

AT A MEETING of the Children and Families Advisory Panel of HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL held at the castle, Winchester on Tuesday, 4th February, 2020

Chairman:
a Councillor David Keast

p Councillor Pal Hayre
p Councillor Ann Briggs
p Councillor Peter Edgar MBE
p Councillor Jackie Porter

a Councillor Martin Boiles
p Councillor Fran Carpenter
p Councillor Floss Mitchell
p Councillor Malcolm Wade

75. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr Keast and Cllr Boiles. Cllr Hayre Chaired the meeting and Cllr Brooks was present as the Conservative Deputy.

76. 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 Non-Pecuniary interest in a matter being considered at the meeting they considered whether such interest should be declared, and having regard to Part 5, Paragraph 2 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.

77. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the last meeting were reviewed and agreed.

78. DEPUTATIONS

No deputations were received.

79. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman had no announcements to make.

80. CHILDREN'S RECEPTION TEAM AND MULTI AGENCY SAFEGUARDING HUB UPDATE

The Children and Families Advisory Panel received an update from the Director of Children's Services on the Children's Reception Team (CRT) and the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

Officers set out staffing levels and the level of activity in terms of contacts and referrals to the service (detailed in the appendices to the report). It was noted that staffing was difficult to maintain due to the nature of the role being office based.

Members noted that a comprehensive review of the service has recently been completed, which had led to a number of action points to further improve the service. In addition to this review CRT and MASH were scrutinised as part of previous OFSTED inspections. CRT and MASH are considered by OFSTED to be strong and effective, ensuring that contacts and referrals are efficiently managed. Members noted the importance of a strong 'front door' to Children's Services.

The Panel received an overview of the High Risk Domestic Abuse meetings undertaken daily within MASH with partner agencies. Officers explained that these meetings have been very successful in identifying unknown risk, formulating safeguarding plans and ensuring that the victim's voice has been heard at an early stage.

In response to questions members found that;

- The 'other' category on the appendices covered many minor issues such as; specialist assessment, CAFCASS, court orders etc.
- There was a comprehensive 'out of hours' service which focussed on the children most at risk due to there being no ability for checks with other agencies. It was noted that the out of hours service covered Southampton & Portsmouth.
- There is an ongoing effort to reduce police contacts as there are many received which are too minor to be useful.
- CRT & MASH has benefited from ongoing external scrutiny and internal audits since their creation.
- Other agencies have a direct input in assessment, including specialists in Children's Health and Mental Health.
- Efforts have been made to create a supportive environment for staff, in light of the nature of the work, with regular opportunities for training.

Resolved: That the Children and Families Advisory Panel noted the update provided in the report in respect of CRT and MASH and the role that the service undertakes for Children's Services.

81. UPDATE ON HAMPSHIRE FOSTERING SERVICES

The Children and Families Advisory Panel received an update from the Director of Children's Services on Hampshire's Fostering Services.

Officers set out the four teams that make up the Fostering Service;

- Fostering Recruitment and Assessment Team –responsible for marketing, recruiting new foster carers and completing assessments for foster carer applicants.
- Fostering Team East & West –responsible for supporting foster carers, following their approval, in the East & West of the county.
- Connected Carers Assessment Team – this team coordinates all assessments of wider family members who offer to look after children when their parents cannot.

Officers explained that the performance of the service is reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure that the care children receive is of high quality and that carers are receiving the support that they need in order to provide this.

The Panel noted that the number of foster carers in Hampshire has decreased over the last year and this reflected a national trend. It was noted that dissatisfaction with the service is not the reason behind this, but a mixture of personal circumstances such as moving out of area, family commitments and retirement. Officers also explained that foster carer approvals have fallen over the last 3 years, meaning the recruitment of foster carers is a primary focus for the service.

In response to questions members found that;

- The County Council
- The increased in individuals who rent rather than own their own was not thought to be a contributing factor to the difficulty in recruiting foster carers.
- Efforts will be made to place a child in such a way to enable them to continue at the same school, they will, however consideration is not given to District boundaries.
- Placing a child into care is always a last resort and Children's Services always plan to return where safe to do so.
- There have been ongoing difficulties with payments in relation to Foster Carers but there has been significant improvement and efforts made to reduce this.

Recommendations: That the Children and Families Advisory Panel note the update on Hampshire Fostering Services.

82. HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S VIOLENCE REDUCTION UNIT

The Children and Families Advisory Panel received an update from the Director of Children's Services on Hampshire County Council's Violence Reduction Unit (VRU).

Officers explained that in 2018 the government published its Serious Violence Strategy which set out a response to serious violence. The strategy places emphasis on early intervention and prevention, recognising the need to tackle the root causes of violence and prevent young people from becoming involved in crime.

Officers set out that in 2019 the government listed Hampshire's Office of the Police Crime Commissioner (OPCC) as one of 18 areas to be granted a share of £35m to set up a VRU. This share was further divided between the four Local Authorities with a proportion of the money going to the OPCC to oversee the development of the VRUs. Each Local Authority was allocated a proportion of the money to set up its own VRU and the remaining money was to provide the interventions.

The Panel noted that HCC was awarded £65,000 to set up the VRU and £233,000 to provide the interventions.

As this money must be spent by 31 March 2020, interventions that had already been commissioned or delivered were prioritised. This was provided the interventions linked to what was known to impact on violent crime. Any underspend is to be repaid at the end of the year. Officers shared the distribution of this money by HCC, following consultation with partners, as stated in the report.

The Panel heard that Public Health administer the grant and are responsible for providing quarterly narrative updates to the OPCC. These reports must cover progress on the delivery of the core function of the Violence Reduction Units including;

- core membership
- delivery of a multi-agency public health approach
- the number of young people supported by the identified interventions
- details of the money spent against the allocated funding.

Recommendations: That the Children and Families Advisory Panel notes the progress made in developing a Violence Reduction Unit and receive progress reports at suitable intervals.

83. **UPDATE ON CHILDREN IN CARE AND CORPORATE PARENTING**

The Children and Families Advisory Panel received an update from the Director of Children's Services on Children in Care and Corporate Parenting within Hampshire.

Officers explained the reasons children were taken into care including the duties under the Children Act 1989 to ensure children and safeguarded from harm. Children become 'looked after' when they are made subject to a legal order by a court, which can take a variety of forms.

The Panel noted the demographic of looked after children in Hampshire, alongside the numbers, types of placement and costs involved. Members also

received an explanation of Care Leavers and the role of a 'Corporate Parent' in relation to the County Council.

Recommendations: That the Children and Families Advisory Panel note the update on Children in Care and Corporate Parenting.

Chairman, Children & Families
Advisory Panel