

At a meeting of the CHILDREN AND FAMILIES ADVISORY PANEL of HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL held at The Castle, Winchester on Tuesday 9 June 2015

Chairman:
p Councillor David Keast

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

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

49. 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.

50. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jacqui England and Jackie Porter.

51. 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.

Councillor Malcolm Wade declared a Personal Interest as Chairman of Trustees for a Youth Charity.

52. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of 3 February 2015 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

53. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman invited Members to visit a Children's Home in their locality if they hadn't already done so. A number of Members expressed an interest in visiting Swanwick Lodge, and officers would arrange for this to be taken forward.

54. INNOVATION FUND BID

The Panel received a presentation of the Director of Children's Services (Item 5 in the Minute Book) regarding the recent successful Innovation Fund Bid to the Department for Education, which had been set up for local authorities to initiate innovation and change programmes.

The pressures on Children's Services were highlighted to Members who noted the rising demand for services, as well as the rising costs of children in care. It was explained that the proposal sought to transform services to reduce demand for specialist services, create capacity to deal with rising demand, improve the quality of social work practice and to improve outcomes for children by getting it right first time.

Members also noted that the proposal focussed on the following key elements which were outlined in detail:

- Family Intervention Teams
- Trained Volunteers
- Social Work Co-ordinators
- Services for children on the edge of care
- Services for children who go missing, are at risk of child sexual exploitation or trafficking
- Social work surgeries
- A Partnership for Excellence with Higher Education Institutions to support and train for the above.

In answer to Member questions, it was confirmed that improvements to the assessment of risks and needs, would help to ensure that outcomes for children were right first time, and refresher training for social workers and volunteers would help to deliver this. It was also noted that work would be evaluated by external evaluators to ensure that the proposals set out in the bid were being achieved.

RESOLVED:

That the Children and Families Advisory Panel note the work being progressed as part of the Innovation Fund Bid.

55. **CHILDRENS HOMES STRATEGY, REGULATION AND INSPECTION**

The Panel received a report of the Director of Children's Services (Item 6 in the Minute Book) providing an overview of the Children's Homes Regulations 2015, The Ofsted Children's Home Inspection Framework 2015 and an update on Hampshire's Residential Strategy.

The report was outlined to Members, who were informed that The Children's Homes Regulations 2015 had come into force on 1 April 2015. These ensure each child has the right placement at the right time, and for residential care to be both a positive and beneficial choice. Members heard that The Regulations provided nine Quality Standards, each of which was summarised to the Panel, who noted that these had replaced the National Minimum Standards. As a result, all Children's Home staff would be required to have the skills to ensure all Quality Standards were met.

The new Ofsted Children's Home Inspection Framework 2015 was set out to Members who noted the changes to the inspection regime and heard that Hampshire was in a strong position to take these changes forward. It was reported that inspections would now consider the starting point of each child, the progress they had made in relation to their capacity to change and the quality of the experience. The skills of managers and staff in the care homes were essential in preparing for these changes, and managers were meeting monthly to share best practice.

An update on Hampshire's Residential Strategy was outlined to the Panel and it was explained that as well as the building of six new four bedded homes for children, staff would be trained in the Emotional Warmth Model of Professional Child Care. A number of points relating to these changes were raised by Members and clarified. It was highlighted that 20-25 new staff would be recruited and in place before the new homes opened. Members asked about the design of the new homes, and it was confirmed that these would look like a family home. Issues around children absconding were discussed, and it was noted that the residential homes weren't a secure provision and therefore an important role for staff was to work with the children in order to ensure that they wanted to be there.

RESOLVED:

That the Children and Families Advisory Panel receive and note ongoing work to meet the requirements of the Children's Homes Regulations 2015 and the Ofsted Children's Home Inspection Framework 2015.

That the Children and Families Advisory Panel note the update on Hampshire's Residential Strategy.

56 **INDEPENDENT REVIEWING SERVICE AND SAFEGUARDING UNIT
ANNUAL REPORT**

The Panel received a report of the Director of Children's Services (Item 7 in the Minute Book) on the work and activity of the Independent Reviewing Service and Safeguarding Unit.

The Director presented the report and set out the background of the Independent Reviewing Service, explaining that it fulfilled a statutory requirement, and confirming that it continued to deliver well. The role of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) was also set out and Members noted that IRO's participated in case reviews, monitored the local authority's performance and ensured effective oversight of the child's case, independent of the operational teams and their line management. It was also noted that IRO's had responsibility for Chairing Child Protection Conferences.

It was confirmed that Ofsted had been very positive about the Service when it was last reviewed, and data relating to the Service was continually monitored to ensure good timeliness of conferences and effective action plans. Members noted that the Safeguarding Unit had also continued to deliver effective services in the last year.

In answer to Member questions, it was highlighted that the Service was continuing to examine more efficient ways of working, including an IT pilot project which would incorporate voice recognition software on laptops to maximise officer capacity. Members also questioned the number of 0-4 year old children who were not currently living in a permanent placement, and it was confirmed that wherever possible and appropriate, work would be done to try to ensure that the children could return to the family home, if that was in the best interest of the child.

RESOLVED:

That the Children and Families Advisory Panel note the contents of the Independent Reviewing Service report.