

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

MINUTES of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held at Priory, Room 2F Centre Block, County Hall - County Hall, Lewes on 2 April 2025.

PRESENT Councillors Kathryn Field (Chair), Bob Bowdler, Anne Cross, Penny di Cara, Colin Belsey and Colin Swansborough

ALSO PRESENT Carolyn Fair – Director of Children’s Services

 Kathy Marriott – Assistant Director of Children’s Services

 Fiona Lewis – Head of Looked After Children Services – Provider Services

 Deborah Ennis – Assistant Director of Children’s Services

 Fiona Lewis - Head of Looked After Children Services - Provider Services

 Sally Carnie - Head of Looked After Children Service – Operations

 Charlotte De Retuerto – Operations Manager Children’s Disability Services

 Verity Lloyd – Operations Manager Children’s Residential – Open Homes

 Dr Isabelle Hodgson – Designated Doctor – NHS Sussex

 Georgina Seligmann - Governance and Democracy Manager

 Summer Kelly – Governance and Democracy Officer

77. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 30 JANUARY 2025

77.1 RESOLVED to agree as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2025.

78. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

78.1 Apologies were received for Councillor Sorrell Marlow-Eastwood, it was noted that Councillor Johanna Howell was in attendance as substitute.

79. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

79.1 Councillor Kathryn Field declared an interest as Battle Pre School Chair. She did not consider this to be prejudicial.

80. URGENT ITEMS

80.1 There were none.

81. REPORTS

81.1 Reports referred to in the minutes below are contained in the minute book.

82. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

82.1 RESOLVED to exclude the public and press from the meeting for items 6 and 7 on the agenda (see minutes 83 and 84) 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.

83. REGULATION 44 QUARTERLY SUMMARY REPORT - QUARTER 4 (JANUARY - MARCH 2025)

83.1 The Panel considered the Quarterly Registered Children's Home report relating to all East Sussex County Council Children's Homes, including updates from Regulation 44 reports and relevant Ofsted reports.

83.2 The following points were highlighted to the Panel:

- 1) The Bungalow was inspected in December 2024 where it received a judgement of 'Requires Improvement to be Good'.
- 2) There were 5 Ofsted Inspections during Quarter 4: Silver Birches was inspected on 2 January and judged 'Good', Acorns was inspected on 15 January and judged 'Requires Improvement', Hazel Lodge was judged 'Good' on 21 January, The Bungalow received an Assurance Inspection on 12 February where it continued to be judged 'Requires Improvement to be Good', Homefield was inspected in March.
- 3) All homes have received monthly visits from their Regulation 44 Independent Person including unannounced visits. The visits continue to pose valuable challenge and constructive reflection for the Registered Managers.
- 4) Staffing remains challenging in the current market; however there has been positive recruitment, particularly at The Bungalow. The homes now have few vacancies, and the managers are focussed on driving performance through management of attendance which has been a significant pressure over a number of years.
- 5) Ofsted inspection of Silver Birches Children's Home – 2-3 January 2025. A full inspection of Silver Birches in January rated the home 'Good' across all areas. There was one requirement relating to Ofsted notification criteria and one recommendation that the Registered Homes Manager (RHM) should 'fully consider the impact that a new child moving into the home could have on the existing group of children.'
- 6) Ofsted Inspection of Acorns – 15-16 January 2025. A full inspection of Acorns in January identified that the home 'Required Improvement to be Good'. This was a positive outcome given the changes that have taken place, the interim placement of one child

and the building work which is required to bring the home up to standard. There were four requirements relating to best practice following allegations or incidents, recruitment checks and the Reg 45 Review Document. There were 2 recommendations relating to promoting a safeguarding culture within supervision and developing a written policy covering use of monitoring equipment.

- 7) Ofsted Inspection of Hazel Lodge – 21-22 January 2025. A full inspection of Hazel Lodge in January found the home to be 'Good' overall with only Leadership and Management judged to 'Require Improvement to be Good'. There were 2 requirements relating to staff training and record keeping. There were 3 Recommendations relating to supervision, recruitment and Return Home Interviews.
- 8) Ofsted Inspection of The Bungalow December 2024 and February 2025. A full Inspection in December and an Assurance Inspection 2 months later both found The Bungalow to 'Require Improvement to be Good'. The original inspection took place within a few weeks of the service relocating back to the building, whilst decoration was still being completed and children still settling. The Bungalow provides care for 7 children with complex needs and disabilities. East Sussex challenged the initial report leading to a number of changes.

83.3 Following discussion, the panel RESOLVED to note the report.

84. EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL CHILDREN'S HOMES

84.1 The Panel received a presentation on East Sussex County Council's Residential Children's Homes, the experience of Ofsted inspections, outcomes, strengths and areas for development across the homes. The presentation included the voices of young people's experiences of the Residential Children's Homes.

84.2 The presentation explored graded judgements, online safety, the maintenance of the county's Children's Homes and future challenges, such as digitalising services, the increased demand for placements and recruitment, in particularly recent changes in staffing.

84.3 The Panel heard details of the Ofsted framework and how this had been applied to East Sussex County Council's Residential Children's Homes.

84.4 Following discussion, the Panel RESOLVED to note the presentation.

85. EARLY HEALTH AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE REFORMS

85.1 The Panel considered an update on Early Help and Children's Social Care reforms.

85.2 The transformation activity across the Children's system is being implemented with a focus on driving improvements in outcomes and reducing costs.

85.3 The Panel received a presentation on the Early Health and Children's Social Care Reforms. The presentation informed the Panel of ongoing activity in East Sussex in response to the Government's strategy 'Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive' (November 2024) and the current Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, to help reshape the delivery of early help

and social care services. The presentation explored 4 key strands, these were, prevention, family help, multi-agency child protection teams and family Networks and Kinship Care.

85.4 The presentation explored four key strands, these were, prevention, family help, multi-agency child protection teams and family Networks and Kinship Care.

85.5 The Panel RESOLVED to note the update on transformation activity in East Sussex in response to the national reforms in Early Help and Children's Social Care.

86. REGIONAL CARE COOPERATIVE (RCC) UPDATE

86.1 The Panel received an update on the development of the Regional Care Cooperative and the involvement of East Sussex County Council.

86.2 The following points were highlighted to the Panel:

- 1) The Department for Education (DfE) published Stable Homes, Built on Love, an implementation strategy and consultation, on 2 February 2023. The consultation was backed by £200m additional investment. The DfE launched a competition for regions to bid for the opportunity to be funded to implement a Regional Care Cooperative (RCC). East Sussex County Council (ESCC) committed to the successful regional bid and are working with the other 18 Local Authorities (LAs) involved to design and develop the RCC.
- 2) The DfE are running 2 regional Pathfinders to pilot Regional Care Cooperatives. The South East region was successful in bidding for one of the pathfinder projects and has been awarded a grant of £1.95m of revenue funding and up to £5m of capital funding for the 19 authorities in the region. As one of 2 regions taking part, ESCC will play a key role in shaping the future delivery of this key development in children's services.
- 3) The implementation of the South East RCC is one strand of much wider transformation activity that is being implemented across the children's system in East Sussex, with a focus on driving improvements in outcomes and reducing costs.
- 4) £1.95m of grant revenue funding is being provided to the South East region to help develop a model that delivers DfE requirements for RCCs and works well for all the authorities in the region. This work will also include key partners most notably health and youth justice agencies.
- 5) The project is being led by a Director of Children's Services (Lucy Butler – West Sussex County Council) from the South East who has been seconded from her role to lead the work. The RCC will be co-produced and designed by the 19 authorities in the region.

86.3 The Panel RESOLVED to note the update on the development of the Regional Care Cooperative and the involvement of East Sussex County Council.

The meeting ended at 12:34pm

Councillor Kathryn Field
Chair