

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 10 MARCH 2022

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

Apologies: Cllrs Ryan Holloway and Cllr V Potheary

Also present: Cllr Andrew Parry

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

Matthew Chislett (Service Manager - Corporate Parenting Board and Permanence), Kate Critchel (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Sarah Jane Smedmor (Corporate Director - Care & Protection), Louise Drury (Head of Service Children in Care and Care Leavers), Marc Eyre (Service Manager for Assurance) and Kaye Wright (Personal Advisor (C&S 13-25)), Lisa Reid (Consultant Quality Assurance), Elizabeth Williams (Assistant Assurance Manager – Complaints) and Tony College (Team Manager Dorset Council Permanence)

1. **Welcome and Introductions**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the first “in-person” meeting of the Board since the start of the pandemic.

2. **Apologies**

The following apologies were reported: Cllr R Holloway, Cllr V Potheary Theresa Leavy – Executive Director People (Children’s) Elaine Okopski, Dorset Parent Carers, Jan and Martin Hill – Foster Carers, Simon Fraiz Brown – Service Manager for Young & Thriving , Louise Smith Dorset CCG, Lisa Linscott, Principle teacher and David Webb, Service Manager Dorset Combined Youth Offending Service.

3. **Declarations of Interest**

There were declarations of interest to report.

4. **Introduction and Scene Setting**

Sarah-Jane Smedmor, Corporate Director for Care and Protection reflected on the work that had been carried out since the Board last met. The service had held its annual conversation with Ofsted last week. Ofsted took the opportunity to look at the work that was taking place with the authority’s care leavers.

She drew attention to the progress of the Care Leavers Delivery Group and the impact and the pace that the care leavers service had worked since Ofsted had

visited the service in September 2021. She confirmed that all the areas that Ofsted had highlighted and recommended on had been completed.

She further confirmed that Dorset now had 18 unaccompanied children in its family and Dorset Council was working with its partners to ensure that these children received access to the services that they needed.

5. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meetings held on 29 April 2021, 5 August 2021, 16 September 2021 and 6 December 2021 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6. **Public Participation**

There was no public participation for this meeting.

7. **Care Leaver Offer 2022**

The Service Manager Corporate Parenting Permanence and Care Leavers set out the report. The Care Leavers offer had been created in conjunction with Dorset care leavers in relation to its presentation. He also referred to the young care leavers video shown prior the start of the meeting. The full offer was to update the Board members, and this would be done annually.

He referred to the offer available to young care leavers and the development of a local provision which when up and running will offer 7 self-contained flats as well as a training flat to help young people settle into their own accommodation. Further details would be shared with the Board later in the year.

In response to a question regarding the number of care leavers on the housing register, the Service Manager for Corporate Parenting Permanence and Care Leavers advised that he could find out that information and report back to members.

Members welcomed the document, which was well presented. They also asked how this information being disseminated to care leavers. In response, the Service Manager indicated that work was being developed to display this on the website by working with QR codes, advertised through PAS and hard copies will also be provided.

It was also noted that local charities can provide support to care leavers and greater connections should be made with these organisations.

It was proposed by Cllr A Kerby seconded by Cllr S Jones

Decision

That the Corporate Parenting Board supports the Care Leaver Offer for 2022.

8. **CLICC Update and Challenge Cards**

Kaye Wright, Youth Voice Team Manager set out a report seeking support to move away from challenge cards in order to bring corporate parents closer to young people and by doing so role modelling good adult relationships with them.

The proposed report card approach would allow conversations to take place between members and young people, allowing for solutions to be co-produced. A short PowerPoint presentation set out some examples of co-production and report cards.

Members welcomed the approach to use report cards and expressed the importance to be engaged with the wider care leavers community. However, it was essential that progress be carefully monitored.

It was proposed by Cllrs S Jones and seconded by Cllr C Jones

Decision

That challenge cards be discontinued in favour of co-production between corporate parenting board members, children, and young people.

9. **Corporate Parenting Dataset**

The Service Manager for Corporate Parenting and Permanence set out the purpose of the Dataset report to provide the Board with an overview of performance. The indicators were grouped together under the relevant areas.

The following issues were discussed and highlighted:

- Need to look at ways to track unaccompanied refugee children data
- Improvement in pathway plans
- Highlighted improvement in number of care leavers in bed & breakfast with action plans in place
- Initial health assessments consents to be completed in 5 working days with the assessment to be in place within 20 working days
- Looking to work closer with neighbouring councils regarding health assessments.
- Working with health colleagues
- Making sure that council is in the national conversation re health outcomes.
- Working group in place to explore education and employment figures, further report to come forward to the Board at a future date.
- Council should encourage procurement companies to be offering apprenticeships to care leavers
- The increase in mental health issues and care including provision and support to foster carers.
- The importance of meeting and connecting with young people to have fun and get to know them.
- Family dates would be circulated to the board.

- Adoption – members received an explanation of the Somerset Ruling.

The Corporate Parenting Dataset was received and noted.

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

The Service Manager for Assurance presented the annual complaints report that provided an update on the numbers, types and outcomes of complaints made against Dorset Council. There was also an appendix that met statutory reporting requirements for Children's Services.

Members noted the key messages that were set out within the 2020-21 annual report. Over all directorates there was a 76% increase in complaints but to balance this there was also a significant increase in complements across services.

He confirmed that complaints from children in care and advocacy was still very low and where possible the complaints team work with officers to resolve the complaint informally and outside of the statutory complaints process. Of the complaints that were referred to the ombudsman, none of them had been upheld. He further advised that regular reporting was carried out with Children Services Directorate.

Members discussed the types of complaints received and how the function continued to make a difference in promoting a culture of learning from complaints despite well documented challenges across the directorates due to the Covid19 emergency during this period. Members requested to see care leavers complaints at Board meetings in the future. The Chairman also suggested that the subject matter could be discussed at a future workshop session.

Decision

That the annual complaints report for 2020/21 be noted

The Chairman welcome Cllr A Parry to the meeting.

11. **Advocacy and Independent Visitors**

Kate Saunders (NYAS Advocacy and IV Commissioned Service set out the report designed to update the board on progress for the provision of advocacy since the change in provider from August 2021.

She advised members that following some initial teething issues, the service was in a position that any young person referred to the service was receiving advocacy in a timely manner. Recruitment was on-going and corporate & compliance training was also taking place.

In response to a question relating to independent visitors, members were reassured that this role would continue to exist and there was no mixture between independent visitors and an advocate. She did confirm that there was cross over between personal advisors and advocates, but the service tries to manage these boundaries.

Members noted the update on the service.

12. **Corporate Parenting Board - Future format, themed agenda, identification of champions**

Members were advised that formal Corporate Parenting meetings were currently held approximately 7 times a year. Many reports were for noting and challenge but did not require a decision to be made. The Head of Service and Children in Care Leavers sought members support to hold a single formal Corporate Parenting meeting a year to receive annual statutory reports and all other meetings would be in an informal setting. This would allow for the informal meetings of the Board to use different locations and methods of engagement with stakeholders and children and young people. It would ensure that members were accessible and able to encourage the very best input from everyone taking part in the meetings.

It was also suggested that Board members be nominated to “champion” themes that were of particular interest to them. Champions would be able to work with lead officers and young people to contribute to the content of workshops and act as an ambassador for young people promoting high aspirations and securing best outcomes through service development within an area of interest.

Overall members were supportive of the proposal and made the following comments:

- Keen not to lose site of the Dataset and hoped that this could also be received in the informal setting.
- If the Dataset showed areas of concern an additional formal meeting could be arranged
- Would be open to meeting formally twice a year if required.
- Would enable an increased rigor of challenge and scrutiny
- Opportunity to engage with young people.

In response the Corporate Director for Care and Protection advised that from her experience an informal setting often encouraged more challenge as the board member could get to the root of the issue by meeting with a young person in a more comfortable setting. But she agreed that it was important that it is well managed and that the challenge was open, transparent and visible.

Members indicated an interest in the following champion areas

Cllr C Jones – to meet with young people who were struggling educationally, not in education or in training programmes. To talk to them about their dreams, their aspirations for the future and help them find a pathway forward.

Cllr R Biggs - Residential Care including private provision.

Cllr S Jones - Safeguarding and Education

Cllr C Lugg - Residential Care

Other councillors could discuss champion options with the Head of Service and Children in Care Leavers direct.

It was proposed by Cllr C Jones and seconded by Cllr A Kerby

Decision

- (a) That formal Corporate Parenting Board meets once a year to receive annual statutory reports and all other meetings would be in an informal setting.
- (b) That individual members of the board nominate themselves to participate in champion work and act as an ambassador for young people promoting high aspirations and securing best outcomes through service development within the area of interest.

Any nominations of interest, not received at the meeting, would be warmly received by Matthew Chislett and can be sent to matthew.chislett@Dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

13. Date of Next Meeting

The next formal meeting will be held on 28 April 2022 at 5pm in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Dorchester.

Duration of meeting: 5.00 - 6.53 pm

Chairman

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