

**CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL  
31 JANUARY 2014**

**PRESENT: COUNCILLOR D BRAILSFORD (CHAIRMAN)**

Councillors A G Hagues, J D Hough (Vice-Chairman), J R Hicks and P J O'Connor.

External Members: Jean Burbidge (Lincolnshire Community Health Services) and Mrs Polly Coombes (Foster Carer).

Officer/invited guests in attendance: Karen Bailey (Looked After Children's Education Services Manager), Theresa Buhryn (Performance Development and Reviewing Manager), Dave Clarke (Secure Unit Principal), Katrina Cope (Team Leader Democratic and Civic Services), Sheridan Dodsworth (Head of Service Children with Disabilities), Linda Graham (Commissioning Officer Children's Services), John Harris (Joint Head of Regulated Services), Caroline Jackson (Performance Information & Data Manager), Tracy Johnson (Scrutiny Officer), Tara Jones (Joint Head of Regulated Services), Andrew McLean (Head of Service – Children's Commissioning) and Janice Spencer (Assistant Director Children's Services).

**39. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R J Hunter-Clarke and L Wootten.

An apology for absence was also received from Councillor Mrs P A Bradwell (Executive Councillor Adult Care and Health Services, Children's Services).

Mrs Marilyn Graham-Williams (Foster Carer), Mr Ted Normandale (National Youth Advocacy Service) and Samantha Edwards (Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust) also submitted their apologies for absence.

The following officers also submitted their apologies: Clive Chambers (Assistant Director Children's Services, Barnardo's Midlands Region), Jan Gunter (Consultant Nurse, Safeguarding – NHS Lincolnshire), Colin Hopkirk (Participation Officer) and Kerry Mitchell (Leaving Care Manager, Barnardo's).

**40. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

No declarations of members' interests were made at this stage of proceedings. However, it was noted that Clive Chambers (Assistant Director Children's Services, Barnardo's Midlands Region) and Kerry Mitchell (Leaving Care Manager, Barnardo's) had not attended the meeting due their interest in Agenda Item 8 - Care Leavers' Tendering of Service Contract.

41. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 5 DECEMBER 2013

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 5 December 2013 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

42. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN STRATEGY 2013 - 2016

Pursuant to minute number 35(2) from the meeting held on 5 December 2013. The Panel gave consideration to a revised version of the Looked After Children Strategy for 2013 - 2016.

A copy of the latest version of the Strategy was detailed at Appendix A to the report presented.

The Joint Head of Regulated Services confirmed that the issues raised at the 5 December 2013 meeting had been incorporated within the Strategy.

During consideration of the Strategy, the Panel raised the following issues:-

- Page 3 – The first sentence to paragraph three should refer to all elected members and not just the Corporate Parenting Panel;
- Page 5 – The second paragraph required clarity in relation to the number of young people and the reasons for the distinction;
- Page 9 – Second paragraph from the bottom, it was felt that this was too general and needed to be more specific, for example, officers advised that one nurse had been appointed. It was felt that the text needed to reflect what action was then going to be taken with regard to the second nurse;
- Page 12 – "What are we going to do next" section at the bottom of the page, needed to state specific target dates;
- Page 14 – That clarity was needed with regard to the fifth paragraph. Members were advised that the statement was saying that 97.5% of children attended school 85% of the time; and
- Page 15 – That the second sentence of paragraph seven needed to be a new paragraph.

Members were reassured that as part of the consultation process, young people had been consulted during the formation of the Strategy.

In conclusion, the Panel felt that the Strategy brought all the actions relating to Looked After Children together into one document and was therefore a step forward in the right direction.

The Chairman on behalf of the Panel extended thanks to officers for all their hard work.

## RESOLVED

That approval be given to the Looked After Children Strategy 2013 – 2016 as detailed at Appendix A to the report, subject to the inclusion of amendments as detailed above.

### 43. LINCOLNSHIRE'S ADOPTION DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENT

A report from the Executive Director of Children's Services was considered, which provided the Panel with an update relating to Lincolnshire's adoption diagnostic assessment.

It was reported that in February 2013, Lincolnshire had received an unanticipated adoption reform grant to assist in the implementation of the Government's Action Plan for Adoption and Reform. As a result, Outcomes UK had been commissioned to undertake an adoption diagnostic assessment of the adoption service.

Detailed at Appendix A to the report was a copy of a letter from Outcomes UK, which set out the lines of enquiry, and a summary of the recommendations based upon Outcomes UK findings.

The Joint Head of Regulated Services introduced the Outcomes UK response document to the Panel and highlighted that the findings had identified that the customer experience of prospective adopters could be better. It was reported that the Departmental Management Team had agreed to put measures in place to strengthen family findings. Another area that had been identified was that more joined up training was required for those involved in the adoption process. The Panel noted that workshops had already been planned and that staff were very enthusiastic of the joined up training. A further area highlighted was that there was a need to have an easily understood, visual tracking tool of the child's journey.

In conclusion, the Joint Head of Regulated Services advised that the adoption service had found it very helpful to have the assessment and have an independent view, before the forthcoming Ofsted inspection.

During discussion, the Panel raised the following issues:-

- The need to ensure that the initial contact point was a positive experience, as this could present a negative signal. The Panel was reassured that steps were being put in place to ensure a lot more positive experience. A pilot had been agreed to take Frontline Advisors back in-house so that the first point of contact could be managed better;
- Promoting a multi-agency culture, a suggestion was made whether all agencies working in the same building might help to alleviate any problems. The Panel was advised that Band Six Clinicians were to be co-located with Adoption Social Workers. It was noted that as things moved forward with the

Lincolnshire Sustainable Services Review there would be more opportunities for services to merge together;

- A question was raised as to whether a strategy was required to take forward and strengthen a child's journey. The Panel noted that at the moment there was not the ability to pull off the data required on the current ICS system, but, an impending new IT system (Mosaic) would enable that to happen in the future. It was hoped that the new system would be implemented in approximately one year's time. However, currently, the moment, a child's journey was maintained by Business Support, and this provided rich data. Case notes from social workers also reflected the journey; it was just recording the information onto ICS that was the issue. It was highlighted that progress was continually monitored through quality audits;
- N161 placement of children within 12 months of best interest performance had dipped from 90% to 81%. The Panel was advised that information sharing meetings had started, and if social workers were unable to attend an information sharing meeting, they would be able to visit, or skype the adopters before the placement. It was highlighted that the transfer policy and the adoption placement had been revised to define the social workers role and to make sure that everyone was aware of their responsibilities; and
- Checking of what's happening on the ground – It was highlighted that work was going on around the county with regard to FAST teams with the new 26 week deadline for the child's journey. It was very important to get consent forms signed to release medical information whilst workers were still engaged with the mother.

The Chairman extended his thanks for the in depth report.

## RESOLVED

That the report presented be endorsed and accepted.

### 44 LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN PLACEMENT SUFFICIENCY STRATEGY 2013 - 2016

Pursuant to minute number 36 from the meeting held on 5 December 2013, consideration was given to a report from the Executive Director of Children's Services, which provided the Panel with a revised Looked After Children Placement Sufficiency Strategy 2013 – 2106, which included planned timescales for the delivery of the Commissioning objectives.

The Strategy took into consideration the substantial funding pressures the Local Authority would face in the immediate future; and the future comprehensive spending review, and outlined plans to ensure that the Council was able to effectively manage placements through enabling a sufficient market place.

In guiding the Panel through the report, it was highlighted that it was crucial to understand the make-up of Lincolnshire's LAC population and being able to forecast trends and identify the right placement, in the right place at the right time. The Panel was advised that currently there were approximately 599 children and young people

who were Looked After by the Local Authority. Full details of the Needs Data Analysis were shown on pages seven to ten of Appendix A - to the report presented.

It was highlighted that based on the latest 2012 Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Benchmarking Club, Lincolnshire had one of the lowest unit costs of a LAC - with the highest composition of placements being made through in-house foster care provision. Through a positioning-based approach, the Authority had looked to achieve a strategic fit to develop an Ofsted rating of 'Outstanding' for the in-house foster care. Investment and support to carers had enabled the Authority to meet the needs and outcomes for the majority of its LAC population (71%).

In-house foster care, together with robust in-house residential care home provision, and effective commissioning of independent sector placements, combined had been instrumental in Lincolnshire having one of the lowest overall costs of a LAC. Coupled with effective outcomes performance, this had provided good value for money for the services provided.

Full details of the associated costs relating to LAC were detailed at the top of page 14 of the Appendix presented.

Discussion ensued, from which the following issues were raised:-

- The cost of out of county placements. The Panel was advised that the costs for 86 placements in 2005/6 were £6.8m and they were now £2.5m for 28 placements. It was highlighted that these placements mainly represented the more complex young people which attracted a higher cost;
- Concern was expressed at the number of carers in their 60's. The Panel was reassured that Lincolnshire was very lucky to have a range of foster carers who had remained committed to the service for many years. The recruitment process was trying to recruit carers of all ages. It was highlighted that some foster carers only came forward later in their life when their own children had grown up. It was an ever changing situation which would be kept under review;
- The Panel received an explanation as to the definition of commissioning. The Panel noted that it was not about outsourcing particular service(s), but was about finding the best means of delivering the service(s). This involved reviewing current practices and performance, and looking at best value for money. Part of the commissioning review was to bring things together, look at all the options and look for the best value for money; and
- It was reported that Independent Sector providers had not previously had an aggressive approach to recruiting Lincolnshire carers; however this was now happening along with neighbouring authorities taking on Lincolnshire carers too. It was highlighted that one authority had been offering a very competitive salary to encourage carers to apply.

In conclusion, it was noted that the aims and objectives had been reviewed and updated with proposed timescales to begin the review work involved. Members were

asked to accept the updates to the Looked After Children Placement Sufficiency Strategy.

RESOLVED

That the updates to the Looked After Children Placement Sufficiency Strategy as presented be accepted.

45. FOSTERING REPORT QUARTER 2

The report presented to the Panel outlined the activity in the fostering service during Quarter Two and was presented in line with regulatory requirements.

Appended to the report at Appendix A was a Quarter Two Fostering Report – 2013/14, which had been presented to Departmental Management Team. Detailed at Appendix B was an addendum to the Quarter 2 Fostering report, which provided information concerning the Department for Education's recruitment project.

The Assistant Director of Children's Services wished it to be noted that the success of the Lincolnshire's adoption service was down to the hard work and dedication of the carers and staff working together to do their best for Looked After Children in Lincolnshire. More challenges were ahead with 599 Looked After Children, as the resources to deal with the increased numbers of young people remained the same.

The Chairman endorsed the Assistant Director of Children's Services comments on behalf of the Panel.

During consideration of the report, the following points were raised:

- That older children seven years plus were more of a challenge to place and that there had to be some creativity with short term placings; and
- Some concerns were expressed as to whether foster carers were thanked enough. Members were advised that foster carers were thanked, but more could be done. The foster carer present at the meeting advised that she was fully supported; and at times of crisis had been very well supported. Foster carers were made to feel valued. One member raised a concern that from having had experience of sitting on a Fostering Panel, whereby an applicant had been approved and then at the six month review it was evident that they had experienced a lot of pressure. Officers reassured the Panel that carers were fully supported.

RESOLVED

That the report presented be approved.

46. CARE LEAVERS' TENDERING OF SERVICE CONTRACT

The Panel received a presentation from the Commissioning Officer, which provided information as to the work that had been completed so far on the Leaving Care

Commissioning Review and the next steps. It was reported that there was a continued requirement for providing a Leaving Care Service. The Council had a statutory responsibility, as well as a duty as corporate parents. The presentation covered the following issues:

- Young people's concerns on leaving care – A list containing the views of young people were shared with the Panel. These included being on your own; not being able to cope; not being able to get help when you need it; leaving before you are ready; having nowhere to live and not being settled anywhere and having to keep moving around;
- The current leaving care contract – It was noted that this had been contracted out to Barnardo's since 2007 and was due to expire on 31/03/2015 and could not be extended further;
- Timeline for service re-provision – Full details of the timeline were presented. It was reported that the needs analysis had been undertaken and the results had been presented to Departmental Management Team on 28 January 2014. The matter would then be considered by the Contract Assurance Board on 3 February 2014, and then to Scrutiny in March 2014, with the decision being taken by the Executive on 1 April 2014, following which the tender process would commence;
- Needs Analysis – The Panel noted what had been taken into consideration during this process i.e. Stakeholder engagement, financial analysis, market analysis and benchmarking;
- Stakeholder engagement – It was highlighted that extensive work had been done with stakeholders and that further work would continue to develop the required service specification. Panel members were invited to participate at the service specification stage. It was agreed that the Scrutiny Officer would also email members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee inviting them to participate as well;
- Emerging Themes – Seven emerging themes were listed for members to consider;
- Statutory requirements – It was reported that the statutory requirements were contained within the Children's Act Guidance & Regulations (Volume 3);
- Current service – It was highlighted that the current service provided support for over 300 care leavers by 17.9 FTE leaving care workers. It was reported that workers were based in Lincoln, Sleaford and Louth, with use of LCC hot desks in Horncastle and Skegness. It was reported further that the workers also shared an office with Locate in Peterborough to service the needs of a number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers who resided in that area. There was also two Education, Employment and Training (EET) workers, a dedicated Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service worker funded through the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and an Accommodation worker; and
- Performance monitoring – It was noted that monthly contract management meetings would be held to monitor a range of KPIs, but the main areas would be Care Leavers in EET; Care leavers in Suitable Accommodation and Pathway Plans reviewed in timescales.

During discussion the following points were raised:

- How many organisations would put forward tenders - Members were advised that, from research so far, there were only five known providers of leaving care services nationally, but other providers who worked with complex young people, such as supported accommodation providers, might also bid for the contract;
- Questions were asked as to how long the proposed contract would be. Officers advised that the Council was looking for three years +1 +1; and
- Bench marking – Members were advised that there was limited benchmarking information, but Children's Services were members of the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum and CIPFA benchmarking club and were therefore able to take advantage of any information that was available.

RESOLVED

That the presentation concerning the Leaving Care Service Commissioning Review be noted.

#### 47. SMOKING CESSATION IN CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL SERVICES

Consideration was given to a report from the Executive Director of Children's Services, which provided an outline on how Residential Services were accessing relevant services to support young people residing in residential homes to either stop smoking, or provide them with information and support to prevent them from starting smoking.

It was reported that the majority of young people placed within the three medium to long term children's homes already smoked cigarettes on a regular basis on admission.

The current support in place to assist young people to stop smoking was:

- a) To refer the young person to Addaction. They would then be assigned a worker who would then come to meet the young person to discuss any smoking or drug usage;
- b) Appointments are made with a GP for referral of the young person to a local smoking cessation support group, with provision of nicotine patches and sprays;
- c) The young person would have Keyworker sessions with staff from the residential homes to help them look at strategies to assist them to reduce or stop smoking;
- d) Work was also done with the police when establishments had been identified as selling tobacco to under age young people; and



- e) That all the young people were offered the opportunity to access local gyms, swimming pools and clubs to support their general health and wellbeing.

The current situation within the three children's homes was that at 33 Northolme, 3 young people regularly smoked, one occasionally smoked and one was a non-smoker. At 91 Eastgate, two young people regularly smoked and two were non-smokers, and at 67 Albion Street, one young person regularly smoked and five were non-smokers.

The Panel was advised that there were no designated smoking areas at any of the three homes and that all the measures described were ongoing.

#### RESOLVED

That the report presented be accepted.

#### 48. PERFORMANCE REPORT ON THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROGRESS OF LINCOLNSHIRE LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

Consideration was given to a report which set out performance information relating to the academic achievements and progress of Lincolnshire Looked After Children (LAC) during the academic year September 2012 to August 2013.

Appendix A to the report was a copy of the performance report for the Panel's consideration.

Overall, the educational performance for Looked After Children in Lincolnshire at the end of statutory education in 2013 was improving but continued to require focus.

The headline figure for 5A\*-C including English and Maths was an excellent achievement for the young people concerned and it was just below the national average. It was highlighted that the emerging trend was that over the last few years evidence suggested that work with LAC and LACES was showing some benefits but that there was still some work to do to close the gap.

The Panel was advised that the priority actions identified for LACES included:

- Greater support for KS1 to achieve level 2 in their teacher assessment;
- Ensure that there was early individual target settings and support for those young people new into care;
- Maximise those students capable of achieving GCSEs at the end of year 11;
- Reduce the number of secondary school moves;
- That all schools were challenged to focus the use of the pupil premium for maximum educational benefit of the young person; and
- To increase the potential number of young people who can access GCSE exams.

Key Stage summary information was detailed on page four of the Appendix.

The trend for Lincolnshire for 5+ GCSE's was shown on page 13 of the Appendix, and this depicted Lincolnshire's trend over time compared to the national average.

During discussion, the following points were raised:

- The procedure followed if a child was expelled;
- Home tuition, with particular reference being made as to whether enough was being invested to ensure that our young people were moving forward. The Panel was advised that the service was on target to spend the budget; and
- Use of pupil premium by schools – It was highlighted that the pupil premium was there to help the young person and provide them with extra help and advice. It was highlighted that the Council was unable to advise the school how to spend the money; however, the schools were required to publish a report identifying how they had spent the money.

RESOLVED

That the performance report presented be noted.

49. PERFORMANCE INFORMATION RELATING TO LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS

The Panel received a presentation from the Performance Information and Data Manager, which provided information on how the Corporate Parenting Panel performance reports were constructed and how these could be interpreted.

The presentation covered the following issues:-

- The Planning Process in Children's Services;
- Provided a sample of how a Corporate Parenting Panel Performance report would look and an explanation was given as to its content;
- Advised how targets were set;
- How information was compared to statistical neighbours; and
- The Corporate Parenting Panel's measures. It was reported that there 19 measures that would be presented to the Panel, two of which were in the Corporate Business Plan.

It was highlighted that the Panel would be receiving a performance report at the March meeting.

RESOLVED

That the presentation be noted.

50. CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL WORK PROGRAMME 2014

The Scrutiny Officer introduced this item and advised the Panel that there was now an improved format for the Corporate Parenting Work Programme, a copy of which was detailed at Appendix A to the report.

In relation to the OfSTED residential services report, it was noted that Strut House and the Secure Unit had recently been visited by OfSTED and both had received Outstanding judgements.

RESOLVED

That the work programme presented be approved.

The meeting closed at 1.15.pm