

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

MINUTES of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held at Council Chamber, County Hall, Lewes on 24 July 2024.

PRESENT Councillors Bob Bowdler, Anne Cross, Penny di Cara, Kathryn Field (Chair), Sorrell Marlow-Eastwood and Matthew Milligan

ALSO PRESENT Carolyn Fair - Director of Children's Services
Fiona Lewis - Head of Looked After Children Services - Provider Services
Sally Carnie - Head of Looked After Children Service - Operations
Cassie Atherton - Operations Manager, Youth Support – Social Work Service
Lisa Apps – Practice Manager - Family and Friends
Dawn Walsh - Lifelong Links & Family Group Conference practice adviser - Family Rights Group
Sue Dawes – Practice Manager LAC CFW (Contact) Service
Adrian Sewell - Operations Manager, Fostering Team
Belinda Trunfull - Governance and Democracy Officer

45. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 24 APRIL 2024

45.1 RESOLVED to agree as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 24 April 2024.

46. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

46.1 There were no apologies for absence.

47. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

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

48. URGENT ITEMS

48.1 There were no urgent items.

49. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

49.1 RESOLVED to exclude the public and press from the meeting for items 6 and 7 on the agenda (see minutes 50 and 51) 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.

50. REGULATION 44 QUARTERLY SUMMARY REPORT - QUARTER 1 (APRIL - JUNE 2024)

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

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

50.2 The Panel considered Ofsted inspection reports for the following children's home:

- Brodrick House

50.3 Fiona Lewis, Head of Looked After Children Services informed that the report on the full inspection of Broderick House had now been received.

50.4 All homes received monthly visits from their Regulation 44 Independent Person including unannounced visits. Managers across all homes are making good progress on recommendations.

50.5 Recruitment continues to be a challenge; however, all homes are now working in a coordinated manner with the Children's Services Recruitment Team to ensure sufficiency.

50.6 The Panel discussed a range of issues, including recording of information, staff wellbeing and the ongoing day to day activity within the homes.

50.7 The Panel RESOLVED to note the report.

51. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (LAC) STATISTICS

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

51.2 Sally Carnie, Head of Looked After Service updated the Panel on the latest position for LAC in East Sussex. The Panel heard that in the last quarter there has been a significant

increase in LAC from 655 to 684 (increase of 29). There were 67 children admitted to care and 38 children discharged from care. This was made up of several large sibling groups, increased numbers of children being accommodated and a group of unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) being transferred via the National Transfer Scheme (NTS). The sufficiency of placements both in-house and in the independent sector continue to be extremely challenging, however, as a result of the improved financial offer, 16 new foster carer applications have been received.

51.3 At the end of June 2024 there were 351 children living in Foster Care (an increase of 13). 10 children were placed for adoption (a decrease of 6). 100 young people were living in supported housing options, homes or hostels (an increase of 5). The number of children who were living with kinship foster carers, increased significantly from 67 to 78 (an increase of 11). 24 children were living at home with their parents whilst remaining subject to a legal order to ESCC (a decrease of 3). 113 children were living in regulated residential children's homes (an increase of 5). 3 children were placed in external Secure Units and there is now 1 child placed in Lansdowne Secure Children's Home. 1 child was remanded into youth detention accommodation. There was still 1 child placed in a Family Centre or Mother and baby unit. 2 children were placed in Residential Schools. At the end of March, there were 77 UASC (a decrease of 1).

51.4 There is focus on promoting reunification of children to their families as this has a much more positive outcome.

51.5 In response to a question from the Panel regarding recruitment targets, the service informed that presently there are no set targets, however, there is a high focus on diversity and resilience.

51.6 The Panel RESOLVED to note the report.

52. LIFE LONG LINKS AND FAMILY GROUP CONFERENCE

52.1 The Panel received a presentation from Cassie Atherton - Operations Manager, Lisa Apps - Practice Manager and Dawn Walsh - Lifelong Links & Family Group Conference (FGC) practice adviser regarding the service development about Lifelong Links and Family Group Conference.

- **Family Group Conference** allows the family to identify and establish a sustainable plan to meet the needs of children and young people within their family unit. This is an opportunity to involve wider family and friends and for them to have a voice in the decisions around the child, with key emphasis placed on the child's needs.
- Objectives of the FGC include family reunification, prevention of family breakdown, parental contact issues and identifying alternative family, friends and carers all the while ensuring that the child's voice is heard.
- **Lifelong Links** is a pilot model supporting the concept of relational stability with the recognition that relationships can continue beyond placements. Lifelong Links aims to ensure that a child in care has a positive support network around them to help them during their time in care and into adulthood.
- The number of young people referred to Lifelong Links continues to grow with 10 referrals made so far between April and July 2024 as well as positive feedback received from young the people taking part.
- **Family Rights Group** is a national charity that works with parents whose children are in need, at risk or are in the care system and with wider family

members and friends who are raising children. Family Rights Group offer advice about rights and options when social workers or courts make decisions about children's welfare.

52.2 The Panel also welcomed a video titled 'Sadie's story' and commented that it was pleasing to hear about the children's experiences. The Panel commended the team on their positive work with children and their families.

52.3 The Panel RESOLVED to note the report.

53. FAMILY TIME (COMMUNITY FAMILY WORK SERVICE)

53.1 The Panel considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which provided an update on the Community Family Work (CFW) Service.

53.2 Sue Dawes, Practice Manager LAC CFW (Contact) Service provided an update on the work carried out by the CFW service. The CFW service offers countywide provision of supervised contact, life story book work (for infants) and reunification family support. The service is based across 3 sites in Hailsham, Silverlands and Newhaven.

53.3 The service currently provides 24,949 contact hours per rolling year (482 contact hours per week) and work with 309 looked-after children.

53.4 Maintaining supervised contact with parents is important to a child's wellbeing following the trauma, loss and separation from their parents. Information is provided in an age-appropriate way to children around their identity, helping them understand who they are and where they come from as well as information about their parents, family, home, pets and all-important people in their lives.

53.5 Careful consideration is placed on choice of venue for the contact meetings ensuring that it is close to where the child lives. Contact takes place in the community in places such as the local park or leisure park. A Community Family Worker also attends the contact meeting.

53.6 CFW research and prepare Life Story Book Work for infants and toddlers. A Life Story Book provides an age-appropriate narrative for the child to look through with their family and includes detail gathered from the key people in the child's life.

53.7 In response to a question about venues, the Panel was informed that great care is taken to ensure that children do not have to travel far, alternative venues will be used including civic and children's centres.

53.8 The Panel RESOLVED to note the report.

54. ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT OF EAST SUSSEX FOSTERING SERVICE - 1 APRIL 2023 - 31 MARCH 2024

54.1 The Panel considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which outlined the performance and progress of the Fostering Service between 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

54.2 Adrian Sewell, Operations Manager – Fostering Service provided further detail regarding the key activities and work of the service. This included information regarding Fostering Duty, Commissioning, High Intensive Supported Accommodation, Fostering Recruitment Recognition

and Retention, 16+ Fostering & Supporting Independence Team, Support and Supervision of Foster Carers, Placement support service, Children in Care Council (CiCC) and Priorities for 2024/25.

54.3 In response to a question around the Learning Pool for carers and accessing information, the Panel was updated that an online handbook is currently being developed which will be searchable by subject and e-learning courses will be made accessible post completion.

54.4 The Panel discussed opportunities that could be made available by the local authority to young people in terms of work experience and mentoring and requested that this topic is considered and presented at a future Corporate Parenting Panel meeting.

54.5 The Panel RESOLVED to note the report.

The meeting ended at 12.15 pm.

Councillor Kathryn Field
Chair