

Committee: **Cabinet**

Date: **14 June 2005**

Title of report: **Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report**

By: **Director of Children's Services**

Purpose of report: **To inform the Cabinet of the activities of the Corporate Parenting Panel in 2004/05**

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

**The Cabinet is recommended to note and endorse the contents of the report and the range of issues covered by the Panel in 2004/05**

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**1. Financial Appraisal**

1.1 There are no additional costs arising directly from this report. The costs of the Corporate Parenting Panel are contained within existing resources.

**2 Supporting information**

2.1 The Corporate Parenting Panel was established in 2000. Its membership was initially three, increasing to five in 2001, and to seven in 2003. During 2004/05, the membership comprised Councillors Mrs Leigh (Chairman), Skilton, Whetstone, Thomas, Bentley, McPherson and Webb. The Panel met quarterly.

**3 Best Value Review of Children in Public Care**

3.1 This Best Value Review reported to the Cabinet in January 2003 when the Cabinet agreed with the Review's recommendation that the Panel should monitor the implementation of the Review's 21 recommendations. During 2004/05 the Corporate Parenting Panel continued to monitor progress on the few recommendations still to be implemented fully. All have now been implemented with the exception of one recommendation relating to services for disabled children which is now being addressed by the SEN Review.

**4 Regulation 33 Reports**

4.1 At each Panel meeting, Members have considered Regulation 33 reports on all five of the Authority's residential homes for children. All of these homes are visited monthly by an off-line manager who compiles a report for consideration and necessary action by senior managers. Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel have had detailed discussions with managers about a number of issues, such as the impact of staff vacancies and sickness, need for improvements to buildings and access to education for the young residents. They have also addressed with the registered managers (who attend the Panel) periodic concerns about the quality of care and have monitored through the reports whether improvements are occurring.

4.2 Members have a rota for their own visits to the children's homes and raise issues arising from their visits at the Panel.

## **5 Inspection Reports by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI)**

5.1 The CSCI inspected each of the five residential homes for children twice during the year. Reports of these inspections and the action plans arising from them were presented to the Panel. The Panel also received the CSCI reports on the inspections of the fostering service and of the adoption service.

## **6 Other Matters**

### **6.1 Fostering**

The Panel has continued to take a particular interest in the fostering service and was pleased to receive a favourable CSCI inspection report confirming the continued improvement of the fostering service in the past year. The Panel received the fostering service's own annual report for 2004/05 and was pleased to note the significant increase in investment in the service in order to improve levels of remuneration and support and the consequent improvement in recruitment of foster carers during the year. One Panel member continues to sit on the Fostering Panel. The Panel also met with representatives of the East Sussex Foster Care Association and heard their views on the progress of the fostering service and on the very positive partnership working between the Association and the County Council. Members of the Panel attended the Association's annual general meeting and social events for foster carers to celebrate their achievements and contribution to children's lives.

### **6.2 Adoption and Permanence**

Four Panel Members continue to sit on the Adoption and Permanence Panels. The Panel has considered the adoption and permanence service's annual report for 2004/05 and was pleased to note sustained progress in the placing of children with adopters and a continuous improvement in placing children with permanent foster carers in line with the Public Services Agreement target.

### **6.1 Listening to Young People**

The Panel has considered reports on feedback from the residents of the two children's homes and the secure unit on their experience of living in residential care. The Panel also received a report on an innovative consultation exercise with the young people who have short breaks at the two respite care units, many of whom have severe communication difficulties. The Panel also met with two young people who had recently left care and heard a powerful presentation of their experiences.

### **6.2 Care Leaving Service**

The Panel has received an update on the progress made by the Care Leaving Service in 2004/05.

### **6.3 Education of Looked After Children**

The Panel has considered reports on the educational attainments of looked after children in 2004 and noted the significant improvements in GCSE results. The Panel has also been involved in drafting the strategy for the better education of children in care and several members attended the conference in June 2004 to launch the strategy. Members of the Panel attended the very successful Awards Ceremony for Looked After Children in March 2005.

### **6.4 Residential Care Strategy**

The Panel has received updates on progress in implementing the strategy.

6.5 Health of Looked After Children

The Panel has monitored progress in implementing Government Guidance on Promoting the Health of Looked After Children, receiving reports from Health managers on joint working in this area.

6.6 Children Missing From Care

The Panel received a report on joint procedures with the police to trace children who go missing and to reduce the risk of future absconding.

**7 Conclusion and Reason for Recommendation**

7.1 The Corporate Parenting Panel continues to fulfil a valuable function, enabling these Members to engage directly in the various aspects of corporate parenting.

DENISE STOKOE

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