

At a meeting of the CHILDREN AND FAMILIES ADVISORY PANEL of HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL held at The Castle, Winchester on Tuesday 30 September 2014

Chairman:
p Councillor David Keast

p Ann Briggs
p Rita Burgess
p Roz Chadd
p Jacqui England

p Marge Harvey
p Jackie Porter
p Malcolm Wade
p Christopher Wood

29. BROADCASTING ANNOUNCEMENT

The Chairman announced that the press and members of the public were permitted to film and broadcast the meeting. Those remaining at the meeting were consenting to being filmed and recorded, and to the possible use of those images and recording for broadcasting purposes.

30. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies were received.

31. 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 and, having regard to 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, having regard to Part 5, Paragraph 4 of the Code, 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 while the matter was discussed, save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with the Code.

32. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of 27 May 2014 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

33. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Marge Harvey to her first meeting as a full Member of the Panel.

34. MEMBERS FEEDBACK ON VISITS TO CHILDREN'S HOMES

The Chairman invited Members to provide feedback on recent visits to children's homes within their division. Cllr Burgess reported on a visit she had recently made to a children's home in Basingstoke.

35. REDESIGNING EARLY HELP SERVICES IN HAMPSHIRE

The Panel received a presentation of the Director of Children's Services (Item 6 in the Minute Book) regarding the redesigning of Early Help Services in Hampshire. It was explained to the Panel that the concept of early help was not new, and the importance of early intervention to help prevent escalation had been proven in recent evidence based national reviews. Members also noted the co-ordinated working with organisations including Children's Centres, and Locality Teams situated within Children's Services. The importance of the role of schools was also highlighted, in particular in identifying problems at an early stage.

The role and work of the Early Help Hub was explained to the Panel, and Members heard that these were based at various locations around the County; locations determined by factors such as wi-fi access and building size. A discussion highlighted the importance of families receiving the right level of service tailored to individual needs, and it was clarified that cases were regularly reviewed to ensure the appropriate level of help. Access to the Hub for support was usually through Hantsdirect as the 'step up' access point.

Members raised questions around attendance at the hub meetings, and it was noted that attendees at weekly case discussion/allocation meetings could include: an Early Help Hub Manager, a Social Worker, a Family Support Worker, a Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) officer and an Educational Officer. Their attendance at meetings would always be subject to case requirements.

Members expressed an interest in visiting the Early Help Hubs, and it was agreed that this would be coordinated by Children's Services officers.

RESOLVED:

That the Children and Families Advisory Panel note the Redesigning Early Help Services in Hampshire presentation.

36. **HAMPSHIRE ADOPTION SERVICES ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT 2013-2014**

The Panel considered the report of the Director of Children's Services (Item 7 in the Minute Book) regarding the management and outcomes of the Adoption Agency from 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014.

The report was outlined to Members, who were informed that a number of new regulations issued by the government on 1 July 2013 had been implemented in Hampshire. The government's adoption reform aimed to increase the number of prospective adopters. A number of areas of the adoption reform were highlighted, in particular: decreasing the time of the assessment process to six months from eight, and the implementation of a new 26 week time limit to minimise the length of children's care proceedings. The nature of the new national adoption leadership board was explained to Members, and it was noted that Children's Services Head of County Services was a member of the Board. Members welcomed the recent Ofsted Inspection report which judged Hampshire County Council's adoption performance as outstanding.

The performance levels in Hampshire compared to the previous year of 2012-2013 were discussed, and the Director confirmed that performance levels had generally improved. The number of children subject to adoption orders in 2013-2014 had fallen slightly, but the Director explained that March 2014 witnessed a number of complex adoption hearings, with final hearings taking place at the beginning of the new financial year. As a result of this, Members noted that the number of adoption orders was anticipated to increase in 2014-2015.

A number of matters were discussed by Members, including inter-country adoptions, the national adoption register and e-learning for prospective adopters. The relationship between adoptive parents and birth mothers was also discussed, with Members noting that methods such as indirect letter box contact could help to provide a valuable link. It was emphasised that all correspondence was screened first by an appropriate member of the adoption team.

Members expressed their concern with the reference in the report to trading in prospective adopters and the background and circumstances of this were explained by the Director.

RESOLVED:

That the Children and Families Advisory Panel note the content and findings of the Adoption report.

37. **CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION**

The Panel received a presentation of the Director of Children's Services (Item 8 in the Minute Book) on how Hampshire County Council was tackling child sexual exploitation.

The Director presented a summary of the national picture of child sexual exploitation and also the role that Hampshire played in tackling this. Members heard of the challenges currently being faced, and in particular the rise in on-line grooming of vulnerable children on the internet. It was noted that a Pan-Hampshire Missing Exploited and Trafficked (MET) group involved close working with a wide range of Hampshire partners including: Children's Services, the Police, and Youth Offending Teams. The presentation highlighted that a new MET protocol had been devised, as well as referral pathways to ensure consistency. The Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework Form (SERAF) was explained, and Members noted that this was a key tool to assist in identifying the signs and symptoms of sexual exploitation.

Various initiatives to raise public awareness of child sexual exploitation were highlighted, and Members heard that a theatre production entitled 'Chelsea's Choice' would take place next month in Winchester. The production would be open to professionals, young people, parent and carers to attend, and would seek to raise awareness of child sexual exploitation. It was noted that a number of schools in Hampshire had expressed interest in the production. Further details regarding this production would be forwarded to Members of the Panel to share with colleagues.

Members were keen to hear about other methods of raising awareness and were informed that this was ongoing through highlighting awareness to taxi companies, bed and breakfast establishments, and through distribution of leaflets and posters. Raising awareness and intelligence sharing through agencies such as the Police, Crimestoppers and Barnados, was also highlighted, as was the importance of raising awareness of sexual exploitation amongst vulnerable young adults and children with learning difficulties.

The Panel was keen for the presentation to be shared with all Members of the Council and it was agreed that an appropriate way to achieve this would be found.

RESOLVED:

That the Children and Families Advisory Panel note the Child Sexual Exploitation presentation.