

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 23 NOVEMBER 2023

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

Present remotely: Cllrs Mark Roberts

Apologies: There were no apologies for absence.

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

Antony Bygrave (Senior Assurance Officer Complaints), Kelvin Connelly (Safeguarding Education Service Manager), Paul Dempsey (Corporate Director - Care & Protection), Catriona Fountain (Communications Business Partner, Children's), Tina Ironside (Strategic Commissioner), Sunita Khattrra-Hall, Joshua Kennedy (Apprentice Democratic Services Officer), Megan Rochester (Democratic Services Officer), Claire Shiels (Corporate Director - Commissioning & Partnerships), Jo Smark-Richards, Daun Tattersall (Service Manager - Residential CWAD), David Webb (Manager - Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service) and Kaye Wright (Youth Voice Manager)

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

Amanda Davis (Corporate Director for Education and Learning)

1. **Welcome and Introductions**

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed those present.

2. **Minutes of previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 25th May 2023 were confirmed and signed.

3. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

4. **Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

5. **Introduction and Scene Setting**

Paul Dempsey, Corporate Director for Care and Protection, set the scene for the meeting and informed the board that the number of children in care had been changing and updated members on the number of asylum-seeking young people

in Dorset. He also discussed national impacts for children in care and informed members of the different strategies which had been implemented to support children in care at the earliest stages. The Corporate Director for Care and Protection also updated the board on the increase of 16- and 17-year-olds and the number of care leavers.

6. **Corporate Parenting Dataset**

Members were introduced to the Corporate Parenting Dataset and were given an update on the number of children in care and the number of asylum-seeking children. Members also received an overview on strengths and difficulties questionnaires as well as attendance figures and care leavers accommodation. Members were also informed that officers were continuing to work hard to ensure children were placed within their local communities and noted that more needed to be done to complete health assessments on time. It was also highlighted the increase in the number of children in education and an increase in children being adopted. It was noted that the number of children being adopted had increased.

Members raised the following questions and statements:

- Questions regarding whether staffing was adequate.
- Clarification regarding placement types.
- Number of unaccompanied children being placed locally in Dorset.
- Percentage of children in 3 or more placements per year.
- Questions regarding children in bed and breakfast accommodation.
- What is being done to support and prepare care leavers for employment opportunities.
- Requested further updates on visits and location of asylum seekers within the UK.
- Praised the officer's report and were pleased to see an improvement with the number of looked after children.
- The completed Health Assessments was an area of concern.

The Corporate Parenting Board Dataset was received and noted.

7. **Independent Reviewing Officer's Annual Report**

Sunita Khattra-Hall, Interim Head of Quality Assurance and Partnerships, delivered the independent reviewing officer's annual report. She informed members that over 2022-23 there had been growth within the team which showed a lot of progress and better relationships between IRO and children in care. The board was informed that they had been maintaining high standards for personal educational plans and had a strong focus on advocacy. It was highlighted that more work needed to be done to complete initial health assessments. In addition to this, other key areas to focus on included improving IRO footprints, quality assurance to ensure delivery of care planning and improving knowledge to help support asylum seeking children.

Members raised the following questions and statements:

- Thanked the officers for the comprehensive report and noted the positive feedback and areas of improvement.
- Monitoring of IRO caseloads and recruitment.
- Questions regarding improvement plans evidence.
- Clarification of escalation procedures.

The Independent reviewing officers annual report was received and the areas for improvement were noted, and members looked forward to tracking these changes.

8. **Annual LADO Report**

Members were introduced to the annual LADO report. There had been a significant increase in demand for LADO, both locally and nationally. The board were informed that there had been an increased capacity to meet demand and updated the board on the number of referrals from education. Areas of growth were also discussed as well as the number of foster carer referrals and the management of them. Officers praised the Dorset foster carer's and commended all the work that they continue to do. Members were informed that improvements were being made to improve timescales for investigations as safely as possible.

Members raised the following questions and statements:

- Concerns regarding timescales.
- Clarification regarding the use of independent schools.
- Questions regarding the number of referrals and severity of them.
- Concerns regarding the length of the process. Members questioned the potential to mitigate it.

The Annual LADO report was received and noted.

9. **Annual Report of the Virtual School: Education of Children in Care**

Members were introduced to the annual report of the virtual school. Congratulations were given to children in care as officers praised their significant achievements. The board was informed that there had been a reduction in reduced timetables, contributing to children having their full entitlement to education. In addition to this, members were also updated on the first designated teacher conference which aimed to support teachers. Members were also updated on the quality of personal education plans and were pleased that welcome packs for unaccompanied children had been adopted by others in the country. Residential trips and higher education success was also discussed.

It was agreed that the Annual report of the virtual school would be circulated later, and any questions or comments would be directed to the officers.

10. **Advocacy and Independent Visitors**

Tina Ironside, Strategic Commissioner, set out the report which represented the views of children to ensure their voices were heard. Members were updated on the number of referrals which had resulted in advocacy being delivered. The board were informed of the work that independent visitors had done to provide consistent

relationships for children in care. The Strategic Commissioner also informed members of new procedures which had been implemented and the revised advocacy guidance and standards that the Department for Education are consultation on. She also highlighted to members the importance of advocates and independent visitors and explained how they offered support to those who needed it most.

Members raised the following questions and statements:

- Members praised the report and were pleased with the figures and feedback from Independent Visitors.
- Requested the number of Independent Visitor volunteers increases so more C&YP could benefit from this service.
- Collaboration and work with gypsy traveller children.

11. **Children in Care at Risk of Offending and Custody**

David Webb, Manager of Youth Justice, spoke of preventing children from entering the justice system and reducing the risk of further offending. He also discussed concerns regarding the welfare of children whilst in custody and continuing offences. The Manager of Youth Justice also highlighted custodial sentencing and the safety of children in custody. He was mindful that continuity within the services was essential to keep the number of children in custody low.

Members raised the following questions and statements:

- Members praised the officer's report.
- Questions regarding social workers involvement with children in custody.

The Children in care at risk of offending and custody report was received and noted.

12. **Complaints and Representations- Children in Care and Care Leavers**

Antony Bygrave, Assurance Complaints Manager, addressed the committee. Members were updated on the number of complaints received and officers were pleased that it was a low number. The Assurance Complaints Manager was really assured with the statistics and quality surveys.

Members raised the following questions and statements:

- Responsibility of complaints received at residential homes.
- Clarification of complaint resolutions.
- Number of SEN complaints

The Complaints and representation report was received and noted.

13. **Health of Looked after Children and Emotional Wellbeing of Looked after Children**

Louise Harris-Smith, Designated Nurse for Children in Care and Care Experienced Young People, presented the report. Members were updated on the number of children in care, children placed from other local authorities and the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Dorset. Health visitor performance assessments and delays due to availability were also highlighted. Louise Harris-Smith also informed members of regular performance meetings to ensure continuity. Areas of improvement were also included within the report, it was recognised that dental care was a priority and work was being implemented to ensure children in care were being prioritised. The importance of pregnancy pathways and health passport were also discussed.

Members raised the following questions and statements:

- Thanked the officers for their report.
- Concerns regarding NHS dental visits.
- Pathways for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.
- Comments regarding other authorities' children in care.
- Members discussed the importance of dental education.
- Questions regarding private dental accessibility.
- Members noted increasing problems with children's mental health and questioned the support being given to them.

The health of looked after children and emotional wellbeing of looked after children report was received and noted.

14. **Urgent items**

There were no urgent items.

15. **Exempt Business**

Decision

That the press and the public be excluded for the following item in view of the likely disclosure of exempt information within the meaning of paragraph 1 and 2 of schedule 12 A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

Reason for taking this item in private.

Paragraph 1 - Information relating to any individual.

Paragraph 2 - Information which is likely to reveal identity of an individual.

The live streaming was concluded at this juncture.

16. **Cherries Ofsted Report**

Daun Tattersall, Service Manager- residential CWAD, presented the exempt report to members.

The Cherries OFSTED report was received and noted.

17. **Date of Next Meeting**

It was confirmed that the date of the next formal Corporate Parenting Board meeting would be held on Thursday 25th April 2024 and the next informal meeting would be held on Thursday 25th January 2024.

Duration of meeting: 3.00 - 5.08 pm

Chairman

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