

## **CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**

### **MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 16 SEPTEMBER 2021**

**Present:** Cllrs Kate Wheller (Chairman), Richard Biggs (Vice-Chairman), Ryan Holloway, Carole Jones, Stella Jones and Cathy Lugg

**Apologies:** Cllrs Jane Somper

**Also present:** Cllr Andrew Parry and Cllr Val Potheary, Stewart Dipple, Kim Rickford, Kirsten Hallett and Lianne Chorley.

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

Theresa Leavy (Executive Director of People - Children), Claire Shiels (Corporate Director - Commissioning, Quality & Partnerships), Matthew Chislett (Service Manager - Corporate Parenting Board and Permanence), Megan Rochester (Democratic Services Officer Apprentice), Sarah Jane Smedmor (Corporate Director - Care & Protection), Simon Fraiz-Brown (Service Manager - Adolescent Services), Lisa Linscott (Principal Teacher) and Kaye Wright (Personal Advisor (C&S 13-25))

**11. Welcome and Introductions (17:00)**

The Chairman opened the meeting and received apologies from Cllr Jane Somper, Louise Drury, Liz Plastow and David Webb.

**12. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest

**13. Public Participation**

There was no public participation to report

**14. Introduction and Scene Setting (17:05)**

Theresa Leavy (Executive Director Children Services) informed members that members and officers had a collective responsibility for children to have the best life, especially those within care. Officers were working hard to meet this challenge. The Executive Director also informed the board of those areas of focus to ensure that children continued to thrive. These areas were education, wellbeing, and physical health. Another discussion point was the strategy; to ensure that families were kept close, stayed within their communities and to maintain close relationships with support officers. There had been great improvements around building relationships within the last 18 months and the Board were also informed of the steady trickle of applications for foster carers within Dorset.

The Executive Director for Children Services also updated the board on the residential provision, which would be going online this term, providing provision for children. There was a lot of work going on to ensure that the council met its ambition- to be the best Corporate Parents in the country.

**15. Dorset Council Permanence Strategy 2021-2023 (17:10)**

The Corporate Parenting Board considered the Permanence Strategy Report. The board was informed of the different ways to achieve permanence and the importance of keeping those family lifelong links when safe to do so. They were also informed that permanence could be with extended families. Where children and young people come into care, we are working hard to ensuring that they had stable placements, especially within Dorset as it was the best place for children to live and thrive in their local communities. Members discussed the report and highlighted the following areas:

- The Board welcomed the report and noted that there were several areas doing well.
- Referred to how it would be measured and if there were other ways to measure the quality. It was questioned whether the data set was sufficient and detailed enough. It was suggested that for future meetings, it should be higher up on the agenda due to the importance of it.
- The Report stated that the recommendation for review would be every 3 years. This was thought to be a long time, especially within a rapidly changing world. It was recommended that this be changed to annually to ensure that these targets were being met.
- How were special guardianship orders followed? They created a robust support plan with ASPIRE which set out the support that would be received and what they could expect. It was important to let families be families but if they needed support again then ASPIRE would step in and they can always contact the council if needed.

**16. Dorset Council's Care Leaver Strategy 2021-2023 (17:30)**

Sarah-Jane Smedmor (Care Corporate Director) informed the board of the Dorset Council's Care Leaver Strategy. She also explained that the next informal meeting will be dedicated to care leavers as it was care leaver week. Kirsten Hallett (Team management with care leaver) informed the board of the Your life beyond care survey. This was conducted to have a better understanding of children's experience and the help and support they receive. The following discussion points were made:

- Was there a target to ensure that every care leaver can read and write before progressing onto the next stages of their lives beyond care? How can a targeted mentoring scheme be monitored to help them into the world of life? The board was assured that officers were working with schools and the virtual school to ensure that all children could read, write, and have basic IT skills. They were also informed that some councillors had come forward to become mentors, whether this be for job interview practice or

university applications. Through working with local businesses, they were also looking into different apprenticeship opportunities for young people.

- Regarding contact, the board was assured that they were in contact with several care leavers. Some chose not to retain contact for personal reasons but those involved there was contact more frequently than every 8 weeks.
- The board was also informed that the target for those in employment or within education was currently not being met. The level was currently at 60% but officers assured the board that they would be working hard to increase this percentage. Several care leavers were not able to work due to illness, criminal records, or personal life choices, so this also needed to be included within these statistics. What can be done to open the doors to employment?
- Due to living in a more rural area, transport was an issue. The board asked how the council could help either financially or by offering transport? In answer to this question Kirsten Hallett (team management with care leavers) informed the board of the guaranteed bursary that was offered to 16-19-year olds within care. This could contribute to books, trips, and transport. In addition to this the council could offer further payments and bespoke packages based on their personal needs.
- Reports were currently produced on 18-21-year olds however the care system looked after young people until the age of 25. For those who wanted contact after the age of 21, they could be contacted on an 8-weekly basis. It was their choice, and bespoke packages could be made between the care leaver and their PA.
- A suggestion was made that schools offer mock interviews which would be useful. It would be good to do marketing with councillors within the different fields to mentor young people.

#### **17. Emotional Health and Well-Being in Schools and briefing on the Emotional Health and Well-Being Support Group (17:50)**

Theresa Leavy (Executive Director Children Services) introduced the report on behalf of Vik Verma. The number of children who had completed the strengths and difficulty questionnaire had improved. The average score was down to 15.4, this was still elevated but the board were assured that they were looking to get this down by tracking all data. They were also informed of the work being done with schools around mental and physical health which made an impact on a child's life. They were also working with schools around trauma and looking at ways to support them to focus on that. Working to ensure that children knew that a school was a place of safety and to create a sense of normality for them. The following discussion points were made:

- The questionnaire could not be simplified, it was a standard questionnaire. The strengths and difficulties questionnaire were being promoted in all meetings. There were three different questionnaires, for the child over 11, foster carers and teachers. The questionnaire enabled the identification of trends through the different surveys.

- Relationship with partners in CAMS- this was an ongoing piece of work but would like to update members in the future of the waiting times, outcome and how successful this service has been.

#### **18. Health of Looked after Children and Emotional Wellbeing of Looked after Children (18:15)**

Louise Smith, designated nurse for children in care and care leavers presented the board with the report. She explained that the report reflected the difficult year due to covid, plus the recovery plan put in place. Another discussion point was the importance of children's voices, and they were working with participation groups to better this. One change that they were making, was how do the children want their health assessments delivered in the future. Would they want virtual or face-face? The board was also informed of the number of care leavers rising, and there was work in progress to transform the care leaver role. They were also wanting a more transitional role into adulthood for 17-18-year olds.

The Corporate Parenting Board was also informed of the progress made with dental care. Children within the care system were now prioritised and there was a robust escalation process in place if any complications arose.

Members asked the following questions relating to the following:

- The report was welcomed by the board and was praised for the hard work that has gone into it.
- Do all children in care have an EHCP? It was suggested to add more information regarding speech and language therapists within the report. It would be useful to see what percentage of children in care had this.
- Vaccination approval, who would need to give this? The board was advised that a process was needed for this and a meeting had been set up to discuss this matter. Due to it not being a routine vaccine, officers would need to make sure that either the authority or parental consent was given.
- Key performance indicators were around referrals with health assessments. Additional needs would be referred to either the GP or other professional services around eating disorders or dietitian services. Training and support was also offered to foster carers around healthy eating.
- Suggestion to speak about religious and spiritual requirements on future agendas to ensure the needs of all children were covered.
- Procedures with disputes with vaccinations- A strong vaccination team within Dorset health care and it will be parental choice. Considering the capacity of children, it was early days but there would be conversations around the procedure for this.

#### **19. Corporate Parenting Dataset (18:40)**

Matthew Chislett (Service Manager Corporate Parenting and Care Leavers) introduced the members to the Corporate Parenting Dataset. The permanence plan achievement rate was increasing. Last month 30% and to date it was up to 33%. Hoping to see more traction to achieving permanence through the new

processes. The process around early permanence, adoption, and long-term fostering had been streamlined. He also informed the board of having 268 care leavers with 97% keeping in touch and keeping close relationships. Officers aspired to lead the way to be the best corporate parents nationally. In terms of initial health assessments, they were meeting targets. Dental checks were seen within the vulnerable group and if we can't access, an escalation process is in place to ensure all children are seen.

The following suggestions were made:

- The report was welcomed but it was noted that transport was a barrier and it was important to address as employment was below average. Matthew Chislett (Service Manager Corporate Parenting and Care Leavers) assured the board that at the next informal meeting, this would be a topic considered with members.
- It was also suggested that discussions be held with Cllr Bryan on the transport issue how public transport could be improved to help employment chances.

**20. Date of Next Meeting (18:50)**

It was confirmed that the date of the next informal Corporate Parenting Board meeting would be held on Monday 11 October 2021.

Meeting closed at 18:47pm

**Duration of meeting:** 5.00 - 6.47 pm

**Chairman**

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