

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on Monday, 21 January 2019 in Committee Room 3 - City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 4.30 pm
Concluded 6.25 pm

Present – Councillors

LABOUR	CONSERVATIVE	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT
Engel Tait Thirkill	M Pollard	N Pollard

NON VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBERS:

Nick Nolan - Chair of Children in Care Council

Yasmin Umarji - Bradford Education

Sue Thompson - Bradford District Clinical
Commissioning Group

Councillor Thirkill in the Chair

21. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

No disclosures of interest in matters under consideration were received.

22. MINUTES

Resolved –

That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 September and 5 November 2018 be signed as a correct record.

23. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

24. PROGRESS REPORT ON B POSITIVE PATHWAYS

In January 2017 Bradford was awarded £3.2 million over 2 years from the DfE Innovation Fund. There were 3 elements to the award:

- 1) Reducing the need for children to come into care through stronger edge of care work.
- 2) Improving our ability to provide high levels of care within our residential homes through embedding a therapeutic “PACE” approach.
- 3) Setting up two “mockingbird” hubs to improve support to foster carers working with children with more complex needs.

After consultation with the Children in Care Council, the programme was named B Positive Pathways (BPP)

The Assistant Director (Children’s Social Care) submitted a report (**Document “L”**) which set out elements of the programme and progress to date. The following aspects of the programme were highlighted:

- That as of 15 November 2018, the outreach staff held an active caseload of 88 “edge of care” adolescents and had already closed 102 cases, of which 91.7% of those young people did not enter the care system.
- That the Mockingbird Programme was launched on 10 February 2018 and currently we had 26 young people in the Mockingbird Model, and since February 2018 there had been no breakdown of stability within this cohort.
- That the Department for Education had agreed to profile funds into the 3rd year in order to continue with the programme.
- That we were now in a position to analyse the emerging cost savings for Police partnership. In addition the BPP had made a direct saving to the Police in its reduction of calls for service.
- That at this current time we did not have enough data from our health partnership to be able to accurately analyse cost benefit analysis, however early indications show that the health partnership is having a positive impact.
- That an evaluation framework of BPP had been agreed and the evaluators will concentrate on the impact of the hub homes, the outreach team and the Mockingbird constellations.

During the discussion Members asked a number of questions, the questions together with the responses are detailed below:

In response to a question regarding the timeframe for re profiling the funds, it was explained that the contract end date was March 2019 and that the re profiling was specific to the health element and this will extend this element to March 2020. There was also a discussion to be had with the Police of the intention of utilising PCSO’s.

In relation to a question on the recruitment of the new educational specialist, it was confirmed that this specialist would be part of the virtual school team.

In relation to a question on whether the Ofsted inspectors had made any criticism of the effort to keep the number of children going into care down. In response it was explained that no criticism had been expressed by Ofsted, in addition all care planning was done in conjunction with Social Workers and any issues were flagged up.

In response to a question on whether the Service was confident that the thresholds for closing cases was robust enough, it was explained that the team was also backed by an outreach team, a psychologist and others and that they were fully involved in the decision making, and if a young person did not need to enter the care system, appropriate support would be offered within the home setting.

A Member raised the question whether the number of children in care was increasing from a cohort not previously identified as being at the “edge of care”. In response it was stated that thresholds in Bradford were increasing and that the Ofsted inspection outcome had been a further factor.

In response to a question on how staff skills were being developed and how the training of staff was being monitored, it was explained that Psychologist at the hub picked up any deficiencies and additional training provided if necessary.

In response to a question of what happens when the Mockingbird Programme ends, it was explained that as Authority we were trying to adopt is as a programme and at the same time argue our case for future funding, in particular as the Mockingbird Programme would be a fully evaluated programme.

The Interim Strategic Director stated that it would useful for this Panel to have information around the number of children going into external care and the unit costs, and also to gauge the views of the young people involved.

Resolved –

- (1) That the report be noted and the progress made on the B Positive Pathways.**
- (2) That a further update report be submitted at a later date to be determined, which includes comparative data regarding the cost of utilising external care.**
- (3) That the views of our Children who are Looked After be gauged to ascertain the difference it is making.**

ACTION: Assistant Director Children's Services

25. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE VIRTUAL SCHOOL

This statutory annual report of the Virtual School Head and Virtual School for the City of Bradford Metropolitan Borough Council highlighted the work of the Virtual School; the Local Authority and partner agencies to improve outcomes for children in care from the early years up to targeted care leavers aged 25. The report of the Deputy Director Children's Social Care (**Document "M"**) covered progress and attainment at all key stages. The report also outlined the activity of the Virtual School Head Teacher, the Virtual School and the 2018 educational outcomes of children in care which were available currently. It reflected on achievements and progress against the development plan and also identified areas of development to achieve the best outcomes for children in our care.

Data contained in the report, was for children who were in the care of the City of Bradford Metropolitan District council) for a year or more as at 31 March 2018.

The Primary Achievement Officer gave a brief overview of the Virtual School and the notable achievement's, which were detailed in report.

During the discussion Members made the following observations on the Virtual School:

In response to a question regarding the success of the reading programme, it was stressed that the Dolly Parton reading programme was still running as well as the reading champions programme.

In response to a question regarding the high percentage of Looked After Children with Special Educational Needs, Officers acknowledged that the percentages were high and this was even more remarkable given the progress these children made. The Member stressed that given the extra challenges faced by Looked After Children educational outcomes had to be looked at in context.

In response to a question regarding how schools dealt with issues faced by Looked After Children, such as on the issue of exclusions, it was stated that there was a dedicated link officer to the school, who would be the first point of contact in case an issue cropped up, and appropriate one to one support would be provided to support the child in school.

In response to a question regarding schools where Looked After Children were placed, it was explained that generally they would be placed in a good or outstanding rated school, however they were sometimes placed outside of these schools, where the Authority was confident good support would be offered and we had a good relationship with that particular school in terms of supporting a Looked After Child.

In response to a question regarding the increase in the proportioned retained by the Virtual School and the extra funding, the Primary Achievement Officer stated that Bradford's Virtual School was the fourth largest in the country and that during the recent Ofsted inspection the Inspector challenged us around the Virtual School and its impacts on the lives of Looked After Children, so the additional money and staff would enable us to improve our provision further.

In relation to a question on a change in Social Worker for a Looked After Child

and its impact, it was explained that a change in Social Worker was not a critical issue in terms of the Virtual School, however maintaining an education provision /placement was a vital component.

A Member stressed the need for a representative to always attend a parents consultation evening on behalf of or with the Looked After Child, and that schools had to ensure that a more empathetic mechanism was in place during the consultation evening.

Resolved –

- (1) That the report be noted and that officers be thanked for submitting an informative report.**
- (2) That a progress report be submitted towards the end of the calendar year which contains up to date data, to include any progress made in the development areas included in this report.**

ACTION: Assistant Director Children's Social Care

26. INDEPENDENT MONITORING AND QUALITY ASSURANCE OF CHILDREN'S HOMES, REGULATION 44.

The Assistant Director (Children's Social Care) submitted a report (**Document "N"**) which aimed to inform Members of the Independent Monitoring of Children's Homes (Regulation 44 independent person, visits and reports) and recognise the role of elected members in visits to Residential Children's Homes.

The Assistant Director stated that there had been a decline in the number of visits made by Members and given the statutory responsibility we had, it was important that we addressed this issue as member involvement was a key component in ensuring there was oversight and scrutiny.

During the discussion a number of suggestions were made around how Member involvement could be improved and it was therefore:

Resolved –

- (1) That the Chair meets with officers to discuss a way forward to improve the number of Members visiting residential children's homes.**
- (2) That Members of this Committee, including Co-opted Members and alternates make a commitment to visiting residential children's homes.**
- (3) That consideration be given to approaching Councillors who have a residential children's home within their ward, with a view to encouraging awareness and accompanied visits with a Reg 44 Officer.**

ACTION: Assistant Director Children's Social Care

**27. CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER OUTCOMES REPORT AND ADDENDUM:
UPDATE ON MISSING FROM CARE**

The Assistant Director (Children's Social Care) submitted a report (**Document "O"**) which highlighted the work being undertaken in Bradford to prevent children being missing from care the actions taken to protect young people when they do go missing and the provision that is in place to meet their needs. The report covered the period April 2017 to October 2018.

The Assistant Director stated that this report had been resubmitted from a previous meeting, as a result of some minor discrepancies in the previous report, and that it now contained the correct data. Members welcomed the report and it was therefore:

Resolved –

That the work being undertaken to safeguard looked after children who go missing in Bradford be endorsed.

ACTION: No Action

28. WORK PLAN 2018/19

The Panel's Work Plan for 2018/19 was submitted (**Document "P"**) for Member's consideration and following a brief discussion, the following amendments were made to the work plan.

Resolved –

- (1) That the proposed report on Children Missing from Care be omitted from the 11 March meeting of the Panel.**
- (2) That consideration be given to bringing the report on Citizenship and Access to Passports for Looked After Children forward to the 15 April meeting of the Panel.**

ACTION: Assistant 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.