

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

MINUTES of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held at County Hall, Lewes on 29 January 2016.

PRESENT Councillors Ruth O’Keeffe (Chair), Roy Galley, Jim Sheppard, Rosalyn St. Pierre and Sylvia Tidy

ALSO PRESENT

Liz Rugg, Assistant Director, Safeguarding, LAC and Youth Justice

Teresa Lavelle-Hill, Joint Head of Looked After Children Service

Nigel Hewitt, RHM Lansdowne Secure Unit

Nicky Scott, Operations Manager - Residential LAC Services

Ian Williams, Registered Homes Manager - Homefield Cottage

Antony Julyan, Operations Manager

Dawn Emsley, Deputy Manager Brodrick house

Helen Simmons, RHM Sorrel Drive and Acorns

Tina Henderson, Sheeleagh Steward, and Nigel Hodgson (Adopted Families Group) – for Item 9 (minute 29)

Harvey Winder, Democratic Services Officer

23 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16 OCTOBER 2015

23.1 The Panel agreed the minutes to be a correct record of the meeting held on 16 October 2015.

24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

24.1 Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Charles Clark.

25 URGENT ITEMS

25.1 The Chair agreed to raise as an urgent item a verbal update to the panel about an upcoming multi agency inspection in East Sussex that is expected to take place at the end of February.

26 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Panel agreed to exclude the public and press from the meeting for the next three agenda items 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 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), namely information relating to any individual.

27 OFSTED INSPECTION REPORTS FOR THE FOLLOWING:

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

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

- (a) Brodrick House
- (b) Hazel Lodge
- (c) Homefield Cottage
- (d) Lansdowne Secure Unit

27.3 The Panel discussed the sleeping conditions for staff at Brodrick House.

27.4 The Panel RESOLVED to note the reports.

28 CHILDREN'S HOME REGULATIONS 1991, REGULATION 44: INSPECTION REPORTS FOR AUGUST, SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER.

28.1 The Panel considered Regulation 33 Reports for August, September, October and November 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

28.2 Each Registered Home Manager gave a brief oral update on activity at the home covering the period since the last Panel meeting and bringing the Panel up to date.

28.3 The Panel RESOLVED to note the reports.

29 ADOPTED FAMILIES GROUP (AFG) (EAST SUSSEX)

29.1 The Panel considered a report by the Director of Children's Services providing an insight into the work of the Adopted Families Group (AFG). The report involved a presentation from three members of the AFG.

29.2 In addition to the content of the report, the AFG provided the following information – in response to questions from the Panel – relating to the work of the AFG and the importance of post adoption support to adoptive families in East Sussex:

- Adopted children often require post adoption support and in this regard the AFG recognises the value of the Virtual School and Adopted Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (AdCAMHS) in helping adopted children and their families.
- AFG has successfully lobbied to get the Pupil Premium for adopted children and is now lobbying to have it ring-fenced to be spent specifically on the adopted child and not on the school as a whole.
- It is vital that parents of adopted children ask for professional help if they are struggling to cope. Parents can be given vital assistance, and it can often lead to the diagnosis of

previously unknown health problems – especially because adopted parents do not have access to the child's medical records.

- AFG has observed that children entering the Looked After Children (LAC) service in recent years are displaying more challenging behaviour, particularly in the age range of 18 months to two years old. This means that foster parents and adoptive parents require more help than before.
- AFG is concerned about budget cuts to post adoption services, especially considering that East Sussex currently has an excellent service. According to Freedom of Information requests to other local authorities in the south east, no other local authority is planning to reduce funding to post adoption services.

29.3 The Panel RESOLVED to note the report and thank the AFG members.

30 UPDATE ON UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM SEEKING CHILDREN (UASC) AND REFUGEES, SEPTEMBER-DECEMBER 2015

30.1 The Panel considered a report by the Director of Children's Services providing an update on Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) and refugees during quarter 2 of the 2015/16 financial year.

30.2 The Panel was informed by officers that any response to the large number of asylum seekers in Kent would require a coordinated national response and could not be resolved at a local level. The Looked After Children (LAC) service is running at full capacity already, so if a national dispersal system is instituted it will have an impact on services in East Sussex – most likely requiring the use of agency foster carers.

30.3 The Panel RESOLVED to 1) note the report; and

2) request that it be made a standing item on the agenda.

31 LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (LAC) STATISTICS

31.1 The Panel considered a report by the Director of Children's Services providing an update on changes over Quarter 2 of the 2015/16 financial year to Looked After Children (LAC) statistics.

31.2 The Panel was informed by officers that a policy was in place to reduce the use of agency foster carers in favour of placing children in in-house placements. This process involves reviewing placements when they come to an end and does not involve disrupting children in stable placements. This process is expected to deliver significant savings. There were now 22 fewer placements in agency foster care compared to at the start of the calendar year 2015.

31.3 The Panel RESOLVED to note the report.

The meeting ended at 12.17 pm.

Councillor Ruth O'Keeffe
Chair