

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

MINUTES of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held in Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Monday, 18 September 2017.

PRESENT: Mrs A D Allen, MBE (Chairman), Mr G Cooke, Mr D S Daley (Substitute for Mrs T Dean, MBE), Mr T Doran, Ms S Dunstan, Ms M Emptage (Substitute for Ms S Dunn), Mr D Farrell, Ms L Fisher, Mrs S Gent, Mr R Graves, Mr S Gray, Ms S Hamilton, Mrs S Hammond (Substitute for Mr P Segurola), Mr A Heather, Ms N Khosla, Mr G Lymer, Ms C Mutton, Mr M J Northey, Ms A Ogilvie (Substitute for Ms H Carpenter) and Mrs S Prendergast

ALSO PRESENT: Mr R W Gough and Mr R Barton

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms G O'Grady (Participation Co-ordinator, Specialist Children's Services), Mrs M Robinson (Management Information Unit Service Manager), Ms C Smith (Head of Fostering Service) and Miss T A Grayell (Democratic Services Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

27. Apologies and substitutes

(Item 1)

Apologies for absence had been received from Hazel Carpenter, Teresa Carpenter, Trudy Dean, Sue Dunn, Lesley Game, Stuart Griffiths, Carolyn Moody and Philip Segurola.

Ailsa Ogilvie was present as a substitute for Hazel Carpenter, Dan Daley for Trudy Dean, Marion Emptage for Sue Dunn and Sarah Hammond for Philip Segurola.

28. Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 21 July 2017

(Item 2)

It was RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 July 2017 are correctly recorded and they be signed by the Chairman. Arising from these, the Chairman requested that *a briefing on the Housing Act and its impact upon Children in Care be added to the Panel's work programme.*

29. Chairman's Announcements

(Item 3)

1. The Chairman announced that Philip Segurola was shortly to leave Kent for a post in Croydon Council's Children's Services, and she placed on record her sincere thanks to him for the work he had done in his role as Director of Specialist Children's Services to support and improve services for children in care in Kent.

2. The Chairman announced that, at the start of the OCYPC update item, a short film would be shown of children and young people enjoying the activities at recent

VSK participation events. As this could not be shown in public, the meeting would be closed briefly to the press and public.

Motion to exclude the Press and Public for Exempt Business

It was RESOLVED that, under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

EXEMPT ITEM

(Open access to Minutes)

30. Film of activity days and participation events

1. Robert Barton from the Young Adults Council introduced the film, which had been made and produced by the VSK apprentices while he had been working with them over the summer months, with the help and support of all the children who had attended activity days over the summer.

2. The film showed children and young people of a range of ages enjoying activities at participation days around the county, with Roger Gough, Philip Segurola, Naintara Khosla, Gemma O'Grady, Jo Carpenter and the VSK apprentices.

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

31. Verbal Update from Our Children and Young People's Council (OCYPC)

(Item 4)

1. Ms Mutton, Mr Graves, Mr Barton and Ms Dunstan gave a verbal update on the work of the OCYPC, the Super Council and Young Adults Council and forthcoming participation events. *The text of the update would be attached to these minutes.* They then responded to comments and questions from the Panel, including the following:-

- a) Panel members welcomed news of the Christmas dinner planned for care leavers who would be alone on Christmas Day and offered help providing food or making some other contribution to the day. A list of requirements could be reported to the 9 November meeting to allow time to organise contributions; and
- b) it was noted that Chloe had volunteered to work on Christmas Day to organise and support the event, and the Panel thanked her for making this commitment.

2. It was RESOLVED that the verbal updates be noted, with thanks.

Details of the post-16 awards ceremony on 19 October were emailed to all Panel members after the meeting.

32. Corporate Parenting Challenge Cards

(Item 5)

1. Ms O'Grady introduced the report and asked Panel members to support the one challenge currently outstanding, the Virtual Triathlon to Calais' taking place on 26 October 2017. *She undertook to circulate to Panel members details of how they could sponsor participants at this event.*
2. The participation events which had taken place over the summer had been an opportunity to gain feedback from young people, and new challenge cards were expected to arise from this. The Children in Care Council would meet monthly to consider any new challenge cards arising, and would then report them to the Corporate Parenting Panel.
3. It was RESOLVED that the progress made on the challenges raised be noted and that Panel members support and attend the 'Virtual Triathlon to Calais' on 26 October 2017.

33. Verbal Update by Cabinet Member *(Item 6)*

1. The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education, Mr R Gough, gave a verbal update on the following issues:-

Post-Ofsted Practice Development Plan – issues identified in the Ofsted inspection report had been mostly covered by work which was already in hand, for example working with district councils to co-ordinate and improve accommodation provision for 16 and 17 year olds. The practice development plan had been reported to the Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee on 7 September and would then be submitted to Ofsted as the County Council's formal response to the inspection report.

Report on celebration events – recent events held to celebrate the achievements of children in care had been excellent, and the range of activities and achievements being celebrated very broad. Younger children had featured in the morning session and older children in the afternoon. He urged Panel members to attend future celebration events.

KCC personnel changes – Philip Segurola was to leave Kent County Council on 29 September after four years as Director of Specialist Children's Services for a similar post in Croydon. Mr Gough paid tribute to r Segurola's distinguished service, particularly in increasing engagement and participation with children and young people in care and for his work with unaccompanied asylum seeking children. Sarah Hammond had been appointed as the interim Director of Specialist Children's Services. Matt Dunkley would arrive in late November to take up the post of Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education.

UASC latest status – there had been very little change since the last meeting in the number of UASC arriving in Kent, with numbers still very low compared to previous years and the effect of the National Transfer Scheme being apparent; there had been 148 arrivals so far in 2017, compared with 388 for the whole of 2016 and 948 for the whole of 2015. However, the number of care leavers would increase steeply in January as approximately 796 UASC would reach 18, and it was expected that the UASC population would then decrease to 231.

Academic results – early results were yet to be verified but the initial picture was good, with Kent children in care scoring above the national average in all subjects. KS4 and GCSE results would be difficult to compare to previous years as the

parameters had changed nationally. In this academic year, twenty young people in care had achieved sufficient grades to win university places.

Leaving Care service – this had been nominated for an award by *Children and Young People Now* magazine and the winners would be announced on 24 November.

Post - Adoption service – this had been nominated for an ‘Excellence in Adoption’ award.

2. Mr Gough responded to comments and questions from the Panel, including the following:

- a) although there was still a gap in attainment between children in care and their peers not in care, and this was still wider than hoped, the picture had improved much in the five years since the establishment of the Virtual School Kent;
- b) KS4 results were usually reported to the Children’s, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee twice a year, in October and in the new year, so a clearer overall picture should be possible then;
- c) as part of the Prevent Strategy, foster carers were supported to deal with issues relating to the radicalisation of young people. The safety of foster carers was as important as that of the young people in their care, and both needed support to deal with such issues. *A report on issues arising from the Prevent agenda would be prepared for a future meeting of the Panel;*
- d) foster carers were also trained to deal with issues experienced by UASC, and Ms Khosla advised that this training would be revised in the wake of recent terrorist activity. It was important also that foster carers should feel able to report any concerns of this type that they had about the young people in their care and should have a clear process for doing this;
- e) Panel members asked to be given as much information as possible about the support available for vulnerable young people and those caring for them, so they as corporate parents could be fully aware of issues. It was acknowledged that some information may not be able to be shared in a meeting open to the public, and thought would need to be given to how best to approach this; and
- f) concern was expressed about further budget cuts in Specialist Children’s Services and that any such cuts may jeopardise progress made so far in issues such as those set out above. Mr Gough said that he could not promise no more cuts but that he did not want to see any reversal in progress during his tenure as Cabinet Member. He added that some work could be approached differently, for instance, to place as many children as possible with in-house foster carers to minimise payments to external foster carers. Ms Khosla added that Kent made the lowest number of external foster placements of any authority in the UK. A review of external fostering was currently being undertaken by Martin Narey and would look at Kent as an example of best practice.

3. It was RESOLVED that the verbal updates be noted, with thanks.

34. Update on Mind Of My Own (MOMO) app for Children and Young People (Item 7)

1. Ms O'Grady introduced the report and explained the background to the launch of the app in Kent in 2016, to allow children and young people in care to communicate in a way in which they were most familiar and comfortable, as it had become clear that young people did not like completing surveys as a way of providing feedback on the services they received. She assured Panel members that use of the app was secure and was only possible from devices which could use a secure model. The app was a national model which Kent had done much to develop. It had first been made available in north Kent and later rolled out to cover the whole county, and in April 2017 had been extended and adapted for use by younger and disabled children. Training on use of the app had been given to 75% of frontline staff, and by October 2017 all frontline staff would have received training. MOMO had the approval of Ofsted, was popular among social workers and had attracted the attention of other local authorities, who wanted to use the same model for their own children in care. Foster carers would also be encouraged to use it.
2. It was RESOLVED that the progress made on the countywide roll-out of the Mind Of My Own app be noted, with thanks.

35. Performance Scorecard for Children in Care (Item 8)

1. Mrs Robinson introduced the report and explained that, in response to a request from the Panel, a column had been added to compare Kent's statistics with the national average. She responded to comments and questions from the Panel, including the following:-
 - a) Panel members needed to understand the definitions of the red, amber and green ratings used, For example, performance rated as 'near target' would be easier to understand if people knew that 'near' meant within 5% or 10% of target. *Mrs Robinson undertook to send Panel members a document which set out these definitions, which was done after the meeting.*
 - b) members would also need to understand how targets were set, and to be satisfied that they were gauged correctly, to be sufficiently challenging but not unachievable. *Mrs Robinson explained that targets were agreed by the divisional management team and undertook to share this information with the Panel, which was done after the meeting.*
2. It was RESOLVED that the information set out in the Children in Care scorecard, and given in response to comments and questions, be noted, with thanks.

36. Placement Stability - the Sense Of Belonging service (Item 9)

1. Ms Smith introduced the report and added that, since last reporting on this issue to the Panel, a psychologist and two support workers had been appointed to

the Sense of Belonging Service. The former Therapeutic Parenting Service had ended in July 2017 and the last five young people being supported by that service had transferred to the Sense of Belonging Service. Two issues previously identified and discussed by the Panel as having an impact on placement stability – young people excluded from school and those on a part-time timetable – would be included in latest project work. Ms Smith responded to comments and questions from the Panel, including the following:-

- a) work to help increase placement stability was welcomed and the need to support both young people and foster carers to achieve permanence was emphasised;
 - b) asked how progress and success could be identified and measured, and how soon it would be possible to identify the impact of current work, Ms Smith explained that the progress of the first cohort of young people to be placed under the Sense of Belonging service would be tracked;
 - c) the psychologist appointed would work with and support both young people and their foster carers;
 - d) although it was hoped that more foster carers would be recruited, it was also important to work to retain those carers, and progress towards this aim would form part of the evaluation of the new service;
 - e) the importance of addressing the education elements of placement stability – young people excluded from school and those on a part-time timetable – was emphasised. The contribution of these elements to the overall picture was vital; and
 - f) Ms Smith advised the Panel that the annual Foster Carer Awards ceremony would take place on 4 October and invited them all to attend. *Details of the event were emailed to all Panel members after the meeting.*
2. It was RESOLVED that the progress made over the last five months and the work plan for the improvement of placement stability be noted, with thanks.