



CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL 23 JULY 2020

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR D BRAILSFORD (CHAIRMAN)

Lincolnshire County Council: Councillors Clio Perraton-Williams (Vice-Chairman), A G Hagues, R H Trollope-Bellew and M A Whittington

Added Members: Ann Wright (Foster Carer), Amy-Louise Butler (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)) and Elizabeth Bunney (Lincolnshire Community Health Services)

Officers in attendance:-

Lisa Adams (Service Manager, Barnardos), Michelle Andrews (Head of Early Years), Kieran Barnes (Virtual School Head Teacher), Nicola Corby (Principal Lawyer), Ben Lilley (Team Manager, Quality and Standards), Yvonne Shearwood (Children's Service Manager - Regulated (South and Adoption)), Janice Spencer OBE (Assistant Director of Children's Services Safeguarding), Daniel Steel (Scrutiny Officer) and Rachel Wilson (Democratic Services Officer)

1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

That Councillor D Brailsford be elected as Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Panel for 2020/21.

COUNCILLOR D BRAILSFORD IN THE CHAIR

2 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

That Councillor C L Perraton-Williams be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Panel for 2020/21.

3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor S R Parkin and Polly Coombes (Foster Carer).

4 DECLARATION OF MEMBER'S INTERESTS

Councillor M A Whittington wished it to be noted that his son was in receipt of support from Barnardo's.

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5 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12 MARCH 2020

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2020 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

6 FUTURE MEETING DATES

RESOLVED

That the following meeting dates for 2021 be approved:

- Thursday, 14 January 2021 at 10.00am
- Thursday, 11 March 2021 at 10.00am
- Thursday, 12 May 2021 at 10.00am
- Thursday, 22 July 2021 at 10.00am

7 LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVER STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

The Panel received a report which provided members with the opportunity to consider the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy and Action Plan. It was reported that the Looked After Children (Children in Care) and Care Leaver Strategy was a key document guiding the work and activity of the Council, as the Corporate Parent, as to how services to support young people in care were designed and developed. The Strategy was written and agreed in 2018 and this was the second review of the action plan.

The action plan was designed to track the activity that was working to achieve the aspirations set out in the strategy. This strategy was the first of its kind to be developed on a multi-agency basis and was supported by the LSCP and all the Partners.

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:

- It was queried whether if a child was adopted in another part of the country and came to live in Lincolnshire, how would the funding work in this situation. Would the original authority let the County Council know that the child was in Lincolnshire? The Panel was advised that if a child was adopted in another part of the country and the family moved to Lincolnshire, there was no requirement for the authority to be notified. However, if a child came from another authority to be placed in Lincolnshire, the responsibility remains with Lincolnshire.
- It was noted that the report did answer a lot of members' questions.

- In relation to actions which were showing as amber, it was queried whether there was an estimated time frame for when they should go green. Members were advised that the amber rating usually indicated an open ended piece of work.
- Members looked forward to next year's review of the Strategy.

RESOLVED

That the priorities and actions identified in the Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy Action Plan be noted.

8 LEAVING CARE SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20 (APRIL 2019 TO MARCH 2020)

The Corporate Parenting Panel received the annual report relating to the work undertaken on behalf of Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service by Barnardo's. The purpose of the report was to demonstrate the performance of Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service in regard to care leavers (18-25 years old).

Members were guided through the report and attention was drawn to the following areas – accessing and maintaining suitable, safe accommodation; accessing and maintaining appropriate Education, Employment and Training opportunities; compliments and complaints; and Lincolnshire Leaving Care Contract.

Members were provided with an 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:

- It was highlighted that the link between 'in care' and 'leaving care' was vital.
- It was noted that one young person would be attending their graduation ceremony, and clarification was sought that there would be someone who could attend with them. It was confirmed that Barnardo's officers were trying to get to events such as graduations so they could support young people.
- Officers were thanked for providing the Panel with a positive report.
- It was queried whether it would be considered to approach large employers in Lincolnshire in relation to developing opportunities for apprenticeships for care leavers.
- It was queried how supportive were district councils being and was there anything that dual hatted members could do to help. It was noted that in terms of the district council and housing, the Corporate Parenting Manager had done a lot of work with the districts and they were very supportive. Some districts had more of a turnover of care leavers and so the authority worked very well with them. There had been some individual cases which had been challenging, but the Corporate Parenting Manager had raised the issues with the district and the issues had been sorted out. It was noted that there had been a really good response in relation to the individual cases.
- It was noted that the report only covered up to the end of March 2020 and the impact of Covid-19 would be included in the report for the following year.

- In response to a question about private renting, it was noted that this was an option for care leavers, and officers would look through the tenancy agreement with the young person and offer support.
- In terms of Covid-19, it was noted that Barnardo's had been successful in getting an additional £13,000 of funding to help care leavers deal with social isolation. This had been used to provide data bundles, mobile phones and laptops so they could access social media. It was also noted that staff had had much more regular contact with care leavers than the statutory requirement. There was also management oversight through Mosaic. Members commented that this was positive news and were pleased that care leavers were being supported in this way.
- One member commented that they were pleased to see that examples of achievements and feedback had been included in the report.
- In terms of the apprenticeships, it was queried whether the scheme was limited to 10 young people, and if there was a wish to increase this number would that create a budget pressure? It was highlighted that Lincolnshire had always been supportive of apprenticeships. It was noted that if there were individual cases where it was thought they would benefit from an apprenticeship and it would go over the 10 places, then the local authority would be approached. The Panel was advised that there was sufficient funding for up to 10 care leavers to engage in apprenticeships, and that number tended to not be reached. However, officers would be happy to approach the departmental leadership team to increase funding if there was a need.

RESOLVED

That the Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service Annual Report and performance of the Leaving Care Service be noted.

9 VOICES FOR CHOICES (V4C) UPDATE REPORT

The Panel received a report which provided a summary and overview of activities with regard to V4C between January and June 2020. This was a longer period of time than the agreed quarterly timescale due to February's report to the Corporate Parenting Panel focusing on updates regarding the Big Conversation and the Tell Us Survey, and the previous Corporate Parenting Panel being refocused due to matters related to the Covid-19 infection.

The report provided an update of V4C activities early in 2020 in January and February, which had not been previously reported and provided information on V4C activities over the more recent months within the context of significant disruptions and changes to working practices as a result of the Covid-19 infection, meaning in line with many other activities, V4C meetings had been taking place virtually and remotely.

It was reported that the meetings had been taking place using Zoom and some sessions had been held with Soundlinks. A 12 week programme had commenced

which covered several different musical activities for the group. It was hoped that the Zoom meetings would continue after the move back to physical meetings.

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:

- Members were pleased to see that the lockdown had not stopped activities and that officers were finding new ways to engage with the young people.
- There were concerns that some people found virtual meetings quite difficult, and it was queried what was being done to help and encourage those young people to join virtual meetings. Developing the confidence of young people using platforms such as Zoom was acknowledged as important. One of the youth workers was supporting young people in this by encouraging them to meet in smaller groups to build confidence.
- It was suggested that in the future, virtual meetings in between the physical meeting could provide a drop-in approach. It was confirmed that it was hoped that a hybrid model would be adopted in future, as it gave more opportunity to reach more children and young people.
- In order to participate in virtual meetings, there was a need to have the right technology and it was queried whether the authority was able to give support to those young people who may not have access to the technology to enable them to engage. It was noted that some young people had been using their parent's phones when they did not have their own. There was an aim to address any issues where people did not have access to technology.
- It was queried whether those young people that had not participated in any V4C events were contacted. The Panel was advised that when a young person had been due to attend an event but had not participated, they would be contacted to determine why they had not attended. This was often due to a last minute problem or travel and transport issues.
- In terms of the activities which were suggested for V4C events (when physical activities were taking place), it was queried whether they were chosen in conjunction with the young people. It was confirmed that this was done where possible, but sometimes the suggestions may be led by the youth workers, but the children and young people would choose where they were held. It was noted that when the activity and venue was correct, attendance was increased.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

10 LEGAL SERVICES LINCOLNSHIRE END OF YEAR REPORT 2019/20 (APRIL 2019 TO MARCH 2020)

The Panel received a report which provided an opportunity to consider the Legal Services Lincolnshire End of Year Report 2019/20 (April 2019 – March 2020). It was noted that within this reporting period, an increase in the number of Care Proceedings issued had been seen. It was also noted that the use of Placement

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Orders had dropped, and there had also been a slight decrease in the number of care proceedings concluded.

Since the Covid-19 pandemic was declared in March 2020, the Assistant Director for Children's services and the Principal Lawyer had continued to meet with the designated family judge. There had been a considerable amount of work carried out to maintain the progression of cases through the court system.

Officers were thanked for a thorough report.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

11 **INDEPENDENT REVIEWING SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20**

Consideration was given to a report which introduced the Annual Report on the Independent Reviewing Service. It was highlighted that this was a statutory requirement which served to update the Corporate Parenting Panel on the services to Children in Care in Lincolnshire.

Members were guided through the report and provided with an 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:

- It was noted that there had been issues around engagement with parents and it was queried what could be done to encourage parents to become more involved in the process. It was noted that there had been a move to using a combination of Zoom and Teams Meetings. It was also noted that families were contacted prior to the conference to ensure they were aware of how the meeting would be run.
- The mental health of young people had been identified as a key area, and suggestions had been made that it may be 10 years before the effects of lockdown on mental health were realised. It was noted that part of the challenge of the IRO was to ensure that services were in place for children and their families.
- It was noted that in terms of the number of reviews, every child got at least one review every year.
- There had been contact with children and young people throughout this process, and there had been some positives with the move towards virtual meetings, with some young people more keen to participate through this media. There would be a review at the end of the Covid-19 pandemic of how this worked for young people and if it could be continued.
- It was noted that this new process did not make LAC reviews quicker. However, it meant that case loads were being managed during the current situation.
- It was reported that the staff were dedicated to the work that they did and had been a consistent face for the children for many years. Staff morale was very positive at the moment.

- It was commented that from experience, whether it was a review conference or court date, it was better if the details could be shared with the child or young person as the earliest possible opportunity.
- In terms of mental health, it was reported that the authority had been invited to participate in a longitudinal study with Bristol University. This research would enable a benchmark to be set, officers would be able to provide updates to the Panel as the research progressed.

RESOLVED

That the Annual Report of the Independent Reviewing Service be noted.

12 REGULATION 44 INDEPENDENT VISITING SERVICE - ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20

Consideration was given to a report which provided an update on the work of the Independent Visitor.

It was reported that Part six, regulation 43 of the Children's Home Regulation 2015 made provision for the appointment of an independent visitor. There remained an expectation that the appointment of an Independent Visitor would continue to be the responsibility of the local authority, with clear guidance being offered as to the criteria which needed to be met in terms of ensuring the visitor's independence was clearly demonstrable. The visits continued to be required to be made on a monthly basis.

It was reported that the roll out of signs of safety was working very well and had been embedded in working practices. The countywide training was due to be rescheduled due to Covid-19 and would pick up on all the positive practices. It was noted that the homes had been very good at promoting communication between the staff and the children.

Albion Street and The Beacon had been very successful at recruiting new staff members. All homes were able to evidence multi-agency partnership working. The reports from Visitors indicated that homes were responding very positively to the current situation.

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 during discussion included the following:

- It was commented that it was difficult to get a sense of the physical layout of the home virtually. It was queried how the voice of the child was being heard. It was noted that the Independent Visitors still went through the same process in terms of documents that needed to be seen, and they would still also need to observe some sessions and speak to staff and managers as well as some of the young people.
- One member commented that they used to visit Northolme as the visiting member, and it had been noted that the rating had dropped from 'good' to 'requires improvement' and it was queried what the reason for this was. It was noted that this was due to a specific issue which had been picked up by

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Ofsted. It was also highlighted that the home had changed to become more therapeutic.

- It was queried that as the country was now starting to come out of lockdown, visits were starting to be allowed to care homes again, and it was queried when visiting member duties might be resumed. It was noted that work was underway to reinstate family time, and that there was a need to minimise risk to the children. Therefore, the homes were encouraging family time to take place outside and to ensure that social distancing was followed.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

13 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 greatest benefit.

It was noted that an update on the research by Bristol University could be brought to the meeting of the Panel in November 2020.

It was highlighted that the next meetings would take place on 17 September 2020 and 19 November 2020.

RESOLVED

That the work programme be received.

The meeting closed at 12.12 pm