The Panel was also advised that it was planned to review processes and that one of the changes was to broaden the representation of the V4C group, and to consult with the young people first.

RESOLVED

That the verbal update be noted.

26 REGULATION 44 REPORT

The Panel gave consideration to a half yearly report from the Independent Visiting Service for the period between February and August 2015.

The Panel noted that there had been a number of changes during the last six months which included changes to regulations, which govern the role of the Independent Visitor, staffing and internal procedures. It was noted further that the Independent Visitor would continue to be expected to provide a report following each visit, in accordance with Regulation 44 of the Children's Homes Regulations.

It was reported that the Independent Visitor had been very positive about all the care homes, making particular reference to the fact that all homes endeavoured to make sure the voice of the child was heard. The Independent Visitor had been particularly impressed with the changes that had taken place at the Beacon.

It was highlighted that Albion Street and Northolme had continued to experience incidences of young people going missing. When this did occur, members of staff ensured that set procedures were followed to deal with this matter.

The Panel was advised that the implementation of social pedagogy as a means of working with children and young people had now been implemented within the children's homes in Lincolnshire. The method encouraged young people to develop a greater awareness of themselves and how they interact with the world about them.

The Panel was reassured that the reporting would still be done in the normal way. Under Regulation 44 the visiting member reports were needed as were the responses by officers, as it was these reports that OFSTED looked at and followed up.

During discussion, particular reference was made to page 63 and reference to the incidences when children had gone missing. The Panel was reassured that the incidences referred to a specific cohort of young people at the time and that it was not a regular occurrence. It was also highlighted that the term missing could just

**CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL
10 SEPTEMBER 2015**

refer to a curfew being missed, but because of procedures that would mean that the police would have to be made aware and the term 'missing' was used. There was really good established procedures in place to deal with such instances. It was agreed that the wording of the report was misleading in this instance.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

27 LEAVING CARE SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT

The Panel gave consideration to the Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service Annual Report - April 2014 to March 2015 from Barnardo's (exempt), which provided a picture of Lincolnshire young people leaving care in terms of the challenges they faced, and the services in place to assist them.

The Children's Services Manager Barnardo's introduced the report and highlighted to the Panel some specific areas, which included the OFSTED results; Employer, Education and Training; specialist provision; supported lodging service; partnership working and transition from school.

During discussion, questions were raised with regard to the following issues:-

- In relation to Education, Employment and Training for care leavers. The Panel was advised that the cohort were on target to reach the 65% target. However the government's return identified that an average of 52% of Lincolnshire care leavers were in Education, Employment or Training for 19, 20 and 21 combined. It was reported that the figures were reported a month in front and three months after;
- University places – The Panel was advised that only 10 leavers were at university, which equated to 3.6% of the 17 – 25 year olds compared against 49% of 17-30 year old in the general population. The Panel was advised that all LAC had the opportunity to have career guidance post 16, but there was still work to be done;
- Transition issues – The Panel was advised that more joined up working was being done, but there was still work to be done with regard to where responsibility started and finished; and
- Exclusion – It was highlighted that some schools/college had a protocol to deal with exclusion.

In conclusion, the Panel was advised that the service being provided had gone from strength to strength, which was a credit to the Children's Services Manager.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

28 FOSTERING REPORT QUARTER ONE

Consideration was given to a report from the Children's Service Manager Regulated – North and Adoption, which provided Quarter One performance information for the Fostering Service in line with regulatory requirements.

Appendix A to the report provided the first Quarterly Report for 2015/16. It was reported that the first quarter had seen a stabilisation in the number of Looked After Children with a total of 641 at the end of June. Despite the increase in the number of registered Foster Carers, this level of the looked after population had rendered the placement choice more difficult.

During the period, 166 enquiries had been received from members of the public interested in becoming foster carers. Out of these it was reported that 49 had contacted the service for further information. The main focal point of the month had been Fostering Fortnight, which involved an evening with foster carers held at Lincoln and Grantham. The service had given members of the public the opportunity to hear directly from foster carers and was attended by 35 people. From this six expressions of interest had been received, and it was felt that the service would be repeated.

The Panel was advised that the Foster Care Association had established its first support group in Lincoln and had introduced mentoring support for all new carers.

It was reported that Kinship Assessments had changed the overall workload of the team; and thanks were extended to all staff for their effort over the last year in dealing with the 140 assessments received, as all deadlines had been achieved.

During discussion, reference was made to the following issues:-

- Thanks were extended to the fostering team for all their hard work;
- Refugees situation – what the expectation would be for Lincolnshire. The Panel was advised that work would be done to see what provision was available in Lincolnshire; and information would be sought regarding sex and ages. The Panel was advised that currently there was 43 care leavers who were unaccompanied asylum seekers over the age of 16; and
- An explanation of what 'Out of County' meant in this instance. The Panel was advised that the term referred to carers who were out of the County budget.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

29 ADOPTION SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT

Consideration was given to a report from the Children's Service Manager Regulated – South and Adoption, which provided the Panel with the Adoption Service Annual Report. Appendix A to the report set out the relevant performance information and identified key developments within the service during the last twelve months.

10
CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL
10 SEPTEMBER 2015

It was reported that the purpose of the report was to advise members of the work of the Adoption Service. The Government was still continuing to maintain a clear focus on minimising delays for children with a plan for adoption, and maximising the potential pool for adopters.

The Panel was advised that the National Adoption Agenda had allowed the Pupil Premium to be increased in value and was now available to all school children adopted from care. The new regulations had also put the Adoption and Children Act register onto a statutory footing and from September 2014, two-year old children adopted from local authority care were now entitled to additional Government funded early educational provision along with children made the subject of a Special Guardianship Order.

It was reported that in October 2014, Children's Services as a whole had been the subject to inspection under the revised Ofsted Single Inspection Framework. The outcome of this inspection was that the Adoption Service had again been rated as 'Outstanding'. Key comments regarding the service were contained on page 135 of the report presented. The Panel was advised that as a result of the Ofsted judgement Lincolnshire County Council had been asked to host visits from a range of other LA Adoption Agencies to see what they could learn from the Lincolnshire approach.

The Panel was advised that for 2015/16 the government looked set to make adoption a priority, and that the new Bill would enable the Secretary of State to require local authorities in England to make arrangements so that their adoption functions could be carried out by other authorities or adoption agencies. Part of the rationale for this was to enable 'excellent' agencies to support other agencies in their improvement journey. It was highlighted that Trailblazer funding was available to early local authorities and the Council was currently in the process of putting together a bid to form a regional adoption agency.

A concern was raised as to whether the Council had the capacity to cope with regionalisation. The Panel was advised Lincolnshire was being forward thinking in its approach to ensure that it would be in control and as a result would have more opportunity. The project was work in progress.

RESOLVED

That the Annual Report for the Adoption Service be noted.

30 **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL WORK PROGRAMME 2015/16**

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

It was highlighted that when annual reports were included on future agendas, Panel Members should send questions in to officers in advance of the meeting.

It was agreed that a letter of appreciation should be sent from the Chairman to Colin Hopkirk acknowledging his work with Looked After Children.

RESOLVED

That the Work Plan as presented be approved.

31 FUTURE MEETING DATES

RESOLVED

That the meeting dates as detailed below be agreed:-

Thursday 10 March 2016 at 10.00am;
Thursday 9 June 2016 at 10.00am;
Thursday 8 September 2016 at 10.00am; and
Thursday 15 December 2016 at 10.00am.

The meeting closed at 12.43 pm

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