

# Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on Wednesday 19 November 2014 in Committee Room 1, City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 1655  
Concluded 1800

## PRESENT – Councillors

CONSERVATIVE	LABOUR
D Smith	Arshad Hussain
	Thirkill

Co-opted Members: P Weston (Bradford Achievement Service); and the Chair of the Children in Care Council

Also present: Councillor Berry, Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People’s Services;

## Councillor Thirkill in the Chair

### 8. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

No disclosures of interest in matters under consideration were received.

### 9. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

There were no appeals submitted by the public to review decisions to restrict documents.

### 10. REVIEW OF THE COMPLAINTS PROCESS BY THE CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL

Previous reference: Minute 24 (2013/14)

Members recalled that the annual report in respect of complaints made by looked after children and young people in 2012-13 had been presented to the Panel on 5 March 2014.

During that meeting the representative of the Children in Care Council (CICC) had raised some issues about the complaints process and it had been agreed, amongst other things:



*“That the Quality Assurance Manager and the Complaints, Freedom of Information and Data Protection Manager be requested to review the complaints process, in consultation with the Children in Care Council, to ensure that it is fit for purpose, including consideration of any suggestions for improvement and an assessment of how Looked After Children are made aware of the ways in which they are able to submit feedback, either positive or negative.”*

The Complaints Manager and the Quality Assurance Manager had attended a meeting of the CICC on 18 June 2014 and the report of the Assistant Director (Children’s Specialist Services) (**Document “C”**) now summarised the issues raised and the resultant recommendations.

In presenting the report the following points were highlighted:

- There was only one advocacy worker which meant that this provision was not as effective as it could be.
- The most cost effective method of giving information to young people about complaints was electronically. An updated electronic version of the complaints leaflet would be developed and it was considered that this was the best approach for young people as it could be accessed via a mobile phone or laptop. The information could also be updated more frequently and thus kept relevant.
- Access to information could be particularly difficult for those young people in foster care, particularly if placed outside the district.
- All the complaints information on the website was currently being reviewed.

The CICC Chair said that consideration had been given to holding a competition to design an appropriate leaflet. The undertaking of a ‘blog’ was also under consideration.

In answer to a question from a Member of the Panel it was explained that there were currently three members of the CICC who were trained as mentors, although this had not included specific training on dealing with complaints, to date. It was intended to expand this provision.

Members made the following comments:

- Perhaps a specific complaints app could be developed.
- There should also be the facility for compliments to be made as well as complaints.
- Could the ‘Viewpoint’ system be used as another point of information/contact in respect of complaints?

The Assistant Director said that the potential of an app would be explored. She also undertook to contact Members by e-mail, in six months time, to keep them apprised of the progress being made on the recommendations made in the report as well as submitting a formal report to the Panel in twelve months.

**Resolved –**

- (1) That Document “C” be welcomed.**
- (2) That the value of the input of members of the Children in Care Council into the consideration of issues such as this review be formally acknowledged.**

- (3) That the Assistant Director – Children’s Specialist Services be requested to present a further report to the Panel, in twelve months time, to provide an update in respect of the implementation of the recommendations contained in Document “C”.

**ACTION:** Assistant Director – Children’s Specialist Services

## 11. COMPLAINTS RAISED BY LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

A report was submitted by the Assistant Director – Children’s Specialist Services (**Document “D”**) which summarised the issues raised by looked after children who had used the statutory complaints procedures to seek redress for their concerns. The report related to complaints in the period 1 April 2013 to 30 March 2014.

The report included information in respect of:

- There had been complaints made by nine young people, this was equivalent to only 1% of the total number of young people in care.
- Details of the age, gender and ethnicity of complainants.
- The focus of the complaints.
- How complaints had been generated.
- Comparison with figures from the previous two years.
- The results after investigation.
- Response times.
- Learning points.

The Assistant Director responded to questions from Members as follows:

- If a complaint raised with a Social Worker concerned a matter that could be resolved at that point this was what happened; if a response in writing was needed then the complaint would be formally logged as such.
- Officers were aware of possible issues in respect of accessibility to the complaints process for young people with a disability and had worked closely with the Brunswick Unit to try and ensure this issue was addressed.
- There was an on-line training course for staff in respect of complaints and this was mandatory.

**Resolved –**

- (1) That the improvement achieved in terms of response times to complaints be welcomed.
- (2) That the Assistant Director – Children’s Specialist Services be requested to consider if there are any additional ways in which young people with disabilities might be assisted in engaging with the complaints process.

**ACTION:** Assistant Director – Children’s Specialist Services

## 12. **SAFEGUARDING LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AT RISK OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION**

The Assistant Director – Children’s Specialist Services presented a report (**Document “E”**) which provided assurance to Members in respect of the arrangements in place in the Bradford district to safeguard young people against sexual exploitation, further to the publication of the Jay report into historical abuse in Rotherham.

A full report would be submitted to the Executive in January 2015.

The Assistant Director made the following points:

- This authority had adopted partnership working at an early point, in 1995, and had a long history of addressing the sexual exploitation of children.
- Further to a review of the effectiveness of the multi-agency approach in 2011, work had been undertaken to establish ‘The Hub’, a base where all key professionals could come together on a daily basis. Additional funding had been allocated by the Council to support this initiative in 2013.
- Work had also been undertaken with the voluntary sector, schools, communities and parents’ groups on raising awareness and preventative initiatives.
- Consideration was being given to the use of the ‘Viewpoint’ system as a way to obtain the views of young people on the issue.
- There was a dedicated police officer who worked with the Authority’s residential homes and had a direct link with ‘The Hub’ if any concerns arose.
- The arrangements for young people placed outside the district had been reviewed to ensure they were effective in identifying any risks. Safeguarding arrangements were rigorously inspected.

The Chair of the Children in Care Council (CICC) said that the CICC was looking at the issue of personal safety, including identified places of safety and the potential distribution of rape alarms.

Officers answered Members’ questions:

- The dedicated police officer (for residential homes) was a new role and it was hoped that it might be further enhanced to include young people in foster care.
- Foster carer competencies were currently being reviewed.
- E-learning and a checklist were provided for foster carers so they should be well aware of the issues.
- It was believed that robust arrangements were in place in the Authority’s residential homes and staff had the necessary support.
- At present there were only a very small number of young people placed in the Bradford district from other Authorities. They were in private provision which had access to the Council’s multi-agency arrangements.
- The issues in respect of engagement with new communities were recognised and were being addressed in a number of ways.

Members made the following comments:

- Publicity and awareness of the issue should be extended to all parents. It was not only looked after children that were at risk.
- The public needed to be assured that there was a multi-agency response with information being shared and acted upon quickly.
- The Council should ensure that it took note of initiatives developed by other Local Authorities that might also be adopted in this district.

- There was concern that potentially the right people were not being reached through the present methods of community engagement. It was questioned whether the groups involved were feeding information back sufficiently to local communities. There also needed to be provision for people from communities new to the UK. (The Assistant Director undertook to relay these relevant and important points back to the Safeguarding Board for consideration).
- The establishment of a Review Team to respond to historical allegations of CSE should be more widely publicised to give people the confidence to come forward. It was important to ensure that anyone who did so received the necessary support and that contact with the relevant agencies was facilitated.

**Resolved -**

- (1) **That the Assistant Director – Children’s Specialist Services continue to work within the allocated budget and to utilise partnership working to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of service provision in relation to child sexual exploitation.**
- (2) **That the Executive be requested to review the resources directed towards safeguarding children at risk of sexual exploitation, during the budget setting process, to ensure that they match the need and that service delivery can be maintained.**
- (3) **That the Assistant Director – Children’s Specialist Services be asked to ensure that foster carers receive appropriate training in respect of this issue.**

***ACTION: Assistant Director – Children’s Specialist Services***

**13. WORK PLAN 2014/15**

The Panel’s work plan for 2014/15 was submitted (**Document “F”**) for Member’s consideration.

Members were happy with the plan as set out for the remainder of the current municipal year.

**No resolution was passed on this item.**

***NO ACTION***

Chair

**Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a correct record at the next meeting of the Committee.**

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