

## 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 25 July 2023.

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PRESENT Councillor Bob Bowdler, Councillor Penny di Cara, Councillor Kathryn Field (Chair), Councillor Sorrell Marlow-Eastwood, Councillor Matthew Milligan and Councillor Colin Swansborough

ALSO PRESENT Kathy Marriott - Assistant Director, Early Help and Social Care  
Alison Jeffery - Director of Children's Services  
Sally Carnie - Head of Looked After Service  
Heather Lomas - Designated Nurse: Children and Young people in care  
Dawn Siddens - Designated Nurse: Children and Young people in care  
Adrian Sewell - Operations Manager, Fostering Team  
Darren Edwardes - Senior Social Worker/Health and Wellbeing Project Manager  
Belinda Trunfull - Member Services

### 1. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 APRIL 2023

1.1 RESOLVED to agree as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 25 April 2023.

### 2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2.1 Apologies were received from Councillor Jonny Denis.

### 3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

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

### 4. URGENT ITEMS

4.1 There were no urgent items.

### 5. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

### 6. QUARTERLY REGISTERED CHILDREN'S HOMES REPORT

6.1 The Panel considered 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

6.2 The Panel considered Ofsted Inspection reports for the following Children's Homes:

- The Bungalow
- Acorns
- Homefield Cottage

6.3 The Panel welcomed the reports and received a verbal update from Kathy Marriott, Assistant Director, Early Help and Social Care. The Panel received a detailed explanation of Reg 44 and were also informed that all recommendations on the report had been actioned.

6.4 The Panel requested an update on inviting Looked After Children (LAC) and Care Leavers to future meetings. In response, the Panel were updated that a young person was due to attend the meeting, however, due to unforeseen circumstances they were unable to. Alternative arrangements will be made to accommodate them in a future meeting.

6.5 The Panel discussed judgements on Ofsted reports and suggested that it would be useful to see a background narrative explaining the reason behind judgement decisions as this could be key in ensuring that that staff are not left feeling demoralised. Kathy Marriott updated the Panel that that this will be fed into a consultation taking place soon regarding Ofsted requirements for children's homes.

6.6 The Panel suggested writing to Ofsted putting their view forward regarding judgements and the importance of providing a narrative. Alison Jeffery, Director of Children's Services agreed to draft a letter for the Panel to review.

6.7 The Panel were satisfied that the Home Managers had appropriate action plans in place to address the recommendations within the reports.

6.8 The Panel RESOLVED to note the report.

## 7. ANY OTHER EXEMPT ITEMS CONSIDERED URGENT BY THE CHAIR.

7.1 There were none.

## 8. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (LAC) STATISTICS

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

8.2 Sally Carnie, Head of LAC Services updated the Panel on the latest position for LAC in East Sussex. During the last quarter, a total of 677 children were living in care which is the

highest number of children the Local Authority (LA) has cared for in the last 20 years. Of this total, 342 children are in Foster Care (a decrease of 15). 250 were living with approved ESCC carers (a decrease of 10). 90 children were living with independent agency carers (a decrease of 5) and 2 with other LA carers. 88 young people were living in supported housing options, homes or hostels (an increase of 3). There were 20 children placed for adoption (an increase of 4).

8.3 Children living with kinship foster carers remained the same as the previous quarter at 77. The number of children living at home with their parents whilst remaining subject to a legal order to ESCC, has decreased from 33 to 30. The number of children living in regulated residential children's homes increased to 113 (increase of 21).

8.4 There were 2 children placed in external Secure Units. The number of young people seeking asylum was 71. The number of children subject to Child Arrangement / Residence Orders remained the same at 342 and those children subject to a Special Guardianship Order decreased by 3 to 475. There were no complaints from LAC during this period.

8.5 The Panel discussed the rise in numbers of care leavers and were informed that a few options are currently being explored like increasing in house capacity for children with complex needs, demand management and working with providers in the market to bridge the gap.

8.6 The Panel RESOLVED to note the report.

## 9. FOSTERING REPORT

9.1 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 2022 to 31 March 2023.

9.2 Adrian Sewell, Operations Manager – Fostering Service provided further detail regarding the key activities and work of the service including information around fostering duty, high intensive supported accommodation, recruitment and retention, supported lodgings, support supervision of foster carers, foster carer training, Children in Care Council (CiCC) and priorities for 2023/24.

9.3 In response to a question from the Panel regarding pressures on Foster Carers and outstanding allegations, the Panel were informed that there were no allegations pending and that majority that go through the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) are usually unsubstantiated.

9.4 The Panel discussed supported lodgings and requested more detail on their set up and running. In response, the Panel were informed that a supported lodging is equivalent to a foster care placement which is overseen by the LA who ensure that all relevant safeguarding is in place. Supported lodgings can be used as a steppingstone to independence for 16 to 17-year-olds and is therefore essential that this market is maintained.

9.5 The Panel RESOLVED to note the report.

## 10. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (LAC) HEALTH

10.1 The Panel received a presentation from Heather Lomas and Dawn Siddens, Designated Nurses - Children and Young people in care outlining the role and responsibilities of the NHS in relation to children in care together with performance data and analysis. The presentation also

highlighted the priorities for NHS Sussex in relation to children in care and care experienced young people.

10.2 The Panel discussed performance data and the number of young people turning down referrals. The Panel were informed that Business Support Officers are now in place to chase up any referrals which have been turned down. In addition, a strategic health group meeting takes place quarterly, the group reviews declined referrals and how they are recorded with a view to streamlining the process and bringing down the numbers. The Panel agreed that it would be beneficial to see the refusal figures.

10.3 The Panel RESOLVED to note the report.

## 11. CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL (CICC) PRESENTATION AND BRIGHTSPOTS SURVEY - HEALTH

11.1 The Panel received a presentation from Kathy Marriott, Assistant Director, Early Help and Social Care outlining Children in Care's experience of health and wellbeing services.

11.2 In July 2022, a survey was conducted with children in care aged 4-18 to understand their wellbeing and to identify what has gone well and what needs improvement.

11.3 Children felt that the time they got to spend with family was 'just right'; over 80% of 8-18 years olds felt that life was getting better and took part in hobbies and activities; 100% of 4-7-year-olds got to have fun at weekends; over 94% of 8-11-year-olds and 11-18-year-olds felt carers showed an interest in their education; 100% of 4-7-year-olds, 94% of 8-11-year-olds and 96% of 11-18-year-olds trusted their carers; and over 99% of children aged 8-11 and 11-18-year-olds knew who their social worker was, compared to 92% in other LAs.

11.4 The survey highlighted the importance of promoting hobbies and activities to establish healthy friendships and parity with peers. It is also essential for adults to ensure that that young people do not feel stigmatised for example by wearing lanyards when visiting young people in educational settings. Support needs to be offered in terms of activities to ensure that young people feel that the things they do in life are worthwhile.

11.5 Direct work with young people will be undertaken to clarify issues raised in the survey as follows:

- Virtual School to review Personal Education Plan (PEP) process.
- Safeguarding Unit to pick up issues raised through 'My Voice Matters' meetings.
- Pathway plan process to be reviewed.
- Further events planned to gain greater understanding from young people.
- Dissemination event to take place to share findings with all key stakeholders and young people in Autumn 2023.

11.6 The Panel welcomed the presentation and enquired if AB testing had been used during the survey. In response, the Panel were informed that the survey was completed anonymously, and it was not known if AB testing had been used, however, it was agreed that it would be interesting to see if this is something that affects responses for future surveys.

11.7 The Panel discussed how the survey compared to other LAs. It was noted that that there is a cost involved for the LAs and the completed rate was at around 30%.

11.8 The Panel RESOLVED to note the contents of the report.

12. CARE LEAVERS - PERSONALISED HEALTH BUDGETS PROGRAMME

12.1 The Panel considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which provided an update on the Health and Wellbeing Project for care leavers.

12.2 Darren Edwardes, Senior Social Worker - Health and Wellbeing Project Manager updated the Panel on the project's aim targeting those identified young people with the service who were experiencing difficulties with their mental health and wellbeing and whose lives were impacted adversely from their own experiences in life as well as through the Covid-19 pandemic.

12.3 The Panel watched a video compilation of young people speaking about their activities and the positive impact this has had on their mental wellbeing. The Panel were informed that the music used in the video had been produced by one of the young people interviewed.

12.4 In response to a question regarding funding, the Panel were informed that funding was allocated in October 2021 following a successful bid from NHS England, currently there has been an underspend on the funding, however options are being explored for future funding.

12.5 The Panel RESOLVED to note the contents of the report.

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

13.1 There were none.

The meeting ended at 3.20 pm.

Councillor Kathryn Field  
Chair