

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

MINUTES of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held at County Hall, Lewes on 28 April 2017.

PRESENT Councillors Roy Galley (Chair) Councillors Jim Sheppard, Rosalyn St. Pierre and Philip Howson

ALSO PRESENT Liz Rugg, Assistant Director, Early Help and Social Care
Teresa Lavelle- Hill- Head of LAC
Nicola Scott- Operations Manager Residential
Antony Julyan- Operations Manager Disability
Shirin White- RHM Acorns
Janet Fairless- RHM Homefield
Oliver White- Deputy RHM Brodrick
Helen Simmons- RHM The Bungalow and Interim RHM Lansdowne

29 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 27 JANUARY 2017

29.1 The Panel agreed that the minutes were a correct record of the meeting held on 27 January 2017.

29.2 The Panel asked as a matter arising how many Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking young people were in East Sussex County Council's care. The Assistant Director Early Help and Social Care said that the Council currently had 26 children in its care with an average age of 16.

30 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

30.1 Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs O'Keeffe, Tidy, Phillips (substitute: Cllr Howson) and Clark.

31.1 Apologies for absence were also received from Dawn Emsley, Deputy RHM Hazel Lodge.

31 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

31.1 There were no disclosures of interest.

32 URGENT ITEMS

32.1 There were no urgent items.

33 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

33.1 The Panel resolved to exclude the public and press from the meeting for the next two agenda 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 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), namely information relating to any individual.

34 OFSTED INSPECTION REPORTS

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

- a) Acorns at Dorset Road
- b) The Bungalow
- c) Homefield Cottage
- d) Lansdowne Secure Unit

34.2 The Panel also considered a verbal report on the Ofsted inspection of Brodrick House.

34.3 The Panel were informed that officers had unsuccessfully challenged the result of the Ofsted inspection of The Bungalow but had decided not to take the matter further.

34.4 The Panel RESOLVED to note the report.

35 CHILDREN'S HOME REGULATIONS 2015, REGULATION 44: INSPECTION REPORTS FOR THE PERIOD DECEMBER 2016 TO FEBRUARY 2017.

35.1 The Panel considered Regulation 44 Reports for the period December 2016 to February 2017 for the following Children's Homes:

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

35.2 Each Registered Homes Manager gave an oral update on activity at the home covering the period since the last Panel meeting.

35.3 The Panel discussed a number of issues including:

- the difficulty in maintaining short stay vacancies at the Acorn respite service when parents decline to take back their child from the service – and the Council has a corporate parenting duty towards the child – and how this risk can sometimes be reduced by providing additional support to the family;
- the continued work to reduce the number of agency staff at all sites but the requirement to use them on occasion, e.g. due to sudden vacancies; and
- the value of carrying out Return Home Interviews in instances where the child was known to be safe during the time that they had absconded; and
- how the Corporate Parenting Panel is effective at holding children's homes to account and in promoting the importance of the Council's corporate parenting role; the Panel considered ways that it could become even more effective in the future.

35.4 The Panel RESOLVED to note the reports.

36 LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (LAC) STATISTICS

36.1 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. The Assistant Director, Early Help and Social Care, explained that the statistics represented a snap-shot of the activity of the Service at the end of the quarter and that there is considerable activity which goes on throughout the months.

36.2 The Panel were advised that the LAC service ended the financial year with a £750k overspend due to the needs driven cost of placing children in care. The LAC service continues to look at ways of reducing costs whilst fulfilling its obligations, e.g. pushing for joint funding with the NHS where appropriate.

36.3 The Panel debated whether more time should be spent looking in detail at the cohorts of children other than the 50 or so who are in East Sussex children's homes or in the secure unit. The Assistant Director advised that each child has regular LAC reviews and that annual reports by the Independent Reviewing Officer team were also produced and presented to the Panel.

36.4 The Panel was informed that the Council has notified Ofsted about a child currently in an unregulated placement. Ofsted had confirmed that ESCC has made all reasonable efforts to identify a regulated placement but agreed that to date this has not proved successful.

36.5 The Panel RESOLVED

- 1) to note the report;
- 2) to receive an annual report from the Independent Reviewing Officer team concerning the cohorts of children in foster care etc; and
- 3) to record its thanks to Councillor Rosalyn St. Pierre upon her retirement as an important member of the panel and as an advocate for Looked After Children.

The meeting ended at 11.40 am.

Councillor Roy Galley
Chair