

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

MINUTES of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held in the Committee Room, County Hall, Lewes on 25 October 2019.

PRESENT Councillors Sylvia Tidy (Chair), Jim Sheppard, Francis Whetstone, Colin Swansborough and Martin Clarke.

ALSO PRESENT Liz Rugg – Assistant Director, Early Help and Social Care
Sally Carine – Head of Looked After Children (LAC) Services
Dr Katayoon Afsharpad – Designated Doctor LAC in East Sussex
Sally Williams – Operations Manager, Residential and Directly Provided Services, Children’s Disability Service
Beverley Moores – Strategic Lead, Children’s Disability Social Care ISEND
Nicola Scott – Operations Manager, Residential LAC Services
Mandy Lewis – Head of Virtual School
Phil Smith – Practice Manager, Through Care Services
Janet Fairless – RHM Homefield Cottage
Scott Lipa – RHM Brodrick House
Charlotte De Retuerto – RHM The Bungalow
Shirin White – RHM Acorns
Ian Williams – RHM Hazel Lodge
Helen Simmons – RHM Lansdowne Secure Unit

14 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26 JULY 2019

14.1 RESOLVED: to agree as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 26 July 2019.

15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

15.1 Apologies were received from Councillor Kathryn Field and Councillor Charles Clark.

15.2 Councillor Martin Clarke was present as a substitute member for Councillor Chris Dowling.

16 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

16.1 There were none.

17 URGENT ITEMS

17.1 There were none.

18 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

18.1 The Panel agreed to exclude the press and public for the next two agenda items on the basis that if they were present there would be disclosure to them of information considered to be exempt by virtue of Category 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), namely information relating to an individual.

19 OFSTED INSPECTION REPORTS FOR THE FOLLOWING: BRODRICK HOUSE, HAZEL LODGE AND HOMEFIELD COTTAGE

19.1 The Panel received Ofsted reports on the following Children's Homes:

- Brodrick House
- Hazel Lodge; and
- Homefield Cottage

19.2 The Panel discussed the impact that unannounced Ofsted inspections have on the children in the Homes. The Panel were assured that disruption to the children and their routines was kept to a minimum and that the inspectors are accompanied by a member of staff during their visits.

19.3 The Panel welcomed the positive outcomes of the Ofsted reports.

19.4 RESOLVED: to note the reports.

20 CHILDREN'S HOME REGULATIONS 2015, REGULATION 44: INSPECTION REPORTS FOR JULY 2019 - SEPTEMBER 2019:

20.1 The Panel considered Regulation 44 Reports for the period July 2019 to September 2019 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, Sorrel Drive

20.2 Each Registered Home Manager (RHM) gave a verbal update on the activity at the homes covering the period since the last Panel meeting.

20.3 The Panel discussed staff recruitment at the Homes and asked the RHM's whether recruiting staff to the Homes was an issue. The RHM's informed the Panel that recruitment was an ongoing area of development and that in recent months there has been close work with the Human Resources (HR) department to improve the offer for staff and to review the pay grades for specific roles.

20.4 The Panel discussed ongoing building works at the Homes and the impact that these works have on the children at the Homes, specifically where it impacts the outdoor and garden areas of the Home. The RHM's assured the Panel that disruption was always kept to a minimum and that there are provisions in place to ensure that the Children have access to outside space, for example a mobility programme at Lansdowne where the Children are taken outside of the Homes for walks on a more regular basis.

20.5 RESOLVED: to note the reports.

21 ANY OTHER EXEMPT ITEMS CONSIDERED URGENT BY THE CHAIR.

21.1 There were none.

22 ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN'S SERVICES - 1 APRIL 2018 - 31 MARCH 2019

22.1 The Panel considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which provided an updated on the annual performance of the Looked After Children's Service for 2018 – 2019.

22.2 The Panel were informed that there has been a slight decrease in the overall numbers of LAC in East Sussex compared to the previous 3 years. The decrease in numbers of children coming into care were from the 0-12 year old age range, whereas there was an increase in children aged 13+ coming into care. The Panel were informed that the decrease in the lower age range group was due to local and national policy and practice change, and the increase in children aged 13+ was due to more a rigorous application of the Southwark Judgement whereby teenagers can be classified as LAC and offered accommodation rather than being viewed as homeless.

22.3 The Panel discussed UASC (Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children and were informed that as of the end of March 2019 ESCC was caring for 16 more UASC than the previous year, with a total number of 36. Members questioned the route of arrival for UASC and were informed that 5 UASC have come into the care of ESCC via The Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme and that the reminder have been spontaneous arrivals, mainly arriving via Newhaven Port.

22.4 RESOLVED: to note the report.

23 VIRTUAL SCHOOL ANNUAL REPORT - 1 APRIL 2018 - 31 MARCH 2019

23.4 The Panel considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which highlighted the work of the Virtual School for the period 1 April 2018 – 31 March 2019 and the educational outcomes for LAC in East Sussex, as well as the use of the Pupil Premium.

24.4 The Panel were updated on the work of the East Sussex Virtual School, which included: supporting 445 LAC in schools; the appointment of a Primary Advisory Teacher to lead on the development of teaching intervention; the appointment of 17 additional casual Intervention Teachers; management of the PPG (Pupil Premium Grant) for LAC; appointment of 2 additional

Personal Advisers (PA'S), one with a focus on NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) LAC and the other on UASC (Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children), amongst other work.

24.5 The Panel discussed the importance of supporting LAC with their mental health while they were in education. The Panel were informed by Mandy Lewis, Head of the Virtual School, that the Virtual School provides free training sessions to schools to support LAC who have experienced traumatic experiences. The Panel were also told of the work the Virtual School has taken forward with other educational and health services to develop a co-ordinated strategy for supporting mental health in schools. The Panel welcomed these positive pieces of work.

24.6 RESOLVED: to note the report.

24 CORAM VOICE BRIGHT SPOTS SURVEY OF CARE LEAVERS - PRESENTATION

24.1 The Panel received a presentation from Phil Smith, Practice Manager –Through Care Service which detailed the responses to the Bright Spots survey of care leavers which was commissioned by ESCC and conducted in a partnership between the University of Oxford and the children's charity Coram Voice.

24.2 The Panel were informed that all 233 care leavers in East Sussex were offered a chance to complete the survey. The response rate was 35% which the Panel were informed accounted for 81 responses and that this was a high response rate for this type of survey.

24.3 The Panel welcomed the many positive outcomes of the survey, these included:

- 76% of care leavers reported trusting their worker 'all of most of the time'.
- 75% of care leavers reported feeling safe in their home.
- 70% of care leavers felt settled where they lived.
- Care leavers in East Sussex were almost as likely as individuals in the general population to be living in households with internet access (87% compared to 90%).
- 78% of care leavers reported feeling 'very positive' about their future.
- The survey responses included many positive comments regarding the advice, support and guidance that workers offer care leavers.

24.3 The Panel also discussed the areas for improvement that the survey highlighted, these included:

- **General Wellbeing:** The survey found that only 49% of care leavers reported high or very high levels of happiness the previous day and also that they were almost twice as likely as young people in the general population to report high levels of anxiety the previous day. The Panel discussed how many factors can play a role in these statistics and were informed that loneliness can be a factor in the general wellbeing of care leavers and that when care leavers have their own accommodation this brings many positives but also can lead, in some cases, to feeling socially isolated.
- **Finances:** The survey found that compared to young people in the general population, care leavers in East Sussex were almost three times more likely to report financial difficulties. The Panel were informed that the Department are working on strategies to assist with the financial pressures the care leavers reported, this includes: plans for free bus passes and free gym memberships, and working closely with job centres to ensure that care leavers are correctly supported with claiming the correct benefits and finding work.

24.4 The Panel welcomed the positive outcomes of the survey and noted the Departments comments and actions towards the areas where it is seeking to make improvements.

24.5 RESOLVED: to note the report.

25 LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (LAC) STATISTICS

25.1 The Panel considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which provided an update on Looked After Children Statistics.

25.2 The Panel were informed by Liz Rugg, Assistant Director for Early Help and Social Care on the current figures for LAC in East Sussex.

25.3 RESOLVED: to note the report.

26 ANY OTHER NON-EXEMPT ITEMS CONSIDERED URGENT BY THE CHAIR.

26.1 There were none.

The meeting ended at 12:34pm.