

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 25 MAY 2023

Present: Cllrs Kate Wheller (Chairman), Richard Biggs (Vice-Chairman), Ryan Holloway, Carole Jones, and Mark Roberts

Apologies: Cllrs Stella Jones and Cathy Lugg

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

Matthew Chislett (Service Manager - Corporate Parenting & Care Leavers), Lianne Chorley (Fostering Panel Member), George Dare (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Simon Fraiz-Brown (Service Manager - Adolescent Services), Lisa Linscott (Principal Teacher), Megan Rochester (Democratic Services Officer), Mark Rogers (Independent Chair, Birth to Settled Adulthood Board), Claire Shiels (Corporate Director - Commissioning, Quality & Partnerships) and Kaye Wright (Personal Advisor (C&S 13-25))

1. Welcome and Introductions

Following from the Annual Council Meeting, members voted in Cllr Wheller as Chair and Cllr Richard Biggs as Vice-Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board.

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed those present.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the formal meeting held on Wednesday 30th November 2022 were confirmed and signed.

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 of the number of children in care and care leavers. The Corporate Director assured the board that it had been a very busy but successful year with the number of care leavers growing. He also discussed the

recent OFSTED review and informed the board that the outcome was positive and drew members attention to the benefits of personal advisors for care leavers. Helping them with advice regarding housing, health, etc. Mr Dempsey welcomed Cllr B Quayle to the board and invited him to say a few words.

Cllr B Quayle informed members and officers that he had been working with children's services for the last 2 years and had taken the time to read the officers detailed reports and was delighted to be a member of the Corporate Parenting Board.

6. **Corporate Parenting Dataset**

Members were introduced to the Corporate Parenting Dataset and were given an update on the number of children in care as well as the positive progress that had been made. 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 was higher than the national average.

Members raised the following questions and statements:

- Clarification of attendance figures of children in care.
- Potential to have prioritised mental health assessments and members wanted to ensure that health assessments were completed on time.
- Cllr K Wheller felt the figures were looking good. She informed the board that she'd spoken to young adults to get their feedback and praised the hard work that officers were doing to support children in care.
- Attendance was something that needed to be monitored and was reassured that there was a process in place. Members were pleased to hear that numbers in further education had increased.

The Corporate Parenting Board Dataset was received and noted.

7. **Fostering Annual Report and report from Panel Chair**

Gerry Connell, Fostering Services Manager, introduced members to the Fostering Annual Report. Members were informed of the challenging year, but he praised the work of foster carers. He also addressed the Mockingbird project as well as the reduction in foster carers. Mr Connell discussed the different ways in which they were recruiting, particularly external marketing and increasing their digital footprint. Members were also given an update on the fostering panel, and he had been impressed with the chairing which had been a positive stride forward. In addition to this, the Fostering Services Manager also discussed foster carer training and carer support and the work that had been done on therapeutic support for carers.

Members were also given an update on the budget and highlighted the importance of placing children with Dorset foster carers. Mr Connell also discussed the long service aware which ensured that children were apart of. Another aspect of the

report was complaints, he informed members of the number of complaints received and assured members that officers had been working hard to reduce them.

Members raised the following questions and statements:

- Members were pleased with the improvements that had been made.
- Recruitment was a concern. Members questioned whether there had been any correlations with other authorities to see what they'd implemented.
- Members noted that the service needed investments.
- Interested in the management of aspirations of looked after children to ensure they weren't missing out.
- Questions regarding additional funding to support children.
- Members felt that officers had delivered on the promise from last year and felt as though they were moving in the right direction, creating a more positive experience.
- Members recommended a mystery shopper to see what work people do.

Lianne Chorley, Fostering Panel member, gave members an update on the number of panels. She informed members that training had been completed and that they were currently trying to encourage diversity across the panel. Ms Chorley assured members that relationships had been build and there had been a significant amount of positive feedback. She highlighted the future from the report and was pleased with the future investments for foster carers. The Fostering Panel Member also highlighted that Dorset was the first local authority in England to do therapeutic work and felt the commitments to work ensured a great start for children.

Members noted the officers report.

8. **Adoption Annual Report**

Allan Charlton, Aspire Manager, introduced members to the Adoption Annual Report to provide an overview of care placements. He informed members that adoption days had increased, and officers were working hard to increase this. Mr Charlton also discussed recruitment and the ways in which officer's were launching recruitment drives. The report also highlighted voluntary adoption agencies, special guardianship numbers, in particular referrals and increases in the number of referrals.

Members raised the following questions and statements:

- Management of the budget
- Members referenced long term adoption and wider recruitment.
- Questions regarding interim authorities.

9. **Children in Care and CLiCC Strategy and Plan**

Members were given an overview of the previous year. They were provided with information regarding activities with children and co-production of the Dorset Promise which would be implemented through informal workshops. The presentation also included details regarding the young commissioner's programme

which would be offered during the summer months to give young people the skills to analyse, plan do and review. In addition to this, the Youth Voice team and the importance of understanding their voices was also discussed. Members were informed that the next theme for care leavers was health, wellbeing, and relationships.

Members raised the following questions and statements:

- Clarification regarding the Takeover challenge
- Members suggested that children should take an approach in the decision-making process in future.

10. **Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report**

Paul Dempsey, Corporate Director for Care and Protection, introduced members to the annual report. He informed the board that officers had invested a lot of time into care leaver accommodation, and they had opened the college house for adolescents. He also highlighted ambitions for children in education and noted that a higher percentage of children had been offered university placements. Mr Dempsey also discussed Youth Voice participation and informed members that work was continuing to respond to this. He also highlighted the workshops at informal meetings and how they would allow members to see the work completed by young children. Members were also informed of improvements in transitions and gave an update on the mockingbird constellations. Issues were highlighted in the dataset, but members were assured that work was being done to address these concerns. The Corporate Director for Care and Protection praised the development and continued hard work of the Corporate Parenting Board.

Members raised the following questions and statements:

- There were no questions from members.

The Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report was received and noted.

11. **Birth to Settled Adulthood**

Mark Rogers, Chair for Birth-Settled Adulthood, informed the board of supportive pathways for children with disabilities or special educational needs. Members were informed of the hard work that had been implemented to assure timelines were being met. Mr Rogers also highlighted the importance and benefits of a programme director as well as key partners. Members were informed that officers were monitoring and were able to keep track and mitigate potential risks. He also discussed engagement with children and young people as an area of focus and highlighted areas of funding.

Claire Shiels, Corporate Director Commissioning and Partnerships highlighted the two elements of work. Members were informed that the focus was to prepare young children for adulthood through employment and education, ensuring that the service delivery would be as smooth as possible for the children and assured members that tracking would have been sought throughout.

Members raised the following questions and statements:

- Members were interested in the identified risks; however, they mentioned that the benefits had not been mentioned and questioned as to whether there was a framework for measuring improvement.

12. **Care Leavers Annual Report**

The Service Manager Corporate Parenting and Care Leavers delivered the Care Leavers Annual Report. He gave an update on the OFSTED inspection and highlighted key agencies and the hub area which had been used by care leavers. Included in his presentation was an update on pathway plans and he also discussed the value of young people's voices and staff training. The Service Manager Corporate Parenting and Care Leavers informed members that he was proud to be apart of the leadership team and notified them that they were voted team of the year last year. He was pleased to see the progress of the Corporate Parenting Board.

Members raised the following questions and statements:

- Members thanked the officer for his detailed report and praised all officers for their continued support for young people.
- Clarification regarding unsuitable accommodation.
- Members wanted to know what could be done to get children into education or employment to avoid social isolation.
- Can more be done regarding apprenticeship schemes.
- Members questioned whether there was data on lack of transport impacting on children.

Cllr K Wheller thanked all officers for their continued hard work and was looking forward to seeing their continued progress at the next formal meeting.

13. **Date of Next Meeting**

It was confirmed that the date of the next formal Corporate Parenting Board meeting would be held on Thursday 23rd November and the next informal meeting will be held on Thursday 27th July.

14. **Urgent items**

There were no urgent items.

15. **Exempt Business**

There was no exempt business to report.

16. **Updated Agenda Frontsheet**

Duration of meeting: 3.00 - 5.05 pm

Chairman

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