

**CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL
 12 MARCH 2015**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR D BRAILSFORD (CHAIRMAN)

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

Added Members: Jean Burbidge, (Lincolnshire Community Health Services), Samantha Edwards, (Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust) and Mary-Beth Pepperdine, (V4C The Children in Care Council).

Officers/invited guests in attendance: Kieran Barnes, (Virtual Head of Looked After Children), Theresa Buhryn, (Performance Development and Reviewing Manager), Dave Clarke, (Secure Unit Principal), Annie Fletcher, (Children's Services Manager, Barnardos), Judith Gilbert, (Democratic Services Officer), Jan Gunter (Designated Nurse for Looked After Children, South West Lincolnshire CCS), John Harris, (Children's Service Manager Regulated – North and Fostering), Laura Hyatt, (Regulation 33 Officer), Tracy Johnson, (Scrutiny Officer); Kerry Mitchell, (Leaving Care Manager – Barnardos), Ron Oliver (Assistant Director, Barnardos) and Janice Spencer (Assistant Director Children's Safeguarding).

Observing: Beverley Kitchen, Head of Safeguarding Children, South West Lincolnshire CCG.

46. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chairman invited attendees to introduce themselves.

Apologies for absence were received from Polly Coombes, (Foster Carer), Sheridan Dodsworth, (Children's Service Manager – SEND), Colin Hopkirk, (Participation Officer), Tara Jones, (Children's Service Manager Regulated – South and Adoption) and Ted Normandale, (National Youth Advocacy Services).

47. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

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

48. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 11 DECEMBER 2014

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on the 11 December 2014 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to the following amendments:

- (a) Page 4 (Item 35) to read – "*the audit had demonstrated that there were unacceptable numbers of health assessments completed to less than the required standard*"
- (b) Page 5 (Item 35) to read – "Each Local Authority retains responsibility for the young people they place within Lincolnshire".

49. OUTCOMES FROM THE OFSTED INSPECTION

Consideration was given to a report by Janice Spencer, Assistant Director Children's Safeguarding, together with an Action Plan for improvements identified from the Ofsted Inspection at Appendix A.

It was explained that, following a recent Ofsted Inspection in Children's Services, Lincolnshire County Council had been graded as "good" in the following areas:

- Children who needed help and protection;
- Children looked after and achieving permanence; and
- Leadership, management and governance.

The Panel was informed that the adoption performance had been graded as "outstanding".

It was noted that Lincolnshire had achieved second position out of the 43 local authorities who had received a recent Ofsted Inspection in Children's Services and the Panel offered their congratulations to all the staff in Children's Services for their commitment and hard work on achieving such good results.

It was reported that the Ofsted Inspectors appreciated the help and support given to them by elected members and felt that their contribution had been valuable. It was noted that there had been no "unallocated cases" of children who needed child protection in the County.

During discussion, the following points were noted:

- The penultimate Ofsted Inspection had focussed mainly on the processes undertaken by Children's Services whereas the latest inspection undertaken was much more robust and in depth;
- Local authorities would continue to receive independent inspections until 2017 as Ofsted had currently abandoned plans for multi-agency inspections due to the challenges of inspecting Health, Probation, Police and Children's Services all at the same time;
- The inspection framework would continue in its current format;
- Ofsted was committed to improving standards in Children's Services throughout the Country and it was reported that the grades Local Authorities received had decreased since their last inspection;
- Children's Services in Lincolnshire felt that early intervention in a vulnerable child's life was paramount;
- Children's Services Officers challenged Ofsted Inspectors if they felt their judgement to be unjust;

- It was confirmed that Members did not have access to case files on their visits to children's homes;
- It was confirmed that the Chairman would be attending a Safeguarding Assurance Day on the 17 April 2015 and Councillor Mrs P A Bradwell would be attending on the 18 March 2015;
- Bed and Breakfast accommodation would only be used in exceptional circumstances;
- Social Workers were receiving training to raise awareness on the importance of maintaining Personal Educational Plans;
- It was queried why there were no timescales in the Action Plan. It was noted that this was a draft version and there was now a version with the timescales included. The Assistant Director Children's Safeguarding agreed to send the updated version to the Corporate Parenting Panel;
- It was confirmed that a non-operational practice supervisor would be appointed on the 1 April 2015 who would be leading on the Task and Finish Group looking at identifying key priorities for improving the quality and timeliness of all assessments, care plans and placement planning for Looked After Children. The Panel requested a copy of the report once it had been completed;
- 8 young people were currently in police custody out of 320 and some young people were already in custody when they came into Local Authority Care. When young people had been in custody for over 13 weeks they were referred to the Leaving Care Service; and
- It was queried whether there was any work being done to look at as to why those Looked After Children ended up in custody to see if there were any lessons to be learned. The Assistant Director Children's Safeguarding agreed to work with Barnardo's post April 2015 to complete a piece of work on this.

RESOLVED

1. That the report be noted;
 2. That an updated version of Appendix A, showing timescales, be circulated to the Panel;
 3. That the report from the Children's Services Task and Finish Group looking at identifying key priorities for improving the quality and timeliness of all assessments, care plans and placement planning for Looked After Children be brought back to the Panel; and
 4. That Children's Services work with Barnardo's to investigate the reasons why Looked After Children ended up in custody and identify any lessons that could be learned.
50. LINCOLNSHIRE LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN – QUALITY AUDIT – REVIEW OF THE STATUTORY HEALTH ASSESSMENTS FOR 2012/2013 AND 2013/2014 AND HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE EXTRACT FROM MINUTES HELD ON THE 14 JANUARY 2015

Consideration was given to a report presented by Jan Gunter, Designated Consultant Nurse Safeguarding and Looked After Children and Jean Burbidge, Named Nurse Vulnerable Children and Young People's Team. The report focused on the improvements which had been made since the Clinical Commissioning

Group's last report in November 2013 which had identified that the quality of Looked After Children's statutory health assessments had been variable and inconsistent. It was noted that a positive letter had been received by the Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Panel from the Chairman of the Health Scrutiny Committee observing the improvements made.

The following points were noted:

- A pilot needed to be undertaken to understand how many Looked After Children had acknowledged health conditions and what these conditions were;
- There had been increased staffing investment in the Children and Young People's Team;
- Quality of information received by the Health Review Association was improving;
- A summary of each child's individual health history would be available for each Looked After Child;
- Dentists must complete information accurately for health assessments for Looked After Children which they had carried out otherwise the information would be returned to them;
- Registered professionals currently carry out health checks for Looked After Children, although this may change in the future;
- It was felt important that a child was ready to receive their health assessment before this was being undertaken;
- Lack of an initial health assessment for Looked After Children should not delay any medical care a child may require;
- Foster Carers must register Looked After Children with their Doctor as soon as possible in order that health assessments were not delayed;
- Following a query, it was agreed to find out how many Looked After Children had Chromosome Disorder. It was confirmed that the growth hormone administered for Chromosome Disorder had been genetically manufactured and was completely safe for use;
- Children could refuse consent to give a urine sample to detect drugs in their system;
- Doctors needed to complete the records of Looked After Children accurately in order to receive payment for health assessments undertaken;
- Every child received a "Red Book" from birth and every Looked After Child received a "Blue Book" as well. Foster Carers were given training on how to maintain the books; and
- Work was being undertaken in order to improve the BAAF form for Looked After Children in Lincolnshire.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

51. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN – ANNUAL REPORT FOR HEALTH 2013/2014

Jan Gunter, Designated Nurse for Looked After Children, introduced the Looked After Children – Annual Report for Health 2013/2014. The report related to the period 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014 with regard to health service provision and health outcomes for children looked after by Children's Services and those children who resided in Lincolnshire which had been placed in the County by neighbouring authorities. It was noted that the report received did not provide an overview of services and outcomes for Looked After Children in Lincolnshire as some data was collected and reported on by Children's Services. It was noted that it was essential that Children's Services and the National Health Service (NHS) worked together.

The Panel was informed that the funding was divided between each child regardless of which Clinical Commissioning Group the child resided in the County.

It was noted that for 2014/2015 the Annual Report for Health would be integrated with the Children's Services Annual Report for Looked After Children.

RESOLVED

That the Action Plan be presented to the next Corporate Parenting Panel detailing progress against the recommendations outlined in the Annual Report.

52. CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL – PERFORMANCE REPORT – EXCEPTIONS ONLY – QUARTER 3 – 2014/2015

John Harris, Children's Services Manager Regulated - (North and Fostering), presented the Performance Report for Quarter 3.

It was noted that in relation to the performance indicator for fostering/adoption of Looked After Children aged between 10 and 16 the figure for this quarter remained 1% below the target figure. This quarter had seen a further increase in the number of looked after children 25% of whom had been aged 15 years plus. Although fostering remained the placement of choice for all children, suitable placements were not always available for all children. There had been an increase of three children placed in external residential placements. It was noted that 38 older children had been subject to care orders and still lived at home although the children and parents continued to be monitored carefully by Children's Services.

It was reported that there was an increase in the complex behavioural issues which young people now presented with and foster carers needed support to be able to deal with those issues. It was observed that although a good support network had been established between foster carers, this still needed to be strengthened further as it was found that some foster carers were ceasing to foster after 500 days of providing care. The service had commissioned an independent review of this cohort in order to better understand why seemingly stable placements had been disrupted and consideration should be given to what additional support Foster Carers needed to improve placement stability.

It was noted that every looked after child had been registered with a dentist and good oral care should be promoted with each child.

The Panel was informed that Barbara Simpson, Consultant, was doing a piece of work on why foster placements were going wrong after 500 days. It was agreed that the report arising from this work on placement stability would be brought to the Panel in September 2015.

RESOLVED

1. That the report be noted; and
2. That the report arising from the placement stability review be presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel in September 2015.

53. V4C THE LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN COUNCIL QUARTERLY MINUTES OF THE V4C EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON THE 20 JANUARY 2015

Consideration was given to the V4C Quarterly Minutes of the 20 January 2015. It was reported that the FAB Awards held had been a tremendous success and a very enjoyable event. Foster carers, with over 15 years' service, had received recognition at the event. It was observed that the birth children of foster carers should not be ignored and they should be encouraged to enjoy the event also. It was agreed that all members of the Corporate Parenting Panel should be invited to future FAB Awards.

The Care Pledge for Looked After Children was shortly to be relooked at to ensure that all their needs were being met by Children's Services. It was noted that a residential weekend had been held during February 2015 and work had been undertaken in preparing the young people in interview skills.

The Panel was informed that Mary-Beth Pepperdine had purchased her first home and the Panel offered their congratulations and best wishes to her.

RESOLVED

1. That the report be noted; and
2. That all members of the Corporate Parenting Panel should be invited to attend future FAB Award ceremonies.

54. VISITING MEMBERS' LOG OF QUARTERLY VISITS TO CHILDREN'S HOMES – APRIL 2014 – MARCH 2015

Consideration was given to the Visiting Members' log of visits to Children's Homes between April 2014 and March 2015. It was noted that all visits scheduled had been completed. The Panel expressed concern that, once again, visits had been completed but as the reports had not been received the visits had not been recorded onto the log of visits. It was confirmed that Dave Clarke, Secure Unit Principal, would inform Tracy Johnson, Scrutiny Officer, after the completion of Members' visits. The Chairman offered to contact Members in future who had not completed reports of their visits to the Children's Homes.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

55. COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS RECEIVED FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

Janice Spencer, Assistant Director Children's Safeguarding introduced the Compliments, Comments and Complaints report received regarding Looked After Children for the period 1 April to 30 September 2014.

It was noted that in the above period there had been six complaints from children in care which had all been resolved although two of the complaints were related. No compliments or comments had been received from children in care for this period. It was known that social workers did receive many verbal compliments from children in care which went unrecorded. The Panel was informed that there were many ways in which children in care could make a complaint, namely:

- Through statutory reviews;
- Reg 33 visits;
- Residential meetings;
- Through their Social Worker;
- NYAS; and
- Voices for Children.

It was noted that a complaints leaflet was currently issued to every child in care but the V4C had concerns over how accessible this was to young people. The V4C was now looking into putting the information onto the Coming into Care App which was currently being developed. The Panel noted that an E Safety Training Officer made regular visits to schools in Lincolnshire and had attended last year's Lincolnshire Show.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

56. BARNARDO'S LEAVING CARE SERVICES REPORT

The Panel was informed that Kerry Mitchell, Leaving Care Manager – Barnardo's, would be leaving Barnardo's shortly to pursue a career in London. The Panel offered their thanks to Kerry for all her support and commitment over the years and wished her well for the future.

It was noted that Barnardo's had been awarded the leaving care contract for a further three years and had also achieved the status of "good" from the recent Ofsted Inspection.

It was reported that Barnardo's was currently working with District Councils in Lincolnshire with the aim of achieving a Lincolnshire Homeless Strategy. It was

noted that pregnant care leavers were to be supported by a Parenting Worker who would be attending Teenage Pregnancy Meetings.

The Panel was informed that professionals from the Family Nurse Partnership had been working for the last nine months in Boston to strengthen the family coverage which the town currently received from Children's Services. It was suggested that this service could be linked in with Barnardo's around pregnant care leavers. It was hoped that this service would be extended to further towns in the County depending on the funding bid which had been submitted to the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Following the presentation of the report, a short film was shown to the Panel, entitled "Tumezghi's Story".

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

57. FOSTERING REPORT QUARTER THREE

Consideration was given to the third quarterly report from John Harris, Children's Services Manager - Regulated – (North and Fostering).

It was noted that during Quarter 3, 224 general enquiries had been received from members of the public interested in becoming foster carers. Out of the 224 general enquiries received, 50 had contacted the service to attain further information. The Panel was informed that 23 applications for foster carers were currently being processed within the Stage 2 process, and five new fostering households had been approved by the Fostering and Permanence Panels, which had offered 9 placements to children during the Quarter 3 period. In addition to this, 3 "foster to adopt" carers had been approved which would enable young children who required an adoptive placement to be placed directly. It was also noted that 4 foster carers had de-registered. The Panel was informed that the retention of foster carers was a significant issue and it was apparent that foster carers were generally fostering for shorter periods. The number of children looked after had increased to 656 within this quarter.

The Panel was informed that the Stage 1 of the Foster Carers' process would take two months to complete and the Stage 2 Assessment Process would take six months to complete. It was confirmed that officers had an ability to prioritise urgent applications if necessary. It was noted that the main issue around retention was the retirement of long-term foster carers.

The Panel received reassurance that although Equip Expo 2014 targeted recruitment for foster carers from Church groups, officers always endeavoured to recruit the most suitable candidates as foster carers.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted and any future reports presented to the Panel must contain comparative figures from the previous year which would enable the Panel to determine trends.

58. HALF YEARLY REPORT OF THE REGULATION 33 SERVICE – SEPTEMBER 2014 – JANUARY 2015

Consideration was given to a report which was presented by Laura Hyatt, Regulation 33 Officer which provided the Panel with an overview of the functioning of the Residential Homes for young people in Lincolnshire.

Laura reported that she would be leaving the service at the end of May. She reported that she felt very proud of the work which was being undertaken in the County's children's homes which enhanced the lives of the young people in care. She felt that the staff worked tirelessly, often around the clock, to try and make a difference to children who were being looked after.

It was felt imperative that the Panel read the reports presented to them which gave an insight into some of the challenging behaviours experienced by staff in Children's Homes. It was noted that a Member had visited The Beacon at Grantham which was a home for children with disabilities and she had been left alone in the home, albeit for only a short period of time, which made her feel vulnerable. An apology was received from the Secure Unit Principal who stated that this should not have happened and the issue would be addressed with staff immediately. It was noted that staff at The Beacon had received training in behaviour management techniques which would help to prevent aggressive behaviour occurring.

It was also noted that there were currently five staff vacancies, which it was hoped would be filled within the next few weeks. Despite a big recruitment drive being undertaken, the numbers of applications received had reduced from previous advertisements undertaken.

During discussion, the following points were noted:

- It was confirmed that Managers of Children's Homes would discuss the menu with the young people as some people found the food provided to be rather bland;
- From April 2015, Taylor Shaw would be the providers of food in Children's Homes;
- Police Community Support Officers worked and supported Looked After Children in Children's Homes; and
- Staff in Children's Homes were receiving additional training and education with regard to dealing with Legal Highs.

The Panel thanked Laura for all her work over the years and wished her well for the future.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

59. INTERIM REPORT – THE VIRTUAL SCHOOL FOR LINCOLNSHIRE – LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN – JANUARY 2015

Consideration was given to a report which updated the Panel on the work being undertaken by the Virtual School in Lincolnshire. It was noted that the Virtual School had appointed a number of Educational Co-ordinators to their team. It was also observed that no one in the Virtual School team had previously taught in schools and needed to develop their awareness which would enable them to have the confidence to challenge schools in raising their expectations and standards of Looked After Children. It was explained that staff in the team were receiving training in order to increase their confidence and awareness levels.

It was reported that schools had been contacted either by letter or in person informing them of the statutory role of the Virtual School Head. It was important that Looked After Children who were underperforming in schools received the help needed in order to be able to achieve their full potential. It was also observed that schools were under-predicting attainment figures for Looked After Children in Key Stage 4, as it was in the interest of the schools to predict a lower figure of possible attainment. Absence Management for Looked After Children was reported at 93% for 2013/2014, which was a decrease of two percent school attendance from the previous year.

It was noted that there was now a much greater focus on continual professional development in schools in Lincolnshire and good progress needed to be achieved. The Virtual School's team would be producing a plan to ensure that interventions at schools were implemented.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

60. CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL WORK PROGRAMME 2015

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

RESOLVED

That the work programme be approved as set out in the report.

At this point of the meeting the Chairman thanked the officers of the Panel who were leaving for their support and wished them well for the future.

The meeting closed at 1.40 pm.