

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 Tuesday, 17 September 2019.

PRESENT: Mrs A D Allen, MBE (Chairman), Ida Linfield (Vice-Chairman), Ms D Bride, Mr T Byrne, Mr T Doran, Mrs L Game, Ms S Hamilton, Mrs S Hammond, Mr A Heather, Mrs S Prendergast, Ms N Sayer, Mrs T Scott (Substitute for Ms J Bayford), Ms C Smith and Ms S Vaux

ALSO PRESENT: Mr R W Gough

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr M Dunkley CBE (Corporate Director for Children Young People and Education), Mr R Barton (Apprentice Participation Worker, Virtual School Kent), Ms J Carpenter (Participation and Engagement Manager, Virtual School Kent) and Miss T A Grayell (Democratic Services Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

176. Apologies and substitutes

(Item 1)

Apologies for absence had been received from Julianne Bayford, Gary Cooke, Stephen Gray, Stuart Griffiths, Geoff Lymer and Michael Northey.

Tracy Scott from the Kent Foster Care Association was present as a substitute for Julianne Bayford.

177. Membership

1. The Democratic Services Officer announced that, since publishing the agenda, she had received news from Stuart Griffiths that he was unable to continue as a Member of the Panel as new work commitments meant he was no longer able to attend meetings.

2. The Chairman placed on record her thanks to Stuart for his participation over the years and for his valuable insight as an experienced foster carer and adopter, in particular his experience of caring for UASC.

178. Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 25 July 2019

(Item 2)

It was RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 25 July 2019 are correctly recorded and they be signed by the Chairman. There were no matters arising.

179. Chairman's Announcements

(Item 3)

The Chairman said how very proud she had been to attend the recent ceremony at Canterbury cricket ground to present young people in care with awards and certificates of achievement. It had been very pleasing to see young people's joy at having their achievements celebrated. She thanked the participation team who had organised and attended the event for the care they had put into the arrangements.

180. MOTION TO EXCLUDE THE PRESS AND PUBLIC FOR EXEMPT ITEMS

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.

The Chairman explained that the meeting was being closed so a film could be shown which featured children and young people in care attending participation events.

EXEMPT ITEM

181. Verbal Update from Our Children and Young People's Council (OCYPC) *(Item 4)*

1. Tom Byrne and Rob Barton, Apprentice Participation Workers, Virtual School Kent (VSK), gave a verbal update on the work of the OCYPC, the Super Council and Young Adult Council and forthcoming participation events. *The text of this update will be appended to these minutes.*

2. The first part of the update included a film of children and young people enjoying various participation events over the long summer holiday. These covered a range of activities, including gliding, horse-riding and a sports day. Young people attending had also taken part in a discussion about the qualities needed by a good foster carer.

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS (meeting re-opens to public)

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

1. The update continued in open session with a second film, made using a new 'Videscribe' animation facility which presented participants as animated figures, with the voices of real young people as a soundtrack. It was noted that this would make it easier for young people to share their views at first hand with a wider audience as they could not be identified and the challenges of protecting their privacy were thus avoided. This new medium and its possible uses were welcomed.

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

183. Verbal Update by Cabinet Member *(Item 5)*

1. The Cabinet Member for CYPE, Roger Gough, gave a verbal update on the following issues:

Awards ceremony - he agreed with the view of the Chairman that the awards ceremony held on the previous weekend had been a wonderful occasion. The presence of the Panel Chairman as Chairman of the County Council had given the occasion a higher profile than it had had before. Such an event aimed to celebrate all young people in care, not just those who had achieved good academic results. Many were involved in community activities or excelled at sports or the performing arts. He referred to the number of County Council Members who had attended and suggested that more publicity of the event among Members might encourage more to attend.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) – the number of UASC had been increasing for a while. 18 months ago, the number of UASC under 18 in Kent had been 230, which was Kent's 'fair share', using the formula which accompanied the National Transfer Scheme. There were now 353 under 18 and 900 over 18. So far in 2019, just over 200 new UASC had arrived in Kent.

2. He explained that the general position on funding for care leavers, including UASC, had not changed since reporting to the Panel in July. A Government review had increased the rates paid in support of UASC under 18 but there were still outstanding funding issues relating to care leavers over 18. Although the shortfall for this sector was between £500,000 and £600,000, this was the lowest it had been in ten years.

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

184. Report on Looked After Children and Custody (Item 6)

1. Dan Bride, Assistant Director, Adolescent and Open Access, West, introduced the report and responded to comments and questions from the Panel, including the following:

- a) a Panel member who had visited Cookham Wood Young Offenders Institute praised the education facilities there but expressed concern about the number of children in care in the youth justice system and that 60% of those had special educational needs and disability (SEND). Ms Bride advised that the number of children in care in custody or awaiting sentencing was a challenge not just in Kent but nationally, and work was going on to seek to reduce this number. The Home Office, the Ministry of Justice and the Department for Education were collaborating on a national protocol to reduce the unnecessary criminalisation of children in care and care leavers. Early Help and Preventative Services aimed to achieve very early intervention and an holistic approach, with schools being able to refer young people and families to self-refer. There was also a move to use more out-of-court disposals, for example, restorative justice and community solutions, to avoid young people entering the youth justice system;

- b) asked what role Virtual School Kent (VSK) could play in this work, Tony Doran, Head Teacher, VSK, explained that VSK aimed to improve the school attendance of all young people, not just those with SEND, to keep them away from risk-taking behaviour, but pointed out that VSK was only part of a larger picture. Ms Bride added that 'open access' offers were being reviewed to make these more robust and identify earlier those who might be at risk of becoming involved in criminal behaviour;
- c) asked what would happen to residents of the Medway Secure Training Centre (STC) during its conversion to a school, and how many of those residents were girls, Ms Bride explained that there were no girls currently resident at Medway. Current residents would move to the nearest suitable centre, as close to their foster families as possible. A recent inspection had advised Medway STC that they needed to ensure that a social worker was in post. Asked where any girls would go, Ms Bride *undertook to find out about this and the social worker appointment and advise the questioner outside the meeting*;
- d) asked about health services for young people in custody, Ms Bride advised that some young people coming into care at the time of they entered the youth justice system did not have a GP and hence had health needs which were not being met. There was an established relationship between secure institutions and the North East London NHS Foundation Trust to deliver healthcare services;
- e) asked if the County Council would have any input into the establishment of the first secure school in the UK, Ms Bride advised that, although she would be meeting shortly with the Oasis Charitable Trust, which would run the school, to talk about providing suitable training for staff, the County Council had no jurisdiction over the running of the school;
- f) asked how young people at risk of exploitation could be protected from county lines and gang activity, Ms Bride advised that a model of risk management was being established which would involve joint working and shared intelligence between professionals, as well as mentoring for young people, which had been shown to be effective when used elsewhere; and
- g) asked how the achievements of young people in the youth justice system would be celebrated, compared to other children in care, Ms Bride advised that the youth justice service aimed to establish a scheme by which young people's achievements could be celebrated, replicating the arrangements made by VSK for other children in care. She referred to the excellent work started by Josh, the Youth Justice Apprentice, who had since moved on to a new role. The aim now was to establish a Youth Justice Apprentice in each of the four regional teams, rather than one to cover the whole county,

and that their work would focus on black, Asian, and minority ethnic (BME), children in care and care leavers, as these groups were over-represented in the youth justice system.

2. It was RESOLVED that the information set out in the report and given in response to comments and questions be noted, with thanks, and that a further update report be presented to the Panel in six months' time.

185. Performance Scorecard for Children in Care *(Item 7)*

Chris Nunn, Senior Management Information Officer, was in attendance for this item.

1. Mr Nunn introduced the report and explained that pattern changes had arisen from the re-inclusion of UASC in the figures and the completion of fewer initial health assessments. Nancy Sayer, Designated Consultant Nurse for Looked After Children, Kent Clinical Commissioning Groups, added that there had been a large increase in the first half of 2019 in the number of both children in care and those placed in Kent by other local authorities, especially in East Kent, and this had stretched resources to breaking point. Health assessment interviews for UASC were necessarily more complicated than for other children in care as UASC required interpreters, came with no health records and hence could have all manner of hitherto unidentified and unmet health needs. Asked about the long-term impact of this and how long it might take to clear the backlog, Ms Sayer said this was not easy to predict. She explained, however, that additional capacity would be made available later in the autumn and more nursing resources would be requested in instalments thereafter. This would hopefully include specialist paediatricians with experience of working with children in care and UASC. Sarah Vaux, Chief Nurse, Medway Clinical Commissioning Group, agreed that resourcing initial health assessments for children and young people coming into care was an ongoing concern.
2. It was RESOLVED that the performance data set out in the report and the information given in response to comments and questions be noted, with thanks.

186. Kent Adoption Service Annual Report 2018/2019 and Kent Adoption Service Business Plan 2019 *(Item 8)*

Sarah Skinner, Head of Adoption Service, was in attendance for this item.

1. Ms Hammond and Mrs Skinner gave an update on the regional adoption agency (RAA) and explained the work which was continuing to establish it. The Government had committed to the development of an RAA involving Kent, Medway and Bexley Councils, and those three councils had formally agreed to work together, which meant their respective staffs would have no change of employer or terms and conditions of employment. Mrs Skinner would be the Interim Head of the RAA, as well as retaining some of her responsibilities at Kent County Council, and her County

Council post would be back-filled. Executive and operational boards for the RAA had been set up and stakeholder events organised for social workers, the NHS, young people and others. There would be an Adoption Advisory Board event in November 2019.

2. Mrs Skinner then responded to comments and questions from the Panel, including the following:-

- a) the Chairman commented that the Adoption Annual Report was not just a regular report of activity but a celebration of the work of Kent's Adoption service;
- b) although there was a target timespan during which a child should be matched with suitable adopters, it was surely more important that the match ultimately made was the right one. Mrs Skinner advised that the target timespan was set by the Government and was required to be met; and
- c) Mrs Skinner explained that the aim of the adoption service was to meet the needs of all children awaiting adoption, in the best way possible for each child. Sometimes the needs of children were so great that they may need to be the only child in a family at a point in time. Mrs Skinner emphasised that any decision to separate siblings would be taken only after much thought and only by weighing up how the needs of each child could best be met in a secure permanent placement, which would avoid unnecessary future moves. Although some siblings may not be placed together, every effort would be made to keep them as geographically close as possible, and to encourage contact between their adoptive families, so they could still see their siblings while being parented by different adults.

3. It was RESOLVED that the information set out in the Kent Adoption Annual Report 2018/19 and Business Plan 2019 and given in response to comments and questions, be noted, the excellent work of the adoption team be welcomed and celebrated and all adoption staff be sent the Panel's thanks for their work.

187. Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Action Plan/Children in Care with Education, Care and Health Plans (ECHPs) (6 monthly review)
(Item 9)

Lesley Burnand, Special Educational Needs County Manager, was in attendance for this item.

1. Ms Burnand introduced the report and responded to comments and questions from the Panel, including the following:-

- a) the facilities for delivering an alternative curriculum to young people excluded from school were impressive and were praised. Ms Burnand set out some of the innovative and creative projects which were in place, including one which encouraged young people to learn to maintain a bicycle and plan and undertake cycle rides. This would develop the practical skills of mechanics, route planning and orienteering as well as encouraging them to get out into the fresh air and take regular exercise. Such schemes would be run alongside other educational provision, and in a young person's education record this would be listed as 'other education'. Mr Doran added that the success of such schemes was evidenced by the reduced number of young people with an Education, Care and Health Plan who were not in education, employment or training (NEET); and
- b) asked if there were any schools specialised in working with 'school refusers', Ms Burnand explained that some independent providers offered outreach packages and mentoring schemes.

2. The Corporate Director, Matt Dunkley, suggested that one role of a corporate parent could be that of a 'pushy parent', to champion and pursue what any other parent might pursue for their child. He added that the recent integration of the Child Disability, Early Help and Children's Social Care teams provided one co-ordinated, integrated service for children with special needs. As a service provider, the County Council needed to be responsible for the whole service provision and, as such, would seek to achieve a first class and outstanding service.

3. It was RESOLVED that the information set out in the report and given in response to comments and questions be noted, with thanks, and a further update report be made to the Panel in six months' time.

188. Looked After Children Annual Report for the Kent Clinical Commissioning Groups, April 2018 - March 2019

(Item 10)

1. Ms N Sayer introduced the report and explained that she had a statutory duty to report annually on the health services provided to looked after children in Kent and priorities for future work. She responded to comments and questions from the Panel, including the following:-

- a) concern was expressed about there being only one designated nurse for looked after children in Kent, against the recommended total of five. Ms Sayer advised that, since writing the report, two deputy designated nurses had been appointed and interviews for a third appointment were due to take place shortly;
- b) Ms Sayer advised that an interim designated doctor for looked after children, Dr Leather, had been appointed substantively in July 2019,

working two days a week. She hoped that Dr Leather could attend a future Panel meeting to talk about her work. It was hoped also to be able to appoint three deputy designated doctors, at least one of whom could be a GP;

- c) asked about the funding available to recruit more designated doctors and nurses, and if this funding could be protected until suitable appointments could be made, Ms Sayer confirmed that the funding was reserved and would be protected while suitable staff were being sought. Recruitment of such staff could take a long time as the subject area was very specialised and required a very specific skills set;
 - d) asked if other local authorities placing their children in care in Kent made a contribution to the costs of their health care, Ms Sayer advised that there was a national tariff for health assessments which other CCGs in the placing local authorities were required to pay, but no formal arrangement for them to pay for any other, secondary health services the child may need during their placement in Kent. Some authorities, in particular London authorities, had limited placements near to their boundaries and so had to place them elsewhere, and many London children came to Kent; and
 - e) asked about funding for training about gang activity and knife crime, Ms Sayer advised that one-off funding had been made available by NHS England, but no further training was being planned.
2. It was RESOLVED that the information set out in the report and given in response to comments and questions be noted, with thanks, and the opportunity to meet a designated doctor at a future Panel meeting be welcomed.