

DORSET COUNCIL - CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 15 JULY 2019

Present: Cllrs Toni Coombs (Chairman), Richard Biggs (Vice-Chairman), Ryan Holloway, Stella Jones, Andrew Kerby, Cathy Lugg, Andrew Parry and Elaine Okopski (Dorset Parent Carers Council)

Also present: Cllr Pauline Batstone

Officers present (for all or part of the meeting):

Mark Blackman (Assistant Director - Schools and Learning), Will Bradbury (Communications Team Leader), Antonia Dixey (CEO Participation People), Penny Earney (Designated Nurse for LAC), Madeleine Hall (Corporate Parenting Officer), Jan Hill (Foster Carer), Martin Hill (Foster Carer), Sarah Parker (Executive Director of People - Children), Stuart Riddle (Senior Manager), Mary Taylor (Acting Assistant Director for Care and Protection) and Liz Eaton (Democratic Services Officer)

12. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2019 were confirmed and signed.

13. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests were made at the meeting.

14. Public Participation

There were no public questions or statements received at the meeting.

15. LAC Reduction Discussion Paper

The Corporate Parenting Board considered a discussion paper by the Executive Director of People - Children on LAC Reduction.

Officers explained the discussion paper was about the number of children Dorset Council had in care. It was about basing services for children on the principle of the right to a family life, and how we should be designing services that enable children to live safely with their family or in a family setting. A great deal of data had been mapped and the University of Warwick had plotted how the centile of deprivation influenced the likelihood of state intervention in family life. Children living in the least deprived areas had little chance of being in care whereas children living in the most deprived areas had a much greater chance of being in care.

LAC numbers had gone up in recent years although that did not always bear any relationship to the level of deprivation within the local authority area. It was interesting to note that if you lived in a deprived part of a relatively affluent place the chances of coming into care would shoot up. For example, if you compared Weymouth to the East End of London you would be more likely to be in care in Weymouth than in the urban area. Warwick University were still researching this.

The discussion paper had a summary of about how things changed in Dorset and an analysis about Dorset's care population and where there was the potential to make a difference and options on how a difference could be made. This was not primarily about cost saving, but was about the right to family life and good outcomes - children in care are less likely to do as well as their peers in the population at large.

Members thought the discussion paper was very interesting and a very well written. Some felt the transfer of the youth centres to community groups had not been a good decision and hoped funding for youth centres would be found as they could help young people look after their children. It was also felt there was an interlink between the 2 residential homes that had closed.

The Chairman confirmed that Homestart provided a good service in the west of the County where there was an exceptional group, but that was not the case in the east of the County where they were not so good. She explained that the People Scrutiny Committee were looking at youth centres at the present time and she would be happy to champion this and was also a member of the People Scrutiny Committee.

One member asked why Dorset was not replicating what Leeds were doing to enable early intervention and was it about leadership and the ethos in Leeds. Officers explained that Leeds started changing about 5 years ago and an awful lot of things needed to be changed. It was about Leeds and the city becoming child friendly. Family group meetings took place to establish whether the family could look after the child before the child came into care. Officers would be visiting Leeds shortly and were also looking at North Tyneside and North Yorkshire who also had good practice.

The Executive Director of People – Children explained this was a huge cultural issue they were at present talking with youth offending about tolerances. Participation People were looking at Happy Dorset which would continue for a couple of years.

The Chief Executive of Participation People confirmed that young people were eager for this conversation. A student voice toolkit was being launched in the Autumn. Work was also being carried out around child exploitation which was a snap chat conversation.

Members mentioned that part of the problem was that families did not want to engage as they did not see the way they behaved as an issue. There was an area in Ferndown where there was a nursery and children's centre. The nursery was very effective and families trusted the head but the children's

centre was ineffective. It was noted that schools and nurseries would notice if something was wrong and closer working with them was important. It was the first 1,000 days of a child's life which would set the scene of how that child's life would be.

One member was interested in the difference between Dorset and urban authorities. Officers confirmed the majority of children in care in Dorset were subject to a Court Order. The other issue was about life chances - in the East End of London over the course of a child's life there were more opportunities and more going on culturally than in Weymouth, Great Yarmouth or Blackpool.

Chief Executive of Participation People commented that in terms of what young people were saying it was about valuing and listening to them, understanding the individual's needs and working with family partnership zones.

One member asked why the family partnership zones had not directly brought down the number of children in care. Officers explained that early help services were not necessarily edge of care services, but that over time early help services would be advantageous.

The Chairman highlighted how members saw the importance of early intervention. She still thought that was the right focus for the Board's endeavours but could well investigate further other areas.

The Executive Director of People – Children confirmed they had focussed on early years and children's centres and youth services and spoken about the culture in communities and, having regard to children in Dorset, did not underestimate the impact of exclusions on families. Voluntary organisations also had a massive contribution to make. There was no one single thing - it was a whole system reform that would help young people and keep them with their families.

The Chairman asked as work progressed on the whole system review that this came back to Corporate Parenting Board so the Board could see how things were changing and enabling young people to have a better deal. The Executive Director of People – Children confirmed there were several distinct pieces of work and the golden thread through all of that was the voice of the child. She was happy to come back to a future meeting to share with the Board how work was progressing.

Resolved

That the Executive Director of People – Children provide a report on how work was progressing to the 16 January 2020 meeting of the Board.

16. Children's Placements - Use of Unregulated Placements - Progress Report on Action Taken

The Corporate Parenting Board considered a report by the Executive Director of People – Children on Children’s Placements – Use of Unregulated Placements.

Officers informed the Board the current position had changed and was not as mentioned in the report which had been based on the previous month’s information. There had been 3 young people in unregulated placements, the current number was 6 although 3 were to move on, one young person was to move home.

Dorset have a number of young people whose behaviour is difficult to manage. There is a lack of sufficient placements available in the local area for these young people. Some placements may be a long way from home, ie north of the country. These sorts of placements were regularly reviewed, and officers continued to search for registered provision for them.

Going forward officers had been looking to provide children’s homes within the Council’s estate and therapeutic foster carers. The Authority needed to work with families at an early stage so as to avoid them needing to come into care due to the experiences they have had and the impact of that on their behaviour.

One member noted there was a potential offer for one young person who had been in an unregulated placement the longest and the young person who had been in unregulated placement the second longest was due to go home mid-August. He mentioned that the Authority did not seem to have a policy of advising Ofsted on unregulated placements.

The Chairman mentioned that Ofsted was informed on a monthly basis.

The Chief Executive, Participation People informed the Board the CLiCC young person who had attended the previous meeting had started a campaign regarding placing young people in unregulated settings.

The Corporate Parenting Officer confirmed that one young person had taken up the offer of having an Advocate.

The Chairman was disappointed that numbers had risen and hoped that next time the Board received an update the numbers had improved.

The Executive Director of People – Children commented that unregulated placements were not the preference, safeguarding of the young person was paramount. She was more concerned about the length of time young people stayed in unregulated placements than the number. One of the things officers were working on was the language used on the form about the young person, the risks were presented first rather than the wonderful things relating to the young person, this required change.

Councillor Kerby indicated he would like to be included in the visit to the caretaker’s bungalow at Colehill School when that was arranged. The

Executive Director of People – Children informed him that dates had been identified in about 3 weeks' time.

The Chairman confirmed the next update on action taken would be at the meeting of the Board on the 4 September 2019.

Resolved

1. That Councillor Kerby be included in the visit to the caretaker's bungalow at Colehill School.
2. That officers provide a progress report on action taken at the next meeting of the Board on 4 September 2019.

17. Looked After Health Briefing Update - Escalation of Performance of Initial Health Assessments - Quarter 4 and Initial Health Assessments

The Chairman asked that the Board take this report and the Initial Health Assessments report together as one item.

The Corporate Parenting Board considered a report on Looked After Health Briefing Update – Escalation of Performance of Initial Health Assessments by the Designated Nurse for Looked After Children and a report on Initial Health Assessments by the Executive Director of People – Children.

The Designated Nurse for Looked After Children informed the Board that during 2018/19 there had been some improvement, but timeliness of consent was still a challenge. She referred to table 2.3 where assessments were ranging from 65.5% to 44.7% with an average of 52.5% Initial Health Assessments completed in 20 working days. During the last few months the Pan-Dorset Pathway had been agreed and implemented including guidance for Social Workers regarding their responsibility for meeting the statutory guidance. There had been increasing challenges on Paediatricians due to a vacancy not being filled, and as there was a national shortage of Paediatricians the CCG were working with Poole Hospital Trust to review the existing model.

The Executive Director of People – Children commented there were complex issues around why decisions were made. A little more analysis needed to be researched regarding young people's wishes about where they need to go to have their IHA. It was not good that they should have to miss school we want to look at the experience of the IHA for young people and ensure they are able to access them in their local area. In terms of the workforce we have LAC health nurses and are positive about the new pathway that has been developed. Meetings had been arranged with Health for the following week beginning 22 July 2019 to discuss progress.

The Foster Carers explained they had been carers for 18 months and during that time they had only been to 2 IHA's one young person did not want to be there and her birth mother who was present, was asked very little. Information relating to the family history was recorded as "no information" available even though the birth mother was in attendance. The second time they attended an IHA was for a very small baby and the medical lasted about

10 minutes – a very quick check over of baby. The birth mother who was in attendance was not asked any information and this also was recorded as “no information” available.

The Designated Nurse for LAC was very disappointed to hear that had happened and would take that away with her to check on. She felt that as both parents were present there had been a missed opportunity. She went on to explain the statutory requirement for completing IHA's.

The Executive Director of People – Children mentioned that the Children Act had been written 30 years ago and LAC were very different now compared to then. If there was a young person who did not want that assessment, officers needed to work with them to establish why. It was about the child and keeping them safe we need to find out why we are not meeting the target.

The Designated Nurse for LAC confirmed the specialist LAC nurses she worked with would ask young people why they did not want an IHA. The Statutory requirement would still need to be met as that was how the service was measured.

The Chairman understood the comments about meeting the national targets but for Corporate Parents it was about the young person.

One member commented that it was also about health checks taking place somewhere accessible, how could they be made desirable to young people as it set them apart from their peers.

One member asked about the timescale for an IHA to take place. The Designated Nurse for LAC explained the timescale. Officers explained they could achieve the timescale but could not get consent in advance of the child coming into care. If the child was coming into care on a court order they could not pre-empt the decision. Ideally notification and consent would be given on day one of the child coming into care this was part of the new pathway. Health should then receive information as early as possible.

Martin Hill, Foster Carer agreed that national targets and timescales had to be met but perhaps it would be better if there was more time available to enable children to settle into coming into care. If this happened there might be a completely different outcome, surely it would be better to have good information and not meet the target than have bad information and meet the target.

The Designated Nurse for LAC considered a change of culture was required about how IHA's were sold to young people. Smarter working with social workers and pooling of information was required.

The Corporate Parenting Officer mentioned that Early Services received a great deal of information about the child and wondered whether information could be released from the GP as they would have had a record of the child.

The Chairman asked whether, when first referrals were coming through, there was anything that stated information could be accessed. The Executive Director of People – Children confirmed there was an issue around informed consent and if they say no, the Authority had to accept that.

One member asked if information could be provided as to the cost of the paediatrician undertaking initial medicals at the child's placement in the same way that the Looked After Children's nurses did for the review medicals. The Designated Nurse for LAC confirmed the cost of visiting at a home would be excessive and had been explored previously but this could be scoped with a view to seeing how much it would cost now.

One member asked for financial information to be provided and the Designated Nurse for LAC agreed she would provide that information at a future meeting of the Board once costings were complete. She anticipated this would be available for the meeting of the Board to be held on 19 March 2020.

The Chairman commented that the Board did not want this issue to keep coming back to them as a problem, a solution should be sought with flexibility on both sides. An update on action taken and progress should be submitted to the Board quarterly, the next report to the 9 October 2019 meeting.

Resolved

1. That the Designated Nurse for LAC provide financial information at the meeting of the Board to be held on 19 March 2020.
2. That officers and the Designated Nurse for LAC provide a joint update report on action taken and progress to the meeting of the Board on 9 October 2019.

18. Pathway Plans

The Corporate Parenting Board considered a report by the Executive Director of People – Children on Pathway Plans.

Officers informed the Board that Pathway Plans were provided for young people aged 16 years onwards. The Plan should be drawn up together with the young person with performance being monitored in two ways; those who had a plan in place and by identifying how many plans had been updated within 7 months. The IRO service looked at the quality of the plans and gave them an Ofsted rating. 95% of all LAC had a Care or Pathway Plan with 89% completed within the past 7 months.

One member asked what happened if a young person wanted the Pathway Plan changed completely. Officers confirmed the Plans could be changed at any time if there was something the young person would like done differently this would be discussed and changed as necessary.

The Chairman referred to table 2 in the report as there was quite a wide variation in completed plans especially for those with a disability only 40% completed in the west of the county. She asked what was being done in

respect of the transition to Adult Services for disabled young people as it could take years for the packages they required to be in place. Officers confirmed the plans were completed alongside the young people wherever this was possible. Officers commented that there was further work to be undertaken alongside Adult Services to ensure there was sufficient lead in time for plans to be firmly in place when the young person moved into being supported by Adult Services and that this was consistent across the service.

The Chairman of Dorset Parent Carer Council mentioned the young people would have an EHCP which started at year 9 and transition should start from that year to enable all services to work together. At the present time it seemed they had separate plans that were not being merged together.

The Executive Director of People – Children could not understand why transitions were a problem. She confirmed that officers would be looking to see how to get this right as whole life services were the favourable option. She was happy to bring this back the Board at a future meeting.

The Chief Executive of Participation People commented that moving into adulthood was contained in the Children’s Satisfaction Survey and it was felt this should start at age 14. Young people were requesting work was started earlier. Young people were also given a postcard with the different terminology written on it to enable them to get used to the phrases used.

The Chairman referred to paragraph 2.6 of the report and asked for feedback on the whole service workshop that had taken place on the 8 July 2019. Officers confirmed the workshop looked at how to improve services to young people by monitoring performance and improvements to the pathway planning. The Chief Executive of Participation People was looking at the design of forms with young people to enable them to become more person friendly.

Officers confirmed they would provide a report quarterly on action taken.

Resolved

1. That officers provide the Chairman with feedback on the whole service workshop held on 8 July 2019.
2. That officers provide a quarterly report to the Corporate Parenting Board on action taken to be reported at meeting held on 9 October 2019.

19. Children Who Are Disabled

The Corporate Parenting Board considered a report by the Executive Director of People – Children on Children who are Disabled.

Officers informed the Board there were three social work teams covering the East, West and South areas. Paediatric Occupational Therapy and specialist Early Help services were provided on an authority wide basis. Numbers have remained stable with 53% of young people with foster carers, 5 young people were placed within the authority’s own facilities. Visiting statistics were difficult to report on because a young person may decide not to see their social

worker so often and this could be changed to 3 monthly visits. Table 5 referred to assessments completed within the statutory 45 working days, quarter 4 January to March 2019 showed an improving picture with focus on sustaining that improvement. One of the continuing challenges was securing placements for those young people that came into care and those at risk from criminal and sexual exploitation.

The Chairman of Dorset Parent Carers Council asked if there were any concerns around providers and the number of breaks, were there enough providers and what happened to those with challenging behaviour. Those with quite challenging behaviour and more complex needs tended to be in a residential setting rather than in a family situation, officers were not aware of any issues.

Members asked whether the improving percentages between quarter 1 and quarter 4 were due to the falling number of cases rather than the work. The Executive Director of People – Children confirmed better processes were in place now in the West which had reached 100%.

Reference was made to paragraph 3.3 of the report and members thought it would be interesting to know where the young people were. Officers did not have that information to hand but would ensure it was included in the next report to the Board.

It was agreed the Board would receive a progress report showing peaks and troughs and action taken in 6 months' time at the meeting being held on the 16 January 2020. If further information was available earlier then officers should email Board members with the information.

Resolved

1. That officers provide the Board with a progress report showing peaks and troughs and action taken in 6 months' time at the meeting being held on 16 January 2020.
2. That information relating to where the young people were be included in the next report to the Board.
3. If further information was available earlier officers should email Board members with the information.

20. Urgent Items

The Chairman mentioned the DofE initiative about young people being in independent schools and felt it was something that could be brought to future meetings of the Board she was not clear if the initiative was about residential placements or independent schools ie public schools and wondered if this could be looked at in October.

The Assistant Director – Schools and Learning confirmed it related to children in care being in care and accessing public schools. He confirmed there were no Dorset Children at Shaftesbury School.

Noted

21. **CLICC - List of Broken Promises, Challenge Cards and update from Participation People**

The Chief Executive of Participation People apologised to the Board that unfortunately there no young people available to attend the meeting.

The challenge cards which Children's Services had completed were circulated to the Board and discussion took place on the responses. The Board's response is set out below.

Challenge One – Sometimes it takes too long to hear back from a Social Worker. We have an example of it taking 2 weeks for a reply, by which time it was too late to act on the request. How can we stop this from happening?

Response – Ask young people how they would like to be contacted/communicated with and offer a personalised response. Return calls as a basic/standard duty. Support them to elevate an issue if it persists, easily.

Challenge Two – We think that some decisions are passed up to managers, when they could be made by Social Workers. This can mean the decision takes too long to be effective. Is there a process where Social Workers can have the confidence to make those decision themselves to save time?

Response – Foster Parents should have their own delegated powers. Dorset Council should help them be more aware of these and support them to use them.

Challenge Three, Four and Six – If my Social Worker is on holiday or has left, how can you make sure I can get in touch with someone else when I need to?

Must I always go through my carer if I need to contact my Social Worker? I don't have my Social Worker's email address or contact details.

We think Social Workers should give us a card with their contact details on the front and the out of hours/duty number on the back, so we always know how to get in touch.

Response – Agree to a business card. They need to be of good quality. Not all Social Workers will want their face on a business card, perhaps a Bitmoji could be used instead? We should offer a paper version and digital one for both young people and Foster Carers. The Executive Director of People – Children's details should be added to every card to make it as easy as possible for young people and foster carers to get in touch with her.

Challenge Five and Seven – When a taxi is booked for us, why can't the taxi be given our details so they can keep us informed? We understand that our

Social Worker probably won't know if our taxi has failed to turn up. We need to know what to do if this happens.

Response – Foster Carers should be able to book young people's transport. We should support young people's independence.

The Chief Executive of Participation People thanked the Board for their input and confirmed CLiCC responses would be fed back to the Board at its meeting on 4 September 2019.

Resolved

That the Chief Executive of Participation People provide the CLiCC responses to the meeting of Corporate Parenting Board on 4 September 2019.

Duration of meeting: 3.00 pm - 5.20 pm

Chairman
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