

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, 20 March 2017.

PRESENT: Mrs A D Allen, MBE (Chairman), Mrs Z Wiltshire (Vice-Chairman), Mr R H Bird (Substitute for Mr M J Vye), Mrs P Brivio (Substitute for Mrs S Howes), Mrs P T Cole, Ms M Emptage (Substitute for Ms S Dunn), Ms L Fisher, Mr S Gray, Mr A Heather, Ms N Khosla, Ms D Marsh, Ms C Mutton, Mr P Segurola, Mr A Terry and Mrs J Whittle

ALSO PRESENT: Mr P J Oakford

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs S Skinner (Head of Adoption Service), Ms C Smith (Head of Fostering Service), Ms G O'Grady (Participation Co-ordinator, Specialist Children's Services) and Mr P Savage (Democratic Service Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

195. Membership

(Item A1)

The Panel noted that, since the last meeting of the Panel, the following changes had been made to the Panel's Membership:

- Reece Graves and Chloe Mutton had joined the Panel, in place of Bella Taylor and to fill the vacant VSK seat.
- Alan Terry had joined the Panel, in place of Bob Neaves.

196. Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 20 January 2017

(Item A3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Panel's meeting held on 20 January 2017 were correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman. There were no matters arising.

197. Chairman's Announcements

(Item A4)

The Chairman reported that she was being interviewed by OFSTED on 21 March 2017 as OFSTED were interested in the issue of corporate parenting.

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

(Item A5)

1. Ms Mutton gave a verbal update on recent work undertaken by the participation team on behalf of the Children in Care Councils (CICCs), the Super Council and Young Adult Council (YAC). *The text of the update is appended to these minutes.*

2. In response to questions from the Panel to Ms Mutton, Ms O'Grady and Ms Smith, and in subsequent discussion, the following points were raised:
 - Young people were assisting with the development of the commissioning documents and the process for interviewing and evaluating foster care providers of the future by identifying important needs for children in care
 - Many foster carers would appreciate the important factors as reminders
 - Young people were helping keep the conversation going between themselves, foster carers and the local authority
 - Some of the initiatives being pursued would help participants to develop crucial life skills
3. The Panel would welcome a report on the IRO film entitled "Chairing your own review" and asked for it to be included in the work programme for the next meeting.
4. RESOLVED that the verbal update be noted with thanks.

199. Corporate Parenting - Challenge Cards

(Item A6)

1. Officers introduced the report which provided Members with an overview of the Challenge Cards process, progress made and current challenges.
2. RESOLVED that Panel note the Challenge Card process and progress to date and request that quarterly updates be submitted on issues and requirements.

200. Verbal Update by Cabinet Member

(Item A7)

1. Mr P.J. Oakford gave a verbal update on the following issues:
 - He had attended the foster carer awards event on 8 February 2017 which had included a couple who had fostered 55 children over 35 years
 - He had also attended the CFCA foster family celebration on 5 March 2017 at which 144 had participated. This involved total families – ie all parents/carers with both foster and birth children
 - He was lobbying Kent MPs on the issue of other local authorities placing their foster children in Kent: this had already resulted in a television interview of Sir Roger Gale, MP, and was likely to involve a meeting with all Kent's MPs
 - Unaccompanied asylum seeking children: there was nothing significant to report on this area at this time. Numbers continued to remain much lower than the peak of 2015 with the national dispersal programme working effectively since July 2016. There were 725 known care leavers which might result in pressures in the future
2. In response to comments and questions from the Panel, Mr Oakford explained the following:
 - He had lobbied ministers and MPs on the issue of tracing out of authority placements and would also raise with OFSTED when he was interviewed as part of the current review. It was important to remember that these children remained the responsibility of the placing authority
 - Private fostering continued both with friends and family and also through independent fostering agencies, which was especially popular with London boroughs. It was a significant issue with language schools

and work was underway in terms of assuring that adequate checks and safeguards were in place.

- There were 321 young people from Kent in out of authority placements
3. RESOLVED that the verbal update be noted.

201. Kent Adoption Service - Statement of Purpose

(Item B1)

1. Ms Skinner introduced the report. The Statement of Purpose set out the framework for Kent County Council's Adoption Service, as required under the Adoption and Children Act 2002, the Adoption Agencies Regulations and Guidance 2013 and the Adoption National Minimum Standards (Care Standards Act 2000). In discussion the following comments were made:
 - Members of the Panel agreed that good work was being undertaken but would welcome more data to monitor
 - There had been 77 adoptions since April 2016 which was a slight reduction on the past year but was in excess of the target. Average adoption times were quicker than previously. This was also a national problem and it was agreed to raise with Members of Parliament and Ministers
 - Data would be produced on the breakdown rates of Special Guardianship Orders
 - The information contained in this document about partnership agencies such as Barnado's was appropriate for the public domain and was available on websites
 - Recommendations were made to amend and re-order the core values
 - Mentoring was available to all new adoptive parents but was not compulsory
 - The Intercountry Adoption Centre was a statutory requirement which involved very few children and was certainly not used as a recruitment route for adoptions
2. RESOLVED that (1) the Panel supported the aim to develop the range of services provided and their suitability to meet the needs of adoptees and their families in order to provide an 'Outstanding' service; and (2) it be recommended that the core values be amended so as the second and third bullet points be reversed in order and the word "prospective" be deleted from the penultimate bullet point.

202. Placement Stability - 'Sense of Belonging'

(Item B2)

1. Ms Smith introduced the report which outlined the Kent offer to foster carers to create and provide increased placement stability. There were three components of the newly developed 'Sense of Belonging' offer; this offer created choices for foster carers, children and young people that allowed them to consider what would provide the best opportunities for children to thrive and develop in their placements and prevent further disruption. Kent Fostering Service was proposing the implementation of additional support for their most vulnerable fostering placements, where additional pressures upon the foster carers meant there was a higher risk of a placement breakdown. In discussion the following comments were made:

- Panel members welcomed the initiative and supported the inclusion of Ms Chloe Mutton as a member of the commissioning panel.
2. RESOLVED that (1) the initiative be noted and (2) Ms Chloe Mutton serve on the commissioning panel for selection of provider.

203. Conclusion

(Item)

This being the last meeting of the Administration, Chairman thanked all members of the Panel for their service over the past four years and especially thanked Ms Jenny Whittle who had indicated that she would no longer be available to serve on the Panel.