

## Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on Wednesday 13 September 2017 at City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 4.30 pm  
Concluded 6.35 pm

### Present – Councillors

CONSERVATIVE	LABOUR	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT AND INDEPENDENT
D Smith	Engel Tait Thirkill	N Pollard

### NON VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBERS

Children in Care Council representative

K Jolaoso – Bradford District Clinical Commissioning Group

Inspector K Taylor – West Yorkshire Police

Observer: Councillor V Slater – Portfolio Holder, Health and Wellbeing

Apologies: Y Umarji – Bradford Education

### 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. THE CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL

The Deputy Director (Children’s Social Care) presented a report (**Document “D”**) which outlined the role of the Children in Care Council (CICC), the legislative background to its establishment, how it is supported by officers and the aims and outcomes for the young people involved.

Representatives of the CICC were in attendance at the meeting and said that:

- They had provided the information for the report and had approved it for submission to the Panel.
- The Council was comprised of a diverse group of young people representing all those in care.
- It was considered that the model used in Bradford was very effective; it assisted social care professionals in ascertaining the opinions of young people and their views on proposed ideas and initiatives.
- Members of the Council also took an active part in training and recruitment.
- It would be nice if the CICC had a higher profile.

They answered questions from Members:

- There were usually at least 8 to 10 members at the CICC meetings, sometimes a lot more and it was organised to try and ensure that everyone who wished to could have an input.
- New members sometimes came via recommendation from the young people others through referral by their social worker or other contacts. Membership was open to anyone in care or leaving care.
- Attendees usually ranged from mid teens to 25 years old and the meetings had an agenda but were run in a casual relaxed atmosphere. This could be a supportive environment for anyone who might have a lot going on at home. The CICC was actively looking into facilitating participation by younger children and by those living in the residential homes.
- Various senior officers, the Portfolio Holder and the Chair of this Panel attended when invited to do so . It would be a decision for the young people whether other Elected Members would be invited to attend.
- Decisions at the meetings were usually reached by consensus or if this was not possible a clear majority.

The Deputy Director (Children's Social Care) said that:

- The CICC had a twitter account and contact could be made with them via this.
- Currently the youngest member of the Council was 14.
- Members did get travel expenses and refreshments. This could include, where necessary, for regional and national events. On occasions payment would be made for participation in a consultation if this would take a considerable amount of time.
- Funding had been provided for an apprenticeship and this person was now employed by the Council. It was intended to repeat this process.

Members expressed their thanks to the CICC for the informative report; some Members said that they had not realised how much work was involved for the young people concerned.

**Resolved –**

- (1) That Document “D” be welcomed as a valuable insight into the work of the Children in Care Council (CICC) and that the members of the CICC be thanked for their participation in a wide range of roles.**

- (2) That the Deputy Director (Children's Social Care) be requested to disseminate the information in Document "D" throughout the Council and to Elected Members in order to raise awareness of the Children in Care Council and its role.

**ACTION:** Deputy Director (Children's Social Care)

## 11. IMPROVING SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE/CARE LEAVERS

Previous reference: Minute 28 (2016/17)

Members recalled that, at the meeting of the Panel held on 8 March 2017, a report had been submitted by the Deputy Director (Children's Social Care) which set out the findings and recommendations arising from a review of the support for young people in care/care leavers undertaken by members of Bradford Council's Future Leaders Programme 2016.

Amongst other things, the Panel had resolved:

- "(3) That the Deputy Director (Children's Social Care) submit a progress report in six months time to allow the Panel to monitor the implementation of the recommendations."*

The Deputy Director therefore submitted **Document "E"**, which summarised the activities undertaken to date and proposed future action. It was explained that:

- The new cohort of Future Leaders (FL) had now taken over this project with support from the Through Care Service.
- Three key areas of work had been established where it was believed that the FLs could use their expertise and resources effectively.
- The message that 'everyone is a corporate parent' needed to be communicated throughout the Council.
- The FLs had spoken to the Children in Care Council (CICC) and some younger looked after children (LAC) and created a video to illustrate what a corporate parent is.
- The communication plan was being developed further.
- Work was on-going in respect of expanding the cultural offer to LAC and developing apprenticeship opportunities.
- The FLs intended to work closely with the CICC in moving forward on the targeted areas set out in the report.
- It was also hoped that to extend the work with the voluntary sector.

The Portfolio Holder stated that the recommendations in the original report had all been adopted by full Council in March 2017 but some did not appear to have progressed. For example, the standard Executive/Committee report template did not yet include the 'Implications for Corporate Parenting'; this was considered to be important as it ensured that officers focussed on this issue.

## **Resolved –**

- (1) That the proposals set out in Document “E” be endorsed.**
- (2) That, in light of the resolution of Council at its meeting held on 21 March 2017 to adopt the recommendations in the ‘Improving Support for Young People in Care/Care Leavers report, the Deputy Director (Children’s Social Care) be asked to review the progress made on the implementation of each recommendation and report back to the Panel at the earliest opportunity, including information on the actions proposed and the timescale for implementation.**

***ACTION: Deputy Director (Children’s Social Care)***

## **12. OUTCOMES FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN**

A report was presented by the Deputy Director (Children’s Social Care) (**Document “F”**) which provided the Panel with comprehensive information regarding the outcomes for looked after children in the Bradford district.

The report comprised a summary of the information known about looked after children in Bradford as at 31 March 2017 and drew on the same data used to provide statistical returns to the Department for Education (DfE)(all figures being provisional as the DfE would publish the final figures in March 2018). It provided comparisons with performance levels at 31 March 2016 and to the first National Statistical Release for 2015-16.

In presenting the report the following points were highlighted:

- There had been a significant increase in the number of looked after children. This was mirrored at regional and national level and was obviously a challenge for the local authority.
- The numbers of adoptions and Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) had decreased and Care Orders had become much more likely to be used.
- Increased numbers of young people had had dental checks and immunisations.
- There had been an improvement in the numbers of those in education and training.
- A good level of placement stability was being maintained. Some out of area placements had ended but only where this was a positive move for the young person concerned.
- A lot of work was being done in respect of mental health issues.
- The B Positive Pathways project was moving forward.
- inspections of children’s homes over the last year had been very positive particularly in light of the challenges being faced.
- Educational outcomes was to be the subject of a separate report to the Panel at a later date.
- The level of participation by young people in their reviews was good.
- The number of cautions had fallen and the level of convictions reduced. There were now two dedicated police officers based in residential homes.
- In terms of economic wellbeing, the authority was performing well in respect of

the numbers in Employment, Education or Training (EET) and the provision of suitable accommodation.

The Deputy Director responded to Member's questions:

- The change in terms of SGOs was reflected nationally; it appeared that the judiciary wished to see it demonstrated that arrangements were tried and tested prior to being made more formal.
- A real improvement had been seen in respect of the length of time children were waiting to be adopted and the authority was performing well in comparison with others. It should be noted that these figures could be skewed by the situation for children with additional needs.
- It was believed that the 96% participation level for LAC in their reviews had been achieved through a strong focus being placed on the children and their ability to participate. The Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) made meeting with a young person prior to their review a priority.
- There had been an increase in the number of young people who had a PEP and the quality of those PEPs was also recognised as an issue of great importance.
- Young people who chose to be not in work, education or training (NEET) due to parental responsibilities were still counted in the NEET figures even if this had been a positive choice on their part.
- A breakdown of the NEET figure to local level could be provided.
- A lot of work was being undertaken to motivate LAC to go into higher education. Higher numbers were now going to University after the age of 21. Debt was a big issue in this regard and payments had been reviewed to see if these young people could be better supported.
- The number of young people entering into apprenticeships had increased.

The Portfolio Holder commented that the trend was for fewer young people to go to University, particularly in less affluent areas. Apprenticeships could be as good as University; the aim was to fulfil potential and achieve aspirations.

In response to a question from a Member, the Co-opted Member from West Yorkshire Police said that attempts were made not to criminalise young people and alternative restoration methods were available for use where appropriate. The prevention work being undertaken by the Youth Offending Team having a positive impact.

**Resolved –**

- (1) That Document “F” be noted and welcomed.
- (2) That the Deputy Director (Children's Social Care) be requested to include more detailed localised information in the report to be submitted to the March meeting of the Panel in respect of the Through Care Service.

***ACTION: Deputy Director (Children's Social Care)***

### 13. CARE LEAVERS AND COUNCIL TAX

The report of the Deputy Director (Children's Social Care) (**Document "G"**) informed the Panel that, further to a report by the Children's Society, local authorities were being challenged by the Children's Commissioner for England to review and consider their corporate parenting duties and powers to implement exemptions for care leavers from Council Tax contributions.

National research had indicated that care leavers were more likely to fall into the poverty trap and consultation had shown that care leavers believed that this sort of initiative would make a significant difference to them. A number of different models had been considered and the favoured option for Bradford was to exempt all care leavers up to the age of 21.

A Member commented that, if implemented, it would be important to ensure that these young people were well prepared for when the exemption would end and that they would have to start paying. The Deputy Director explained that the Through Care Service covered young people up to the age of 25 so they would still be supported post 21. He also pointed out that preparation for transition and budgeting was undertaken within the residential homes. The change from residential accommodation to independence could be a big shock for a young person. Work was being done towards making financial processes more accessible to young people from the age of 14, not waiting till they were about to leave care, and to provide better information.

A CICC representative spoke of his experience in terms of budgeting and suggested that there was a need to ensure that the required information was clearly retained by a young person, perhaps by giving them practical experience of paying bills for example. The CICC felt very strongly that an exemption should be given to all care leavers up to the age of 21. Once a young person had left care there was no opportunity for them to return in the event of having problems and they were well aware that their resources would be limited.

Members also supported the suggestion that Staying Put providers should be supported in the continuation of their 25% discount (where applicable) if a young person remained placed with them after the age of 18.

**Resolved –**

**That it be recommended to the Executive:**

- (i) That the proposal that all care leavers up to the age of 21 be exempt from paying Council Tax be incorporated in the budget planning process for 2018/19 with a view to implementing any exemption from 1 April 2018.**
- (ii) That consideration be given to allowing eligible 'Staying Put' providers to retain their 25% single occupier Council Tax reduction.**

***ACTION: Deputy Director (Children's Social Care)  
City Solicitor***

#### **14. COMPLAINTS - ANNUAL REPORT**

A report was presented by the Deputy Director – Children’s Social Care (**Document “H”**) which summarised the issues raised by looked after children and young people who had used the statutory complaints procedures to seek redress for their concerns. The report related to the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017.

The following points were highlighted:

- Six complaints had been received.
- There had been an increase in the level of complaints from black and ethnic minority young people; the average age of a complainant had increased and the complaints, in the main, related to quality of service issues with two about safeguarding issues and no complaints about staff this year.
- The six complaints had related to ten different issues
- Most had been submitted via email.
- 40% had been upheld or partially upheld, 2 had been inconclusive.
- All complaints had been acknowledged within the two day period.
- 67% had received a response within the required timescales which was the same level as last year; this was an element that the Service was keen to improve upon.
- 15 compliments had been received, which was a greater number than last year.

In response to questions and comments, the Deputy Director explained that:

- The suggestion of training being provided to senior officers to enable them to assist managers in dealing with complaints and the possibility of getting more subjective feedback from young people about how complaints were dealt with could be considered and the conclusions reported back to the CICC.
- An electronic response/reminder system was used to flag complaint deadlines and to send reminders.
- The feedback process had been simplified but its implementation had been delayed and there was therefore no information on this in the report.
- Complaint response letters were quality checked and would include an explanation of the result and what would happen next.
- In terms of feedback from the complainant, it had been found that this generally reflected whether or not the complaint had been upheld
- Feedback as a result of complaints was disseminated to the staff teams of the residential homes

A Member commented that it was important that any learning points arising from complaints were taken seriously and that explanations were given if a complaint was not upheld.

**Resolved –**

**That the contents of Document “H” be noted.**

***NO ACTION***

**15. WORKPLAN 2017/18**

The Panel's Work Plan for 2017/18 was submitted (**Document "I"**) for Member's consideration.

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

Chair

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

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