

# Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on Monday 10 September 2018 at City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 4.35 pm  
Concluded 6.50 pm

## Present – Councillors

LABOUR	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT
Engel Mohammed Thirkill	Humphreys

## NON VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBERS

Chair of Children in Care Council (CICC)  
Yasmin Umarji

Bradford Education

Apologies: Councillors D Smith and Tait, Inspector K Taylor and S Thompson

## Councillor Thirkill in the Chair

### 7. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

No disclosures of interest in matters under consideration were received.

**NO ACTION**

### 8. MINUTES

**Resolved –**

**That the minutes of the meeting held on 25 April 2018 be signed as a correct record.**

**ACTION:** *City Solicitor*

### 9. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

**NO ACTION**

## 10. INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICERS' ANNUAL REPORT

A report was presented by the Deputy Director (Children's Social Care) (**Document "D"**) in relation to the work of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Service and its Annual Report, the production of which was a requirement of the IRO Regulations.

The IRO Manager went through the comprehensive Annual Report in detail and responded to questions from Members as follows:

- The 'Viewpoint' consultation system was still being used but was only one of the methods used to capture the voice of the child. Efforts were being made to re-energise this resource and to make it a more bespoke tool.
- In terms of sharing good practice with education/schools colleagues, it was not considered that there would be a problem with schools accessing sufficiency reports and he would liaise with the Virtual School on this issue.
- The 86.7% response from Looked After Children (LAC) in respect of whether they felt safe and happy where they lived did not correlate to the remaining 13.3% being unhappy. Similarly, in relation to the 60% of those aged 16+ who said that they knew who to contact if there was a problem with their accommodation, this did not mean that 40% did not know. A young person may have chosen not to answer those particular questions. The sufficiency report used the majority answer to highlight any potential issues.
- If a young person raised an issue with their IRO about something that they were concerned or unhappy about this would be looked at and the IRO would ensure that there was a resolution to the issue. This had a very positive impact; an example was given of a case where the IRO had acted as advocate for a young person where they had not felt comfortable addressing the issue directly for themselves.
- The volume of referrals had increased and this could be associated, in part, with the effects of welfare reform and stress on families.
- In relation to the workloads of IROs (compared with the past) members of the team rated themselves as being happy in their work. The IRO Handbook suggested that case loads should be no more than 70. In some other authorities IROs also undertook other tasks but in Bradford they focused solely on the core responsibilities.
- An IRO would speak to a young person before their review and if there was a problem this would be discussed at the review meeting.
- Bradford had a history of developing good social workers. It was very important that these staff were retained, allowed to continue to develop and felt valued.
- The key priorities were getting placements right and ensuring that Care Plans were robust and sharp and that there was no delay or drift in achieving goals.

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

- Local authorities where Universal Credit had been introduced had experienced a rise in workloads. It was to be introduced in Bradford in June 2019 and the same pattern of increase was anticipated.
- One of the reasons for the work being undertaken to expand the 'viewpoint'

system was the wish to strengthen the young person's input into the process. If an issue was identified through the system then this could then be looked at with the members of the CICC.

- The review process was an integral part of the service's role to ensure that the needs of the child/young person were met as they got older and these needs changed.
- Following a review the social worker had 10 days to update the young person's care plan.
- The Regulation 44 Officer would be able to show any Member who was interested how the viewpoint tool worked.

The Strategic Director, Children's Services commented that it was good to see the level of challenge being put forward and the level of participation at 99% was positive. However he considered that a higher level of Quality Audits should be achieving a 'good' rating and questioned whether the impact on a child over a period of time was measured.

The CICC representative questioned how a young person would be aware of how their views had been represented; 943 reviews were recorded as being 'PN6: Child not attended, views sent'; what if their views had been misinterpreted? He also asked about how the 'voice of the child' was defined.

The IRO Manager said that IROs audited the review process to look at if the social worker had captured the 'child's voice' ie did the young person communicate a message about what they wanted by whatever means. This was evidenced at different points of the process. The first section of a review record included the child's views and if they did not agree with this they could ask for it to be changed. If a child did not attend two reviews consecutively this would be followed up and the IRO would undertake a visit. The record taken at the review formed the basis of the individual's Care Plan going forward; every young person (where they were of an appropriate age) should be given a copy of this and their social worker should go through it with them. In light of the concerns raised by the CICC representative he undertook to contact a sample of young people who had not attended their review to establish if their views were recorded accurately and to report to the CICC.

#### **Resolved –**

- (1) That Document "D" be welcomed and that it be noted that it is anticipated that there may be changes in the figures recorded for different categories of need in future reports.**
- (2) That the Deputy Director (Children's Social Care) be requested to include evidence on the impact of interventions in future reports to the Panel.**
- (3) That the key priorities for the Independent Reviewing Officer Service, as set out in Section 12 of Appendix 1 to Document "D", be endorsed.**
- (4) That the Independent Reviewing Officer Manager be asked to share**

best practice with colleagues in the Education Department with particular reference to work to capture the voice of the child.

- (5) That the Independent Reviewing Officer Manager and the Service Manager for the Through Care Service be requested to produce a report in respect of young people's knowledge of the content of their Care Plans and the record taken of their Looked After Children (LAC) Reviews, in the context of ensuring that the voice of the child/young person is being accurately reflected.
- (6) That it be noted that the Panel values the role of the Independent Reviewing Officer and believes that it should continue with the support of Corporate Parents.

**ACTION:** *Deputy Director (Children's Social Care)  
Independent Reviewing Officer Manager  
Service Manager - Through Care Service*

## 11. HEALTH AND DENTAL CHECKS FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

The Deputy Director (Children's Social Care) submitted a report (**Document "E"**) which updated Members in relation to outcomes in respect of the annual health check and dental check key performance indicators for Looked after Children (LAC) set by the Department of Education and detailing the Looked After Children and Care Leavers' Health Offer in Bradford.

In presenting the report the following points were also highlighted:

- Data was received on a monthly basis.
- The Looked After Nursing Team had been set up 14 years ago and since that time the numbers had increased from approximately 600 to over 1000.
- All LAC had a named nurse who worked closely with the Through Care Service (TCS).
- An app was being developed in relation to the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) which should allow a more robust picture to be achieved in relation to any individual's wellbeing at any point in time.
- The Therapeutic Social Care Team was a small team but its members were working hard to try and maximise its impact.
- The two Care Leavers Nurses were creative in their engagement with young people, this included running various support groups on relevant issues.
- There were challenges arising from the increase in numbers and the level of resources but a stronger partnership approach was being pursued.

The Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) representative said that she considered that the key issues was that there was an exceptional, dedicated team of nurses for looked after children. In many areas this work was undertaken by standard services whereas in Bradford there were specialists and the aim was for a young person to have one named nurse throughout their time in care.

In response to a question about dealing with the increase in numbers, she

explained that a service review was being undertaken by the CCG (which was expected to be concluded by January 2019) and the team was also looking at creative ways of working to maximise the available resources and to avoid duplication across different services. The situation was complex due to the number of services involved.

The Deputy Director said that those young people who were waiting for their initial assessment were tracked on a weekly basis to ensure that if any problems did arise they could be prioritised. A smarter and faster service was now being provided.

The Strategic Director, Children's Services said that it was recognised that there was massive demand in the system; the Council had a similar issue with social worker capacity, and work was being done to try and ensure smarter working. He undertook to speak to the Chief Officer for the CCGs, about resourcing, as a priority but stressed that there was no criticism of the CCG.

The Deputy Director said that the issue was already being discussed with the CCG. The key issue for the TCS was the completion of the initial assessment within the 28 day period in order to facilitate future planning. The Director of Strategic Partnerships had agreed to look into this and to see what could be done in respect of additional staffing in the interim period until the review was concluded.

The CCG representative agreed that the present situation needed to be addressed but said that it was important to avoid a 'quick fix' at the expense of quality of provision. The service had been operating with greatly reduced resources but had managed to maintain performance of 89% (annual health assessments), there had also been issues in respect of sickness absences and doctors' resources.

Members commented as follows:

- It was important, in addressing the backlog for CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services), that this was not dealt with by pulling resources away from their other work where there were also long waiting times as this would further increase stress on families.
- By the time an individual had been on a waiting list for mental health assistance for 3 years they would need more support than if they had been seen in a timely manner.
- The current working arrangements gave the young people consistency.

The CCG representative said that the agency would be mindful of the issue of CAMHS support as part of the review; there were concerns generally in respect of mental health support and this was a nationwide issue.

The Strategic Director noted that there were many strengths in the existing model and the question was how to alleviate the current issues.

The CCG representative agreed stating that the partnership working and the dedicated LAC Nurses Team operated very effectively.

**Resolved –**

**That the Chair contact the Director of Strategic Partnerships for Bradford and Airedale Clinical Commissioning Groups, on behalf of the Panel, on the basis that the strength of the existing model is recognised but that additional resources are needed for the Looked After Nursing Team as a priority pending the results of the on-going review of the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Health and Pathway.**

***ACTION: Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel  
Deputy Director (Children's Social Care)  
Strategic Director, Children's Services.***

## **12. CITIZENSHIP AND ACCESS TO PASSPORTS FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN**

A report was presented by the Deputy Director (Children's Social Care) (**Document “F”**) which provided an overview of the work that was undertaken by social workers to ensure that children in the Authority's care who were not UK citizens had the appropriate identity documentation to allow them to travel abroad on school trips and holidays, and to ensure that their immigration status was appropriately addressed.

The Deputy Director explained that this was a very complex area which was a relatively new issue for social workers. Knowledge and skills were being established and it had been identified as a training need. Relevant training was to be provided by Migration Yorkshire in the near future.

Some young people were missing out on participation in school trips or holidays abroad with their carers due to these issues. This was a national issue and had been raised with the Home Office and Migration Yorkshire without any resolution.

The Chair said that she was personally aware of three children whom this affected. She had written to the Home Secretary about the issue but had not, to date, received a response.

A Member suggested that:

- A child's primary school may have a copy of their birth certificate, if parents were unwilling or unable to provide it, as they were often necessary to get a place at a school or nursery.
- The Chief Executive had been asked by full Council to report to the Executive in respect of passports and documentation and it was considered that these issues should be included within that process.

In response to questions from Members it was stated that:

- Brexit was a significant issue but, at this stage, it was not known what the impact would be; it was probable that the situation would be even more complex post Brexit.
- Care leavers were provided with documentation to assist them in getting a job.

- Most young people had at least some paperwork.
- The CICC was sending representatives to a national meeting which would have a focus on immigration and it was hoped that this may be the source of some useful information.

It was requested that further information in relation to the impact of Brexit be included in the next report.

**Resolved –**

- (1) That the Deputy Director (Children's Social Care) be requested to raise this issue with the Local Government Association.
- (2) That the Deputy Director (Children's Social Care) be asked to submit a further report to the Panel in 12 months time and that this include information on the numbers/percentage of Looked After Children affected by these issues.

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

**13. WORK PLAN 2018/19**

The Panel's Work Plan for 2018/19 was submitted for Member's consideration (Document "G").

**Resolved –**

**That the following items be added to the Work Plan:**

- (i) Report in respect of young people's knowledge of the content of their Care Plan.
- (ii) Report on Differential Allowances
- (iii) Report on recommendations arising from the on-going Ofsted Inspection.

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

Chair

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