

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

MINUTES of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 11 July 2014 at County Hall, Lewes

PRESENT: Councillors Clark, Galley, St Pierre, Sheppard and Tidy

ALSO PRESENT: Liz Rugg, Assistant Director, Safeguarding, LAC and SEN
Marion Cooper, Practice Manager Special Placement Scheme/Placement Support
Teresa Lavelle Hill, Joint Head of LAC Services
Adrian Sewell, Operations Manager, Fostering Team
Douglas Sinclair, Head of Children's Safeguards & Quality Assurance
Alex Sutton, Acting Safeguarding Operations Manager

Janet Fairless, RHM Brodrick House and Homefield Cottage
Anthony Julyan, Operations Manager, Children's Disability Services
Roy Noble, Deputy RHM Lansdowne Secure Unit
Nicky Scott, Operations Manager, LAC Services
Helen Simmons, RHM Sorrel Drive and Acorns
Martin Sutcliffe, RHM Hazel Lodge and Rose Cottage

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

1.1 Councillor St Pierre was elected as Chair.

2. MINUTES

2.1 RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 2 May 2014 as a correct record.

2.2 The Panel discussed the rota of visits made by Members to the Registered Homes.

3. APOLOGIES

3.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor O'Keeffe.

4. REPORTS

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

5. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

5.1 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.

6. OFSTED REPORTS

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

- (i) Brodrick House

6.2 RESOLVED to note the reports.

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

7.1 The Panel considered Regulation 33 Reports for March and April 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

7.2 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.

7.3 RESOLVED to note the written and oral reports.

8. REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER SERVICE

8.1 The Panel considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which presented a Report of the Independent Reviewing Service. Alex Sutton, Acting Safeguarding Operations Manager, highlighted the purpose and legal context of the Service, together with the commitment to ensuring that children can participate in their care planning. The importance of the Service throughout, but especially in the early stages, of planning well for children was stressed and acknowledged by the Panel.

8.2 The Panel discussed: the pressures on the Service, and succession planning in the light of recent changes; whether LAC planning is sensitive to the differing heritage needs of children, with particular regard to traveller families; the targets set for the Service and whether these are really achievable or simply aspirational; and the relationship between the IRO Service and the Children's Services Department (CSD). It was explained that the Service is offline so that it can offer scrutiny and challenge to the social care service.

8.3 Douglas Sinclair, Head of Children's Safeguards & Quality Assurance, set out the value of the Service in monitoring trends and concerns, and as part of resolving professional disputes in the care planning process. He also set out forthcoming changes to the Regulation 33 inspection regime, and the opportunity for the Service to review its practice and procedures.

8.4 RESOLVED to (1) note the report; and
(2) thank the Independent Reviewing Service for their work.

9. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (LAC) WHO GO MISSING AND WHO MAY BE AT RISK OF CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION (CSE)

9.1 The Panel considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which provided an update on key data and progress in safeguarding Looked After Children who go missing and who may be at risk of sexual exploitation. Teresa Lavelle-Hill explained that there is a joint protocol between Sussex Police and the three Sussex Local Safeguarding Children Boards that underpins work in this area. The cooperation of three voluntary organisations, Catch 22, Sussex Central YMCA and Barnados, was acknowledged.

9.2 The Panel discussed the importance of accurate recording, using a new social care system for identifying all LAC who go missing or are absent, and the Return Home Interview process. The panel also discussed children on fixed term exclusions from school as this also increases vulnerability, and it was noted that schools have a duty to record this data, which is inspected by Ofsted. The position regarding responsibility for out-of-area Looked After Children was clarified.

9.3 RESOLVED to note the report.

10 INVOLVING YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

10.1 The Panel discussed the involvement of young people with the Corporate Parenting Panel. Practice from other local authorities was shared with the Panel by Marion Cooper, Practice Manager Special Placement Scheme/Placement Support.

10.2 The Panel discussed the nature of the CPP meeting, and ways of gathering the views of young people in care without requiring them to attend a formal Panel meeting regularly. It was suggested that representatives from the Panel could attend Children in Care Council Action Days, as a way of presenting the work of the Panel, and as a method of hearing directly about issues and challenges facing young people, and as a way to strengthen a channel to the Panel.

11. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (LAC) STATISTICS

11.1 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. 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.

11.2 Members' attention was drawn in particular to: the reclassification of children remanded for criminal activity as Looked After Children; unaccompanied asylum seekers and the difficulty in predicting numbers; the increased use of local courts of parent and baby placements in the light of recent case law, and the efforts made by the Department to challenge this where appropriate; the requirements for Assistant Director approval of agency fostering placements, and exceptional use of bed and breakfast accommodation, to ensure the best interests of the child are being taken into account.

11.3 RESOLVED to note the report.