

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

MINUTES of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 24 April 2015 at County Hall, Lewes

PRESENT: Councillors Charlton, O’Keeffe, St Pierre (Chair), Galley, Sheppard and Tidy

ALSO PRESENT: Liz Rugg, Assistant Director, Safeguarding, LAC and Youth Justice
Adrian Sewell, Operations Manager, Fostering
Niki Kitcher, Practice Manager, Adoption Service
Janet Fairless, RHM Brodrick House and acting RHM Hazel Lodge
Denise Pead, Acting RHM Homefield Cottage
Nicky Scott, Operations Manager, LAC Services
Anthony Julyan, Operations Manager, Children’s Disability Services
Helen Simmons, RHM Sorrel Drive and Acorns
Nigel Hewitt, RHM Lansdowne Secure Unit

31. MINUTES

21.1 RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2015 as a correct record.

32. APOLOGIES

32.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Clark.

32.2 Apologies were also received Teresa Lavelle-Hill, Joint Head of LAC Services.

33.3 Councillor O’Keeffe was present from 10:18am to 11:52am.

33. REPORTS

33.1 Copies of the reports referred to below are included in the minute book.

34. URGENT ITEMS

34.1 None.

35. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

35.1 RESOLVED to exclude the public and press from the meeting for the following two items on the agenda 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 exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

36. OFSTED REPORTS

36.1 The Panel was informed of the Children’s Services Department’s progress in discussions with Ofsted regarding recent reports.

36.2 The Panel considered reports received from Ofsted on the following services:

- (a) Brodrick House
- (b) Hazel Lodge
- (c) Homefield Cottage
- (d) The Bungalow, Sorrel Drive

36.3 RESOLVED to note the reports.

37. CHILDREN'S HOMES REGULATIONS 1991, REGULATION 33: INSPECTION REPORTS

37.1 The Panel considered Regulation 33 Reports for December, January and February 2015 for the following Children's Homes:

- (a) Acorns at Dorset Road
- (b) Brodrick House
- (c) Hazel Lodge
- (d) Homefield Cottage
- (e) Lansdowne Secure Unit
- (f) The Bungalow, Sorrel Drive

37.2 Each Registered Home Manager gave a brief oral update on activity at the home covering the inspection period and bringing the Panel up to date.

37.3 RESOLVED to note the reports.

38. ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT OF THE EAST SUSSEX FOSTERING SERVICE

38.1 The Panel considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which outlined the performance and progress of the East Sussex Fostering Service for the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015. Adrian Sewell, Operations Manager highlighted aspects of the Service's work such as recruitment and retention, and the marketing techniques used to promote the Service.

38.2 Also highlighted was the number of agency foster carers who had transferred to the East Sussex Fostering Service resulting in savings to East Sussex of £256,000 per year in agency fees; the provision of foster care training which has been taken up by foster carers and the excellent standards of that training; and the excellent partnerships between the East Sussex Fostering Service and existing partners such as the Virtual School, ESFCA and CAMHS.

38.3 The Panel discussed: the significant and valued input the Children in Care Council have had to the Service; the age range of the foster carers in ESCC; the motivation factors of foster carers; the reduction in agency placements and the importance of e-safety and online safeguarding.

38.4 RESOLVED to note the report.

39. ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT OF THE EAST SUSSEX ADOPTION AND PERMANENCE SERVICE 1 APRIL 2014 TO 31 MARCH 2015

39.1 The Panel considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which outlined the performance and progress of the East Sussex Adoption and Permanence Service for the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015. Niki Kitcher, Practice Manager, highlighted aspects of the Service's work such as recruitment activity; the Adoption Support Service; children with a plan for

permanence; and the partnership work which has taken place with the Virtual School, AdCAMHS, Adoption Link and the Adoptive Families Group.

39.2 The Panel discussed: the importance of providing support to adopters once a placement has been made, particularly to families who adopt babies and young children where later health problems may arise; the significant and valued support provided by the Adoptive Families Group; the adoption support and training offered from the County Council to potential adopters; and the statutory reasons which require the fostering service and adoption service to be managed separately.

39.3 RESOLVED to note the report.

40. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (LAC) HEALTH SERVICE UPDATE

40.1 The Panel considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which gave an update on the progress of the Health Service for Looked After Children. Liz Rugg, Assistant Director, Safeguarding, LAC and Youth Justice, informed the Panel that during 2012-13 the health services provided to Looked After Children in East Sussex were subject to considerable disruption. In July 2014 it reached a critical point.

40.2 The Panel were informed that the East Sussex Healthcare Trust and Clinical Commissioning Groups had approached Kent Community Healthcare Trust to provide interim cover to ensure LAC were guaranteed at least the minimum statutory health interventions. Since the commissioning of services to Kent there has been a much more robust healthcare service for LAC and positive feedback has been received.

40.3 The Panel praised the individuals involved in providing healthcare to LAC.

40.4 RESOLVED to note the report.

41. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (LAC) STATISTICS

41.1 The Panel considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which outlined the changes to the numbers of Looked After Children (LAC) in the last quarter. Liz Rugg, Assistant Director Safeguarding, LAC and Youth Justice explained that the statistics represented a snapshot of the activity of the Service at the end of the quarter and that there is considerable activity which goes on throughout the months.

41.2 Members' attention was drawn to the overall downward trend in the number of children; the importance of ensuring reduction is managed safely; and the reductions in the use of agency foster care.

41.3 The Panel discussed: Special Guardianship Orders; the importance of keeping children in the care of their families; the Family Drug and Alcohol Court; and the reduction in funding for the service of £400,000 since the adoption Reform Grant has ceased. .

41.4 RESOLVED to note the report.