

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

MINUTES of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 27 January 2012 at 10.00am at County Hall, Lewes

PRESENT: Councillors Stroude (Chairman), O’Keeffe, Ost, St Pierre and Waite

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Belsey, Lead Member for Children and Families

Liz Rugg, Assistant Director, Children and Families
Teresa Lavelle-Hill, Head of Looked After Children (LAC) Services
Douglas Sinclair, Head of Children's Safeguards & Quality Assurance

SC and JD, Representatives of the Children in Care Council
Nikki Brook, Children in Care Council Coordinator

Janet Fairless, RHM Brodrick House and Homefield Cottage
Anthony Julyan, Operations Manager, Children’s Disability Services
Jane Sambrook, Deputy Unit Manager, Lansdowne Secure Unit
Nicola Scott, RHM, Hazel Lodge and Rose Cottage
Helen Simmons, RHM, Sorrel Drive and Acorns

30. MINUTES

30.1 RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2011 as a correct record.

31. APOLOGIES

31.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Hughes and Councillor Pragnell.

32. INTERESTS

32.1 There were none.

33. REPORTS

33.1 Copies of the reports referred to below are included in the minute book.

34. CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL

34.1 JD and SC, as representatives of the Children in Care Council, together with their Coordinator, attended the Panel to provide an update on the work of the CiCC. They highlighted their fundraising for charity, their Action Day focussing on bullying in schools, and the contribution made in producing guidance on e-Safety, which has been circulated to children’s homes and foster parents.

34.2 The CiCC had been involved in the Children's Services Takeover Day in November 2011, where they worked with staff in the 16 Plus team in Eastbourne. The CiCC had also been active in the production of new legislation, and JD had visited the Houses of Parliament in connection with this work.

34.3 JD and SC highlighted the issue of work experience. The Panel discussed the options and developments in this area including work pairing and internships.

34.4 The Panel discussed the Pledge to Children in Care, and requested the assistance of the CiCC in revising and refreshing the Pledge.

34.5 RESOLVED to note the report and to thank the Children in Care Council for their work.

35. ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN SERVICES 1 APRIL 2010 TO 31 MARCH 2011

35.1 The Panel considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which set out the annual progress report of Looked After Children Services, with results from benchmarking exercises against other local authorities.

35.2 The Head of Looked After Children Services highlighted the rise in the number of looked after children over period reported on and the range of new legislation and guidance that had been launched. The Panel discussed the Children's Services Transformation agenda, the need to recruit more foster carers and adopters, and the positive Ofsted inspection outcomes achieved. The Head of LAC Service reported that Ofsted planned an inspection of the Adoption Service commencing on 20 February 2012.

35.3 The Assistant Director – Children and Families reported that she had assisted with the interview and recruitment of a doctor to work with the LAC Service, based at the East Sussex Healthcare Trust.

35.4 The Panel discussed the numbers of children in secure accommodation at the Lansdowne Secure Unit, and the reasons for their being secured.

35.5 The Head of LAC Service reported the large increase in contact sessions ordered by the courts, and that the Service continued to challenge the court where it was felt that contact was not in the best interests of the child. The possibility of asking the CiCC to engage with the judiciary on the subject was raised.

35.6 The Panel further discussed the need to encourage employers to take on a looked after child, the need to prepare looked after children for working life and the options available to effect this, such as Care 2 Work and internships, and the work of Anna Brookes in producing a prospectus to encourage employers to take on looked after children.

35.7 RESOLVED to note the report.

36. UPDATE FROM THE INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER SERVICE

36.1 The panel considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which set out an update from the Independent Reviewing Officer service. The Head of Children's Safeguards & Quality Assurance informed the Panel that the figure for looked after children had appeared to stabilise at about 620 for the past six months. The figure for Child Protection

Plans had however increased to over 700. He also highlighted that the new recording system that had been introduced last year was working successfully.

36.2 The Head of Children's Safeguards & Quality Assurance highlighted the new care plan regulations and Independent Reviewing Officer handbook which focus on achieving consistency for the child, and taking into account their voice.

36.3 The Panel discussed the impact of the economy and the Transformation agenda on the Service, and the integration with the Family Nurse Partnership service. The Assistant Director reported on a successful pilot in Bexhill, Good Start, in which health staff work with children's centre staff.

36.4 RESOLVED to note the report.

37. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN STATISTICS

37.1 The Panel considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which outlined changes to the Looked After Children (LAC) statistics in the last quarter.

37.2 Members' attention was drawn in particular to the rise in number of Special Guardianship Orders issued by the courts, and the use of Acorns and The Bungalow to accommodate long-term residents, as opposed to using agency placements, which has an effect on the availability of beds in those units.

37.3 The Panel discussed the figures for those in Prison Establishments and Secure Accommodation, and requested that these be reported as separate lines in future reports.

37.4 RESOLVED to note the information contained in the report.

38. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

38.1 RESOLVED to exclude the public and press from the meeting for the remaining items on the grounds that if the public and press were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as specified in category 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12(A) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), namely information relating to any individual. It is considered that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

39. OFSTED REPORTS

39.1 The Panel considered reports received from Ofsted on the following services:

- (i) The Fostering Service
- (ii) Acorns at Dorset Road
- (iii) Hazel Lodge
- (iv) The Bungalow, Sorrel Drive

39.2 RESOLVED to note the reports.

40. CHILDREN'S HOME REGULATIONS 1991, REGULATION 33: INSPECTION REPORTS

40.1 The Panel considered Regulation 33 Reports for August and September 2011 for the following children's homes:

- (i) Acorns at Dorset Road
- (ii) Brodrick House
- (iii) Hazel Lodge
- (iv) Homefield Cottage
- (v) Lansdowne Secure Unit
- (vi) Rose Cottage
- (vii) The Bungalow, Sorrel Drive

40.2 RESOLVED to note the reports.