

AT A MEETING of the Children and Families Advisory Panel of HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL held at the castle, Winchester on Tuesday 16th October 2018

Chairman:
p Councillor David Keast

p Councillor Roz Chadd
p Councillor Martin Boiles
p Councillor Ann Briggs
p Councillor Fran Carpenter

p Councillor Pal Hayre
p Councillor Jackie Porter
p Councillor Robert Taylor
p Councillor Malcolm Wade

39. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

All Members were present.

40. 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.

41. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the last meeting were reviewed and agreed.

42. DEPUTATIONS

No deputations were received.

43. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman had no announcements to make.

44. HAMPSHIRE ADOPTION SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2017-18

The Panel received a report from the Director of Children's Services providing the annual update on Hampshire's Adoption Service for 2017-18. The Panel heard that the number of potential adopters progressing to assessment has not only remained strong but has increased, in contrast to the

national picture. The panel also received an overview of the timeliness of stage 1, stage 2 and fast tracked applications, all of which were in line with the governments expectations.

Members heard that over the last year, 55 children had been adopted with a very low number of disruptions. This includes eleven sibling groups. An overview of the work plan for 2018-19 was provided.

In response to questions members heard that;

- A decrease in numbers could indicate that there is an improvement in prevention however numbers are in line with national trends. It was noted that adoption is always the last resort when planning for a child's permanency.
- Support is withdrawn at the point that an Adoption Order is placed.
- If potential Foster Carers lack the experience required, support is provided to help them establish skills in relation to childcare.
- There are no restrictions on potential adopters, all will be considered including single people and there is no cap on age.
- Children are told about their history in an honest but age related way.

Resolved: That the Children and Families Advisory Panel noted the work of Hampshire's Adoption Agency.

45. REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY

The Panel received a report from the Director of Children's Services providing an overview of the Regional Adoption Agency currently being established. The Panel heard that in June 2015 the Department for Education published 'Regionalising Adoption' and required all adoption agencies in England to consider how to work closely together on a regional basis. This was enacted as the Education and Adoption Act 2016 which required authorities and voluntary adoption agencies to join together to form Regional Adoption Agencies (RAAs). Adoption in Hampshire County Council has been rated as 'Outstanding' by Ofsted and as such Hampshire is taking the lead in establishing the new RAA, to be known as Adopt South. The recommended operating model for Adopt South will deliver the following main services across the Adopt South region;

- Recruitment, assessment and approval of adopters,
- Matching of children in need of adoptive families,
- Post-adoption support.

In response to questions members heard that;

- The model for Adopt South seeks to build on the current good practice within each authority to deliver a cohesive, efficient and effective service and the plans do not threaten Hampshire's 'Outstanding' rating.
- The RAA will not require any additional funding to that currently being spent on adoption.
- This is not the first stage of a national approach to adoption, although there will be improvement work between regions to increase standards.
- Adoption panels will also become regional.

Resolved: That the Children and Families Advisory Panel note the work being undertaken to create the Regional Adoption Agency, Adopt South, as required in legislation.

46. PROGRESS REPORT ON THE CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

The Panel received a report from the Director of Children's Services providing an overview of the first twelve months of the Corporate Parenting Board (CPB). The Panel heard how the CPB was a significant factor in ensuring that the Council met its duties in relation to its role as a Corporate Parent. Members noted that the CPB had only been formed a year ago, and as such it was still developing and establishing itself.

Resolved: That the Children and Families Advisory Panel support the ongoing role of the Corporate Parenting Board, who ensure that all services to children in care and care leavers are of a high standard, and ensure they are being well supported in all aspects of their life.

47. UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM SEEKING CHILDREN (UASC) IN HAMPSHIRE

The Panel received a report from the Director of Children's Services providing an update on Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) in Hampshire. The Panel heard that approximately half of the UASC looked after by Hampshire have been accepted through the National Transfer Scheme, which ensures responsibility is taken for UASC as a region. This alleviates pressure on areas with a high number of UASC such as Kent and Portsmouth. This is suggested to be 0.007% of the population (192 for Hampshire). At the end of August 2018, Hampshire had 132 UASC as part of this and 93 care leavers who were over 18 and so counted separately.

Members heard that while there continues to be a flow of UASC coming into Hampshire, the future trends are impossible to predict. It was noted that children in Hampshire are well protected however and become 'Looked After Children' and then Care Leavers who receive support until the age of twenty five.

In response to questions members heard that;

- Central government provides grants to cover some of the costs of UASC but do not cover it all.
- The extra children do provide an additional challenge for adoption, however many children are placed out of county with Independent Fostering Agencies which can be expensive.
- An age assessment is taken for all UASC to establish their age, this is undertaken by trained social workers.

Resolved: That the Children and Families Advisory Panel note the content of the report and the activity being undertaken to support UASC in Hampshire.

48. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING - EXEMPT**

The exempt minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

Chairman, Children and Families
Advisory Panel