

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

MINUTES of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 19 July 2013 at County Hall, Lewes

PRESENT: Councillors Clark, Galley, St Pierre and Tidy

ALSO PRESENT: Liz Rugg, Assistant Director, Children and Families
Siobhan Edwards, Practice Manager, Fostering Team
Teresa Lavelle-Hill, Joint Head of LAC Services
Carole Sykes, Operations Manager, Adoption and Permanence

Janet Fairless, RHM Brodrick House and Homefield Cottage
Nigel Hewitt, RHM Hazel Lodge and Rose Cottage
Anthony Julyan, Operations Manager, Children's Disability Services
Helen Simmons, RHM Sorrel Drive and Acorns
Martin Sutcliffe, RHM Lansdowne Secure Unit

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

1.1 Councillor St Pierre was elected as Chairman.

2. MINUTES

2.1 RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 19 April 2013 as a correct record.

3. APOLOGIES

3.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Howson, O'Keeffe and Sheppard.

4. REPORTS

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

5. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN ANNUAL REPORT

5.1 The Panel considered a report by the Interim Director of Children's Services which introduced the Annual Progress Report of Looked After Children's Services from 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013.

5.2 Teresa Lavelle-Hill highlighted the range of services that make up the Looked After Children's Service, and the leadership ethos and culture that underpins their work. In examining the figures and trend data she spoke about the numbers of children who achieve a permanent placement through adoption or Special Guardianship Order with their foster family, which affects the number of fostering placements available. The impact of THRIVE in both safely reducing the number of children subject to Child Protection Plans, and in the recruitment of foster carers, was discussed. The Panel was also informed of the dedicated GP attached to LAC Services as well as the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service's (CAMHS) input.

5.3 Carol Sykes, Operations Manager, Adoption and Permanence explained to the Panel that adoption was an area of Government focus and change, with an emphasis on speeding up the processes of approving adopters and of securing matches with children. She reported that East Sussex had been part of a successful pilot aimed at reducing assessment times. The contract with CAMHS, to mirror the service available in the Fostering Service, was brought to the Panel's attention.

5.4 Teresa Lavelle-Hill introduced the work of the Residential Services in providing group homes, respite facilities and the secure unit. Individual reports, with input from the Registered Homes Managers, were considered at a later part of the meeting. The work done with care leavers, in particular with regard to supported lodgings and the addition of more qualified social workers to the service to address high risk behaviours, was focussed on, as well as the collaborative approach with District and Borough colleagues and the role of Supported Lodgings carers in providing for homeless young people as well as for care leavers.

5.5 The work of Care2Work and the Virtual School in increasing the opportunities for employment for care leavers were examined. In particular the efforts to engage with those young people not in Education, Employment or Training, and the role Members can play in advocating for Looked After Children and care leavers in the process, together with the East Sussex Human Resources Management Board, was stressed.

5.6 Teresa Lavelle-Hill explained the performance indicators contained at paragraph 10 of Appendix 1, and the vigorous systems in place to deal with children missing from care including working at a strategic level with the Local Safeguarding Board and at a practical level via close liaison work with the local Police.

5.7 The Panel discussed: the need for a glossary of terms and acronyms; how emotional and behavioural wellbeing is measured in relation to National Indicator 58; the increase in admissions of 17 year olds; young homeless people and supported lodgings; and young women losing a number of children to adoption.

5.8 It was explained that NI58 was assessed by means of an annual questionnaire, completed by the child with a social worker, focussed on concrete features such as sleep patterns and behavioural problems. The rise in admissions of 17 year olds was explained with reference to a change in the legal status of those young people who are remanded for criminal activity. The work of the Youth Support Team and interaction with District and Boroughs in regard to young homeless people and in tackling 'sofa surfing' was highlighted, but the Panel were reminded that these were vulnerable young people and not Looked After Children. The use of the four foyer accommodation centres in the County to assist care leavers was also mentioned. In regard to adoption the Panel were reassured that young women who repeatedly had children removed for adoption were the subject of a new project, based on work developed in Reading, to assist them in addressing their needs, so that further removals could be avoided. A report to the Panel on the project, and its implementation in East Sussex, was requested.

5.9 RESOLVED to note the report

6. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (LAC) STATISTICS

6.1 The Panel considered a report by the Interim Director of Children's Services which outlined the changes to the Looked After Children (LAC) statistics in the last quarter. Liz Rugg explained that the statistics represented a snap-shot of the activity of the Service and that additional children also come in and out of care during the month.

6.2 Members' attention was drawn in particular to: the overall downward trend of the figures; the use of Special Guardianship and Residence Orders and the Council's continuing financial commitment to those children; the use of permanent placements at Acorns and The Bungalow

and how this suited the individual children's care plans; and the need to use secure accommodation for three former residential home children, to ensure their safety.

6.3 RESOLVED to note the report.

7. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

7.1 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.

8. OFSTED REPORTS

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

- (i) Acorns at Dorset Road
- (ii) Brodrick House

8.2 RESOLVED to note the reports.

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

9.1 The Panel considered Regulation 33 Reports for March, April, May and June 2013 for the following Children's Homes:

- (i) Acorns at Dorset Road
- (ii) Brodrick House
- (iii) Hazel Lodge
- (iv) Homefield Cottage

9.2 RESOLVED to note the reports.

9.3 The meeting closed at 1.00pm as two Members had to leave, and consideration of Regulation 33 Reports for Lansdowne Secure Unit, Rose Cottage and The Bungalow, Sorrel Drive was postponed as the Panel would have been inquorate.