

## **Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 2 May 2014**

### **Present:**

### **Members of the Panel**

#### **Councillors:**

Yousef Dahmash

Bob Hicks

Jenny St John

John Whitehouse

Chris Williams (Chair)

#### **Officers**

Jo Davies, Qualified Social Worker

Ann Mawdsley, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Calvin Smith, Service Manager (Safeguarding)

Brenda Vincent, Service Manager - South

### **1. General**

Members recorded their displeasure at the late receipt of reports, which did not allow them any time to digest the information provided. There was some discussion about whether all the items on the agenda should be deferred to a later meeting. It was agreed that in future all reports would be provided to Democratic Services at least 10 working days before a meeting for that item to be considered.

#### **(1) Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Peter Fowler and Shinderpaul Bhangal.

#### **(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests**

None.

#### **(3) Minutes of the meeting held on 14 February 2014**

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 February 2014 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

#### **Matters Arising from Previous Meeting(s)**

None.

### **3. Children in Care Council (CiCC) updates**

#### Councillor John Whitehouse – 4 March 2014

Councillor Whitehouse reported that he had been the first member of the Panel to attend a CiCC meeting in this capacity. He noted that the CiCC meetings were held at the same time as the Youth Parliament and VOX, and there was an opportunity for the three groups to network outside of their separate meetings.

It was agreed that the notes of the CiCC meetings would be included in the Panel papers in the future.

The following issues from the CiCC meeting were noted:

- i. CiCC agreed to take part in the Warwick Museum Sheldon Project.
- ii. Different options were being looked at to make improvements to the Facebook/web page, including a possible grant from the Tiffin Club.
- iii. There had been a discussion on sexting and Cllr Whitehouse had informed the CiCC about a video that had recently been produced by young people at the Kenilworth Youth and Community Centre. The CiCC had expressed an interest in getting involved in the launch of this video, which had the potential for countywide use.
- iv. A request was made for one member of the Panel to work with the CiCC to develop training for members on corporate parenting.

Councillor Jenny St. John volunteered to help with the development of training. The Chair agreed to substitute if necessary and it was agreed that they would both attend an initial meeting (on a date to be set through Shinderpaul Bhangal).

There was some discussion about the possibilities and sources for grant money, including the Awards for All England Grants, which were small Lottery grants of between £300 and £10,000, and the Tiffin Club.

#### Councillor Bob Hicks – 1 April 2014

Councillor Hicks noted that this meeting coincided with a Youth Parliament meeting, so the Antechamber had been conspicuous with the number of young people.

At the CiCC meeting several subjects were considered:

- a. Digital by Default – a proposal for an ‘app’ to be created for people leaving care to be able to access for all kinds of assistance. The discussion was wide-ranging and very animated, about both potential content and the value to users. Robin Walsh took away lots of ideas and will be returning to a future meeting with a draft scheme.
- b. Police Cadet Scheme – P.C. Beki Taylor gave a presentation on this scheme, run by Warwickshire and West Mercia police forces. This was aimed at 16 year-old volunteers who take part in a two-year scheme with a

- Level 2 qualification at the end. The scheme is countywide and operates from North Warwickshire and Hinckley Technical College.
- c. The Council was organising an evening event for 16 July at North Warwickshire and Hinckley College, Nuneaton. It is hoped that Lorraine Pascale (TV cook and celebrity who champions looked-after children groups) will attend, and the main purpose of the event is to raise awareness of the CiCC and the Corporate Parenting Panel.
  - d. The Sheldon Project – this was again discussed, and some members of the CiCC stepped forward to work with the Museum Service on this.

Councillor Hicks noted that the CiCC appreciated what was being done and the relationship that was growing between the Corporate Parenting Panel and themselves.

Councillor St. John reported that she had also attended a Warwick District Council Young People and Community Group meeting showcasing what the young people were doing. She had been welcomed to the meeting and had been pleased to support the CiCC and suggested that it would be useful for Councillors to go to these events, particularly when LAC from their divisions were attending. Brenda Vincent agreed that the minutes of their meetings would be provided for the Panel agendas, as well as briefing sheets they produced. The Chair emphasised the need to keep up the pressure and to continue to break down barriers for our LAC.

#### **4. Update from Strategic Lead**

Brenda Vincent reported that the CiCC had attended the full Council meeting on 25 March 2014, and they had given a confident presentation followed by some good questions and answers.

She made the following points:

1. Foster Care Fortnight was a national two week period taking place from 12-25 May 2014. This annual awareness raising campaign aims to encourage a diverse range of people with the right skills and qualities to foster to come forward to meet the needs of children in care. Warwickshire wanted to focus on what young people were saying they wanted from foster care and was expecting higher than usual activity during that time.
2. A 'Fostering Fun Day' was being held on 7 June 2014 to promote fostering.
3. The Children and Families Act was enacted in April and members of the Panel would receive a briefing note on the implications for Warwickshire.

#### **5. Performance Dataset**

Brenda Vincent updated the Panel on the data that had been tabled at the meeting.

Despite the Panel agreeing that there had not been sufficient time to consider the data, the following points were made:

1. The information would be collated on a quarterly basis and needed to identify trends, national averages and statistical neighbour averages to allow for benchmarking.
2. There needed to be comparative data on the pupil premium compared to the rest of the school average to identify gaps, as well as comparisons between the Virtual School results and the general school results.
3. Data needed to be accompanied by commentary where possible to give context.
4. The Pupil Premium Plus was sent direct to the Virtual School and was linked to the personal education plans of LAC, which had to demonstrate that the child was progressing academically against clear targets and expectations. This enabled the Council to hold the school to account.
5. Members welcomed the good NEETs report.

## **6. & 7. Focus on Care Leavers and Independent Housing**

Calvin Smith and Jo Davies introduced this item. The following points were made:

- i. There was an increased responsibility on the Council for young people aged 16-17. In light of this, work was being done with housing partners, maximising opportunities for positive working, but there was a risk that the number of 16-17 year-old young people needing housing would increase.
- ii. All teams were working to the same protocols, but the relationships with different teams differed and each area had its own challenges in terms of the rental market and demographics. For instance Nuneaton and Bedworth had a large number of 16-17 year-olds presenting as homeless, but in Stratford housing options were restricted. There was the potential and willingness to consider a single front door approach for Warwickshire, which was positive.

Members of the Panel made the following comments:

1. St Basils, which helped homeless young people by providing a holistic range of services including prevention, accommodation and support, had been used to provide trained mediators who had worked with families and schools. This work, together with better co-ordination of workers, more streamlined accommodation and investment had resulted in a decline in numbers of the past two to three years.
2. Brenda Vincent agreed to look into the high number of external placements in Warwickshire.
3. Brenda Vincent agreed to investigate the reasons behind the struggle for LAC to get health assessments.
4. There was an issue around funding in relation to asylum seekers who were no longer eligible for government grants and student loans, but still the responsibility of the Local Authority. This had been predicted for some time and had been partly responsible for the decision to join the Asylum Seeker and Leaving Care teams. This meant that there was a reduction in staff and a less resilient service, but savings had been made across the

management structure and every young person still received the same offer when leaving the services. Barnardo's was being brought in-house as well and work was being done with other Local Authorities to see what was being done for Asylum Seekers.

5. The largest number of young people leaving foster care returned to their homes, and research showed that young people had better outcomes if supported at home.
6. Warwickshire had acted as a pilot for the Staying Put programme for 18+ family placements, and this had produced positive results.
7. The age young people could stay in foster care had been increased, but once young people turned 18 they were required to have their own room, and this was expected to impact negatively on the number of available foster beds.
8. Work was being done to look at agencies that could provide supported lodging in the short-term, including family-based options, as this was preferable to Bed and Breakfast options.
9. There was no an even spread of floating support across the county and the County were keen for all schemes to see care leavers as a first option.
10. Reductions had been made in the monitoring of contracts, but there was some monitoring done by social workers. It was agreed that within the process of commissioning it was important to listen to young adults to see what they wanted to ensure the Council got better at commissioning the right placements and paying properly. Jo Davies that a consultation on housing had recently been carried out with the CiCC.

Members agreed that while this was an area that had seen some of the biggest savings, the challenge was to look at better ways of working that could improve outcomes for young people.

## **8. Work Programme**

The work programme was updated.

## **9. Any Other Business**

None.

## **Future meeting dates**

7 July 2014 at 2.00 pm

8 September 2014 at 10.00 am

27 October 2014 at 10.00 am

9 December 2014 at 10.00 am

9 February 2015 at 10.00 am

14 April 2015 at 10.00 am

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Chair

The meeting closed at 4:40 pm