

Corporate Parenting Panel

Monday 16 January 2023

Minutes

Attendance

Panel Members attending in person

Councillor Marian Humphreys
Councillor Sue Markham

Panel Members attending virtually

Councillor Pete Gilbert
Councillor Caroline Phillips
Councillor Jerry Roodhouse

Officers

Helen Barnsley, Senior Democratic Services Officer
John Coleman, Assistant Director - Children and Families
Sharon Shaw, Service Manager - Corporate Parenting Service

Nigel Minns, Strategic Director for People (attended virtually)
Deena Moorey, Deena Moorey, Virtual School Head (attended virtually)

Others Present

Angela Richardson, Designated Nurse – Children in Care

1. General

(1) Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Peter Gilbert, Councillor Jeff Morgan and Councillor Penny Anne O'Donnell. Apologies were also received from Umar Teerab, Family Support Worker.

(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None.

(3) Minutes of the previous meeting

In relation to the second paragraph of item 3 of the minutes from the 12th of October 2022

requested that clarification was given in relation to the unaccompanied asylum seekers placed in the hotels. It was noted that the children are placed in hotels by The Home Office; they are not Warwickshire children.

In relation to Item 4 from the agenda on the 28th of November 2023, paragraph three of the minutes was amended to read –

The panel noted that post-16 funding had been received and that there is a comprehensive training programme worked out. Warwickshire is working with the North Warwickshire College, South Leicestershire College and the Warwickshire College Group.

The minutes were then agreed as a true and accurate record and there were no matters arising.

2. Performance Data

Sharon Shaw, Service Manager - Corporate Parenting Service presented the performance report to the Panel who noted the following –

- Warwickshire has continued to see a decrease in the number of children in care. The total in November 2022 saw a decrease of 17 and as at the time of this meeting, the total was 799 children in care.
- It was confirmed that more children are now being looked after by foster carers in Warwickshire not by carers outside the county which is very positive.
- It was confirmed that there are more male children in care than female, but that this is due to unaccompanied asylum seekers.
- Placement stability is still a key area of work for officers and is still a national issues. There continues to be a shortage of fostering and residential placements. Officers confirmed that there is no 'quick fix' to this issue but things should improve within the next 8 to 12 months.
- The Panel noted that since the last report, 24 children in care were reported as missing (52 episodes). It was noted that the majority of children missing were known to be going back to family members or parents and that officers were aware where they were. It was confirmed that Full Care Orders are being used when circumstance change/ a young person is older. This means that children are placed back with family members and the number of missing episodes will start to reduce.

Following a question from Councillor Sue Markham it was confirmed that a child is noted as missing if they are away from their placement after midnight and this accounts for the majority of missing episodes. An example was given of a young person who was out on New Year's Eve but returned home in the morning. There are one or two children who are logged as missing for a longer period of time but who are in touch with officers daily. There are some unaccompanied asylum seekers who go missing and officers don't know where they are – but none are Warwickshire children.

Councillor Caroline Phillips asked if the Police were made aware in cases where a child is missing for over a certain period of time. Sharon Shaw confirmed that there are multi-agency meetings between Warwickshire Police, the police from the authority where the child is believed to be (if outside Warwickshire), the exploitation team, social workers and placement providers. The multi-agency team will put together a risk assessment and a plan. Every child who does go missing will have a return to home meeting to identify potential patterns/reasons that they go missing which are then addressed. There are currently 12 children with multiple missing episodes and there are active plans in place looking at triggers/reasons and investigation solutions.

3. Warwickshire Response to the National Review Children with Disabilities and Complex Needs

John Coleman, Assistant Director - Children and Families presented a summary of the report to the Panel.

A national review into safeguarding children with disabilities and complex health needs in residential settings was requested of all Directors of Children's Services in August 2022.

The National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel undertook a review considering the experiences of children placed in three specialist independent residential settings located in the Doncaster area.

Part one was to review every child where providers provide home and education. The example of Witherslake in Warwickshire was given to the Panel, where there are 29 children. A team of social workers and quality assurance officers completed a deep dive of the service looking at staffing, quality issues as well as talking to the children. The Panel noted that this was a big piece of work and congratulated officers on completing it within the required timescales.

The findings of the review found that 27 out of the 29 children had no significant concerns.

Two children raised concerns. One was in relation to the staff and the Panel noted that there had been a number of changes to the staff in recent months which meant that there was no stability for the children. However, a rating of no major concerns was given. The second child raised the issue of wanting to go home.

Warwickshire has two Local Authority Designated Officers (LADO) in post, whose role is to deal with complaints about professionals who are responsible for the safeguarding of children. The LADO raised no concerns and noted that all referrals in Warwickshire were dealt with appropriately.

John Coleman confirmed that OFSTED were happy with the Warwickshire Review and that the National Review Body were satisfied with the report and findings.

Councillor Marian Humphries reiterated the Panel's thanks to all the officers involved in this work.

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse raised concerns about the high turnover of staff, stating that stability and consistency is so important to children. Councillor Roodhouse wondered if the right

experienced people were in place and if, perhaps, there was a shortage across the board of social care of experience people.

John Coleman stated that in relation to the Witherslake providers, there have been struggles but officers have been working with them to support continuing improvement. It was noted that there are no Warwickshire children there at present.

Sharon Shaw, Service Manager, Corporate Parenting confirmed that there is a current challenge in recruiting to children's home. It is one of the lowest paid roles in children's care; this is a national issue, not just in Warwickshire. Warwickshire officers are looking at recruiting from across a range of professions, such as ex-teachers, nursery managers etc and then ensuring that the right training programme is in place. It was noted that the management positions at the moment are very well fulfilled with excellent professionals in place. Warwickshire officers are doing everything that they can to make sure that when the new Warwickshire children's homes are open, the very best staff are in place.

4. Outline for the Corporate Parenting Panel Road shows

Following a request from Councillor Jeff Morgan at an earlier meeting, Sharon Shaw, Service Manager - Corporate Parenting Service confirmed to the Panel that she would be looking into the finer details of what each roadshow would entail and be able to bring an update to the next meeting.

Councillor Marian Humphries stated that the amount of work involved should be highlighted. It was agreed to continue promoting the work of the panel to the district and borough councils of Warwickshire, but also with the county council itself. Consideration will be given to taking something to the next appropriate full council meeting.

5. Development of the Work Programme and Items on the Forward Plan

The following additions/changes were made to the work programme –

The following items will be presented at the next meeting (27th of March 2023)

- Placement Stability for Children in Care
- Corporate Parenting Roadshows – Verbal Update
- Governance for Child in Care and HELAC Feedback – Verbal Update
- The Vanguard Project – Verbal Update

John Coleman, Assistant Director - Children and Families will draft a letter for Councillor Jeff Morgan to sign to all District and Boroughs inviting them to present The Corporate Parenting Charter at the June meeting.

An update on the Work Force Strategy will also be presented in June along with a report in relation to the CAMHS/RISE service.

The updated work programme was agreed by the Panel.

6. Any Other Business

Angela Richardson, Designated Nurse – Children in Care confirmed that there was now a designated Doctor in place for Coventry and Warwickshire and asked that she be invited to the next panel meeting. It was agreed that Helen Barnsley, Senior Democratic Services Officer would contact Angela for the contact details and ensure an invitation was sent.

7. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on 27th March 2023 at 10am.

The meeting will be held in Shire Hall, Warwick.

The meeting rose at 11am

.....
Chair