

AT A MEETING of the Corporate Parenting Board of HAMPSHIRE COUNTY
COUNCIL held at the Castle, Winchester on Thursday 21st October 2021

Chairman:
p Councillor Ann Briggs

a Councillor Phil North
p Councillor Nick Adams-King
p Councillor Fran Carpenter
p Councillor Pal Hayre

p Councillor Wayne Irish
p Councillor Arun Mummalaneni
p Councillor Jacky Tustain
p Councillor Malcolm Wade

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr North.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were mindful that where they believed they had a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in any matter considered at the meeting they must declare that interest at the time of the relevant debate and, having regard to the circumstances described in Part 3, Paragraph 1.5 of the County Council's Members' Code of Conduct, leave the meeting while the matter was discussed, save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with Paragraph 1.6 of the Code. Furthermore Members were mindful that where they believed they had a Personal Interest in a matter being considered at the meeting they considered whether such interest should be declared, and having regard to Part 5, Paragraph 5 of the Code, considered whether it was appropriate to leave the meeting whilst the matter was discussed, save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with the Code.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4. DEPUTATIONS

No deputations were received.

5. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman urged members of the Board to take all opportunities presented to engage with officers and individuals involved with the various elements of Corporate Parenting to develop their knowledge.

6. BOARD MEMBERS FEEDBACK - ENGAGEMENT AND RECENT ACTIVITIES

Cllr Wade shared a recent experience with the County's virtual school and noted how it supported children in care and the extra challenges associated with them.

Cllr Wade noted the importance of the designated teacher role, providing consistency for young people and that it was unfortunate there was not a similar role for colleges.

Cllr Wade shared that free school meal eligible looked after children underperformed compared to peers and the variability of Personal Education Plans was a big issue with this.

Cllr Carpenter mentioned the visits she had recently undertaken and the focus she had witnessed on reunification with children's families. Cllr Carpenter noted the positive feedback received from Foster Carers she had met in the New Forest who cited Hampshire's training as a specific benefit. Cllr Carpenter noted that they had wanted to see a priority for looked after children with CAMHS.

Cllr Adams-King also shared the positive experience of foster carers in the New Forest who cited having the same Social Worker for the last four years as a benefit. Cllr Adams-King encouraged all members to engage with similar future events.

7. INDEPENDENT REVIEWING SERVICE CARE PLAN AUDIT

The Board received a presentation from the Director of Children's Services providing an overview of Hampshire's Care Plan Audit for 2020/21.

The Board heard that the Independent Reviewing Service undertakes an annual audit of the quality of children's care plans in Hampshire. The findings from the audits are used to develop and enhance practice and the outcomes for children who are looked after. The audit focuses on the following areas; The Care Plan, The Personal Education Plan, The Health Assessment, Needs of the child, The Child Looked After Review and Equality and Diversity.

The Board noted that 272 children's plans were audited, and increase from 2019. The audit contained 68 questions, including direct answers from children, parents and carers. Questions are both qualitative and quantitative and desired to establish if the Hampshire Approach is having a positive impact on care planning.

The Board received an overview of the key findings of the audit, including;

- 98.5% of care plans reflect the needs of the child,
- 83.82% of children reported that their life had improved since becoming looked after,
- in 89.3% of cases the children's equality and diversity needs were being met,
- there continues to be a need to focus on including young people in the process and to improve the number of signed plans to reflect this,
- dental and optician results have been impacted by the lockdowns introduced during the pandemic which prevented routine appointments.

In response to questions members found that:

- The process and the questions are adapted for children with disabilities and autism to allow them to engage and have their needs met through the plan.

- Plans should include a 'plan b' in case of unexpected issues and emergencies.
- There is work being done to improve the numbers of children who attend, and engage, with their reviews This includes facilitating attendance through technological means.

Resolved: That the Corporate Parenting Board note the presentation on Hampshire's Care Plan Audit for 2020/21.

8. **BIG ACTIVITY WEEK**

The Board received a report from the Director of Children's Services providing an outline of The Big Activity Week 2021.

The Board noted that the first Big Activity Week took place in 2019 but 2020 only had day events due to the pandemic. The Big Activity Week returned in 2021 with six residential centres including the Hampshire County Council run Mountain Centre in Wales. In total 105 young people aged between 8 and 14 attended between 2-6 August 2021.

The Board heard how The Big Activity Week was important as the benefits of outdoor and adventurous activities has been well documented to build resilience and confidence. It would also offer the opportunity for young people to make friendships with young people in similar circumstances. Feedback from previous events had also confirmed this.

The Board were informed that The Big Activity Week for 2022 was in the process of being arranged and a programme of activities was being considered for throughout the years but this would depend on funding.

In response to questions members found that:

- If individuals were unable to attend due to coronavirus, and their place was not able to be filled, the cost of that place was lost.
- There were adaptive sessions for children with challenging behaviour or who needed a 1:1. The Big Activity Week was available for all children.

The Chairman, on behalf of the Board, thanked all involved with delivering The Big Activity Week.

Resolved: That the Corporate Parenting Board note the report on The Big Activity Week 2021.

9. **ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE VIRTUAL SCHOOL**

The Board received a report from the Director of Children's Services providing the annual report of Hampshire's Virtual School.

The Board noted that the Virtual School's role was to ensure the best possible schooling was provided for Hampshire's Looked After Children. A key part of this was the creation of a Personal Education Plan (PEP), which assessed each child's needs and planned how they would be met.

The Board heard how the Virtual School had played a key role in supporting social workers, carers, designated teachers and schools to ensure they meet the educational needs of young people throughout the pandemic. The disruption caused by the pandemic has meant many young people have had to rebuild their trust in key adults, regain a sense of belonging and readjust to school routines alongside addressing gaps in their learning and curriculum knowledge.

The Board received an overview of performance for the 2019/20 academic year and the outcomes for children in care, divided by Key Stage.

In response to questions members found that:

- If a Looked After Child was excluded there was support in place to ensure there was not an impact on the child's sense of belonging or security.
- There were efforts to prevent the PEP falling between the school and social worker and that there was an ownership of the document.
- Training and support was available for Foster Carers to assist them with ensuring young people completed homework.
- Reduced Timetables were a useful tool when a young people was at risk of exclusion, but they can have a long term impact on learning and sense of belonging. Where these were in place the Virtual School will challenge schools and try to ensure their appropriate use. When needed the Virtual School can direct schools to return to a full timetable.
- PEP now retain the child's full educational history in order to provide continuity.
- When Children are eligible for pupil premium the funding goes straight to the school.

Resolved: That the Corporate Parenting Board note the annual report of the Virtual School Head for 2021.

10. AN UPDATE ON HEALTH ASSESSMENTS

The Board received a report from the NHS Hampshire, Southampton and Isle of Wight Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) providing an update on the review Health Assessments backlog.

The Board noted that Ofsted's 2019 inspection of Children's Services identified timely completion of health assessments as an area requiring improvement. A multi-agency meeting was arranged and identified a series of improvements that could be made.

In order to safely manage risk within the backlog cohort, a prioritisation document has been developed by the CCG team. The first priority group included children and young people in care who are under 5 or over 17 years of age (totalling 62 young people). This tool also helped to inform in a face to face assessment was required, or if it could be done virtually or via the health assessment questionnaire.

The Board heard that the CCG team continued to explore options to support the backlog in medium and long term and ensure that a robust health offer exists for Hampshire's children in care.

In response to questions members found that:

- The high volume of churn within the cohort alongside the size of the geographical area led to significant issues.
- Virtual assessments were only undertaken if appropriate.
- There was a period without a designated Doctor for looked after children, which was not the reason for the backlog but has not helped the situation.

Resolved: That the Corporate Parenting Board continue to note the plans in place and joint working with Health and Social Care.

11. AN UPDATE ON THE MODERNISING PLACEMENTS PROGRAMME

The Board received a report from the Director of Children's Services providing an update on the Modernising Placements Programme.

The Board heard that the aim of the Modernising Placements Programme was to develop a care offer which provides the right accommodation and support at the right time for children in care in Hampshire.

The Board noted the latest element of this programme, the 'Hampshire Hives'. The purpose of which was to;

- Facilitate regular support groups and social activities for Foster Carers,
- Provide flexible day care and sleepovers to children in placements with Foster Carers in the Hive,
- Offer needs led, one to one support and advice in a befriending/mentoring capacity to Foster Carers in the Hive,
- Work alongside a range of professionals in supporting children in placement with Foster Carers in the Hive.

There are currently six Hives across Hampshire, in Basingstoke, Andover, Waterlooville, Eastleigh, Southampton & Gosport. These support 80 children in care, 100 Foster Carers (56 fostering families) and 23 birth children.

The Board also noted the efforts undertaken to improve the timeliness of payments following 55% of respondents to the 2020 Foster Care survey raising it as an issue. A new online form has removed a number of steps in the process and the need for social workers to handle paper forms.

In response to questions members found that:

- More Hives were planned around the County and would be established based on need and resources.
- Care Leavers were benefiting from the 'Staying Put' programme, allowing them to stay in Foster Care into adulthood to provide further support alongside their Personal Advisors.

Resolved:

- i. That the Corporate Parenting Board note the progress of the programme.**
- ii. That the Corporate Parenting Board note the work proposed to expand the wider understanding of shared partnerships, companies,**

businesses and communities of children in care and the foster carer role, and considers the contribution that Councillors could make in this area.

- iii. That an update is provided to the Board in January 2022.**

Chairman, Corporate Parenting Board