

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

MINUTES of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held at CC1, County Hall, Lewes on 30 October 2020.

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

ALSO PRESENT Liz Rugg – Assistant Director, Early Help and Social Care
Sally Carnie – Head of LAC Services
Teresa Lavelle-Hill – Head of LAC Services
Fiona Lewis – Operations Manager, Safeguarding Unit
Sally Williams – Operations Manager
Mandy Lewis – Head of Virtual School
Beverley Moores – Strategic Lead, Children’s Disability Social Care ISEND
Nicola Scott – Operations Manager, Residential LAC Services
Dawn Siddens – Designated Nurse for LAC
Ian Williams – Registered Homes Manager, Hazel Lodge
Charlotte de Retuerto - Registered Homes Manager, Sorrel Drive
Helen Simmons - Registered Homes Manager, Lansdowne Secure Children’s Home
Roy Noble – Deputy Manager, Homefield Cottage
Steven Crowe – Deputy Manager, Brodrick House
Aaron Sams – Democratic Services Officer

52 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 24 JULY 2020

52.1 RESOLVED: to agree as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 24 July 2020.

53 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

53.1 There were none.

54 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

54.1 There were none.

55 URGENT ITEMS

55.1 There were none.

56 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

57 CHILDREN'S HOME REGULATIONS 2015, REGULATION 44: INSPECTION REPORTS FOR JULY 2020 - SEPTEMBER 2020

57.1 The Panel considered Regulation 44 Reports for the period July 2020 to September 2020 for the following Children's Homes:

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

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

57.3 The Panel discussed the impact of Covid-19 on Children's Homes and how the service coped with the challenges posed by the pandemic. In particular, and where a child or young person was suspected to have been exposed to the virus, Members wanted to understand more about the procedures in place for self-isolation. In response the Panel were informed that in order to ensure the safety of children and young people and staff, individuals who might have been exposed to the virus self-isolated for 14 days. The Panel also heard that enhanced cleaning procedures are in place, and where appropriate staff are using Personal Protective Equipment.

57.4 The Panel gave thanks to the Registered Homes Managers and their colleagues for their exemplary service in response to the pandemic and for the support they have provided in difficult circumstances to the children and young people in the Council's care.

57.5 RESOLVED: to note the reports.

58 ANY OTHER EXEMPT ITEMS CONSIDERED URGENT BY THE CHAIR.

58.1 There were none.

59 ANNUAL REPORT OF SERVICES FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN 2019-20

59.1 The Panel considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which provided an update on the annual performance of the Looked After Children (LAC) Service for 2019-20.

59.2 The update provided detail about the achievements of the LAC service and the ongoing challenges it faces. The Panel were also provided with current figures for LAC in 2019/20, including:

- **Looked After Children:** The rate of Looked After Children (LAC) in ESCC per 10,000 of the population under 18 years of age reduced from 56.6% in 18/19 to 55.7%. The national rate for England is 65%.

- **Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC):** In 19/20 there were 32 UASC under 18 years of age in the care of East Sussex and ESCC has also retained responsibility for 48 young people as they turn 18 and become care leavers. The Panel also heard that, amongst other developments, there has been specific training delivered to UASC to help support their adjustment to life in the UK.
- **Children with disabilities:** The number of LAC with disabilities remains similar to previous years, at 27 children. The Panel were informed of plans going forward to create more capacity and flexibility in the structure of the Children's Homes to safely manage the needs of disabled children requiring accommodation or respite.
- **Recruitment and retention of Fosters:** 22 foster households were approved in 19/20 which means that East Sussex remains in a favourable position in the context of a national shortage of foster carers.

59.3 The Panel discussed accommodation options for Care Leavers aged 19-21. In particular, the Panel noted the small reduction in the percentage of young people living in suitable accommodation (a decrease of 1.1% when compared to the data from 18/19). As a result, the Panel sought reassurance that this specific issue is being addressed. In response, Members were informed of the ongoing work with local housing authorities to ensure that there is a sufficient supply of suitable accommodation. The Panel were also informed about the Department's collaborative work with the Adult Social Care and Health Department. This work aims to help improve the understanding of the needs of an individual young person and therefore help find accommodation which is better suited to their circumstances.

59.4 RESOLVED: to note the report.

60 INDEPENDENT REVIEWING SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT

60.1 The Panel considered the Independent Reviewing Service (IRS) Annual report for the period 2019/20. Fiona Lewis, Operations Manager – Safeguarding Unit, introduced the report by providing an update on a number of issues including: the statutory obligations of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO), the management of caseloads and Looked After Children Reviews.

60.2 The Panel were informed about progress against the key priorities for 2019/20 for the Service. In particular the Panel noted the positive progress being made with regard to the participation of individual children in the review. For example, the Panel heard how the LAC reviewing process has, since the beginning of 2020, been renamed 'My Voice Matters', a name which was chosen by the children and young people in care. The Panel discussed this development and were also informed a 'My Voice Matters' page is now included within a child's review document; that each child now also receives a letter from their IRO after their meetings. The letter aims to ensure the views of each child are captured and then taken into account as a key part of their review. With the same aim in mind, the letter is also shared with the social work team around the child.

60.3 RESOLVED: to note the report.

61 VIRTUAL SCHOOL ANNUAL REPORT - 1 APRIL 2019 - 31 MARCH 2020

61.1 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 2019 - 31 March 2020.

61.2 The Panel were informed that due to the impact of Covid-19 the DfE (Department for Education) announced that performance data based on summer 2020 tests and assessments

would not be published. Therefore, trend comparisons with previous years as well as performance comparisons with statistical neighbours and national data could not be provided.

61.3 That Panel were briefed on the work of the East Sussex Virtual School, which included: supporting 358 children who were looked after (LAC), and a total of 606 children and young people including Care Leavers (CL), continued development of the Springboard project with Bede's School which provided four students with residential places and one student with a day place which started in September 2020, the appointment of two Personal Advisers (PA's) one to work with young people who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) and one to support the education of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC).

61.4 The Panel discussed feedback from children that described decreased levels of anxiety during the period of home learning while the schools were closed during the Covid-19 lockdown. The Panel questioned whether there would be consideration given for increased home learning, in particular for those children for whom anxiety is an issue. The Panel were assured that the issue of anxiety around school attendance was a key part of the ongoing development plan and this will include discussions around different ways of providing education. Although physical school attendance remains fundamental, the utilization of technology for supplementing this is being investigated as a development moving forward.

61.5 RESOLVED: to note the report.

62 LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN HEALTH REPORT

62.1 The Panel considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which provide an update on the Health of Looked After Children (LAC). Alongside this report the Panel also considered the Pan-Sussex Report on the Health of LAC, and the East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust (ESHT) report on the Health of LAC in East Sussex.

62.2 The Panel were provided with an overview of the key developments and work undertaken to support the health of LAC in East Sussex, including:

- improvements in meeting the statutory timescales for carrying out Initial Health Assessments (IHS);
- a Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) which found IHS and Review Health Assessments (RHA) to be of high quality;
- the ongoing development work to help young people as they move on from the support provided by the Children's Services Department. For example, a Personal Health Summary document has been developed which provides key health facts, information about the health service and guidance on staying healthy.

62.3 The Panel discussed the importance of support for the emotional wellbeing and mental health of LAC and Care Leavers, specifically given the mental health impacts of Covid-19. In response, the Panel were informed that a need for clear pathways and reporting for mental health have been identified following the East Sussex Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) and that a new lead officer has been appointed to take this work forward.

62.4 RESOLVED: to note the report.

63 LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (LAC) STATISTICS

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

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

63.3 RESOLVED: to note the report.

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

64.1 There were none.

The meeting ended at 12:05pm