

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 9 January 2018

Present:

Councillors:

Yousef Dahmash, Jeff Morgan (Chair), Caroline Phillips, Jerry Roodhouse and Chris Williams

Officers:

Shinderpaul Bhangal, Practice Leader – Children’s Participation
Mary Eccleston, Operational Manager – Independent Reviewing Service
Ben Patel-Sadler, Democratic Services Officer
Steve Pendleton, Head of the Virtual School for Children Looked After
Sharon Shaw, Service Manager, Corporate Parenting
Beate Wagner, Head of Children and Families

Other attendees:

Daniel Kalcutt-Smith, young person observing
Councillor Chris Saint, Leader – Stratford-on-Avon District Council

1. General

(1) Apologies

Apologies had been received from Jackie Channell, Designated Nurse for Child Protection and Looked After Children

(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None.

(3) Minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2017

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2017 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Matters Arising

The Chair and members of the Panel wished to place on record their thanks for all of the work undertaken by Beate Wagner, Head of Children and Families who would be leaving the Council in the near future to take up the position of Director of Children’s Services at another local authority. Members noted that an interim head of service would be appointed upon Beate’s departure until a suitable replacement was appointed.

The Panel noted that Mark Riddell MBE (National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers) would be visiting the Council to share examples of best practice and to

provide guidance on areas where the Council could improve in relation to the services provided to care leavers.

2. Update on Children in Care Council (CiCC)

Shinderpaul Bhangal, Practice Leader – Children's Participation addressed the Panel and provided the following updates in relation to the CiCC:

The recent Virtual School Awards had operated under a revised format whereby the awards ceremony had been shortened and the number of activities available at the event had increased.

Steve Pendleton, Head of Vulnerable Groups and Virtual School informed the Panel that it was hoped that two separate awards events would be held next year to cater specifically for younger and older age groups.

Councillor Jeff Morgan (Chair) had attended the recent awards ceremony and informed the Panel that it had been a very good event.

Steve Pendleton informed the Panel that three young people had been invited to attend a recent head teacher's conference. The Panel noted that head teachers in attendance had found the experience to be engaging and extremely worthwhile. Members noted that young people would be invited to attend similar meetings in the future.

The Panel noted that the accommodation inspections carried out by young people were continuing, with three having been completed thus far. The young inspectors had raised concerns during one particular visit – the result being that specific changes had been requested and actioned rapidly.

Members noted that a housing project was being developed in Nuneaton, whereby young care leavers would be able to acquire and manage their own accommodation. Shinderpaul Bhangal informed the Panel that the reason for facilitating the project in Nuneaton was because of the high number of care leavers in this area of Warwickshire. Beate Wagner, Head of Children and Families informed the Panel that similar cooperative projects such as the one in Nuneaton were being developed across the country.

The Panel noted that some young people had also been involved in the commissioning process – assisting with the process of appointing organisations/groups to provide certain services. Shinderpaul Bhangal informed the Panel that it was likely that this would continue in the future.

Shinderpaul Bhangal informed the Panel that some young people had been invited by Coventry University to address students undertaking a Masters Degree. Following this exercise, discussions were ongoing to determine if young people would be invited to contribute formally to form part of certain courses being offered by the university.

Members queried if the same small number of young people were the ones continually undertaking such activities. Shinderpaul Bhangal explained that he had a

directory of 50 plus young people who he could call on to determine if they would be interested in undertaking certain activities. Members noted that from within this group, there existed around 15 young people who regularly volunteered to take part in such activities/schemes.

The Panel noted that young people had been involved in the drafting of the care leavers letter.

Discussions were ongoing to ensure that members remained engaged in The Pledge document.

The Panel noted the updates provided by Shinderpaul Bhangal.

3. Independent Reporting Officers Report

Mary Eccleston, Operational Manager – Independent Reviewing Service introduced the report which had been submitted for the Panel's consideration in advance of the meeting.

Mary Eccleston drew the Panel's attention to the following areas of the submitted report:

- The Independent Reviewing Service had been operational in Warwickshire since 1995.
- Although the service had been successful in recruiting additional Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) and administrative staff, three experienced IRO had left the organisation during the same period.
- IRO salaries were equivalent to that of team managers, reflecting the duties and responsibilities associated with the IRO role.
- It was difficult to recruit experienced IRO regionally due to the shortage of this calibre of personnel and because other authorities were offering higher salaries. The Council was able to compete for prospective staff by offering lower caseloads and a supportive working environment.
- Some social workers working for the Council had transferred to the IRO service to become IRO.
- The implementation of the new MOSAIC software system had created some difficulties for staff, although officers were working closely with the systems developers to improve its functionality and ease of use.
- The IRO service remained confident that the systems which it had in place were effective at resolving any issues. There were very few cases which required further escalation beyond the IRO service.
- 91% of statutory reviews were held within the specified timeframes.
- Only 1% of care plans had been flagged as Red (delay seriously

impacting on the care plan). 18% were Amber (specific issue of concern in care planning, but overall plan was progressing) and 81% were Green (plan was progressing well).

The Panel noted that Ofsted had recently commented on the staffing capacity of the IRO service – officers had acknowledged this and the recruitment process remained ongoing.

Although there had been some issues with the MOSAIC system, the Panel noted that it was the most appropriate system to be using.

Beate Wagner, Head of Children and Families explained that social workers had significantly more meetings with young people – IRO typically met with their assigned young people on a twice-yearly basis

The Panel noted that some young people took the decision not to engage with their designated IRO. Daniel Kalcutt-Smith informed the Panel that some young people preferred meetings with staff to be in an informal setting. Shinderpaul Bhangal expressed a view that young people wanted to be more involved in running their own review. The Panel acknowledged that this would be a cultural shift which would take some time. Young people were informed about the role of the IRO before a meeting took place.

Members noted that feedback on the information booklets provided to young people aged 5-9 was positive. The 9-13 booklet had received positive feedback. The 13+ booklet did require more work which was being undertaken.

4. Adoption Report

This report was marked as 'to follow' and would be circulated for comments outside of the meeting.

5. Child Social Care Activity Data Set

The Panel expressed a view that the one page performance summary sheet was useful.

Members noted that any areas where poor performance was identified had small task and finish groups appointed to analyse what factors were causing it and what could be done to remedy the issue(s).

The Panel noted that there had been a rise in the number of children subject to CP plans – this was due in part to a process of data cleansing and the implementation of the MOSAIC system.

Because the number of children looked after had risen and not reduced significantly, a review as being undertaken to understand exactly why this was the case – specifically if the set reduction targets were realistic.

The Panel requested that they be provided with exact reasons as to why the number

of children looked after was not decreasing.

Beate Wagner, Head of Children and Families informed the Panel that the numbers of children looked after were reviewed on a weekly basis. There had been an increase in the number of teenage children looked after which was partly linked to officers better understanding the risks around Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).

6. Development of Work Programme for 2018

Following discussions between the Panel and officers present at the meeting, it was agreed that the following items would be considered at future meetings:

- Update on the progress of small residential units housing children looked after operating in Warwickshire.
- Educational attainment of children looked after.
- A detailed update on missing children.
- Collaborative work with district and borough councils, particularly in terms of housing.
- NEETS and apprenticeships.
- Training for independent living.

7. Any Other Business

None

8. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel is scheduled to take place on 26 February 2018 at 10.00 in Committee Room 3, Shire Hall, Warwick

The meeting closed at 17.30 pm

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Chair