

**CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL  
10 DECEMBER 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), Polly Coombes (Foster Carer) and Samantha Edwards

Officers in attendance:-

Michelle Andrews (Head of Birth to Five Service), Kieran Barnes (Virtual Head of Looked After Children), Dave Clarke (Secure Unit Principal), Annie Fletcher (Children's Services Manager - Barnardo's), Jan Gunter (Consultant Nurse Safeguarding, South West Lincolnshire CCG), John Harris (Children's Service Manager - Regulated North and Fostering), John Herbert (Youth Development Officer), Tracy Johnson (Senior Scrutiny Officer), Tara Jones (Children's Service Manager - Regulated South and Adoption), Tanya Marten (Customer Relations & Complaints Manager), Ron Oliver (Assistant Director, Barnardo's), Graham Reeves (Participation Officer), Yvonne Shearwood (Quality and Assurance Manager), Barbara Simpson (Consultant), Janice Spencer (Assistant Director Safeguarding) and Rachel Wilson (Democratic Services Officer)

32 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

33 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest at this point in the meeting.

It was noted that there had been a vacancy on the Panel for a while now, and the Chairman commented that he would like to see it filled.

**34 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL  
HELD ON 10 SEPTEMBER 2015****RESOLVED**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2015 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**35 REVIEW OF STABILITY OF FOSTERING PLACEMENTS - AN AUDIT  
RELATING TO PLACEMENT DISRUPTIONS OF LOOKED AFTER  
CHILDREN**

The Chairman welcomed Barbara Simpson, an independent social worker who had written the report 'An audit Relating to Placement Disruptions of Looked After Children', to the meeting and invited her to present the report to the Panel.

The Panel was advised that the audit had been undertaken in order to explore the reasons why some placements of children who were looked after by the local authority were disrupted. An audit was carried out of 38 children in the county who had been looked after for at least two years. A desktop audit of cases was carried out alongside interviews with social workers and a small sample of foster carers.

It was noted that of the 38 cases that were looked at, only 15 had actually been disrupted, of the remaining number some had been adopted and some had moved home.

The Panel was guided through the report, and provided with the opportunity to ask questions to the officers present. Some of the main themes which emerged during discussion included the need for foster carers to be able to build a good relationship with their supervising social worker and to have someone they could speak to about any difficulties they were having without feeling like a failure. It was also important to note that the role of the social worker was not just about procedural support, but also being able to recognise when other types of support were needed, and to have the knowledge of what support packages were available to foster carers.

It was queried whether any conversations took place between social workers and foster carers that when their child turned 13/14 it was likely their personalities could change as they became adolescents. Through the 'Tell us' survey, it had been commented that some foster carers did not know what it was like to be a teenager in today's world. It was acknowledged that this was something which could be done better, as if a foster carer took on a child at the age of 8, they often did not think what that child would be like at 14, and there was a need to think about preparing carers for this.

It should be noted that it was not just foster carers that would experience feelings of failure regarding children in their care, parents would feel like this with their own children as well, but it was commented that it was often felt that there was extra pressure when looking after someone else's child.

The Panel was in agreement that this audit was a very good piece of work and included some results which were expected and some which were quite new. It provided reassurance that the work that social workers did was commendable.

The report highlighted the need for more pro-active work, and to get a message out to foster carers that it was ok to say they were finding things difficult and to ask for help. It was suggested that it would be useful to share this research with foster carers.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

### 36 BIG CONVERSATION 8

The Panel received an update in relation to the Big Conversation 8 which took place on 6 November 2015. It was reported that there were updates on foster carer training, leaving care buddying and mental health projects. There was also a long discussion in relation to the FAB awards and how they could be improved for the following year, but on a lower budget.

The Panel raised questions regarding the perceived stigma when mental health was discussed, and how this was being tackled, and members were advised that a big project was underway to tackle the stigma associated with mental health, and that within CAMHS there was a lot of openness regarding talking about emotional feelings, and there was an increasing demand for its services. It was noted that this was positive in the sense that people felt they were able to talk to staff in this service. It was also noted that teenagers now were more generally aware of emotional issues and were very open about it.

RESOLVED

That the update be noted.

### 37 COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS RECEIVED FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

Consideration was given to a report which provided the Corporate Parenting Panel with information on the Compliments, Comments and Complaints received regarding Looked After Children for the period from 1 April to 30 September 2015.

It was reported that there was one complaint from a child in Lincolnshire County Council Care. It was also noted that there had been one compliment and no comments received regarding Looked After Children in this period.

The Panel was advised that the complaint which had been received had been closed down at stage one. It was noted that the level of complaints received remained relatively low.

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It was noted that Voicability was an advocacy service provided through Barnardo's.

RESOLVED

That the contents of the report be noted.

**38 LAC TAKEOVER DAY**

An update was received from John Harris in relation to the Looked After Children Takeover Day. It was noted that the aim had been to engage with young people on themes which were current. There were 23 young people in attendance at the meeting in Skegness and North Hykeham, and their ages ranged from 8 to 17 years of age. Three main topics were considered as follows:

- Trying to make it more customary for a child to attend fostering placement meetings
- Getting the most out of the LAC review, and encouraging young people to lead more of the review
- What types of questions would be relevant in assessments.

Tara Jones informed the Panel that she attended the meeting at Sleaford, where the majority of the children were age 10 and under. There were some older children in attendance who were helping to facilitate the session, and the focus was on care plans, and what was important to them in terms of what was included. It was noted that the session was really well attended. Some photos from the day would be circulated after the meeting.

RESOLVED

That the update be noted.

**39 EARLY YEARS SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER**

Consideration was given to a report which provided an overview of the Early Years support currently provided to Children Looked After. It included data on the number of Children Looked After who were accessing their 2, 3 and 4 year old entitlement and overview of the current interventions and the impact these were having on the children's educational attainment within the Early Years Foundation Stage.

It was reported that the Birth to Five Service was the Lincolnshire Early Years and Childcare Support Service and had recently developed stronger and more effective working partnerships with the Virtual School and Specialist Teaching Team to monitor and support the early years education of Children Looked After. The Panel was advised that main focus for the Early Years support was as follows:

- To ensure all Children Looked After accessed their 2, 3 and 4 year old early years entitlement when practicable with providers who had a Good or Outstanding Ofsted outcome

- To monitor the progress of Children Looked After in the Early Years in order to narrow the gap of attainment
- To ensure that all Children Looked After experienced high quality learning experiences to enable them to make progress with their expected age and stage of development within the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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

- In terms of the low numbers of monitoring visits carried out, it was reported a new process was in place where the visits would take place immediately. It should be possible to see an improvement in the following year;
- Foster carers reported that they had never received any feedback in relation to the Prime Time Programme. However, it was noted that this was a very targeted programme, but reports should be available for foster carers to view;
- It was suggested that something should be included in the newsletter to ensure foster carers were made aware of this programme;
- The DfE had delayed the returns for LAC, as LAC was not a single cohort;
- There was beginning to be a shift in thinking about whether measuring progress of LAC was being done in the right way.

#### RESOLVED

That the report and comments made be noted.

#### 40 ANNUAL REPORT FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN 2014 - 15

The Corporate Parenting Panel received the Annual report for Looked After Children 2014-15. Members were advised that this was a work in progress. It was noted that the report now included externally placed children who were residing in Lincolnshire, as when these numbers increase, the challenges for the service would also increase, even though Lincolnshire did not have responsibility for them. Emotional and behavioural needs were highest in looked after children placed externally by other local authorities.

It was reported that the biggest challenge was around continuing the achievement of assessments within statutory timescales. There were action plans in place, but this would remain a challenge as the statutory guidance was very clear that there was still a requirement for a medical officer to undertake this work.

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

- There were 654 Looked After Children in Lincolnshire under the care of the authority, and there were a further 440 who were placed in Lincolnshire from out of county;
- It was a very positive step to be able to say that it was recognised that externally placed children had issues;

- Some key pieces of work were underway regarding access to A&E;
- In relation to the group for high SDQ (Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire) scores, it was reported that around 12 cases would be discussed at each meeting;
- It was important to ensure that a child had the right amount of support;
- The need for GP's to carry out initial health assessments was an ongoing issue. In some areas 'hybrid' medicals were being undertaken, in that part of it was undertaken by a nurse, and the remaining part by a paediatrician. However, there were risks with this as it was a disjointed approach, and there could be situations where clinicians were signing off other people's work;
- The authority was working towards a target of the assessment being carried out within 35 working days. It was noted that the child still had a right of access to medical care if they had a health problem, and that the purpose of this assessment was to inform their care plan;
- The authority was trying to develop a Lincolnshire model, but this was an ongoing process.

## RESOLVED

That the Annual Report and ongoing work be noted.

41 VISITING MEMBERS QUARTERLY REPORT AND VISITING MEMBER FEEDBACK

The Corporate Parenting Panel received the visiting members Log of Quarterly Visits to Children's Homes April 2015 – March 2016 for consideration.

One member raised concerns regarding one home which had been downgraded from "outstanding" to "requires improvement", however, he also reported that following a recent Ofsted visit it had been rated as "outstanding" again.

It was also reported that Eastgate in Sleaford had been rated as "outstanding" following a recent inspection.

Councillor L Wootten reported that she was due to visit the Beacon in Grantham on 17 December 2015.

Concerns were raised regarding missing visits and reports, and the importance of this activity was emphasised.

## RESOLVED

That the log of quarterly visits to children's homes be received.

42 V4C THE LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN COUNCIL QUARTERLY MINUTES AND ANNUAL REPORT

The Corporate Parenting Panel received the minutes from the meetings of the V4C Executive held on 22 September 2015 and 20 October 2015 as well as the V4C Annual Report. It was reported that the Annual Report was an overview of the work which had been done this year. Discussions at the meetings included preparing for the Fab Awards in 2016 and the Big Conversation and how to recruit more people to the Group.

The Panel agreed that it was important to be able to recruit more young people to the V4C group. It was also commented that the FAB awards was a very big event which showcased what V4C was and what it did.

## RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meetings and Annual report of the V4C be received.

43 THE VIRTUAL SCHOOL FOR LINCOLNSHIRE LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN ANNUAL REPORT

The Corporate Parenting Panel received the Annual report of the Virtual School for Lincolnshire Looked After Children November 2014 – October 2015, which provided data relating to the educational progress of Lincolnshire Looked After Children on roll in July 2015.

It was reported that some progress had been made in terms of 'narrowing the gap' particularly in the Early Years and primary phases. Progress had also been made in the key areas of partnership working, professional development, championing the individual needs of all Looked After Children and the building of strong resilient partnerships between the Virtual School, real schools and other partners.

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

- Sometimes schools did not understand the needs of Looked After Children, but they did endeavour to work with the authority;
- It was confirmed that the authority still controlled the pupil premium for Looked After Children, and it came to the authority for allocation;
- The designated teacher conference was an annual event;
- Concerns were raised by members regarding the lack of improvement in Maths at Key Stage 2. It was noted that these children would be targeted for additional support;
- It was queried whether there was any mechanism which would change the outcomes for those children in special schools. The issue around alternative provision had been raised with the Regional Commissioner;
- When children were placed in alternative provision, it was ensured that it would be possible for the child to be able to take their exams.

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RESOLVED

That the Annual Report be received.

**44**     FOSTERING REPORT QUARTER TWO

Consideration was given to a report which outlined the activity in the Fostering Service during Quarter 2.

RESOLVED

That the report be approved.

**45**     INDEPENDENT REVIEWING SERVICE - 6 MONTHLY UPDATE

The Corporate Parenting Panel received the six monthly update of the Independent Reviewing Service (April 2015 – September 2015).

RESOLVED

That the update be received.

**46**     PERFORMANCE - QUARTER 2 REPORT 2015/16

The Corporate Parenting Panel received the Quarter 2 Performance Report for Looked After Children. Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions to the officers present in relation to the information contained within the report and some of the points raised during discussion included the following:

- An improvement in the stability of placements had been seen;
- The number of child protection plans being produced was reducing;
- There had been an increase in the population of Looked After Children;
- 140 assessments for kinship placements had taken place;
- In relation to the up to date dental check indicator, it was expected that this would be on target by the end of the year.

RESOLVED

That the performance information presented be noted.

**47**     CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL WORK PROGRAMME 2016

Consideration was given to a report which invited the Corporate Parenting Panel to discuss and agree its work programme for 2016.

It was reported that the next meeting would take place on 10 March 2016. It was also suggested that someone from this Panel should try and attend each of the V4C

meetings and it was requested that a list of future dates be circulated to members. It was noted that next meeting was scheduled for 19 January 2016.

**RESOLVED**

That the work programme, as presented, be agreed.

The meeting closed at 1.07 pm

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