

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on Monday 5 November 2018 at City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 4.30 pm
Concluded 6.35 pm

Present – Councillors

CONSERVATIVE	LABOUR	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT
D Smith	Engel Tait Thirkill	N Pollard

NON VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBERS

Yasmin Umarji
Sue Thompson

Bradford Education
Bradford District Clinical Commissioning Group

Apologies: Councillor Julie Humphreys and Inspector Kevin Taylor

Councillor Thirkill in the Chair

14. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

No disclosures of interest in matters under consideration were received.

NO ACTION

15. MINUTES

Resolved –

That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2018 be signed as a correct record.

ACTION: *City Solicitor*

16. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

NO ACTION

17. THROUGH CARE SERVICE

Previous reference: Minutes 7, 12 and 33 (2017/18)

The Deputy Director (Children's Social Care) presented a report from the Through Care Service (TCS), further to the report considered by the Panel at its meeting in March 2018 (**Document “H”**).

The report included information on particular issues, as requested by Members, as follows:

- Bradford's Local Offer for Care Leavers.
- An update on progress in relation to apprenticeships.
- An update in relation to the national challenge from Ofsted regarding 16+ supported accommodation being a regulated care setting.
- The impact on the Service's resources as a result of the requirement, under the provisions of the Children and Social Work Act 2017, that a service is provided to care leavers up to the age of 25.

The Local Offer to Care Leavers 2018 was attached as Appendix 1 to Document “H” and Members' comments were invited. It was noted that the format lent itself better to being read on screen than on paper. The principle behind this document was to empower young people to know their rights and entitlements and to hold the local authority to account. It was vital that care leavers felt like they were citizens of Bradford first and foremost.

Members' questions were answered as follows:

- A young person had the right to refuse a service from the local authority post 18 and some did so. It was possible for Housing Options to make a decision that someone was 'deliberately homeless' or that their duty had been discharged. Where it was possible to do so, the TCS would identify a young person to Housing Options as a care leaver but if the individual did not want to identify as such this could present a problem.
 - The Service would never want to turn a young person away and this was one of the reasons why the 'crash pad' facility was so important.
 - If a young person had said that they didn't want a service post 18 but then changed their mind they could do so up to the age of 25.
 - The taster flat enabled young people to be independent whilst helping to keep them in care for as long as possible. There were also partnerships in place that could facilitate independent living as part of a group.
 - A high percentage of post 18s did return to the service for support.
 - 'Suitable' accommodation was specifically defined by the Department for Education (DfE). Being in custody, bed and breakfast accommodation or 'sofa surfing' was not classed as suitable. The TCS undertook a robust assessment of accommodation to ensure that it was of a suitable quality; this was very important as it was believed that poor accommodation contributed to poor behaviour.
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- The potential for a co-op model had been discussed with Housing Options and the TCS had a relationship with Intensive Housing Management who provided

a brokerage service to match up landlords and social housing with young people and to aid integration. There could be a delay in finding the right accommodation dependent on the area in which it was required. The TCS worked with young people to secure the right accommodation for them.

- There were also a supported lodgings scheme 'stepping stones' and the 'staying close' scheme where a young person would live in their own property located close to a carer's property and maintaining strong links and support. There were 5 properties with groups of young people living independently but with a 'leader' taking responsibility for bills etc; this was working very well.
- Young people were visited every 6 weeks in the accommodation where they were living.
- If possible and if it was appropriate to do so young people who had been placed outside the district were brought back unless they preferred not to. There was a national agreement in place that the local authority where a young person was living would care for that individual with the parent local authority paying for the resource. The accommodation would still be monitored/assessed in such cases.
- A 'takeover day' was being held on 23 November; these gave young people an opportunity to take on senior roles within the Council and its partners for a day.
- The TCS was working towards a guarantee of an interview for Council apprenticeships for looked after children.
- There was a worker with responsibility for looking at employability and quite a good take up from young people of this support.

Members made the following comments:

- Page 3 of the Local Offer should include electoral registration as a basic need.
- A presentation by the ICE (Industrial Centres of Excellence) Programme, to the Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, in respect of the pathways to certain careers had been very useful and should be accessed for looked after children.
- It may be useful to have a section in the Local Offer in respect of responsibilities.
- It was very important that a positive approach was taken in relation to the interview process for looked after children and that if they were not successful that they still received meaningful feedback to ensure that the process was a constructive one. Coaching should also be provided to assist them in making the best of the opportunity.

Resolved –

- (1) That the Chair write to the Chief Executive, on behalf of the Panel, to support the principle of a guaranteed interview for Looked After Children in respect of Council Apprenticeships and the provision of work experience opportunities within the Council for its Looked After Children.**
- (2) That the Deputy Director (Children's Social Care) be requested to explore the possibilities in respect of coaching/support for Looked**

After Children associated with the interviewing process and the inclusion of this commitment within the Local Offer to Care Leavers.

- (3) That the Deputy Director (Children's Social Care) be requested to approach the Industrial Centres of Excellence (ICE) to facilitate their engagement with Looked After Children of the appropriate age.**

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

18. COMPLAINTS - ANNUAL REPORT

A report was presented by the Deputy Director (Children's Social Care) (**Document "I"**) 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 2017 to 31 March 2018.

The Complaints Manager made a correction to paragraph 3.6 of the report in that it should refer to the LAC (Looked After Children) Team not the Leaving Care Service. She also explained that she considered the complaints process to be robust and that many issues were resolved at an early stage such as through the 'moans and groans' book in residential homes.

She responded to queries from Members with the following information:

- The input of the Complaints Unit ended once the process had reached a conclusion and she did not therefore have any information in respect of the action taken in any case where fault may have been found with a member of staff. However, she could ask for information about whether complaints had led to disciplinary action being triggered for next year's report. She explained that, due to the pressure on managers, it could be difficult to get feedback but she would continue to endeavour to do so.
- Comparisons with other local authorities were undertaken and the Complaints Managers from across the Yorkshire and Humber region met on a quarterly basis. In comparison with another local authority, with a comparable number of LAC files, the numbers of complaints in Bradford was lower.
- It was accepted that it was important to ensure that, as far as possible, young people were fully aware of the complaints process and had faith that it would address their concerns. The process had been made more straightforward and a lot of issues were resolved at pre-complaints stage and did not progress to the formal process.

The Deputy Director assured Members that any issues identified through the complaints process were followed up with the staff concerned. He explained that:

- Lessons were learned from past experience and complaints. As an example; the Through Care Service had been established, in part, to respond to issues raised in the past in relation to the need for continuity and consistency in respect of staff/case workers.
- One of the cases raised had already had a direct impact on practice.
- The report due to be submitted to the Panel in early 2019 (in relation to

Regulation 44 visits) would include information in relation to low level complaints.

- It might be useful for the Panel to receive a report on the work of the Advocacy Service.
- In every case, a complainant was offered an opportunity to meet with the relevant Service Manager.

Members commented that it was important that, if fault was identified, action was taken to ensure that the same thing did not happen again. In addition learning points should be taken from any good practice identified.

The additional detail provided within the confidential appendix to the report and tabled at the meeting was welcomed in terms of Members' understanding of the issues raised and the complaints process.

Resolved –

- (1) **That Document “I” be noted.**
- (2) **That the Deputy Director (Children's Social Care) be requested to include additional information in the next Annual Report on Complaints in respect of:**
 - **Comparison with the statistics for other, similar, Local Authorities.**
 - **Assurances in respect of the action taken/learning points as a result of the complaints process.**

ACTION: Deputy Director (Children's Social Care)

19. OUTCOMES FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

A report was submitted by the Deputy Director (Children's Social Care) (**Document “J”**) which provided the Panel with comprehensive information regarding the outcomes for Looked After Children (LAC) in the Bradford district.

The report comprised a summary of the information known about LAC in Bradford, as at 31 March 2018, and drew on the same data used to provide statistical returns to the Department for Education (DfE) (all figures being provisional with the DfE publishing the final figures in March 2019). It drew comparisons with performance levels at 31 March 2017 and to the first National Statistical Release for 2016-17.

He responded to questions from Members with the following information:

- One Adoption West Yorkshire had undertaken targeted activity to find families able to take children who may have a disability, were part of a sibling group or with more complex needs . A campaign was also being undertaken to find and fast track suitable foster carers for these children, such as those with prior experience or relevant child care qualifications.
- Work was being undertaken to widen the contributions made to a child's 'score' in terms of their strengths and difficulties to ensure that richer data was

available. That score was used as part of their referral pathway into CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) or to the Therapeutic Social Work Team.

Resolved –

- (1) That Document “J” be noted.
- (2) That the next report on Outcomes for Looked After Children be submitted to the April meeting of the Panel to align it with the report on Educational Outcomes.

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

20. WORK PLAN 2018/19

Resolved –

That the following items be added to the Panel's Work Plan:

- Outcomes for Looked After Children – April 2019
- Report on the Advocacy Service – in the 2019/20 Municipal Year.

ACTION: *City Solicitor*
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.

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