

AT A MEETING of the Children and Families Advisory Panel of HAMPSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL held at The Castle, Winchester
on Monday, 10th October, 2022

Chairman:

* Councillor Arun Mummalaneni

* Councillor Ann Briggs
Councillor Prad Bains
Councillor Christopher Donnelly
* Councillor Juliet Henderson
* Councillor Wayne Irish

* Councillor Adam Jackman
* Councillor Stephen Parker
* Councillor Malcolm Wade
* Councillor Sarah Pankhurst
* Councillor Louise Parker-Jones

*Present

25. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllrs Bains and Donnelly. Cllr Pankhurst and Parker-Jones were deputising.

26. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 June 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

27. 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.

No interests were declared.

28. DEPUTATIONS

There were no deputations.

29. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no formal announcements.

The Chairman reported that he was planning to visit a children's home over the next few months and encouraged members of the Panel to arrange visits.

30. **FOSTERING ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22**

The Panel received a report from the Director of Children's Services on fostering activity, detailing statistical performance data and highlighting some focus areas for 2022/2023.

The officer explained to the Panel that the focus for the current year continues to be to find foster carers for the children of Hampshire.

The Panel heard that last year, there had been a 33% increase in the number of 'firm' enquiries, a positive response, leading to a 17% increase in approvals.

The officer reported that the marketing campaign had been shortlisted for an award and that the mystery shopper programme gave Hampshire the highest average score out of the counties in the south east.

The Panel heard that:

- a new training pathway is being developed for foster carers, including a level 3 diploma and that learning has been gained from the Covid Pandemic, with a mix of on-line and face to face training events.
- Some foster carers have struggled with the needs of children which in those cases has made it difficult to identify placements.
- The Complaints and Allegations process has been reviewed to ensure that foster carers feel supported and their voices heard.
- There is a drive to increase the number of Special Guardianship Orders.
- Hampshire Hive is going from strength to strength with positive feedback.

As a result of questions from Members, the Panel heard that:

- It is difficult to put an absolute number on how many foster carers were needed due to the mix of needs, but more was needed than in place now.
- Where possible, learning is gained from complaints and allegations.
- The needs of children, in terms of diversity, is always considered and that some are placed in London Boroughs where there is access and availability to the appropriate local communities and religious facilities.
- A specialist Refugee Children in Care team will be recruited.

- Organisations have been targeted to help recruit more diverse carers and talk about the barriers.
- Prospective foster carers are prepared 'up front' in terms of what personal information and history they will need to provide and why.

Members felt that the team had done a good job over the last four years and felt that the target was manageable if the message is spread. They suggested that Parish Councils would be happy to spread the word if asked.

A presentation was given to the Panel on the Foster Care Campaign 'Open Your Door'.

The Panel heard that the aim was to close the gap between the number of children in care and foster carers.

The officer encouraged all Members to get involved and asked that if they have an idea, or know of a relevant activity that is going on, to let the team know.

Resolved:

The contents of this report were noted by the Children and Families Advisory Panel.

31. **ADOPT SOUTH - ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22 WITH HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS**

The Panel received a report and film outlining the activity of Adopt South, the Regional Adoption Agency for Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton local authorities for the financial year 2021-2022.

Members heard that outcomes had been strong and officers were pleased with the results. Adopt South had compared well against the other 31 Regional Adoption Agencies.

Government timescales had been achieved with a higher number of Placement Orders compared to the previous year.

In answer to questions from the Panel, Members heard that:

- Financial support is provided to adopters, depending on the circumstances, for example, if someone was unable to continue working due to the support requirements of the child.
- Very few adoptions break down. Parenting Support workers are available and learning is taken from experiences.

Resolved:

The Annual Report 2020-2021 for Adopt South, was noted by the Children and Families Advisory Panel.

32. **HAMPSHIRE YOUTH OFFENDING TEAM (HYOT) REPORT ON RESTORATIVE JUSTICE**

The Panel received a report to provide information on the Restorative Justice (RJ) provision within Hampshire Youth Offending Team (HYOT).

The officer explained that restorative justice was about directing people away from the Youth Offending System and for the 'harmed person' to be more empowered.

As a result of questions, Members heard that:

- The system is voluntary and a child needs to acknowledge responsibility for their actions, which may not happen immediately.
- If a 'harmed person' declines to be involved in the process, the Team will continue to work with the child.
- The team worked with 361 children last year.
- Investment has been made in staff training.
- Partnership working takes place with a range of partners including the with the Police and Fire & Rescue Service, and others in the Community Safety Partnership.
- Positive outcomes are achieved when a child realises the impact of their actions on others.
- A young person needs to want to take part in the scheme, otherwise it is not meaningful and can create false expectations.
- There has been a 14% reduction in reoffending. However, it is difficult to know exactly which interventions are successful in which situation so it's not possible to know what impact the process has on reoffending.

Resolved:

The Panel noted the value of Restorative Justice within the work of the Hampshire Youth Offending Team.

33. **HOMES FOR UKRAINE**

The Panel received a presentation on the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, including arrangements for unaccompanied minors.

The officer explained how the scheme was working, the responsibilities of the County, District and Borough Councils and explained that additional pressure had been placed upon public services, particularly Housing and Education and that the County Council was looking at options of how to support hosts.

For unaccompanied minors, the Panel heard that hosts need to commit to sponsoring for three years, or until the child turns 18, whichever is sooner. If the child turns 18 during the three years, sponsors are responsible for supporting the child to become independent.

Resolved

The Panel noted the contents of the presentation.

Chairman, Children and Families
Advisory Panel