

Minutes of the meeting of the CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL held on MONDAY
14 JANUARY 2013 at 9.30 am

Present: Councillor Miles (Chair)
Councillors Bradburn, Brock, O'Neill and Small

Officers: N Rayner (Assistant Director [Children's Social Care]), C Greer
(Head of Delivery- Corporate Parenting), S Johnson (Specialist
Nurse [Children in Care]) and S Muir (Committee Manager).

Also Present: Cllr Dransfield (Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Life
Long Learning)

Apology: Councillor Zealley

PC77 MINUTES

With reference to Minute CP69, Members noted that that the current
level of Care Leavers Grant of £2,000 was applauded by young
people.

RESOLVED -

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel
held on 19 November 2012 be approved and signed by the Chair as
a correct record, subject to the bullet point about effective means of
electronically circulating information in Minute CP75 being be
deleted.

PC78 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

None

**PC79 REGULATION 33 REPORT (01 SEPTEMBER 2012 – 31
NOVEMBER 2012)**

The Panel received details of the Regulation 33 Report for the period
1 September 2012 – 30 November 2012.

(a) Furze House

It was noted that an issue identified by a visitor who had questioned
whether the issue should have been referred straight to the Local
Authority Designated Officer (LADO), had been resolved. It was
reported that further training on the role of the LADO had been
carried out with the manager.

(b) The Walnuts

- The Assistant Director (Children's Social Care) clarified that the Walnuts was run by a community school as a registered children's home. The home provided both respite and full time care for autistic children who attend The Walnuts School. The registration of the home, rather than residential school, was required as there were some full time residents.
- It was reported that work was underway to refresh the décor, undertake maintenance and include a sensory room to improve the appearance and facilities at the home. The accommodation layout had been re-designed to house longer term young people on the ground floor. The Panel commented that the self contained units were well designed.

(c) Westminster House

No Issues were reported.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

PC80

TODAY'S CHILDREN, TOMORROW'S FUTURE (TCTF)

The Panel heard that the party to encourage more young people to learn about TCTF had been held on 1 December 2012 at the Youth Café and that approximately 20 young people had attended and follow up information was being sent to them.

It was reported that the young people's meeting with Councillors on 12 December 2012 was postponed due to an extraordinary Council meeting however three of the young people took the opportunity to attend the All Party Parliamentary Group for Looked After Children and Carers, at Portcullis House in Central London on the same day. It was hoped to re-organise the meeting with Councillors soon.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

PC81

CHILDREN IN CARE - HEALTH REPORT

The Panel received the Children in Care Health Report for 2011/12 which provided information on the progress and work to improve health outcomes for Children in Care as outlined in the Statutory Guidance on Promoting the Health and Well-being of Looked After Children (DOH 2009). It was acknowledged that the report was written in May 2012 and referred to the previous year, but had been deferred from a previous meeting.

The Panel broadly welcomed the positive report and the clarification of the definition of "Looked after Children" but requested clarification on the following:

- In previous years it had been advised that the comment that “health outcomes were higher than national averages in all areas, and higher than regional averages in all areas except immunisation uptake”, referred to data reporting issues, was this still the case or was it due to uptake?

The Assistant Director (Children’s Social Care) confirmed that uptake of immunisations had improved and a follow up programme for those who had missed their immunisations had been instigated.

- Following the merger of NHS Northamptonshire and NHS Milton Keynes and the changes in local commissioning arrangements, had succession planning been implemented?

The Assistant Director (Children’s Social Care) confirmed that the designated nurse role had been transferred across intact with systems in place, therefore transfer problems were not anticipated; however this would be monitored and a progress report be submitted to a future meeting.

- Health Assessments -The Panel noted that it was difficult to achieve a score of 100% when a very small number of young people declined the offer of a health assessment.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

PC82

SAFEGUARDING AND LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Panel considered progress made with activities relating to Looked after Children outlined in the Safeguarding and Looked After Children Performance Improvements Plan 24 August 2012 – 14 February 2013, following the inspection by Ofsted in July 2012. The following issues were highlighted:

- **Immediate Action**

Freeing Orders (Action 8):

The Assistant Director (Children’s Social Care) advised that local authorities had recently been directed by Government to discharge all Placement and Freeing Orders for all Looked After Children who no longer had an adoption plan. The programme of work was already in place in Milton Keynes and had been brought forward accordingly. It was reported that delays in the Court system had been analysed and were being resolved.

The Assistant Director (Children’s Social Care) explained the legislation in relation to Freeing Orders; following a Court Order for a Freeing Order, particularly that parental responsibility of the birth parent ended and then solely rested with the local authority in whose favour the Order had been made. However, this was repealed in 2005 when the Adoption and Children Act 2002 was implemented and it was

replaced by a new placement framework for adoption including new provisions in relation to Placement Orders. However, Freeing Order applications prior to December 2005 continued to be dealt with and had effect under the old law.

Some Looked After Children in Milton Keynes were affected by this anomaly because they had been freed for adoption, but had not been placed in adoption after 12 months from the date of the Freeing Order and the Freeing Order had not been discharged.

- **Missing from Care (Action 9)**

The Assistant Director (Children's Social Care) explained that currently a different data set was used by the Police and that she was due to meet with them shortly to discuss aligning the data sets.

The Panel commented that there was Missing in Care guidance in place for Foster Carers and asked if the aligned data sets would be similar.

The Assistant Director (Children's Social Care) responded that a new national definition for missing persons had just been issued by the Police, which was narrower although the vulnerability and risk remained the same.

The Panel commented that "vulnerability and risk" was a subjective term; knowing where a young person was didn't mean that he/she was safe.

- **Action within Three Months**

- **Level of Complaints by Looked After Children (Action 10)**

It was reported that work on this was progressing, would be reviewed in February 2013 and be brought to the next Panel meeting.

- (a) The Panel commented that young people liked the Independent Advocacy Service.

- (b) The Head of Delivery (Corporate Parenting) advised that the Advocacy Service would:

- Need to be continually refreshed
 - Communicate regularly with young people and the Panel requested that this be monitored.

- **Sufficient Placements (Action 11)**

- (a) Local Placements

- It was reported that work was ongoing to bring young people into local placements but this was dependant on the recruitment of local foster carers. There was currently a slight mismatch in availability of foster carers for older children who had more complex needs.

- (b) The Panel commented that the changes in Benefits might have had an adverse effect on the availability of foster carers; it was confirmed that the Council had received a grant from Central

Government to make up any shortfall. The Panel requested that the grant be well communicated to foster carers and that it be continued in future years.

(c) Supported Housing

The Assistant Director (Children's Social Care) clarified that the supported accommodation at St Mungo's was for children with more complex needs who were not suited to, or did not want family placements and who were formerly placed in Northampton until the contract changed in July 2012..

- **Caseloads for Reviewing Officers (Action 13)**

It was reported that an Administrator Post had been added to support Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO's) and Local Authority Designated Officers (LADO's).

The Panel noted that an IRO had reported that the case load was high; the Assistant Director (Children's Social Care) responded that caseloads were slightly above national guidelines and that that the IRO's were happy to trial the action plan agreed for the Administrator post.

The Panel had concerns that the IT software "Winscribe" used standardised letter templates and would not be suitable; the Assistant Director (Children's Social Care) advised this would be checked.

- **Action within Six Months**

- **Family Finding (Action 8)**

It was reported that some young people with complex needs had not been adopted as quickly as had been hoped when compared with other local authorities. However, 14 adoptions were placed in the year 2011-12 and 28 orders were due to be placed in the current year.

- **Care Plans - Action 13**

The Assistant Director (Children's Social Care) was content that the young peoples' care plans were to a satisfactory standard; any delays had been analysed and monitored.

- **Action 14 – Diversity**

It was reported that to improve the assessment of, and attention to, individual, family and community diversity needs improved outcomes for MK Looked After Children across the full range of outcome areas the format for "Core Case Histories" for young people had been revised into a more user friendly form.

- **Action 17 – Contact**

It was reported that improvements had taken place in all supervised contact and work on this was being monitored.

The Panel requested that as the Ofsted Inspection had levelled criticism at them over their levels of challenge, more detailed data be incorporated into future reports.

The Assistant Director (Children's Social Care) advised that other work was ongoing e.g. Personal Education Plans, details of which would be reported at a future date that would ensure that a more challenging approach would be taken.

The Panel requested that training in legislation, mapping, case histories and an explanation of the different roles in Children's Social Care be incorporated. The training should be available to all Councillors so they were aware of their Corporate Parenting responsibilities.

The Panel concluded that "Care Proofing" of all Council Policies should also be included across the Council and any items in the report rated "poor performance" be treated as Red not Amber.

RESOLVED –

1. That the reports for April – September 2011, October 2011 – March 2012 and April – September 2012 be noted.
2. That training and a "starter pack" for Panel Members be organised for April 2013 through the Member Training Programme.

PC83

CHILDREN IN CARE STRATEGY - REVIEW

The Head of Delivery (Corporate Parenting) reported that the Children in Care Strategy 2009 - 2012 was required be renewed and adopted for the years 2013 - 2016. He informed the Panel of the work to be undertaken which included workshops and consultation with Today's Children - Tomorrow's Future, the health service and partners. The workshops would be used to create a draft Strategy to be brought to the Panel at the April 2013 meeting for discussion and feedback. The work would include how other policies would impact on the Strategy and a re-assessment of the priorities to include new issues e.g. the impact of new partners on the service.

The Panel commented that 14 priorities seemed onerous and might be difficult to achieve and highlighted that:

- the observations of young people should be included.
- the priorities should be streamlined but include "focus areas" and new initiatives.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the proposed consultation be agreed.
3. That the Panel be actively included in shaping the Children in Care Strategy 2013-16.
4. Dates of workshops be circulated to Panel Members

CHILDREN IN CARE STRATEGY – PERFORMANCE UPDATE

The Head of Delivery (Corporate Parenting) reported that the purpose of the report was to support Member challenge during the year and to increase the Panel's awareness of the performance measures in place to assess the outcomes for children in care. It was reported that although the data was collected from different sources, the general trends could be identified.

The Panel made the following comments:

- The data was over a year old and needed to be more up to date, although it was advised that these were national figures that had only just been validated.
- With reference to NI58, the new mental health partnership launched in October 2012 aimed for an ageless descriptor and young people needed to be involved in this.

There was a meeting on 31 January 2013 that required support to make it accessible to, and focussed on, young people and it was confirmed that a member of staff would attend.

- NI62 Placement stability – It was advised that MK performance showed lower stability performance than its statistical neighbours. This was partly due to a range of local circumstances, but the issue was being rigorously addressed and was a corporate parenting priority issue for the Council.
- The charts needed to be simplified to include commentary to clarify the figures and good areas to be highlighted.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Panel noted that the next meeting of the Panel would be held on Monday 15 April 2013 at 09.30.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 11.30 AM