

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

MINUTES of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 2 May 2014 at County Hall, Lewes

PRESENT: Councillors Galley, O’Keeffe, St Pierre (Chair), Sheppard and Tidy

ALSO PRESENT: Liz Rugg, Assistant Director, Safeguarding, LAC and SEN
Siobhan Edwards, Practice Manager
Kim Melville, Practice Manager
Carole Sykes, Operations Manager, Adoption and Permanence

Fred Livings, Chair, East Sussex Foster Care Association

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

32. MINUTES

32.1 RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2014 as a correct record.

33. APOLOGIES

33.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Charlton and Clark.

34. INTERESTS

34.1 Councillors O’Keeffe and St Pierre declared personal interests in item 10 in that they had raised funds for the East Sussex Foster Care Association, but did not consider this to be prejudicial.

35. REPORTS

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

36. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

36.1 RESOLVED to exclude the public and press from the meeting for the following three items on the agenda 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 was considered that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

37. OFSTED REPORTS

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

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

37.2 RESOLVED to note the reports.

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

38.1 The Panel considered Regulation 33 Reports for December 2013 and January 2014 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

38.2 Each Registered Home Manager gave a brief oral update on activity at the home covering the inspection period and bringing the Panel up to date.

38.3 RESOLVED to note the written and oral reports.

39. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE EAST SUSSEX FOSTERING SERVICE 1 APRIL 2013 to 31 MARCH 2014

39.1 The Panel considered a report by the Acting Director of Children's Services which presented the Annual Report of the East Sussex Fostering Service for the financial year ending 31 March 2014. Siobhan Edwards and Kim Melville, Practice Managers, highlighted aspects of the Service's work such as recruitment, and the effect of Residence and Special Guardianship Orders.

39.2 Also highlighted were the increased numbers of foster carers coming forward in Lewes and the rural areas of the County, the training required and delivered by the Service to new and established foster carers, and the placement support available to carers.

39.3 The Panel discussed: ways of promoting recruitment to the Service such as local radio broadcasts and Parish magazines/newsletters; the importance of children who foster; recent television coverage of the fostering sector, the motivating factors of foster carers and the inspection regime.

39.4 RESOLVED to (1) note the report; and
(2) thank the Fostering Service for their work.

40. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE EAST SUSSEX FOSTER CARE ASSOCIATION

40.1 The Panel considered a report by the East Sussex Foster Care Association which presented an update on the work of the Association. Mr Fred Livings, Chair of the Association, was present to introduce the report and highlight the activities undertaken by, and the plans for the future development of the Association.

40.2 Mr Livings set out the changing financial situation for the charity and its commitment to changing the lives of vulnerable children. He explained that the trustees wished to expand the reach of the Association, to include as many of the 600 children who care as possible and the efforts being made to achieve this. He also set out that the Association would be undertaking a strategic review of its structure.

40.3 Mr Livings also set out the lobbying activity that the association undertakes:

- Of the County Council regarding the LAC budget
- Of the local judiciary regarding the use and effectiveness of Contact Orders
- Of Edward Timpson regarding tax implications of fostering income
- Regarding the use of the term "Looked After Children"

He also presented details of the annual conference to be held at the East Sussex National Golf Club with Dr Margot Sunderland as principal speaker.

40.4 The Panel discussed: the importance of addressing the underlying issues surrounding children being taken into care, and the work of the Thrive programme to this end and in particular where Children's Services have worked with several generations of the same family.

40.5 RESOLVED to (1) note the report; and
(2) thank Mr Livings and the East Sussex Foster Care Association for their work.

41. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE EAST SUSSEX ADOPTION AND PERMANENCE SERVICE 1 APRIL 2013 to 31 MARCH 2014

41.1 The Panel considered a report by the Acting Director of Children's Services which presented the progress of the Adoption and Permanence Service in the financial year ending 31 March 2014. Carole Sykes, Operations Manager Adoption and Permanence outlined the highlights of a year in which the Adoption Service has been in the spotlight.

41.2 In particular Ms Sykes pointed out the work being done on a pilot in Adoption Support, and the interest from the Department for Education. She also featured the Activity Day at which those children who are more challenging to place could meet with potential adopters, and which had been a great success.

41.3 The Panel discussed: the Activity Day and the benefits of adopting older children and sibling groups; the development of the adoption support offer from the County Council to potential adopters; and the necessity to ensure robust decision making that support the needs of children within the confines of the new adoption regime.

41.4 RESOLVED to (1) note the report; and
(2) congratulate the Children's Services staff, and in particular the Adoption Service, on the outcome of the recent Ofsted inspection.

42. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (LAC) STATISTICS

42.1 The Panel considered a report by the Acting Director of Children's Services which outlined the changes to the Looked After Children (LAC) statistics in the last quarter. Liz Rugg, Assistant

Director Safeguarding, LAC and SEN 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.

42.2 Members' attention was drawn in particular to: the continued steady downward trend, although the THRIVE target had been missed; the high proportion of in-house placements; the work being undertaken in relation to care leavers, as identified during the Ofsted inspection; the need to identify the appropriate package of care for each individual child; the difference between adoption disruption and breakdown, and the work of Professor Julie Selwyn aided by research undertaken by East Sussex.

42.3 RESOLVED to note the report.