

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 05 September 2017

Present:

Councillors:

Yousef Dahmash, Jeff Morgan, Jerry Roodhouse, Alan Webb (substituting for Caroline Phillips) and Chris Williams

Officers:

Shinderpaul Bhangal, Practice Leader – Children's Participation
Deena Moorey, Senior Education Adviser
Ben Patel-Sadler, Democratic Services Officer
Brenda Vincent, Service Manager (Central)
Beate Wagner, Head of Children and Families

Other attendees:

Jackie Channell, Designated Nurse for Child Protection and Looked After Children
Three members of the Children in Care Council (CiCC)

1. General

(1) Apologies

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Caroline Phillips, Pam Williams and from 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 19 July 2017

It was noted that Jackie Channell, Designated Nurse for Child Protection and Looked After Children had submitted apologies for this meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2017 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Matters Arising

Brenda Vincent, Service Manager (Central) informed the Panel that the Corporate Parenting Policy had been amended to reflect the discussions held at the previous Panel meeting – particularly to emphasize the greater scrutiny role of the Panel going forwards.

Members requested that formal amendments be made to the Corporate Parenting

Panel terms of reference to reflect its definitive role and responsibilities.

2. Update on Children in Care Council (CiCC)

Shinderpaul Bhangal, Practice Leader – Children’s Participation addressed the Panel and informed members that three members of the CiCC had taken part in the recent Warwickshire Safeguarding Conference and had presented at the event where they had received positive feedback.

Members noted that the CiCC had been working with the Virtual School in determining the format of the annual awards ceremony which was taking place on 10th September 2017. Members of the CiCC had requested that the awards were ‘less formal and more enjoyable’.

Shinderpaul Bhangal informed the Panel that the IRO booklets were in the process of being circulated to children – a three month monitoring period would then commence where feedback would be given by booklet users.

Members noted that The Pledge document had been updated so that young people could measure if commitments made to them had been fulfilled.

Young people had conducted their first inspection of housing – their feedback had been passed to housing commissioning. Young people continued to be involved in the recruitment process of some key staff.

Shinderpaul Bhangal informed the Panel that a mobile phone app was being developed which would inform care leavers of their rights and entitlements.

After discussions with young people in attendance at the meeting, they expressed a view that they preferred the term ‘young people in care’ as opposed to looked after children or children looked after.

The Corporate Parenting Panel noted the update and agreed that:

- 1.) The Chair of the Panel would write a letter of congratulations to the young people involved in the presentation at the Warwickshire Safeguarding Conference.
- 2.) The young people who had presented at the Warwickshire Safeguarding Conference would be invited to address a full meeting of Council.

3. Post-Ofsted Action Plan

Beate Wagner, Head of Children and Families introduced the report and informed the Panel that the Post-Ofsted Action Plan was embedded into the Children and Families Business Plan, which in turn was linked to the One Organisational Plan (OOP) 2020.

Members noted that the action plan outlined each priority, the lead officer(s) responsible, the actions related to the priority, the target completion deadline and what specific work would be carried out to ensure how the Council would achieve a ‘good’ grade in each area (as detailed in the Ofsted Handbook).

In relation to the Warwickshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), the Panel noted that arrangements to secure a designated health professional within the unit were ongoing. Jackie Channell, Designated Nurse for Child Protection and Looked After Children informed the Panel that it had been agreed that the designated health professional would fill a senior, permanent post (the equivalent of a named safeguarding lead nurse within a hospital). It was hoped that the health professional would be in post by the end of 2017.

Beate Wagner informed the Panel that it was a key aim of the business unit to reduce the caseloads of social workers, including Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO). Members noted that a recruitment programme was ongoing – significant progress had been made in recruiting to the newly created social worker roles.

Members noted that government legislation would be confirming that local authorities would have responsibility for supporting care leavers up to the age of 25. Beate Wagner informed the Panel that the Children and Families Business Unit was currently being shaped so that this requirement could be fulfilled. The Panel agreed that it was the responsibility of all elected officials and officers to carry out the corporate parenting role.

The Panel noted that good social work was being undertaken with Warwickshire children with regards to their rehabilitation when being introduced back to their family homes.

Beate Wagner informed the Panel that the following actions were being progressed:

- Work around improving placement stability for children
- Additional recruitment of foster carers
- Increased partnership working with organisations such as Barnardo's (specifically around advocacy).
- Training all staff to become proficient in the use of the MOSAIC system. Members noted that a piece of software was being developed which would enable staff to transfer case notes from the older Care First system across to MOSAIC. This would reduce the risk of case notes being lost or misplaced.

The Panel noted that the action plan currently presented a mixed picture – some targets were being achieved, whilst some were in the process of being completed.

The Corporate Parenting Panel noted the Post-Ofsted Action Plan Update.

4. Corporate Parenting Policy

Brenda Vincent, Service Manager (Central) informed the Panel that the Corporate Parenting Policy had been halved in size since the previous meeting.

Members noted that additional aims had been added to help elected members, local authority staff, carers and local partners understand their responsibilities in contributing to the best possible outcomes for children and young people looked after.

The Panel noted that Corporate Parenting Pledge would be tabled at the full Council

meeting taking place on 21st September 2017 where every member would be asked to sign it.

With regards to joint working and shared responsibilities, members noted that the document would be shared with colleagues in the health sector in the very near future. Further work would need to be undertaken to determine how district and borough councils and other partners could formally sign up to The Pledge.

With regards to governance, awareness, monitoring and reporting arrangements, members requested that the term 'periodic reports' should be replaced with 'quarterly reports' (reflecting the meeting schedule of the Corporate Parenting Panel – specifically when it considered specific information).

The Corporate Parenting Panel noted the revised document and agreed that a monthly performance sheet should be provided to members so that they can remain briefed on the current performance in relation to children in care.

5. Children and Social Work Bill 2016

Brenda Vincent, Service Manager (Central) informed the Panel that the attached document was intended to provide members with a summary of what legislation was likely to be included in the forthcoming Bill (which was awaiting royal ascent).

The document was pitched directly at local authorities and was centred on the local offer and care leavers (particularly to specify their rights and entitlements and that now local authorities would be responsible for care leavers up to the age of 25).

Beate Wagner, Head of Children and Families informed the Panel that the Bill would result in implications for serious case reviews (as there would only be three responsible partners going forwards).

The Panel noted that partners in the health sector would shortly be determining what implications this Bill would have on them.

The Corporate Parenting Panel noted the update.

6. Child Social Care Activity Dataset

Brenda Vincent, Service Manager (Central) introduced the report and informed the Panel that attempts had been made to tailor the data presented to members in order that it met the requirements of members.

The Panel noted that although 60 missing episodes had been recorded, these were attributed to 23 individuals – some children had gone missing on multiple occasions.

Beate Wagner, Head of Children and Families informed the Panel that the additional recruitment of social workers would result in the number of caseloads being handled by individuals decreasing.

Members noted it was likely that although some cases had been closed, the

continued learning with regards to the operation of the MOSAIC system might have meant that they might not have been closed 'officially' on the system (the recorded numbers might have been high for this reason).

The Panel noted that it would be helpful to have a breakdown of children looked after activity by geographical area. It was also requested that numbers be represented as numbers and not percentages – percentages per 10,000 people, for example, made it difficult to determine precise numbers.

Members noted that there was currently no recorded unaccompanied asylum seeking children in Warwickshire.

Members were pleased that the data included in the report was being used to measure performance against The Pledge. Members approved of the single page performance snapshot – it contained data which the Panel found to be useful and informative.

The Panel noted the latest dataset.

7. Any other Business

None

8. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel was scheduled to take place on 6th November 2017 at 10.00 in Committee Room 3, Shire Hall, Warwick

The meeting closed at 17.35pm

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Chair