

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

MINUTES of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 13 July 2012 at 10.00am at County Hall, Lewes

PRESENT: Councillors Hughes, O'Keeffe, Ost, Pragnell, St Pierre, Stroude 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

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

Fred Livings, Chairman, East Sussex Foster Care Association

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

1.1 Councillor Stroude was elected as Chairman.

2. MINUTES

2.1 RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 27 April 2012 as a correct record.

3. APOLOGIES

3.1 There were none.

4. INTERESTS

4.1 There were none declared.

5. REPORTS

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

6. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE EAST SUSSEX FOSTER CARE ASSOCIATION

6.1 The Panel considered a report which presented the Annual report of the East Sussex Foster Care Association. Mr Fred Livings, Chairman of the Association, reported on a successful year for the charity. In particular he highlighted the pantomime attended by 200 children in care, the Christmas party and weekends arranged at PGL. He also reported on the appointment of a new patron, Jayne Torvill. Mr Livings went on to mention that there was no

guarantee that future bids to the Children in Need fund, which this year secured £10, 000 to fund two groups of 25 children attending PGL, would be successful because of the time limited nature of that funding stream , and that the Association would have to continue to explore alternative fund-raising ideas.

6.2 Mr Livings set out the ambition of the Association to raise the professionalism and self-regard of foster carers. He reported on the success of a recent conference for carers, attended by Children's Services staff together with medical and education professionals.

6.3 The Panel discussed ways of raising the profile of fostering, fundraising, the success of the Bin the Black Sacks campaign and ideas for alternative activities in which the Association could engage carers and foster children.

6.4 Liz Rugg introduced the paper on Contact and its impact and described it as a 'work in progress' with further discussion with CSD staff planned. Mr Livings set out that the report was based on a survey of Association members and was an attempt to discover what was in the best interest of the children involved.

6.5 Teresa Lavelle-Hill provided information on the context of the report in that the volume of contact had increased eight-fold in two years. She mentioned that the Children in Care Council had met the judiciary and highlighted the issue of sibling contact, and that a meeting between LAC Services and CAFCASS had been scheduled.

6.6 The Panel discussed: the effects of contact on children in care and on fostering families; the issue of contact within the carers' homes; the need for an effective mechanism to address situations where contact is proving not to be in the best interests of the child, and the potential effects on delaying learning.

6.7 RESOLVED to welcome the report and to thank the Association for all its work.

7. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (LAC) STATISTICS

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

7.2 Members' attention was drawn in particular to the rise in the total figure, which was put down to a decline in the number of children leaving the system rather than a rise in those entering it, which was running at a level similar to the equivalent quarter last year. Liz Rugg reminded the Panel that the Service was about to enter its busiest period.

7.3 The Panel discussed the use of Residential School placements and rates of Children Missing From Care. The Panel was informed of the likely costs of a Residential School place, but that the Service did not rule the option out if it was in the best interests of the child. The Panel was also informed of the work done within the Service, and in liaison with the Police and local voluntary groups, to address absconding.

7.4 RESOLVED to note the information contained in the report.

8. OFSTED INSPECTION FRAMEWORK

8.1 Before consideration of the Ofsted reports a letter from Ofsted to all Directors of Children's Services, concerning the new inspection framework, was circulated to the Panel. A copy of the letter is contained in the minute book. The Panel's attention was drawn to the following:

We expect it to be more difficult for a service to be judged as good or outstanding than it was last year...Changes in judgements may not mean a decline in service from the previous year but may be a reflection of the raised expectations embodied in the changes we have made to our evaluation schedule.

8.2 The Panel discussed the implications of the letter.

9. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

9.1 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.

10. OFSTED REPORTS

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

- (i) Acorns at Dorset Road
- (ii) Hazel Lodge
- (iii) Lansdowne Secure Unit
- (iv) The Bungalow, Sorrel Drive

10.2 RESOLVED to note the reports.

11. CHILDREN'S HOMES REGULATIONS 1991, REGULATION 33: INSPECTION REPORTS

11.1 The Panel considered Regulation 33 Reports for March, April and May 2012 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

11.2 RESOLVED to note the reports.