

Corporate Parenting Panel

Monday 18 September 2023

Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members

Councillor Sue Markham (Chair)
Councillor Marian Humphreys
Councillor Penny-Anne O'Donnell
Councillor Caroline Phillips

Officers

Helen Barnsley, Senior Democratic Services Officer
Helen Broughton, Commissioner (Vulnerable People)
John Coleman, Assistant Director - Children and Families
Debs McGarvey, Quality and Impact Service Team Leader (Voice, Influence & Change)
Nigel Minns, Executive Director for People
Liss Phillips, Family Support Worker
Sharon Shaw, Service Manager - Corporate Parenting Service
George Shipman - Service Manager (Safeguarding Communities)
Deena Moorey, Virtual School Head
Umar Teerab, Corporate Parenting Family Support Worker
Vicky Woodfield - Delivery Lead Social Work Operations Manager

Others Present

Gillian Eccles, Lead Art Psychotherapist, Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust.
Chris Evan, Coventry Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust,
Zoe Hutchinson, Coventry & Warwickshire Mind (CWMind)

1. General

(1) Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Brett Beetham and Councillor Jerry Roodhouse

(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None

(3) Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes from the meeting held on the 15th May 2023 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

The Chair confirmed that the Corporate Parenting Roadshows are still in the planning stage and that the Panel will be kept updated.

There were no other matters arising.

2. Voice, Influence & Change Team - Updates

Debs McGarvey, Quality and Impact Service Team Leader (Voice, Influence & Change) introduced the report which covered the period from 1st April 2023 to 4th September 2023.

The following events were highlighted to the Panel –

- Over the last six months, there has been an increase in requests for young people to come and sit on either the interview panel for new positions or to form a youth panel to interview potential candidates.
- National Siblings Day was celebrated on the 6th of April. Over 50 brothers and sisters attended an event at Myton which had been transformed into a fair ground for the day.
- There has been an increase in events aimed at brothers and sisters and following National Siblings Day, there was a trip to Legoland so that siblings who perhaps don't live together were able to spend time together.
- As part of Refugee Celebration Week, Warwickshire hosted a celebration for all young unaccompanied asylum seekers on the evening of 19th June. Over 60 young people attended and the evening included an awards ceremony to recognise educational and personal achievements and acts of kindness.
- The Staff Conference was held on the 13th and 14th July 2023 and 26 young people attended and were able to work with the staff to highlight some of the difficulties they experience when they first come into contact with the children and families service.
- Umar Teerab, Corporate Parenting Family Support Worker (Voice, Influence & Change) gave an update in relation to the Sunday football team which has been up and running, every Sunday, since 2019. It is very popular, whatever the weather. The team did recently loose against the team from Warwickshire Police, but a rematch will be booked. Members of the Panel were invited to attend a Sunday football session – everyone is welcome.
- A new event for care experienced young parents was held at the start of September with a trip to Butlins in Minehead. This was a good opportunity for the council to show support for

those invited and for the parents to meet other parents, many are still in touch with each other. Feedback will be requested from those who went and will be fed back to the Panel. For many of the families, it was the first time that they had been able to take their children away on holiday.

- Liss Phillips, Family Support Worker - Voice, Influence & Change, asked if the lady who runs the charity that enabled the trip to Minehead could be invited to a future meeting. She supports many activities and it would be nice for the Panel members to meet her.
- The Chair commented that the commitment and involvement from the whole Voice, Influence and Change team needs to be recognised and thanked them all for the report, which highlights just how much work is involved. The Panel congratulated all those involved.

3. Performance Data

Sharon Shaw, Service Manager - Corporate Parenting presented the report to the Panel with the following highlights –

- July saw an increase in the number of Children in Care and this is due to the increase in the number of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) coming into Warwickshire as part of the transfer scheme. Without these figures included the number of children in care is stable.
- In relation to the age breakdown of Children in Care, this has also been affected by the UASC with the highest number of children aged 10 to 15. The UASC is also influencing the fact that there are more male than female children in care.
- John Coleman, Director of Children & Families Service confirmed that in relation to UASC, the Government requires local authorities to take 0.1% which equates to Warwickshire taking 119 children. The majority of children come to Warwickshire from Kent. The local hotel that was being used to house UASC is no longer in use.
- It was noted that there is still a national issues of finding foster places for children. However, there has been a decrease in the number of children in residential placements.
- Following a question from the Chair in relation to the stability of long-term placements, it was confirmed that there hasn't been a recent update for the national figures but it remains an area of concern for officers. There has been a large increase in the number of children being returned to parents/family members which is a positive. Officers are continually working to improve the stability of long-term placements.

The Chair thanked officers for the performance report and congratulated them on the format of the data.

4. Child Exploitation and Missing Episodes

The report was accompanied by a presentation given by George Shipman - Service Manager (Safeguarding Communities) and Vicky Woodfield - Delivery Lead Social Work Operations Manager, in relation to Child Exploitation and Missing Episodes.

The video presentation highlighted the dangers that young people could face when they go missing from a placement. The Panel were able to hear some of the reasons that young people go missing.

The following points were highlighted to the Panel –

- It was noted that there has been a 3% increase in the last year of children in care going missing with 14% of all children in care having missing episode/s.
- 15% of missing children are Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC).
- The principal reasons for missing episodes are due to children wanting to meet with peers and associates (often unnamed or perceived to be risky).
- It is notable that long term stability in placements decreased significantly in Warwickshire during the year (66% to 57%) and this is a contributory factor to missing events.
- The biggest risks for children who are missing from placement are drugs and alcohol, along with mental health problems and an increased risk of exploitation.

The Chair thanked officers for the comprehensive report adding that it helped the Panel understand more about the data that is presented in the performance report at each meeting.

Following a question from Councillor Caroline Phillips, it was confirmed that the information in relation to drugs and alcohol being a risk for the children while they are missing came from “return from missing” interviews or from others such as police/carers who report the missing child.

It was noted that 23% of those who are missing travel out of the county, often to be with family or friends. The risk in these cases increases often due to the significant distance that is travelled. Vicky Woodfield confirmed to the Panel that the term “missing” isn't a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach and in in case it will relate to what is known about the child concerned. It could be that an hour missing is considered a risk for some children but not for others. A multiagency response is always key.

A balanced approach is used for each case, officers may not know where a child is but will be in regular contact with them. Each case is dealt with individually and proportionally. The Panel received clarification regarding the term “safe uncertainty” which is when a child is missing but officers know where they are – perhaps with parents. In these cases it is clear where the child wants to be, especially so with frequent episodes, and work will be done on how we can make it safe for them.

Councillor Penny-Anne O'Donnell asked for further information about missing episodes and any connection to exploitation and county line drug issues. It was confirmed that in 17% of missing episodes there were concerns relating to all forms of exploitation. The Panel learnt that for these cases, Multiagency Exploitation (MACE) meetings were in place which focus on interventions, diversionary activities and building an understanding with the child involved as well as close work with the Police.

John Coleman, Director of Children & Families Service highlighted the need for everyone to be part of raising awareness. There are multiple campaigns in relation to exploitation and the hope is that they will encourage everyone to engage and feel comfortable raising any concerns that they have about a child/children.

5. Mental Health Services for Children in Care and Care Leavers

The Panel considered the report and identified areas for future service development. An update will be provided to the Panel in June 2024.

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

It was agreed that a briefing note would be circulated to the Panel with further information about siblings in care with a further breakdown of the information presented as part of the performance data (item 3).

It was agreed that Warwickshire County Council officers are still working on the best way to engage with District and Borough Council colleagues in relation to their Corporate Parenting Responsibility.

The Panel noted that the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee were meeting on the 19th of September 2023 and would be receiving a report in relation to educational attainment. It was agreed that the report would be added to the Virtual School report scheduled to be presented at the next Panel meeting in November.

It was agreed that a briefing note in relation to the KOOTH website would be circulated to members of the Panel.

It was agreed that moving forward, where possible, presentations would be circulated to the Panel ahead of a meeting so that members have an opportunity to review and prepare questions.

7. Any Other Business -

None

8. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Monday 16 October 2023 at 10.00 am.
The meeting will be held in Committee Room 2, Shire Hall.

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Chair