

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 25 April 2017

Present:

Councillors:

Jenny St. John, Chris Williams (Chair)

Officers:

John Coleman, Service Manager (Initial Response)

Ben Patel-Sadler, Democratic Services Officer

Brenda Vincent, Service Manager (Central)

Other attendees:

Jackie Channell, Warwickshire North CCG

1. General

(1) Apologies

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Dave Parsons, Shinderpaul Bhangal, Practice Leader – Children’s Participation, Steve Pendleton, Head of Vulnerable Groups and the Virtual School and Andrew Jones, Deputy Chief Executive, Warwick District Council

(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None

(3) Minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2017

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2017 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Matters Arising

None

2. Discussion Session – Warwickshire Missing Children’s Service

John Coleman, Service Manager (Initial Response) had produced a presentation which was shared with the Panel.

Members were provided with the statutory requirements on children who run away or go missing from home or care (2014). The Panel noted that approximately 25% of children and young people that went missing were at risk of serious harm (this was the national picture which was also reflected in the data held for children in Warwickshire). John Coleman informed the Panel that there were particular concerns about the links between children running away and the risks of sexual exploitation, violent crime, gang exploitation or to drug and alcohol misuse.

The Panel noted that a revised Missing Children protocol was being devised which would include areas around social media and would also include the issue of trafficking. With regards to social media, members noted that currently, if a child was missing, an appeal would not be circulated on social media until the child had been missing for five days.

John Coleman informed the Panel that a new process would be implemented which would record data around missing children more accurately, enabling accurate datasets to be produced in the future. It was hoped that the new datasets would accurately record the demographics of missing children, including whether or not they were in care for example.

The Panel expressed a view that the participation of the Children in Care Council (CiCC) would be crucial with regards to missing children – the use of the 'Respect Yourself' campaign could help to raise awareness around missing children.

John Coleman explained the role of Missing Children Practitioners. Members noted that return to home interviews were a golden opportunity to allow young people to discuss the reasons why they went missing, where they were and what they did while they were missing and any other associated issues. Members also noted that practitioners attempted to make contact in at least three ways within 24 hours to arrange a time to meet with the returning missing person. John Coleman informed the Panel that this information could be shared with schools – the information was always shared with the child's social worker and the police. The child also had the discretion to agree to other relevant people/agencies being able to receive the information. John Coleman informed the Panel that a plan was produced upon the completion of a return to home interview which sought to address any issues which had arisen from the discussion.

Members noted that the Missing Children Practitioners were spread across the county – many had a background in youth work which enabled them to work extremely effectively with children who had gone missing.

In relation to the health sector, Jackie Channell, Warwickshire North CCG expressed a view that it would be important to share this information with GPs so that they could offer the child(ren) any appropriate medical support which might help to avoid missing episodes occurring in the future.

With regards to data and mapping, the Panel noted that the information related to missing children was entered into the MOSAIC system. John Coleman informed the Panel that the five children who had been missing most in terms of missing episodes recorded had been supported via officers facilitating sessions in their respective schools and with their respective parents/carers.

At the present time, the Panel noted that the data held around Warwickshire's missing children could not be benchmarked against other authorities. However, it was hoped that the revised methods of gathering and analysing data would enable Warwickshire to compare its performance with that of neighboring local authorities.

The Panel noted that the numbers of missing children and missing episodes in Warwickshire was rising. However, this could be attributed to the improvement of gathering data – it was too early to determine if a rising pattern was occurring at the present time. Members noted that the increase in missing children could also be

attributed to the large number of asylum seeking children who were going missing before they could be placed with carers/within a suitable setting. There was also a difficulty in gathering data because of the way in which different police forces collected and recorded their missing person's data.

John Coleman informed the Panel that some trends in missing children had been identified in Warwickshire. For example, the vast majority of missing children in Warwickshire were over the age of 13. Very young children who went missing were usually found within a short time.

John Coleman informed the Panel that a definitive decision on how data was collected and categorised would need to be taken to ensure that the future data collection would provide officers and members with an accurate source of information on missing children.

Members noted that changes in practice had taken place to reduce the risk of UASYP going missing who may be at risk from trafficking. This was beginning to have an impact as these young people were now more likely to be placed in a supportive environment, which reduced the risk of missing episodes.

John Coleman informed the Panel that children who went missing were at an increased risk of exploitation; sexual or otherwise. The Panel noted that officers exchanged information with other local authorities to assist in tackling cross-border CSE (Child Sexual Exploitation). Members noted that it was likely that a formal agreement would be signed between Warwickshire and Coventry to look at how CSE could be jointly tackled. John Coleman expressed a view that ideally, a regional CSE agreement could greatly assist the efforts to address and manage this issue.

The Panel noted that children in residential care were also at risk of going missing. However, on the whole, members noted that there were a low number of issues with residential homes reporting children missing.

John Coleman informed the panel that children looked after who were placed elsewhere were offered a return to home interview (if they had gone missing) by an officer based in Warwickshire (if practical). Members noted that local authorities had now agreed to not charge each other for conducting a return to home interview for their respective children who were placed in other areas.

The Panel noted that the priorities for the missing children service were:

- To reduce the number of children looked after who went missing.
- To reduce the whole number of children who went missing by 40%.
- To ensure that 100% of young people who went missing received a return to home interview.
- To complete work with parents to report children missing.
- To provide staff with further training around trafficking.

Members noted that an annual report from the missing children's service would be submitted to overview and scrutiny for their consideration.

3. Any Other Business

Members agreed that the first meeting of the new administration of the Corporate Parenting Panel (taking place in June 2017) would discuss and agree what the priorities for the Panel going forwards might be. Some suggestions of future priorities were:

- Accommodation for children in care/care leavers.
- Information provided to children/young people about their rights and information provided to them prior to placement.

At the June 2016 meeting, members and officers would discuss the membership of the Panel – decisions could then be taken on who should be involved and attend future Panel meetings.

The June meeting would begin at 15.00 so that the above discussions could take place – a further discussion to be held at the June meeting would be to confirm the Panel's revised terms of reference in response to feedback received from the recent peer review.

The June meeting would be rescheduled to take place later on in the month.

The Panel expressed a view that the annual report of the Panel should also be tabled at Council (it was currently submitted to Cabinet on an annual basis).

The next discussion session would facilitate a discussion around fostering.

Members wished to place on record their thanks to Councillor Jenny St. John for her contributions to the Panel – Councillor St. John was stepping down as a Councillor at the May 2017 election.

4. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel had not yet been scheduled. Future meeting dates will be confirmed as soon as possible.

The meeting closed at 11.30 am

.....
Chair