

## CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

MINUTES of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held at Committee Room, County Hall, Lewes on 16 January 2024.

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PRESENT Councillors Bob Bowdler, Anne Cross, Kathryn Field (Chair), Johanna Howell, Sorrell Marlow-Eastwood, Matthew Milligan and Colin Swansborough

ALSO PRESENT Alison Jeffery - Director of Children's Services  
Fiona Lewis - Head of Looked After Children Services  
Sally Carnie - Head of Looked After Children Service  
Deborah Ennis - Senior Manager, IMPOWER  
Belinda Trunfull - Governance and Democracy Officer

### 25. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17 OCTOBER 2023

25.1 RESOLVED to agree as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2023.

### 26. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

26.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Penny di Cara (It was noted that Councillor Johanna Howell was in attendance as a substitute for Councillor di Cara).

26.2 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Johnny Denis (It was noted that Councillor Anne Cross was in attendance as a substitute for Councillor Denis).

### 27. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

27.1 Councillor Matthew Milligan declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest that a close family member is an East Sussex County Council (ESCC) Foster parent.

27.2 Councillor Johanna Howell declared a personal non-prejudicial interest that she is the Chair of People Scrutiny.

### 28. URGENT ITEMS

28.1 There were no urgent items.

### 29. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

29.1 RESOLVED to exclude the public and press from the meeting for items 6 and 7 on the agenda (see minutes 30 and 31) on the grounds that if the public and press were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as specified in paragraph 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.

### 30. EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL (ESCC) CHILDREN'S HOMES QUARTERLY REGULATION 44 SUMMARY REPORT

30.1 The Panel considered the Quarterly Registered Children's Home reports for the following Children's Homes:

- Brodrick House
- Homefield Cottage
- Hazel Lodge
- Silver Birches
- Lansdowne Secure Children's Home
- Acorns
- The Bungalow

30.2 The Panel considered an Ofsted Inspection report for The Bungalow Children's Home.

30.3 The Panel welcomed the report and received a verbal update from Fiona Lewis, Head of Looked After Children Services who informed that the move to producing the reports and supporting statements on a quarterly basis is going well.

30.4 32 recommendations were made by the Regulation 44 Independent Person across the 7 homes this quarter. These related to leadership, management and protection of children standard.

30.5 An Ofsted visit to the Lansdowne Secure Children's Home has been completed in anticipation of the home reopening in January 2024.

30.6 Areas of focus for the next quarter include ensuring that children have the same access to digital resources as their peers, improving the rate of social workers' feedback to the Independent Person to inform the Regulation 44 report and developing staff understanding of language in children's records.

30.7 Recruitment continues to pose a challenge, however, there is ongoing broader recruitment strategies in place.

30.8 Following an Assurance inspection for The Bungalow in November, the inspection identified positive progress. The temporary move of children to Acorns went well following substantive storm damage to The Bungalow Children's Home.

30.9 The Panel RESOLVED to note the report.

31. ANY OTHER EXEMPT ITEMS CONSIDERED URGENT BY THE CHAIR.

31.1 There were none.

32. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (LAC) STATISTICS

32.1 The Panel considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which provided an update on LAC statistics.

32.2 Sally Carnie, Head of Looked After Children Service updated the Panel on the latest position for LAC in East Sussex, informing the Panel that data is drawn as a snapshot on the last day of the month and some changes occur as data is cleansed within the system.

32.3 Since the previous quarter, the overall number of LAC has decreased from 686 to 671. A combination of factors has contributed to this decrease in number including strenuous focus on reunification work with children and their birth families. Despite the overall reduction in the number of LAC during this quarter, children who have remained in care continue to have

complex needs requiring high levels of skilled care. As a result, the LAC service continues to remain under pressure with a national and local shortage of care placements.

32.4 The Panel discussed the LAC data trend and issues affecting data production. The Panel heard that a few anomalies were resolved following a significant data cleansing exercise. Staff training has also improved the effective recording of data ensuring that there are no gaps within the key stages of the process hence ensuring that the child's journey and decision-making stages are clear. Working closely with Social Workers and the Business Support Team has also played a key role in certifying that the children's needs are kept at the forefront.

32.5 The Panel further discussed recruitment of foster carers. Adverts have been going out to Parish Councils and new pay rates will soon come into effect. A review will take place to consider the current advertising on roundabouts due to rising costs. Further work is also being undertaken by IMPOWER around recruitment.

32.6 Councillor Bowdler informed the Panel that following the recent Ofsted inspection, one of the topics highlighted was around listening to the voices of young people and ensuring that there is a clear two-way conversation between the young people and members of the Panel. Events such as Children in Care Council (CiCC) are good forums, however, other channels need to be explored to ensure young people feel heard and their views understood. As it can be a challenge for young people to attend the Corporate Parenting Panel Meeting, it was suggested that children in care could engage with the Panel through video recordings where they would have the opportunity to voice their views and concerns. The department informed the Panel that they are working on plans involving the selection of appointed care leaver acting as a conduit between members of the Panel and various groups of young people.

32.7 The Panel RESOLVED to note the report.

### 33. LANSDOWNE SECURE UNIT UPDATE ON RELAUNCH

33.1 The Panel considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which provided a progress update on Lansdowne Secure Children's Home. The Panel heard that the home is now open with staff training currently ongoing. The home will be open to children from February 2024.

33.2 The Panel recently visited the home and commented on how impressed and pleased they were having had the opportunity to meet the staff and tour the home.

33.3 The Panel RESOLVED to note the report.

### 34. IMPOWER - SUFFICIENCY AND VALUING CARE

34.1 The Panel received a presentation from Deborah Ennis, Senior Manager, IMPOWER who updated on the work of IMPOWER with Children's Social Care since May 2023.

34.2 IMPOWER is a consultancy that works exclusively with the public sector with a focus on improving outcomes for people by transforming public services. IMPOWER works with frontline staff across the service to identify opportunities to enhance outcomes.

34.3 An analysis has been presented by IMPOWER detailing children and young people's needs in East Sussex and associated placement cost pressures in July 2023, as well as the identification of opportunities within a first cohort of children and young people with complex needs using the Valuing Care approach.

34.4 Work is currently focused on developing clear plans to embed the Valuing Care approach across process, practice and commissioning in East Sussex.

34.5 The Panel discussed the working relationship between IMPOWER and other Local Authorities including those that had received an outstanding Ofsted rating following IMPOWER's involvement.

34.6 The Panel RESOLVED to note the report.

The meeting ended at 11.26 am.

Councillor Kathryn Field  
Chair