

## CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

MINUTES of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held in the Committee Room, County Hall, Lewes on 29 January 2021.

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PRESENT                                      Councillors Charles Clark, Chris Dowling, Kathryn Field, Jim Sheppard, Colin Swansborough, Sylvia Tidy (Chair) and Francis Whetstone

ALSO PRESENT                              Teresa Lavelle-Hill – Head of LAC Services

    Sally Williams – Operations Manager

    Nicola Scott – Operations Manager

    Ian Williams – Registered Homes Manager

    Charlotte de Retuerto – Registered Homes Manager

    Helen Simons – Registered Homes Manager

    Janet Fairless – Registered Homes Manager

    Georgia Carty – Deputy Homes Manager

    Sarah Roper-Brooks – Designated Doctor for LAC

    Susanne Beesley – Chair, ESFCA

    Tina Henderson – Trustee, ESFCA

    Aaron Sams – Democratic Services Officer

### 65      MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 30 OCTOBER 2020

65.1      RESOLVED: to agree as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 30 October 2020.

### 66      APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

66.1      Apologies were received from Liz Rugg, Assistant Director – Early Help and Social Care.

### 67      DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

67.1      There were none.

### 68      URGENT ITEMS

68.1 There were none.

69 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE EAST SUSSEX FOSTER CARE ASSOCIATION (ESFCA) 2019 - 2020

69.1 The Panel considered the annual report of the East Sussex Foster Care Association (ESFCA). The report provided an update on the work of the ESFCA and its plans for future development. This included:

- **Online book club:** an online book club is being launched to allow foster children to virtually hear stories. The ESFCA have developed this online resource with assistance from their charity patron, the popular children's author, Jaqueline Wilson.
- **Suitcase initiative:** the ESFCA have an initiative which aims to ensure no child within the care system needs to transport their belongings in black plastic bin bags. As a result, the 'Suitcase initiative' has provided over 200 suitcases and other carrying bags to children to ensure they feel a sense of dignity when they move.
- **Queens Award for Voluntary Service:** in June 2019 the ESFCA was awarded the Queens Award for Voluntary Service. The award was made in recognition of the Association's exceptional community and voluntary work. It is the highest award a voluntary group can receive in the UK.
- **Children in Care Council (CICC):** the ESFCA continues to work closely with the Children in Care Council. For example, in 2019 the CICC provided funding for a group of 25 young people and support staff to see a performance of the musical Blood Brothers.
- **Rucksacks:** the ESFCA, with help from the CICC, have continued to provide support to children and young people with its rucksack project. The project is designed to support children who are enter the care system for the first time. Children are provided with a rucksack which is gender and age appropriate and includes practical items such as a toothbrush, but also comfort items such as a teddy or soft toy.

69.2 The Panel discussed the importance of social inclusion for children in care and asked the ESFCA about the impact Covid-19 has had on this aspect of their lives. In response, the Panel were informed that this has been a challenge for the charity. However, creative approaches have been utilised to adapt to the situation. For example, remote technology has to be used to help children and young people feel engaged with their peers and avoid feelings of isolation.

69.3 The Panel recognised the important work the ESFCA does in East Sussex and thanked the Association for the help and support it provides.

69.4 RESOLVED: to note the report.

70 LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (LAC) STATISTICS

70.1 The Panel considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which provided an update on Looked After Children (LAC) statistics.

70.2 The Panel heard that there has been a slight rise in the number of East Sussex LAC since the last quarter, but that this is in line with a national trend. Members also heard that the Fostering Duty service has, despite significant pressures due to Covid-19, continued to place the majority of LAC in the County Council's in-house foster placements.

70.3 The Panel asked about the location of residential placements for LAC and in particular, whether children are being placed outside of East Sussex. In response Members were informed that the choice to place a child outside of East Sussex is dependent on the individual circumstances of the case, with a range of factors being considered before a decision is made. The Panel were also assured that the Department aim is to place children within county whenever it can and where that has not proven possible, children do return to East Sussex as and when a suitable placement arises

70.4 RESOLVED: to note the report.

#### 71 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

71.1 RESOLVED to exclude the public and press from the meeting for items 9 and 10 on the agenda (see minutes 26 and 27) 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.

#### 72 OFSTED INSPECTION REPORTS FOR THE FOLLOWING: THE BUNGALOW, LANSDOWNE SECURE UNIT AND ACORNS

72.1 The Panel considered Ofsted Inspection Reports for the following Children's Homes:

- The Bungalow
- Lansdowne Secure Unit; and
- Acorns

72.2 The Panel welcomed the outcomes of the Ofsted Inspection Reports.

72.3 RESOLVED: to note the reports.

#### 73 CHILDREN'S HOME REGULATIONS 2015, REGULATION 44: INSPECTION REPORTS FOR OCTOBER 2020 - JANUARY 2021

73.1 The Panel considered Regulation 44 Reports for the period October 2020 – January 2021 for the following Children's Homes:

- Acorns
- Brodrick House
- Hazel Lodge
- Homefield Cottage
- Lansdowne Secure Unit
- The Bungalow

73.2 The Panel discussed a range of issues, including: recruitment, retention and staff changes, building improvements within the homes and the challenges posed by Covid-19.

73.3 The Panel gave their thanks to the Registered Homes Managers and their colleagues for their excellent service and support to the children and young people in the Council's Care.

73.4 RESOLVED: to note the reports.

#### 74 ANY OTHER EXEMPT ITEMS CONSIDERED URGENT BY THE CHAIR.

74.1 There were none.

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

75.1    There were none.