

**Minutes of the Corporate Parenting Panel meeting
8 April 2013, 1.30pm**

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

Visitors

Sue Berry, Development Children's Service Manager –
Barnardo's
Sarah Wager, Project Co-ordinator – Barnardo's

1.1 Apologies for absence

None

1.2 Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None

1.3 Minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2013

A correction was made to record Cllr Robbins as the Chair, not Cllr Appleton. The minutes were then agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

Brenda Vincent provided an update on the Charter for Care Leavers:

- Large laminated copies of the Charter have been displayed in the political group rooms
- Dates and details of the Children in Care Council meetings have been circulated to members
- The young person's questionnaire is still in development by young people themselves
- A leaflet to promote the purpose of the Corporate Parenting Panel will be developed after the elections when membership of the Panel is agreed
- Corporate Parenting awareness training will be included within the induction programme for new members
- The Charter would be taken to Full Council for formal adoption in due course

1.4 Chair's Announcements

None

2.0 Advocacy Service

Sue Berry and Sarah Wager from Barnardo's introduced an overview report on the Children's Rights Service they provide to looked after children (LAC) and children in need in Warwickshire (a service that is commissioned by Warwickshire County Council and Coventry City Council).

The discussion covered the following points:

- a) Advocacy gives a voice to young people, and support workers are led by the views and wishes of those young people. This is a different approach

- to that of social workers, for example, who are led by the best interests of young people
- b) For April 2012 to February 2013, the service was taken up by 37 LAC and 95 children in need (subject to a child protection plan)
 - c) The difference in take-up is because LAC often have other people to act as their advocate, such as foster carers and Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs)
 - d) Advocacy is typically provided to children between the ages of 10 to 16
 - e) There is currently no waiting list for referral to the advocacy service – support is always offered to those who require it
 - f) The advocacy service differs from others such as the Early Intervention Service (EIS) and Children's Centres in that it works directly on behalf of the young person. EIS works with parents and Children's Centres deal with all types of client
 - g) Advocacy provides a purely personal perspective from the young person, therefore some of the issues raised need to be viewed cautiously as the young person may be misinformed or interpret things inaccurately
 - h) Advocacy differs from the role of an Independent Visitor, who is a volunteer that acts as a mentor and friend to a LAC and partakes in regular activities with them
 - i) The take-up of advocacy is not particularly aligned with areas of deprivation
 - j) More can be done to promote the availability of the service in areas with high LAC numbers
 - k) Advocacy can play a part in raising young people's aspiration, particularly for children in need who are not able to achieve and aspire in their home environment
 - l) The focus for the LA moving forward should be to continue with early intervention strategies, to stop the cycle of poor parental choices, and to continue recruiting a good and sufficient supply of social workers and other staff who can effectively intervene in family life.

Resolved

- Sue Berry will discuss with Shinderpaul Bhangal if Barnardo's should accompany Children in Care Council representatives when they next attend the Panel
- The Panel acknowledged the importance of the Advocacy Service offered to Looked After Children in Warwickshire

3.0 Looked After Children Dataset

Brenda Vincent introduced a summary of the data for Looked After Children in Warwickshire, up to the end of February 2013:

- a) There was an increase in the LAC population in February; but the overall figure is still less than 6 months ago
- b) There have been more foster placements with County Council carers and fewer with external agency carers

- c) There have been fewer placements with relatives/friends; although other arrangements may have been made via the kinship service that do not contribute to the figures
- d) There has been a decrease in residential care placements; and an increase in placements with parents or those with parental responsibilities
- e) Recruitment of foster carers is going well, although more carers are always needed as there are not sufficient placements to enable choice
- f) A funding bid has been submitted for work with an external fostering agency (National Fostering Agency) to encourage a wider demographic of people to consider fostering

Resolved

- Brenda Vincent to investigate and report back on the funding arrangements in place for asylum seekers
- The Panel acknowledged the latest data and requested further updates

4.0 Looked After Children Action Plan

Brenda Vincent provided an update on progress of the LAC Action Plan:

- a) Work is still on-going with the Dartington project, as reported at the previous meeting by Jenny Butlin-Moran
- b) More national guidance is anticipated around adoption processes, but the plan is ready to go
- c) The LA is receiving a high number of applications for those wishing to adopt, although it is proving difficult to place siblings
- d) The target to complete 90% of foster carer assessments within 6 months was almost reached (15 out of 19)
- e) Children who experience 3 or more placement moves is around 12%, which is slightly worse than the national target of 10%
- f) However, the statistics for this can be misleading, as every move is counted – e.g., children moving into temporary care, to long-term foster care to adoption would be classed as 3 moves, even though this is a positive care journey
- g) A more refined recording of the data is needed to include narrative about what the data actually means, which Brenda would include within the next update
- h) The LA is looking to use Supporting People funds to achieve a range of housing options for care leavers across the county so accommodation is available where young people want to live
- i) The LA will soon be reviewing its Sufficiency Strategy, which is a statutory assessment of provision for LAC and young people, and this will identify the numbers and locations of care leavers who will likely need accommodation in the future
- j) Members discussed how the district and borough local plans needed to recognise these pressures and plan for sufficient housing accordingly

Resolved

- Brenda Vincent to update the Action Plan, with more detail on the measure of children who experience 3 or more placement moves
- The Panel acknowledged the Action Plan, but requested more detailed information on the progress of each element within the next update

5.0 Other business

Richard Maybey agreed to propose a series of meeting dates for 2013/14, to be held every two months on a Monday at 1.30pm

*[Administrative note: the following dates were subsequently proposed:
10 June / 12 August / 14 October / 9 December / 10 February / 14 April]*

Richard Maybey and Brenda Vincent agreed to produce a draft work programme setting out the content and dates of reports for the Panel to consider in 2013/14

Agenda items for the next meeting would include:

- LAC dataset
- Adoption Services Annual Report
- Introduction to the Complaints Service
- Draft work programme 2013/14 for the Corporate Parenting Panel

The subsequent meeting would include:

- Fostering Service annual report
- Report of the Independent Reviewing Officers

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Chair

The meeting closed at 15.10