

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 7 November 2016

Present:

Councillors:

Patrick Davey (North Warwickshire BC), Peter Fowler, Jenny St. John, Clive Rickhards, Chris Williams (Chair)

Officers:

Mary Eccleston, Operational Manager Independent Reviewing Service
Ben Patel-Sadler, Democratic Services Officer

1. General

(1) Apologies

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Heather Timms, Shinderpaul Bhangal, Practice Leader – Children’s Participation and Brenda Vincent, Service Manager (Central).

(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None

(3) Minutes of the meeting held on 29 September 2016

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 September 2016 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Matters Arising

None

2. Annual Report of Warwickshire’s Independent Reviewing Service

Mary Eccleston, Operational Manager Independent Reviewing Service introduced the report and informed the Panel that it had proved difficult to recruit additional Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) due to both salaries and workloads comparing less favourably with neighbouring and regional authorities. Mary Eccleston informed the Panel that the current supplement to IRO salaries was due to end in February 2017. Because the specific roles and functions of an IRO could not fit directly with the Council’s current salary model, higher levels of pay could not be offered to IROs – one reason for this was that IROs did not have responsibility for managing any budgets or staff. Their job role therefore did not fall into a higher salary bracket.

Members noted that at the present time there were 10 IROs, one Operational Manager and a team of administrative staff employed by the Council. The Panel noted that caseloads within the service remained in excess of recommended levels.

Mary Eccleston informed the Panel that the service continued to focus on developing systems, processes and interrelationships that would result in the IRO guidance being implemented based on current resources. Mary Eccleston assured the Panel that although IRO caseloads were in excess of recommended levels, the cases of most concern were dealt with quickly via prioritisation.

Mary Eccleston informed that Panel that although the workloads of IROs were heavy, the use of the MOSAIC system would result in time and resource savings which would free up more IRO time, assisting them in the management of their caseloads.

Members of the Panel noted that work was being undertaken to explore options of working with partners to deliver a regional IRO service which may deliver efficiency savings and reduce the number of cases being managed by each IRO.

Mary Eccleston expressed a view that some vulnerability existed within the service due to the high turnover of social workers. Members noted that it would be crucial for the social care service to plan effectively to ensure that young people were seen and managed appropriately.

The Panel expressed concerns around the high workloads being dealt with by IROs in Warwickshire and also that seemingly by default, the Council was unable to compete with other local authorities in terms of the salary that could be offered to prospective IROs. Members expressed a view that these matters should be examined by the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Panel wished to place on records its thanks to Mary Eccleston for an informative report and to commend the work of the Council's IRO service.

The Corporate Parenting Panel agreed to note the contents of the annual report.

Due to unforeseen circumstances the officers presenting items 4 through 7 were unable to attend the meeting. A further meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel was arranged to take place on 6th December 2016 to consider these items.

9. Any Other Business

None

10. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel had been scheduled for 6th December 2016, commencing 14.00 p.m. in Committee Room 1, Shire Hall, Warwick.

The future meeting dates set out in the agenda were agreed.

The meeting closed at 11.15 am

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Chair