

Minutes of the Corporate Parenting Panel meeting 22 October 2012

Present:

Members

Cllr Appleton
Cllr Fowler
Cllr Hicks
Cllr Rickhards
Cllr Robbins (Chair)
Cllr Williams

Officers

Brenda Vincent, Service Manager - Safeguarding
Richard Maybey, Democratic Services Officer

1.1 Apologies for absence

Cllr Timms (Portfolio Holder, Children and Schools)

1.2 Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None

1.3 Minutes of the Corporate Parenting Steering Group held on 8 May 2012

Noted

1.4 Chair's Announcements

The Chair welcomed members and officers to this inaugural meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel, and suggested that Item 5 of the agenda (Terms of Reference) be taken first to establish a consensus on the approach to future meetings. This was agreed (*see section 5 of the minutes below*).

2.0 Looked After Children – Action Plan

2.1 Members questioned the likelihood of the authority being able to “safely reduce the number of LAC” (the first entry in the action plan), given the rising numbers detailed in the LAC dataset (circulated at the meeting).

2.2 Brenda Vincent explained that the Safeguarding Business Unit is working with the Social Research Unit on a project (known as the “Dartington project”) to reduce LAC numbers via alternative evidence-based interventions.

- This focuses primarily on interventions for children aged 12+ experiencing family breakdown
- The project is based around proven evidence-based interventions, such as Triple P and Functional Family Therapy
- Members asked that the lead officer for the project (Phil Sawbridge) attend a future meeting to provide a progress update with evidence and outcomes

2.3 Brenda agreed to update the LAC Action Plan for the next meeting using a Red/Amber/Green colour coding system to indicate progress.

- 2.4 Members noted that there was no reference in the Action Plan to preparing young people for work. Brenda explained that this would be part of the Leaving Care Action Plan and agreed to bring this to the next meeting.

3.0 Report of the Adoption Service, 2011-12

Members noted the report, particularly the good progress the authority has made in increasing number of children approved for adoption. However, it was acknowledged that there is still difficulty in matching those children with a suitable family, often due to issues around placing siblings and complex needs.

4.0 Performance Data

Adoption Scorecard

- 4.1 Brenda Vincent explained that the government has introduced an Adoption Scorecard system that allows prospective adopters to compare the performance of various adoption providers

- The latest scorecard for Warwickshire shows that performance is better than the English average
- It was acknowledged that a large proportion of the timescales involved in adopting a child is caused by court processes

Virtual School

- 4.2 Brenda explained that the Virtual School is based around a previous government initiative to have a dedicated headteacher for Looked After Children

- For Warwickshire, this is Anne Hawker, who has a small team of staff who support the work of the school
- The team works with designated teachers in schools to help remove barriers to learning, which involves the development of Personal Education Plans (PEP) for each Looked After Child

- 4.3 Members noted a big jump in GCSE attainment from 2010 to 2011 and asked if there were any reasons for this

- Brenda explained that due to the relatively small numbers of pupils involved, the jump in performance could be simply due to the calibre of students that year and the focus by the Virtual School on learning in the earlier age group, not just those taking their GCSEs

5.0 Terms of Reference

Following discussion on how the aims and objectives of the Panel should be developed and taken forward, the following points were agreed:

- 5.1 Regular reports are needed to inform Panel members of current issues, including:

- Datasets on Looked After Children (LAC) – *monthly*
- Adoption Services report – *bi-annually*
- Fostering Services report – *quarterly*
- Adoption Scorecards – *annually*

- National LAC performance data – *annually*
 - Reports arising from Ofsted inspections – *as and when*
- 5.2 The Panel will report annually to Cabinet, but it should explore other ways of raising the profile of Corporate Parenting among elected members, which may include:
- Sending reports to full Council
 - Sending specific issues to Overview & Scrutiny
 - Organising events, such as a visit from the Children in Care Council
- 5.3 The Panel should meet 6 times a year, every 2 months, and seek to hold topic-based meetings with appropriate experts invited to provide information/evidence
- Topics should be decided 2 meetings in advance to allow sufficient preparation time, and topics should be prioritised towards areas of concern
 - It was acknowledged that members of the Panel had varying levels of knowledge on Corporate Parenting issues, therefore each meeting should include a short overview of the topic from officers on the current processes and issues etc.
 - Consideration should be given to a broad work programme setting out the topics to be looked at over the forthcoming 12 months
- 5.4 The Corporate Parenting Policy and Strategy is due to be refreshed, and should include a section on the role and responsibilities of Elected Members, which the Panel should help in developing
- 5.5 The Corporate Parenting Pledge issued to all Elected Members should be looked at by the Panel, with a view to refreshing it and/or re-issuing it
- 5.6 It was noted that signposting information has recently been issued to young people in care (i.e., the playing cards with QR codes) and has been positively received. Information is now being developed for the younger age groups

Resolved

The next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel will be on 4 December 2012 at 2pm to consider:

- Introduction to the Fostering Service, covering the processes involved
- Updated and colour-coded Looked After Children Action Plan
- Leaving Care Action Plan
- LAC performance data from similar authorities
- Number of LAC attending grammar schools

The subsequent meeting will be on 11 February 2012 at 10am to consider:

- Introduction to the advocacy and complaints procedure for LAC
- Introduction to and outcomes of the Dartington project

Brenda Vincent to make arrangements for the Children in Care Council to meet with elected members, possibly on the day of Full Council.

The meeting closed at 11.40am

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Chair

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