

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 6 DECEMBER 2021

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

Apologies: Stewart Dipple

Also present: Cllr Val Potheary and Cllr Jane Somper

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), Kate Critchel (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Megan Rochester (Democratic Services Officer Apprentice), Sarah Jane Smedmor (Corporate Director - Care & Protection), Simon Fraiz-Brown (Service Manager - Adolescent Services), Lisa Linscott (Principal Teacher), Elaine Okopski (Dorset Parent Carer Council), Karen Elliott (Head of Quality Assurance & Partnerships), Louise Drury (Head of Service Children in Care and Care Leavers), Kaye Wright (Personal Advisor (C&S 13-25)), Louise Smith and David Webb (Manager - Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service) Miriam M Leigh (Principal Education Psychologist) and Lisa Reid (Principal Teacher)

1. Welcome and Introductions (17:00)

The Chairman opened the meeting. Apologies were received from Stewart Dipple.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest

3. Public Participation

There was no public participation to report.

4. Review Previous Meeting Minutes (17:15)

There were no comments on the previous meeting minutes. However, members were informed of the progress with vaccinations, and they are on track.

5. Introduction and Scene Setting (17:25)

Theresa Leavy (Executive Director of People- children) spoke of recent events from the media and reassured members that they have constant conversations regarding safety and the welfare of children. Making better life outcomes for children has been a priority and identifying those who want to hurt children has

been a focus. The concerns around support for social workers was also discussed. Members were assured that extra support was put in place to assist them when needed.

The Executive Director also updated the board on the most recent OFSTED review. There has been great improvements and they were amazed by the focused attention from academic achievements and by how settled and stable children in care were. There has been a look of work going on to ensure that all targets were met.

6. **Corporate Parenting Dataset (17:30)**

Matthew Chislett (Service Manager Corporate Parenting and Care Leavers) introduced members to the Corporate Parenting Dataset. There was an improving picture of the number of children achieving permanence. By the end of October, there were 441 children in care and a reduction in the number of care leavers in bed and breakfast accommodation from 4 to 2. Work is continuing to support young people out of Bed and Breakfast. The Service Manager also discussed how more care leavers continue to stay in touch which indicates the strength in relationships with care leavers. Areas to develop include the initial health assessments, for October they were at 84.6%. Officers were working hard to improve performance and consistency.

The following discussion points were made:

- The report was welcomed, and it was good to see improvements had been made, particularly with dental checks. However, it was suggested that there should be a deep dive on initial health assessments being completed within 20 days due to the importance of them. Looking into different ways of completing them which become more child led.
- Members also suggested that there should be more detail into what 19–21-year-olds are doing in terms of employment and apprenticeship schemes. It was agreed that members would have a breakdown of this before the next meeting.
- The Tornado chart shows that there is a number difference of 20% between boys and girls. The Service Manager would investigate this and will look in detail and refer to the board.

7. **Annual Report of the Virtual School: Education of Looked after Children (Completed September 2020) (17:40)**

Lisa Linscott (Principal Teacher) spoke of the OFSTED respond and how they recognised the virtual school ambition. There has been an improvement in the numbers of child post 16 in either education or training. It is currently at 66% compared to 52% in the previous year. The Principal also discussed the focus on moving to a creative phase for the school, allowing children to become involved and broadening their skills. Members were assured that children were being celebrated for their progress through PEP meetings and

weekly rewards such as book vouchers. They are also celebrated through the EPIC awards. 93% of children were celebrated with this award last year.

The following discussion points were made:

- Members welcomed the report but there were concerns regarding working with schools where children have been excluded. It was highlighted that this tends to happen with children with SEND needs. Members were reassured that work was being done to ensure children don't miss out on education and improvements are already being made.
- Questions were raised regarding Coombe House. Members wanted to know whether our children would get priority if it would be beneficial for them. They were assured that it depends on what is best for the children at the time, some includes children being in care, but this was not always the case. It would be dependent on what is the correct cohort and what is best for those children.
- Members were also informed of Dorset Steps. Asking schools to engage in training around behaviour. This has reduced the number of exclusions and interventions due to responding to the cause of behaviour.
- It was also questioned about exclusions from schools. Members were aware that training was being done but there were still concerns around children missing out on education. Members were informed that those missing out on education were currently due to circumstances where children have an education health and care plan in place and have experienced a placement move. Assurance was given to members that they would only look to see what provision is best for that child and what suits their needs.

Decision

That Dorset Virtual School's contribution towards securing overall 'Good' OFSTED judgement 2021 for Children's Services is recognised.

That the Virtual School's current priorities and direction of travel are supported by the Board to secure further improvements to educational outcomes for Dorset's care experiences children.

That further dissemination be agreed.

8. Children in Care and CLICC Strategy and Plan (18:10)

Claire Shiels assured members of keeping children's voices as a high importance. Simon Fraiz-Brown (Service Manger Young and Thriving) discussed how they intended to go forward. They discussed care leavers being engaged in delivery groups, children being involved in the Harbour work and school council for the virtual school. Also work to be done with the young voice team to learn about personal experiences from the care system. Recognised that not all previous methods of communication have worked. Members were informed of new ways to meet young people, using virtual or workshop-based sessions. The Service Manager, Young and Thriving also discussed family days with foster carers and

birth families as a key part for support. Members were encouraged to sign the recommendation in the report.

The following discussion points were made:

- Members welcomed involving and meeting young children but questioned what limits would be in terms of meeting spaces. Members were informed of making environments meaningful for initial engagements to persuade them to stay engaged in ways that best suit them.
- Members were informed of activities with young children. Some within the care leaver forum, Virtual School, or family activities. Providing members, the opportunities to see and work with young people first-hand.

Decision

That the following recommendations be endorsed.

9. Care Leaver Offer Update (18:30)

Matthew Chislett (Service Manager Corporate Parenting Care Leavers) updated the board on the care leaver update. Members were informed of care leavers using the Reece foundation for numerous reasons such as counselling and specialist advice regarding housing and financial advice. The Service Manager informed the board of Dorset being the first local authority nationally to action this. Members were informed of coproduction and the work being undertaken in collaboration with care leavers. Members were informed of a successful care leaver week and how the team continue to make progress.

The following points were discussed

- Members praised the support for care leavers and questioned top up payments for those on apprenticeships or a lower wage. Members were assured that they would step in financially to ensure that they could complete their training. Young people are also offered financial support and advice from Personal Assistants.
- Members discussed potential to help with funding driving lessons. They were assured that children have personal budgets which could be used as well as through charity organisations. Members wanted to know if a budget could be considered to help pay for driving licences due to the challenges of living rural and limited public transport in certain areas.
- Cllr A Parry declared an interest in respect of his work with a motor group.
- Agreed that a small group of councillors would look at options around transport. Members to include Cllr C Jones and Cllr A Kerby.
- Members were informed of the Care Leaver Delivery group, actioning the plans which helped keep on target. Currently planning business events for young children with different talents to showcase their skills and the potential with them.

Decision

Members supported the charter.

10. Harbour Feedback and Outcomes Report (18:45)

Louise Drury (Head of Service Children in Care and Care Leavers) introduced members to the Harbour Impact and Outcomes Report. Members were informed of the growth in recruitment and ensuring that the right people are in the right roles. In total, 55 young people have been supported between December and August 2021, the majority by outreach and 3 in the care of the Harbour. They have ensured flexibility to support the children at the right time. She also informed members of the decrease in the number of 13-year-olds and older entering care and becoming subject to a child protection plan. There has also been a decrease in the number of placements moves which has created more stability. Those children within the Harbour have stayed within full time education, 80% not in education or training at the time of commencing a service with The Harbour had a confirmed place in September and are attending. The reduction in charges and arrests has also decreased resulting in cost savings.

In relation to health, there was a reduction in A&E attendance which has also been a cost avoidance. Substance usage has also decreased but over the summer months there was an increase which was associated with the easing of Covid restrictions. Members were informed that the team were focusing on increasing completion of SDQs to understand impact on children's emotional wellbeing. There have been significant improvements with The Harbour, but work is still to be done.

The following discussion points were made

- Members were assured that this is a responsive service and there is flexibility to avoid any waitlists. The Harbour service will be available to all children in Dorset.

Decision

That the Corporate Parenting Board note the impact and support the work being undertaken in The Harbour.

That the Corporate Parenting Board provide challenge and support to strengthen the impact and outcomes going forward.

11. Date of Next Meeting (19:00)

It was confirmed that the date of the next formal Corporate Parenting Board meeting would be held on Thursday 10 March 2022.

Meeting closed at 18:51.

Duration of meeting: 5.00 - 6.51 pm

Chairman

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