

AT A MEETING of the Children and Families Advisory Panel of HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL held at the castle, Winchester on Wednesday 11th October 2023

Chairman:
p Councillor Arun Mummalaneni

a Councillor Ann Briggs
p Councillor Prad Bains
Councillor Christopher Donnelly
p Councillor Juliet Henderson

p Councillor Adam Jackman
p Councillor Stephen Parker
p Councillor Louise Parker-Jones
p Councillor Malcolm Wade

34. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr Briggs. Cllr Broomfield was in attendance as the Conservative Group Deputy.

35. 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.

36. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record.

37. DEPUTATIONS

No deputations were received.

38. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman had no announcements to make.

39. FOSTERING ANNUAL REPORT 2022/2023

The Children and Families Advisory Panel received a report from the Director of Children's Services providing the annual report for 2022/23 for Fostering,

providing an overview of fostering activity, detailing statistical performance data, and highlighting some focus areas for 2023/2024.

Members heard that the number of Hampshire's overall fostering households increased by 11 2022 to 2023, with 49 new fostering households approved compared to 33 in the previous year. It was noted that 34 fostering households had deregistered however, and that a focus the coming year would be on the recruitment and retention of foster carers. Officers set out how The Hampshire Hives initiative had grown into a strong recruitment tool which would be central to this, and events such as a recent Fostering Family Day and a long service celebration have been well received.

Members noted that the annual foster care survey results had shown that the majority of foster carers are satisfied with the support received from the fostering service.

In response to questions members found that:

- The most challenging placements are emergency placements where the child was not well known.
- Joint team days have been set up for the Children in Care Teams to build relationships and facilitate handovers and leave cover.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of this report are noted by the Children and Families Advisory Panel.

40. **REFUGEE TEAM/UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM SEEKING CHILDREN UPDATE**

The Children and Families Advisory Panel received a presentation from the Director of Children's Services providing an update from the Refugee Team with a focus on Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC).

Officers set out the detail of the National Transfer Scheme, which required local authorities to take UASC equal to 0.1% of their population. Hampshire's mandated number was 281 and the authority currently had 274 children seeking asylum, with an additional 402 care leavers.

Members heard that HCC was notified of small boat arrivals and given five days to place children, who then become 'Looked After' under Section 20 Children Act 1989. Children also arrived 'spontaneously', which led to an age assessment and children made 'Looked After' – HCC receives £114 per night.

The Panel received an overview of the composition and role of the Specialist Refugee Teams, whose role had taken pressure off the Children in Care teams while providing specialist support. These teams worked closely with the Willow Team to complete trafficking and age assessments and explore risks in respect of exploitation and the Red Cross to locate and make contact with birth families. Members noted the therapeutic approach undertaken in recognition of the trauma these children have experienced.

In response to questions members found that:

- The CAMHS provided mental health support for UASC.
- Young people have safety plans which can include elements such as high level supervision, removal of mobile phones or removing unaccompanied time to mitigate the risk of trafficking. UASC receive a trafficking and child protection investigation upon arrival, with staff assessing at the highest level before moving down as the risks are assessed.
- UASC receive a Care Leave Personal Assistant from the age of 15 until 25 and have Social Worker involvement until they turn 18.

RESOLVED:

That the Children and Families Advisory Panel note the update on the Refugee Team and Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children.

41. **ANNUAL COMPLIMENTS, COMPLAINTS AND REPRESENTATIONS REPORT 2022/23**

The Children and Families Advisory Panel received a report from the Director of Children's Services providing the annual compliments, complaints and representations report for 2022-23.

Officers explained that the Children's Act 1989 required local authorities with social services responsibilities to have a formal complaints procedure for Children's Social Care. It was noted that the annual report was produced in line with national guidance and was designed to share information with members of the public. Although not required by the statutory guidance, the report also included corporate complaints pertaining to Children's Services.

The Panel noted that the report also covered Hampshire County Council's Children's Services Directorate's formal feedback and representations alongside the compliments and complaints formally recorded by the Children's Services Directorate's Complaints Team. Members heard that, in addition to annual reporting, internal reporting takes place on a quarterly basis, with more regular monitoring reports for services issued on request to enable ongoing improvement.

In response to questions members found that:

- There was less direct contact from children than the directorate would like to see, however there was a vast number of methods for young people to feel their feedback had been given voice which were very difficult to accurately record.
- An unreasonable contact policy existed to protect staff.

RESOLVED:

That the Children and Families Advisory Panel note the contents of the Annual Compliments, Complaints and Representations Report for 2022/23.

Chairman, 7 February 2023