

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

MINUTES of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held at CC2, County Hall, Lewes on 16 October 2015.

PRESENT Councillors Charles Clark, Roy Galley, Ruth O'Keeffe (Chair), Jim Sheppard, Rosalyn St. Pierre and Sylvia Tidy

ALSO PRESENT Liz Rugg, Assistant Director, Safeguarding, LAC and Youth Justice
Teresa Lavelle-Hill, Joint Head of LAC Services
Anna Brookes, Head of School and Education, Employment and Training coordinator - Virtual School
Adrian Money, Virtual Headteacher for Children in Care
Nicky Scott, Residential Operations Manager, LAC Services
Anthony Julyan, Operations Manager, Children's Disability Services
Helen Simmons, RHM Sorrel Drive and Acorns
Nigel Hewitt, RHM Lansdowne Secure Unit
Ian Williams, RHM Homefield Cottage
Fred Livings, Former Chair of the East Sussex Foster Care Association
Helen Barnham, Treasurer to the East Sussex Foster Care Association
Children in Care Council (CiCC)

11 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 JULY 2015

11.1 RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 2015

12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

12.1 Apologies were received from Councillor Charlton.

13 REPORTS

13.1 Copies of the reports referred to below are recorded in the minute book.

14 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

14.1 Councillor Rosalyn St Pierre declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in Item 11 on the Agenda, Councillor St Pierre is president of the Lewes Soroptomists.

14.2 Councillor Ruth O'Keeffe declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in Item 11 on the Agenda; Councillor O'Keeffe is a member of the Lewes Soroptomists.

15 CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL

15.1 The Panel received a presentation on the Children's Monitor Survey from three members of the Children in Care Council (CiCC). The survey is undertaken nationally to give children the opportunity to express their experiences of being in care.

The results of the survey indicated that children within East Sussex feel:

- happy and safe in their placements;
- supported in education;
- there is access to further educational opportunities, such as First Aid Courses and the Duke of Edinburgh Award;
- there is a good Virtual School which provides extra support for children;
- that whilst they are asked how they feel about certain things they could be given more options; and
- they could be informed of key decisions regarding their care packages at an earlier stage.

15.2 The Children in Care Council spoke about the work they have been involved in and highlighted the following projects:

- the CiCC have been looking into producing a DVD which can be shown to Schools to show other children on what it is like to be in care;
- members of the CiCC took part in a meeting with local Judges which enabled them to question the Judges on their understanding of what happens to a child once an order has been made and they are taken into care;
- Suss It programme – the CiCC have been working with younger children in care to help them to identify and resolve their issues; and
- working with other CiCC's to share ideas and identify different solutions.

15.3 The Panel commended the work of the CiCC and thanked them for their presentation.

16 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

16.1 RESOLVED to exclude the public and press from the meeting for the following 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 exception outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

17 CHILDREN'S HOME REGULATIONS 1991, REGULATION 44: INSPECTION REPORTS FOR MAY, JUNE AND JULY 2015 FOR THE FOLLOWING CHILDREN'S HOMES:

17.1 The Panel considered Regulation 44 Reports from May, June and July 2015 for the following Children's Homes:

- (a) Acorns at Dorset Road
- (b) Broderick House
- (c) Hazel Lodge
- (d) Homefield Cottage
- (e) Lansdowne Secure Unit
- (f) The Bungalow, Sorrell Drive

17.2 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.

17.3 RESOLVED to note the report.

18 LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN STATISTICS

18.1 The Panel considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which outlined the changes to the numbers of Looked After Children (LAC) in the last quarter. Liz Rugg, Assistant Director Safeguarding, LAC and Youth Justice explained that the statistics represented a snapshot of the activity of the Service at the end of the quarter and that there is considerable activity which goes on throughout the months.

18.2 Members attention was drawn to the overall reduction in the number of foster placements in this quarter; the reduction in adoption numbers; and the reduction in kinship carer placements.

18.3 The Panel discussed: Special Guardianship Orders; the reduction in adoption numbers which is mirroring the national figures; and the increase in Care Orders given by the Courts in Private Law proceedings.

18.4 RESOLVED to note the report.

19 UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM SEEKING AND TRAFFICKED CHILDREN AND FAMILIES WITH NO RECOURSE TO PUBLIC FUNDS

19.1 The Panel considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which provided an update on the current situation in East Sussex with regards to Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC); Trafficked Children; and Families with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF). Liz Rugg, Assistant Director highlighted the number of individual children and/or families which have presented for support over the last three years. The Panel were informed that it is not possible to predict numbers for the future but that we are seeing a steady increase locally.

19.2 The Panel's attention was drawn to the difficulties faced in carrying out age assessments for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children, it was highlighted that sometimes young people abscond before an age assessment has been carried out to determine that they actually are children. The Panel were also informed that once an age assessment is accrued and a child presents to the authority there is a legal duty to protect and support that child. The child then becomes a Looked After Child with the same rights as local LAC.

19.3 The Panel discussed the pressures of the ongoing cost of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children to the Children's Services budget and the long term commitment the Authority has to these children.

19.4 RESOLVED to note the report.

20 LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN ANNUAL REPORT

20.1 The Panel considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which provided an update on the annual performance of the Looked After Children's service for 2014-15. It was explained that the national figures for 2015 had not yet been published and further comparison would be given in due course. Teresa Lavelle-Hill, Joint Head of LAC Services, highlighted in particular the trend in decreasing numbers of Looked After Children; the savings made from the investment in the THRIVE programme; and the education, employment and training opportunities available for Care Leavers.

- 20.2 The Panel discussed the number of children with 3 or more placements during the year; health services provided to LAC and initial health assessments; and the proportion of children with Gypsy/Roma and White traveller heritage within the LAC population of East Sussex.
- 20.3 RESOLVED to note the report.

21 THE VIRTUAL SCHOOL ANNUAL REPORT INCLUDING THE USE OF PUPIL PREMIUM

- 21.1 The Panel considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which highlighted the work of the Virtual School for the period 2014/15 and the educational outcomes for LACs in East Sussex.
- 21.2 The Panel were informed of the work of the East Sussex Virtual School and its good practice (as recognised by the Department for Education); the significant increase in the funding available to the Virtual School as a result of the increase in Pupil Premium from £900 to £1900 per child; the ways in which this increase in funding has enabled the Virtual School to support the educational success of LAC; and the consequent educational attainment.
- 21.3 The Panel discussed the training available to teachers in relation to safeguarding and the needs of Looked After Children; support for foster carers with regards to the national curriculum and helping children with homework; digital equipment available for LAC; and education attainment for children with SEND.
- 21.4 RESOLVED to note the report.

22 EAST SUSSEX FOSTER CARE ASSOCIATION ANNUAL REPORT

- 22.1 The Panel considered a report by the East Sussex Foster Care Association (ESFCA) which presented an update on the work of the Association. Mr Fred Livings, former Chair of the Association, was present to introduce the report and highlight the activities undertaken by ESFCA, and the plans for future development.
- 22.2 Mr Livings informed the Panel that Ms Susan Beasley is the incoming Chair and will be supported by two Vice-Chairs to help her in her role.
- 22.3 ESFCA recognises the importance of working closely with the Children's Services Department and is grateful for the ongoing support.
- 22.4 The Panel discussed the importance of keeping the most vulnerable children safe and providing them with the care they most need.
- 22.5 The Panel expressed their appreciation for the hard work of ESFCA. The Panel also thanked Fred Livings for his past hard work as Chair of the Association.
- 22.6 RESOLVED to note the report.

(The meeting ended at 1.10 pm)