

**Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 27 November
2014**

Present:

Members of the Panel

Councillors:

Peter Fowler

Bob Hicks

Clive Rickhards

Jenny St John

Chris Williams (Chair)

Officers

Ann Mawdsley, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Steve Pendleton, Head of Vulnerable Groups and Virtual School

Brenda Vincent, Service Manager - South

1. General

(1) Apologies

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Dave Shilton, Shinderpaul Bhangal and the Children in Care Council.

(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None.

(3) Minutes of the meeting held on 8 September 2014

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 September 2014 were agreed as a correct record with the following correction:

Page 5 – 3.3 Health related issues for Warwickshire’s Looked After Children

The word ‘included’ on the second line to be replaced by the word ‘inclined’.

Matters Arising

None.

2. Children in Care Council (CiCC) updates

Councillor Bob Hicks- 21 October 2014

Councillor Hicks reported that this had been a working meeting in preparation for the awards evening and the displays at that event. The CiCC had broken into groups to discuss what to put into questionnaires, etc. and he had participated in this. He felt that it had been a very constructive meeting.

Councillor Jenny St.John – 4 November 2014

Councillor St.John reported that the work begun on 21 October had continued at the 4 November meeting. She noted that they had had a practical run-through of the timetable for the awards event.

Shinderpaul Bhangal had also given an update at the meeting on the elected and she had told the CiCC about the session that had taken place to develop the e-learning tool on Corporate Parenting.

Wendy Fabbro confirmed that she would be attending the meeting on 9 September 2014. Councillor Chris Williams undertook to attend as Councillor Bob Hicks was not able to.

Shinderpaul Bhangal reported that Councillor Williams would be attending the Virtual School Awards Ceremony, Coventry University on 13th September 2014. This event was an opportunity for CiCCs to come together and to discuss leaving care issues.

Shinderpaul Bhangal reported that the first draft of the CiCC Newsletter was almost complete and was expected to be circulated at the end of September and quarterly thereafter.

Councillor Chris Williams – CiCC and Virtual School Awards – 12 November 2014

There was a broad discussion about the fact that young people did not like being referred to as 'children in care' as this label had a lot of negative connotations. It was agreed that in the future the term 'looked after children and young people' (LAC&YP) would be used, as this was more encompassing of all children and groups. Brenda Vincent undertook to review the terminology in WCC documents, including the pledge card when this is reviewed.

The Chair also noted the wide spectrum of age groups at the event, and that he felt that the Panel concentrated largely on the older age groups. Brenda Vincent undertook to include an age profile of Warwickshire's looked after children and young people in future data sets.

Steve Pendleton updated the Panel on the Awards Event, which had been very successful despite the logistical problems with traffic and the BBC filming close to the event. He emphasised that these children and young people

deserved to have a high profile event celebrating their achievements, and that he had received a lot of positive feedback since the event. One email from a foster carer had stated how pleased she had been to attend and how proud she had been to be a foster carer and part of Warwickshire.

Warwick University was being considered for the next award event, as this was a good setting to inspire children and young people.

Brenda Vincent noted that Shinderpaul Bhangal was collating a report of the views of LAC&YP of all ages. This would be brought to the next meeting of the Panel.

It was agreed that there needed to be more done to publicise these positive events, which could be shared with foster carers.

The Chair thanked Steve Pendleton and his staff for the excellent Event.

3. Update from Strategic Lead and Performance Dataset

Brenda Vincent tabled an updated version of the dataset, which she then reported against.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were noted:

1. Brenda Vincent outlined the details of the recent B-S Judgment, which required local authorities to put the interests of a child first when considered adoption, including being brought up by their birth family, where possible. All options had to be considered before adoption, including assistance and support to parents and relatives. Brenda Vincent confirmed that for Warwickshire this was already considered as best practice.
2. There was a need to monitor adoption numbers, particularly in light of the increase in the number of approved adopters and the apparent decrease in the number of children available for adoption during the first quarter of this year.
3. Warwickshire's Fostering Service was currently under pressure. There were currently 330 households with foster placements, but there is a constant demand for more available foster carers. There was a discussion about the competitive nature of the fostering market and the challenge for Warwickshire to compete financially. Brenda Vincent stated that there was a need to have a look at recruitment and competition to ensure that Warwickshire can stay in a position where they have the competitive edge in attracting new foster carers.
4. Warwickshire had tight procedures around missing children, which included close monitoring and engagement with the police. Numbers

were reported every month to the safeguarding strategic leadership team so that the numbers are tracked and the circumstances of missing young people are monitored. e.

5. The data set now included data on sibling groups (requested at the previous meeting). In October there were 352 children in sibling groups in care, and 203 had been placed together. The Sibling Policy, which was in early draft, sets out the key principles of:
 - placing together wherever possible and appropriate
 - taking the needs of sibling groups into account when recruiting foster carers
 - priority for adoption fast-tracking
 - having a framework for assessing sibling relationships.

This would standardise the approach. Members agreed that the Policy should be brought to the Panel for consideration.

6. Warwickshire had been successful in placing sibling groups for adoption, and while they may not meet the recommended timescale, it was acknowledged that sibling groups could take longer to place, and sometimes had to be placed out of county if the right family was found which is a longer process.
7. Brenda Vincent agreed to investigate the implications on LAC&YP following the SEND Regulations increasing the age to 25.

It was agreed that all Members would receive data on LAC placements in division and school on a termly basis. The Panel also considered the proposed questions for Members and agreed that the revised version, including points about pupil premium, opportunities for apprenticeships and promoting fostering, would be circulated with the placement data. It was agreed that this should also refer to the new e-learning tool which was expected to be ready by the end of the year.

The Chair reported that Brenda Vincent had spoken to the Conservative Group to raise the profile of corporate parenting, and Councillor St.John and Councillor Rickhards agreed to arrange for her to speak to their groups.

The Chair thanked Brenda for her presentation,

4. Themed Item – Virtual School

Steve Pendleton updated the Panel on the exam results for Children in Care for the 2013/14 school year and educational attainment more generally.

He made the following points:

- a. 18% of LAC who entered the GCSE exams received 5 A*-C grades, compared to 21% the year before. Steve Pendleton noted that on reflection, and following a discussion with the Head at Campion School, there was a need to look at measures of success differently. The current measures, which would need to continue to be monitored, were inappropriate as a measure for some LAC&YP such as asylum seekers who had not been able to speak any English a year earlier. He would be reviewing how the positive results that were being achieved could be reflected. This would give a truer picture of the impact of his service and the support they gave, and whether they were making a difference.
- b. A review would be done of the small number of children not able to achieve a C in both Maths and English, to look at any necessary support to help these children reach their full potential.
- c. There was a gap between the results of LAC&YP and children with other disadvantages compared to their cohorts.

During the discussion that followed these points were raised:

1. There was no evidence that academic results improved the longer children or young people were in care. Brenda Vincent pointed out that children and young people did not generally stay in care for long periods, and young people taking GCSEs would generally have come into care having had many years of issues within their families beforehand.
2. The care cohort was not a stable group, and involved a small number of children and young people, making it difficult to generate any patterns or to identify expectations within a cohort, as other Head Teachers were often able to do. A quarter of Warwickshire's school age LAC&YP were also placed out of county.
3. Steve Pendleton tabled a copy of his service's structure chart. He added that plans were in place to reorganise the service so that there was an officer with responsibility for keeping a grasp of the data .
4. When asked what could be done to improve thresholds and to raise the baseline for LAC&YP, Steve Pendleton noted that the pupil premium for LAC&YP was now allocated to him rather than individual schools. This gave him some say in the allocation of these funds, ensuring they were used to increase attainment and opportunities for LAC&YP to narrow the gap. Steve Pendleton undertook to have the list of criteria given to Heads for pupil premium spend, circulated with the minutes of the meeting.
5. Ofsted were able to consider the use of pupil premiums through the Virtual School Head and through Personal Education Plans (PEPs) which each child had, and which included how this money would be spent. School

Governors also had a responsibility to ensure this money was spent properly.

6. The Virtual School team received termly data from schools in all subjects. These were then considered at a meeting with area leads. If any child or young person was not making progress, a plan would be agreed to address these, using pupil premium money to target interventions if necessary.
7. There had been five exclusions over the year. Steve Pendleton noted that this could be due to contextual circumstances, but that discussions would always be held with the respective Heads. Head Teachers did have the right to exclude pupils.
8. Out of 45 LAC&YP, there were three NEETs. Extra career support was going to be given to Year 11 and 12 to help LAC&YP with their career plans and employability. Members recommended that arrangements were made to enable these young people to attend the Skills Show held at the NEC each year. It was agreed this should be included in PEPs.

The Chair thanked Steve Pendleton for his report.

5. Update on the CiCC Election

This item was deferred to the next meeting,

6. Work Programme

The work programme was agreed, including the updates agreed at this meeting.

7. Any Other Business

The following rota was agreed for Councillors attending the CiCC meetings:

Tuesday 2 December 2014	Councillor Chris Williams
Tuesday 20 January 2015	Councillor Bob Hicks
Tuesday 12 February 2015	Councillor Peter Fowler
Tuesday 3 March 2015	Councillor Clive Rickhards
Tuesday 14 April 2015	Councillor Jenny St.John
Tuesday 5 May 2015	Councillor Dave Shilton.

Future meeting dates

27 October 2014 at 10.00 am

9 February 2015 at 10.00 am

14 April 2015 at 10.00 am

.....
Chair

The meeting closed at 3.55 pm