

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on Wednesday 14 January 2015 in Committee Room 1, City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 1635
Concluded 1745

PRESENT – Councillors

CONSERVATIVE	LABOUR	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT
D Smith	Engel	Leeming
	Mohammed	
	Thirkill	

Co-opted Members: J Pickles (West Yorkshire Police)
Chair of the Children in Care Council

Also present: Councillor Berry, Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People’s Services;
M Jameson, Strategic Director – Children’s Services

Apologies: P Weston and N O’Neill

Councillor Thirkill in the Chair

14. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

In the interest of transparency, Councillor Leeming disclosed that she was a foster carer for Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council.

15. MINUTES

Resolved –

That the minutes of the meetings held on 10 September and 19 November 2014 be signed as a correct record.

16. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

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



17. EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Previous reference: Minute 20 (2013/14) and 7 (2014/15)

The Assistant Director – Children’s Specialist Services presented a report (**Document “G”**) which identified the current issues and developments in respect of employment, education, training opportunities and support for care leavers, including the progress made in respect of apprenticeships and Higher Education.

In presenting the report the Assistant Director explained that:

- A meeting was to be held with the Social Justice Team of the Department of Work and Pensions to strengthen links in the joint working being undertaken towards addressing the barriers to young people attaining work and the long term unemployment of young people.
- The Looked After Children (LAC) Strategy and the Economic Wellbeing Action Plan were currently being reviewed to ensure that they were fit for purpose.
- Work was being undertaken by the service to embed CLIO (Care Leavers Improved Outcomes) as an ethos for education, employment and training provision.
- The service was working towards the introduction of a mentoring scheme to support and encourage young people in accessing higher education and to help build support networks for those going to University.
- The service aimed to establish an Employability Course to support young people in their attempts to access employment.
- Work was being undertaken to increase the number of apprenticeships offered by private organisations.
- Unfortunately the single point of contact, via the Youth Service, had now ended.
- A meeting was being organised to review provision for vulnerable groups in light of the loss of Connexions input to try and identify ways to bridge the gap and improve the interface with this service.
- There were currently 24 young people at University and a further 10 or 11 had indicated an interest in attending in September 2015. The 25 funded placements could well be exceeded again this year. There had been ten graduates in Summer 2014.

She responded to questions from Members:

- There could be a number of issues that would explain why the numbers of those not in education, employment or training (NEET) were higher than the district wide figures. This could include social and behavioural barriers; perhaps young people had entered provision that was not appropriate for their needs.
- It was considered that a holistic approach was needed to address the issue, with all the relevant agencies working together.
- The economic climate had also had a challenging effect in terms of the provision of apprenticeships both by the Council and private providers.
- Comparative information in respect of the general population and statistical neighbours could be provided to Members of the Panel and included in future reports.
- An update would be sought from the Deputy Strategic Director in respect of the potential opportunities offered by the Westfield retail development in the City Centre; the Panel could be assured that a co-ordinated and planned approach was being taken in respect of this issue.

- All EET providers in the district were tasked with engaging with CLIO and completing an action plan with each care leaver.
- The service only currently received funding to support 25 care leavers in higher education. This support included expenses for accommodation, books and travel. It was estimated that it cost £10,000 to send a young person to University. The young people would take advantage of loans and any other grants that they might be entitled to. It was considered that each young person should start their higher education on an equal footing with peers who had not been in care. There was a specific support worker for those young people going to/attending University who would support them, including the undertaking of financial assessments, all the way through their course.
- Other local authorities had taken their lead from the approach taken by this Council.
- Young people could drop out for a variety of reasons; generally one or two left per intake but there had been none from recent intakes.
- All the potential pathways were discussed with young people.
- If a young person decided to start their own business the Leaving Care Service could offer support but not of a financial nature unless related to training. (A Member commented that there were a number of potential sources of support in such circumstances, such as The Prince's Trust.)
- Training on these issues was included within the regular sessions for foster carers.

Members commented that:

- If a single point of contact had proved to be effective then it should be provided. There was a need to make the most effective use of the resources available.
- Routes other than University were more suitable for some individuals. It should be ensured that those who would benefit from this route were enabled to do so but it should not be a target for the sake of it.

Resolved –

- (1) That the bespoke work being undertaken to support young people in care in accessing education, employment and training opportunities be commended.**
- (2) That all Councillors be urged to consider if there are any apprenticeships or work placements that they might be able to assist in making available for young people in care via the Chair of Panel's Annual Report to full Council.**
- (3) That the Assistant Director – Children's Specialist Services be asked to submit a further report to the Panel, in six months time, to update Members on any progress made in respect of the provision of a single point of contact for the Leaving Care Service for young people who are not in education, employment or training, to include any suggestions of how the Panel might support this provision.**

ACTION: Assistant Director – Children's Specialist Services

18. **ADOPTION AND FOSTERING OF SIBLING GROUPS**

Previous reference: Minute 7 (2014/15)

A report was submitted by the Assistant Director – Children’s Specialist Services (**Document “H”**) which outlined the current situation in respect of the adoption and fostering of sibling groups who were in the care of the Local Authority.

The following points were highlighted:

- This was an issue which was currently the subject of significant interest and activity. It was believed that the department followed good practice but there was a need for an objective review and the establishment of a clear policy.
- The service had been effective in achieving the placement of sibling groups and the management of successful relationships.
- Whenever possible siblings were placed together.
- This was a complex area. A significant amount of skill and knowledge was already established within the service but it was recognised that there was a need to develop tools to help with assessments and ensure consistency. Management information systems and the effective tracking of young people could be challenging.

She responded to Members questions:

- A pilot scheme was taking place in an area of London in respect of the use of part of the Adoption Reform Grant to target preventative work to try and reduce the number of siblings coming into care.
- The starting point for officers was to identify the best solution for the assessed needs of the children/young people concerned and attempts would be made to meet these needs as far as was possible. It was obviously more difficult to place larger groups together. If placed separately it would be usual for them to have the same Social Worker and Independent Reviewing Officer and contact arrangements would be put in place.
- The report included all sibling relationships including half brothers/sisters. It was important to take account of what the relationship meant to the child concerned regardless of its nature.
- The service was looking to recruit foster carers who were willing and able to take larger sibling groups.

Members commented that target setting was difficult in such a complex area. There may be occasions where it was not appropriate or in their best interests for siblings to be kept together.

Resolved -

- (1) **That the Assistant Director (Children’s Specialist Services) be requested to develop and promote a clear policy on the adoption and fostering of sibling groups and that Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel be consulted on the draft policy.**
- (2) **That the Assistant Director (Children’s Specialist Services) be requested to submit a progress report to the Panel six months after the policy has been implemented.**

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

19. **WORK PLAN 2014/15**

The Panel's work plan for 2014/15 was submitted (**Document "I"**) for Member's consideration.

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.

minutes\CPP14Jan

THESE MINUTES HAVE BEEN PRODUCED, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, ON RECYCLED PAPER