

## **DORSET COUNCIL - CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**

### **MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 14 NOVEMBER 2019**

**Present:** Cllrs Toni Coombs (Chairman), Ryan Holloway, Stella Jones, Cathy Lugg and Andrew Parry

**Apologies:** Cllrs Richard Biggs and Andrew Kerby

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

David Alderson (Senior Advisor, Schools and Learning Service), Mark Blackman (Corporate Director - Education and Learning), Tony Bygrave (Senior Assurance Officer - Complaints), Emily Clark (Virtual School SENDCo), Antonia Dixey (CEO Participation People), Penny Earney (Designated Nurse for LAC), Karen Elliott (Designated Safeguarding Manager), Marc Eyre (Service Manager for Assurance), Ann Haigh (Participation Worker, Participation People), Madeleine Hall (Corporate Parenting Officer), Jan Hill (Foster Carer), Martin Hill (Foster Carer), Elaine Okopski (Dorset Parent Carer Council), Sarah Parker (Executive Director of People - Children), Kevin Stenlake (IRO Manager for Looked After Children), Mary Taylor (Acting Assistant Director for Care and Protection) and Liz Eaton (Democratic Services Officer)

**36. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 September were confirmed and signed.

**37. Matters Arising**

Minute 30 MASH Update

The Executive Director of People – Children explained the MASH service still existed and was located at Poole Police Station. The new ‘front door’ arrangement was located at Westport House in Wareham.

Councillor Stella Jones mentioned she would like to visit Westport House and the Chairman confirmed she would be visiting on the 22 November 2019. It was agreed they would visit Westport House together.

**Resolved**

That the Chairman and Councillor Jones would visit Westport House on the 22 November 2019.

**38. Declarations of Interest**

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

**39. Public Participation**

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

**40. Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items of business.

The Chairman informed the Board that agenda item 9 would be considered as item 15 just before the exempt items and item 11 would be deferred until the next meeting of the Board on the 9 December 2019.

**41. Quality Assurance and Audit Update Report**

The Corporate Parenting Board considered a report by the Executive Director of People – Children on Quality Assurance and Audit.

Officers explained that the Audit compliance had dropped significantly in September to 59% whereas in July it had reached 89%. Because the audit cycle ended at the end of October and Ofsted have given notification of their visit, there was a decline of client audits during that month.

The Chairman asked of the audits that were ready to go whether they would be completed, or would they be audited again. Officers explained the cohort of children would be all those that would have been audited as officers wanted to check children's records to ensure that auditing was of a good quality.

The Executive Director of People – Children informed the Board that a new audit process called "Moderation" had been designed which Ofsted picked up.

One member observed that on occasions officers went to see siblings and asked whether all children in the family were being shown in the audit. Officers confirmed that they could now accurately report on where children had been more clearly now.

**Noted**

**42. IRO Annual Report**

The Corporate Parenting Board considered a report by the Executive Director of People – Children on the IRO Annual Report 2018/19.

Officers informed the Board the report was slightly out of date as it had been prepared in July 2019. The data related to the last financial year but focussed on changes going forward.

At present there were 462 Looked After Children, IRO's regularly checked on the children to ensure they were the right children to be placed in care. It was hoped the Blue Print for Change would impact on the number of Looked After Children. 96% of children had up to date care plans and the visits by social workers was now at 86% which was an improvement, the target was mid-90%. Part of the IRO's responsibility was to look at the quality of plans

particularly for a child that had several plans missing but currently there were 37% that were good and 2.97% were outstanding. During the last 6/7 months there had been measurable improvements. Blue Print for Change would influence the IRO Service it was hoped the LAC reviews would be more child centred with the child and foster carers in attendance a discussion was had about teachers attending and whether it was necessary. A personal letter was now written to each child rather than a report. Permanency had improved in Dorset ensuring children were placed in long-term placements or adoption. Officers were looking at providing midway reviews in addition and prior to the 6 monthly review to ensure actions had taken place and officers were aware of what progress had been made regarding the children.

One member felt it was a good idea to send letters but asked whether they were written letters or in the form of an email and whether these could be sent by both email and letter. Officers confirmed they wrote letters to the children as some children were not always very good at managing their email, so a letter was written within a form and was in paper format. It was confirmed they could be sent both ways.

One member thought that by reducing the number of professionals that attended meetings officers should check with the child to ascertain whether they wanted a teacher to be present. Officers confirmed the child could choose an advocate, eg someone from Action for Children and a teacher could attend as well.

The Chairman informed the Board that schools rated Ofsted Outstanding were not required to have inspections and over time standards could slip and asked what checks were in place to ensure a child was still receiving a report.

Officers confirmed the child would still have a social work report but would not have a meeting in the foster placement unless one was required. If information showed things were going off course, then a meeting would be arranged.

One member asked about the large rise in the number of children coming into care and asked whether this was voluntary and why it was happening.

Officers explained it was a complicated situation you had to think about why the child/children needed to come into care. Social Workers would recommend a child needed to be removed for their own safety. Parents were also asking Dorset Council to look after their 13/14 year olds. This was not only happening in Dorset, nationally the number of LAC had increased. County lines and sexual exploitation came into play with children being on the edge of care. Youth centres have closed, and there is nowhere for young people to go. Multi-agency working was crucial to keep children in school and looking at the services for children at home to ensure early help was available to enable them to stay at home.

One member asked if a child was looked after by the extended family would the Authority pay them. Officers confirmed they would be treated the same as foster parents.

The Chairman was pleased to see that very few of the number of complaints and escalations mentioned in the report had not risen to level 3 or 4 and asked if there was anything the Board could do to help.

Officers felt this was very challenging as it was not acceptable to have children in unregistered accommodation and hoped inhouse residential care would help to reduce the complaints. It was reassuring that the majority were resolved at the lowest level, complaints received at a higher level had very complex issues and were resolved as soon as possible.

The Chairman asked Board members if this was something Corporate Parents would want to know about. Members responded they would not want to know immediately but if something could not be resolved they would, or if it was a matter of policy they would want to know.

The Chairman asked Board members as this was an annual report would it be helpful to have a progress report later in the year. Officers thought a progress report back to the Board in 6 months' time would be of benefit.

The Chairman of Dorset Parent Carer Council asked how confident officers were that information was getting to the small number of children that had a disability as it was important their views were heard and considered. Officers informed the Board they were dependent upon parents and carers to ensure information was received by the children in the best possible way.

The Chairman drew attention to Section 11 of the report relating to entitlements for care leavers and asked whether the new council tax exemption information would be included. Officers confirmed that would be included in the next report to the Board.

### **Resolved**

1. That unresolved level 4 escalations should be notified to the Chairman.
2. That the Corporate Parenting Board receive an update report in 6 months' time to the meeting on the 9 June 2020.

#### **43. Aspire Adoption Agency Annual Report**

The Corporate Parenting Board received the Aspire Adoption Agency Annual Report 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019.

The Service Manager informed the Board the Annual Report was from 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019 and covered the 3 previous councils, the six monthly Performance Update only covered Dorset Council.

The Chairman complimented the service given the comments on pages 66/67 of the report relating to the Ofsted inspections.

The Service Manager confirmed they had brought 3 separate services together and their underlying policies and were the second Regional Adoption Agency to go live. Aspire were very much under the spotlight and part of a

longitudinal government assessment were keen to know what was working. The Agency were one of 7 case studies, and Ofsted were positive about the way they were performing last year.

The Chairman asked how things were settling with the 2 new Councils and whether the Service Manager saw any threat to being a Regional Adoption Agency as she had heard rumours that BCP were looking to the east, what would be the outcome. The Service Manager confirmed they were finding their way, Dorset was in the middle of a restructure and she knew they would be working with different teams. With regard to rumours about BCP Aspire would be in trouble as they only looked after 2 authorities it would be a threat and they would not be viable if they looked after only one local authority, she had not heard anything as yet and reminded the Board Aspire had entered into a 3 year agreement. She felt it would be a shame if arrangements were changed as at present everything was under one roof and had kept a local concept. Aspire had recently taken on responsibility to provide special guardianship case responsibility for BCP.

One member asked how Aspire were working to ensure foster families were diverse and all inclusive. The Service Manager confirmed she had information she would send. In terms of ethnicity that reflected the population, there were a lot of same sex relationships, disability assessing, single people. It was very similar to the national picture. She mentioned it was difficult to recruit in the west of the county. Aspire worked in partnership with voluntary adoption agencies and with Families for Children the adoption charity in Devon.

The Chairman thought an article ought to be placed in the next Dorset Council newsletter.

One member asked how many children were adopted on an annual basis. The Service Manager confirmed there were approximately 60 children adopted.

The Executive Director of People – Children mentioned she had seen a film about an adopted mother and her experiences and thought if the Board saw the film they would understand the barriers for adopted people. It related to a local parent in Dorset. The Chairman considered it would be a very good idea to show as a one off as part of member training.

### **Resolved**

1. That the Aspire Adoption Service Manager provide the Board with the information relating to agency's inclusiveness.
2. That the Chairman arrange for an article to be placed in the next Dorset Council newsletter relating to Aspire.
3. That the Corporate Parenting Officer arrange the viewing of the film relating to an adopted mother as part of members training.

#### **44. Annual Complaints Update - People Children**

The Corporate Parenting Board considered the Annual Complaints Update – People Children.

Officers explained that quarter 2 of this year was a positive one and explained the complaints for both Children’s Services – Social Care and Non-Social Care were split into quarters in the report. Individual’s felt they were being listened to and for stage 2 the costs were in the region of £8,000, a stage 3 complaint would be determined by a panel of people. In 2018/19 the timescales for dealing with a complaint for quarters one and two were quite high but quarters three and four were much lower. It was noted there was a 20 working day deadline for complaints to be dealt with. Officers explained that Children’s Services – Non-Social Care were in relation to Dorset Council’s own complaints process. Any complaints that were received by the Local Government Ombudsman would not be closed until all actions had been completed.

Officers explained a generic compliments email address would be set up for the Complaints Team as quite a few compliments had been received.

The Executive Director of People – Children mentioned they were looking at auditing complaints and feeding that information into the audit process.

The Chairman asked how the Authority would know that the new systems for reporting complaints would still be embedded in two or three years’ time. Officers explained they were a new team and were changing the way they communicated with the Directorates and allocated complaints and challenged any views that they felt were not completely independent.

One member asked whether the timescales were negotiable. Officers confirmed the 20 working days was a statutory requirement which should not be extended. It was very rare that an extension of time was asked for and if necessary, all such requests would be subject to the Executive Director’s decision.

One member asked whether the Complaints Team worked with the Family Partnership Zones. Officers confirmed they did, and it was very productive.

One member asked if there was a worry that a complainant might be browbeaten into not proceeding with a complaint if they were having an informal meeting. Officers agreed that could be the case but hoped they would enter into the formal complaints procedure.

The Dorset Parent Carer representative mentioned it took a lot of energy to complain and a lot less to compliment someone and asked how officers gathered all the information about compliments. Officers explained any compliments were received through the post not via the online compliments form. The Chairman considered that as members they ought to forward any compliments received to the officers concerned.

The Chairman thanked officers for their report.

## **Noted**

45. **Fostering Service Annual Report - Deferred until the 9 December 2019 meeting.**
  
46. **Unregulated Placements Update**

The Corporate Parenting Board considered a report by the Executive Director of People – Children on Unregistered Placements Update

The Executive Director of People – Children informed the Board there had been some changes since the report was circulated. Child A remains in an unregistered placement out of county property which the Directorate were working with the provider to take over responsibility for the placement and commence the registration process to come within Dorset Council responsibility. Both the young people in B and C were in Dorset Council properties, the properties would be registered in time for the change review, Ofsted would fast track this when it arrived with them. Child D was now placed in an appropriate setting, however since the report had been written another child had been placed in an unregulated placement out of county. Officers were working hard to have that child placed in a registered setting. The Executive Director of People - Children reassured the Board that officers searched for placements daily. Child B was living with staff and would stay with the Authority until their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and likewise child A. Regarding child C there were promising signs that officers may have found a placement for that child. There were sufficiency issues as these young people had needs that required carers with specific skills to be able to support them and the forms that were sent to providers had been redrafted to reflect this. Officers had been talking with the young people about their next placement what they would like that to have and would like to see.

One member asked if a child had a list of things they would like and officers found a placement that did not have all the requirements would that child still be put in the placement. The Executive Director of People - Children emphasised it was important to listen to the young person and to explain to them that they might not find somewhere with everything they wanted. It was important to find somewhere where they would be more settled.

One member referred to Child D's assessment the report mentioned that was being carried out, was that still the case. The Executive Director of People – Children confirmed that child D was no longer in an unregistered setting.

The Dorset Parent Carer representative asked whether Child B had an EHCP because if they had they would not have been a surprise to the service and how did they end up in unregulated property. The Executive Director of People – Children explained the situation regarding Child B.

The Chairman asked whether child D had been reported in the press. The Executive Director of People – Children informed the Board of the circumstances relating to child D.

## **Noted**

### **47. Verbal Update on Urgent Review to ensure EHCP's are delivered**

Officers gave a verbal update to the Board on the number of EHCP's being delivered. There were 355 LAC on the Virtual School register in 195 different schools and settings, the number on the SEND register was 189, 53% of LAC were out of county with 72 in county, 117 EHCP, 108 LAC, 44 of those were out of county with 33 at specialist schools the number in county was 64. Officers mentioned they looked at how far things were being delivered and checked with the case workers to ensure that through personal case plans the EHCP's were met. Reviews took place when required and may be more than once a year. Funding and extra support was made available for those young people with an EHCP who were out of county.

One member mentioned they had recently seen the conclusion of a whole streamlining of EHCP's. The Executive Director of People – Children explained that the department was currently undergoing a restructure and the SEND co-ordinators were being integrated into localities with colleagues and the family partnership zones. On top of which there were new processes to be used, for example, the new Dorset Graduated Offer and accepting that an EHCP was required and how families were stood down from EHCP's. Staff from schools, SENDCo, CCG, Dorset Health Care were involved, there would be a significant difference over the next 6 months. She was happy to update the Board in 6 months' time.

The Dorset Parent Carer representative mentioned the out of county young people and that could be any young person over the border, also that the youngest on the SEN register would be in Reception. This regularly featured as a question on the Virtual School Governing Body meetings to ensure we knew where young people were including Ofsted gradings for the schools they attend.

The Chairman asked officers in future when giving statistics could they give other information as well.

## **Resolved**

That the Executive Director of People – Children update the Board on the restructure of SEND Co-ordinators at its meeting on 9 June 2020.

### **48. Verbal update on Measuring of "Any Other Reason 21"**

Officers gave a verbal update on "Any Other Reason 21" which reflected the number of young people who were left out of care. It was explained that 15 young people had turned 18, 2 had a revocation of care order where the court had confirmed there should be no more intervention by the care authority and 4 had left home and stepped down from children in need.

## **Noted**



49. **CCG Annual Report Including Emotional Health and Wellbeing**

The Corporate Parenting Board received the CCG Annual Report including Emotional Health and Wellbeing.

The LAC Designated Nurse proposed the Board looked at the overarching strategic summary and the looked after children nursing service where 2 emotional health practitioners were imbedded due to children informing the service there was a gap in provision. This had been identified by Ofsted and the CCG sought feedback from young people on the appointment of 2 posts. The new service was now embedded and young people were asked what they thought of the service. A film was shown where the young people commented that they were very happy with the additional practitioners. There was week to week contact and a high level of intense work had been put into emotional health. The young people in the film were positive and mentioned it was important to have a say. The Designated Nurse for LAC informed the Board that 3 of the young people in the film had been involved in the consultation in 2016.

**Noted**

50. **EXEMPT**

51. **Joint Health and Dorset Council Briefing Report**

The Corporate Parenting Board considered a joint report by the Designated Nurse for Looked After Children and the Executive Director of People – Children.

The Chairman referred to bullet points on page 196 and asked how the items were being checked off. The Designated Nurse for LAC confirmed there was a quarterly quality assurance check, Appendix F of the National Audit Tool was used and she self-checked to ensure the audit was completed. These would be clinical audits of the clinician.

One member mentioned that some of the timescales were missed as foster parents had said the appointments were inconvenient. Officers informed the Board that the Fostering Team were working with foster carers to ensure they were aware of the priority that must be placed on Initial Health Assessments (IHA's), this was also being followed-up with the independent fostering carers.

The Chairman asked if, for example, a foster carer had pre-booked a holiday surely that information should be known when the child was placed. Officers responded it was difficult if the foster carer just decided to take a holiday but if they had booked a holiday and could take the child with them that would be good, officers would try to change the appointment within the timescale.

One member asked how long the IHA's took and commented that the wait for the first assessment was taking too long. The Designated Nurse for LAC confirmed there had been ongoing performance issues around IHA's, but they

were now working jointly with Dorset Council to ensure the IHA's took place. If a young person was under 5, they had 2 statutory health assessments a year and over 5 they had one statutory health assessment.

The young person from CLiCC asked why there were the delays. The Chief Executive of Participation People relayed to the young person that IHA's were mandatory and that there might be delays and barriers to the young people preventing them from attending an IHA eg exams.

The Chairman asked whether there was confidence with the update report that the Authority and CCG were getting on top of this and asked for an update report in 3 months' time at the 11 February 2020 meeting. The Designated Nurse for LAC confirmed yes as there was now an action plan.

### **Resolved**

That a Joint Health and Dorset Council Update Report be provided to the Board in 3 months' time at its meeting on 11 February 2020.

## **52. CLiCC - Review of Satisfaction Survey and Receive 4 Challenge Cards**

The Chief Executive of Participation Children introduced the young person from CLiCC who attended the meeting. She explained there were 2 Satisfaction Surveys one for age 2-11 year olds and another for 11-18 year olds the same questions were used every year and were aiming for 100 responses this year. They would report back on the survey to the meeting of the Board in February 2020.

The Board considered the 4 Challenge Cards:

**Challenge One** – “Young people struggle to understand job titles. How can you make every professional's job title, youth friendly?”

**Response** - Officers confirmed that the job title did not always tell people what they did and hoped the postcards that had been completed were useful. The Board and officers mentioned their job title and what they did. The Chief Executive of Participation People gave an example of a title that the young people did not know what they were, eg Operations Manager. Officers agreed and explained that a Corporate Director in Dorset would be a different role to that of a Corporate Director in BCP. It was agreed that officers would let CLiCC have a list of their job titles and ask the young people to let them know what they think the job should be called. If the young people let officers know what titles they were looking at they would go and see them and let them know what they did. The Chairman felt this was something for the CLiCC Workshops

The Independent Visitor colleague from DAIVS explained it was hard to talk about their role and were looking to change the name.

The Chairman asked the young person if they were happy with the response – which they were.

**Challenge Two** – “Children and young people in care have told us that sometimes they need to speak to Social Workers privately, but it can be awkward to ask for this in front of Foster Carers.” “We would like to be given the opportunity to meet and speak privately without being afraid of offending Foster Carers. How can you help us?”

**Response** - Officers explained social workers should always see a child or young person alone and they would be reminded of that unless the child or young person did not raise that as a challenge. Officers confirmed they would ensure that happened.

The Chairman mentioned that not wanting to offend foster carers should not worry young people and asked whether there was a briefing that could be given to foster carers. Officers confirmed that foster carers should not be offended as this was not about them or about the request.

The Chief Executive of Participation People thought it might be an idea to complete another postcard about “Your rights when seeking your social worker”. Officers confirmed the responsibility was the social workers’ for seeing children and young people on their own.

**Challenge 3** – “Children in foster placements want to be treated as part of the family. It is hurtful to go to respite care when the rest of the family have their holiday. Children in foster care want to be part of family holidays. How can you help us?”

**Response** - Officers thought this was a tricky question as sometimes foster carers needed a short break and the authority should ensure young people have something fun to do and have a little break. It was considered that all young people and children that the authority looked after should have a holiday and most of the time the authority would want young people to go on holiday with their foster family. There were occasions when perhaps the foster carer was unwell and could not always be there. Officers should talk to children and young people in advance to ensure they know what respite would be like and whether there was something different that could be arranged, eg staying with a relative or friend for a few nights. The young person asked whether there were any situations where foster carers had said yes to the child or young person going away with them. Officers mentioned that it could be the case that the children and young people did not have a passport and that was something that needed to be addressed. On occasion a family may have booked a holiday before the young person moved in with them. The Authority needed to do whatever they could to ensure that did not happen.

**Challenge Four** – “Care Leavers have told us that don’t feel they have been equipped with the skills to properly manage their money and to budget effectively. What is in place to help give young people these life skills? What else could be done?”

**Response** - Officers mentioned there had been discussion recently about how the Authority helped young people. Several of the banks and building

societies offered support and officers thought about approaching some of the them to see whether they would provide training for some of our young people. It was hoped to talk to the banks and see what they can provide and also speak with foster carers and ensure they do what would be expected of them in providing guidance to young people to enable them to budget and have life skills, and that over time they give young people clothing money and perhaps money to buy food etc.

The Corporate Director of Education and Learning thought this was important as leaving care was a major step and confirmed he would speak with the banks and inform CLiCC if anything could be provided for the young people.

The young person asked even if there was nothing in the system why could the schools not teach them.

The colleague from DAIVS confirmed they had run a scheme with CAP and would let officers have a named contact. The Chief Executive of Participation People gave some other examples of other life skills the young people ought to be aware of.

Officers confirmed the skills required were needed before the young people left care and it was up to foster carers, schools and residential providers to ensure they were equipped with these life skills as they were growing up. It was considered that pathway plans should provide some of the skills required and officers would need to look at the quality of the pathway plans.

The Foster Carer representative asked whether this could be included on the Foster Carers Forum agenda. Officers confirmed this could be included.

It was confirmed officers would have answers for the young people at the next meeting of the Board on 9 December 2019 and the item would be placed on the Foster Carers Forum agenda.

**Resolved**

1. That the responses to the challenges be actioned as set out in the minutes.
2. That life skills training be included on the Foster Carers Forum agenda.

**Duration of meeting:** 2.30 - 5.15 pm

**Chairman**

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