

DORSET COUNCIL - CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 21 JANUARY 2021

Present: Cllrs Kate Wheller, Richard Biggs, Ryan Holloway, Stella Jones, Andrew Kerby, Cathy Lugg and Andrew Parry

Apologies: Jan and Martin Hill (Foster Carer Representatives), Elaine Okopski (Dorset Parent Carer Council), Antonia Dixy (participation People) Simon Fraise Brown (SM Adolescent Services)

Also present: Cllr Val Potheary and Cllr Jane Somper

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

Miriam M Leigh (Principal Education Psychologist), Theresa Leavy (Executive Director of People - Children), Mark Blackman (Corporate Director - Education and Learning), 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), Lisa Linscott (Principal Teacher), Liz Plastow (Head of Safeguarding), Ann Haigh (Participation Worker, Participation People), Louise Smith and David Webb (Service Manager - Dorset Combined Youth Offending Service) Hannah and CJ (Young Person Representatives)

1. **Welcome and Introductions**

The Chairman of the meeting welcomed all presented.

2. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 November 2021 were confirmed as a correct recorded and would be signed by the Chairman at a date in the future.

3. **Declaration of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest to report.

4. **Public Participation**

There was no public participation to report.

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

The Service Manager, Dorset Combined Youth Offending Service presented a report on Children in Care at risk of offending and of the work being carried out to address these issues.

Members were advised that the number of Dorset children in care entering the justice system for the first time had reduced in the last three years. There has also been a reduction in the number of children in care receiving a formal youth justice 'outcome'.

No Dorset children in care had been remanded or sentenced to custody in the last two years. The Board discussed the report and asked a number of questions in relation to:-

- Engagement with employees and unions in respect of health and safety issues and acknowledging the importance that employees feel safe in the work space.
- It was noted that restorative justice approach should be a key element for victim led outcomes.
- Further work on embedding restorative approaches would be carried out in the near future.
- Members requested the figures of Dorset children in care provision outside of Dorset. They recognised the importance of each child either in the Dorset area or outside of it, was being treated equally.
- Noted that following the first COVID lockdown the justice system backlog had been cleared locally.
- Welcomed the approach to engagement through a combination of a speech and language assessment and a trauma formulation to enable YOS workers and other professionals to respond to individual(s) requirements.
- The Service Manager confirmed that the approach of additional speech and language therapists had transformed the service.
- Acknowledged that the local Protocol for Reducing the Criminalisation of Children in Care was working well and would be subject to ongoing scrutiny and improvement.

Decision

The Board noted and supported the work being carried out to reduce the criminalisation and offending of children in care.

6. **Emotional Health and Well-Being in schools and briefing on the Emotional Health and Well-Being Steering Group**

The Corporate Director for Education and Learning outlined a report that highlighted the importance of addressing the issues around emotional health and well-being of children; who may come into care with experiences of trauma associated with abuse, neglect, loss and separation from family and friends.

The Principal Education Psychologist set out the salient points of the detailed document including the work being carried out with education colleagues and the wider work of Corporate Parenting in order to support looked after children. Evidencing the applications of the strength and difficulties questionnaire in order to support children better.

The Board welcomed the detail within the report and also discussed:-

- The impact of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire and its progress;
- Why were Dorset children more “sad” than other children outside of the area? Responding the Executive Director of People Children advised that to date the cohort had not been measured properly. Going forward it was essential to get the process right; for example if you only ask people who are in crisis, it is likely that the figures would be distorted.
- However, she continued that some of the children were sadder and this was probably due to too many being in residential care or far away from home. Going forward this bench-mark allowed for the planned improvement to be recorded.
- Members welcomed the early intervention work, but what support was being carried out with care leavers?
- They noted that Health Care nurses were commissioned to work with care leavers. Educational psychologists were also supporting care leavers to ensure that their needs were being met.
- Noted that life story work was being carried out.
- Noted that children’s voices were heard in many different ways. They must feel secure and supported in order that they can build loving relationships in the future.
- Acknowledged that a reporting framework would be regularly fed back to the Board.

Decision

- (a) The Board noted and supported the work being done to develop relationship-based approaches in schools with an emphasis on trauma informed practice.
- (b) That Board noted and supported to improve the emotional wellbeing of children in care and care leavers.

7. **Sufficiency Strategy (Children's Provision)**

The Head of Commissioning updated the Board on the Placement Sufficiency Strategy. The strategy for children and young people was based on a rights-based approach to reducing the number of children in care which was adopted by the Council in 2019.

The strategy also outlined the targets for reducing the number of children in care in Dorset and increasing the number of homes available for children in care in Dorset.

Members made the following observations:-

- Noted that the strategy was approved by Cabinet on 19 January 2021.
- Expressed concern regarding 16 year olds living with minimal supervision; Family care was the ambition.
- Reconsider the importance of bringing children back into the Dorset area.
- Requested more information regarding young adults. No figures for the ages between 21-25.

- How were “the Strengthening of Services Plan”, “the Children and Young Peoples Plan” and “the Corporate Parenting Strategy” going to be monitored and which committee would be responsible for scrutinising them? In response, the Executive Director for People – Children confirmed that scrutiny committees would consider the delivery and the outcomes of the work; plus regular updates at the Corporate Parenting Board and potentially reporting to Health and Well-being Board when required.
- Members noted that the annual report on Care Leavers would be considered by the board at a future meeting.
- Expressed concern about the lack of foster carers; discussions were on-going with colleagues in respect of housing, the building better lives project and the local plan consultation. Plus consideration of opportunities for capital bid projects where appropriate.

8. **Corporate Parenting Strategy**

The Service Manager for Corporate Parenting and Permanence set out a power-point presentation on the Corporate Parenting Strategy covering the following areas:-

- Increasing the opportunities to hear the voice of our children and young people and to take their views, wishes and feelings into account
- Promote better physical and mental health and well-being through improvement access to health information and services.
- Have high aspirations for children in care and care leavers in their, education, training and employment.
- Ensure safe and stable accommodation within the family home or close relatives and friends, If not possible, children are moved to a permanent placement without delay.
- For our children to have a good enriching experience of care provision and to prepare for adulthood and an independent and successful life.
- Effective governance and planning arrangements are in place to mean the Corporate Parent can be the best they can be.

9. **Corporate Parenting Dataset**

The Board considered the report on the Corporate Parenting Dataset.

The Board made the following comments:-

- Welcomed the work being carried out on the health assessments within 20 days. Members acknowledged the issues with Covid-19, but improvement needs to be shown soon.
- That data showed that the right children were coming into care.
- Important to ensure that the right carers were in place and that permanence plans were put into place promptly.

Cllr S Jones and Cllr A Kerby left the meeting at 7.05pm

10. **Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the formal Corporate Parenting Board would be held on 29 April 2021.

11. **Exempt Item**

It was proposed by Cllr C Lugg seconded by Cllr R Biggs

Decision

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

12. **CLICC Update and challenge cards- 18:55**

The Board received an update on the CLICC update and challenge cards from the Service Manager for Corporate Parenting and Permanence with the input of the young people representatives.

13. **Urgent Exempt Item**

The following urgent, exempt items was considered by the Board.

14. **Unregistered Placements**

Members considered a report of the Corporate Director – Commission, Quality & Partnerships on the current position regarding unregistered provision and the actions being taken to date.

Duration of meeting: 5.00 - 7.40 pm

Chairman

.....