

## **Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on Monday, 29 June 2020, remotely**

Commenced	4.45 pm
Concluded	6.35 pm

### **Present – Councillors**

LABOUR	CONSERVATIVE	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT AND INDEPENDENT GROUP
Farley Tait Thirkill	Smith	Knox

### **Councillor Thirkill in the Chair**

#### **38. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST**

No disclosures of interest in matters under consideration were received.

#### **39. MINUTES**

**Resolved –**

**That the minutes of the meetings held on 10 January and 9 March 2020 be signed as correct records.**

#### **40. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS**

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

#### **41. APPOINTMENT OF NON-VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBERS**

**Resolved –**

**That it be recommended to the Regulatory and Appeals Committee that the appointment of Non-Voting Co-opted Members to the Corporate Parenting Panel for the 2020/21 municipal year be confirmed as set out below:**

- **Sue Lowndes to replace Yasmin Umarji**
- **Inspector Steven Greenbank to replace Inspector Kevin Taylor**
- **Jude MacDonald to replace Sue Thompson**
- **Chair of the Children in Care Council**

**Action: Governance Officer (YP)**

**42. REPORT OF THE VIRTUAL SCHOOL ON EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN IN CARE WHO ARE NOT IN EDUCATION, PRE AND POST 16, INCLUDING EDUCATION DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS**

The report of the Strategic, Children's Services (**Document "A"**) contained information on children not in mainstream education (including Special Schools), pre and post 16 up, to March 20th 2020. The report also detailed a summary on education for children in care during the COVID-19 crisis.

The Chair invited the Virtual Head to introduce the report to the Panel.

Following his synopsis, a question and answer session ensued –

- In reference to section 2.13, the figures from September 2019 to March 2020 had doubled. What was the cause of the increase?
  - This was the result of a particular mix of children due to a variation, particularly in terms of children where it was often most difficult to get them into a suitable education provision. On most occasions the increase of numbers was due to children from out of District placements, it took a period of time to find a suitable education provision. The increase was also due to the individual makeup of a cohort, but the out of District was always be a higher number. A factor being that the authority had less of an influence directly over other admissions authorities.
- Was a elected Councillor able to assist in any way to help try to speed up admission delays that the service have encountered?
  - It was paramount that Councillors ensured that the application for a school got to the school as soon as possible. It was equally important for the Virtual School Head to be made aware of a child's placement move in order to assist in the child's favour towards commencing the process of a new school placement. In this way the service could advise on schools available in order to assist the Social Worker in submitting the application. The protocol on admissions process for Children in Care was also being discussed with the Admissions Manager at present;
- In relation to Section 2.4 of the report, regarding the data of care leavers, how were Bradford's statistical neighbours dealing with this ? and, in terms of these figures, how did Bradford compare to its statistical neighbours?
  - The information presented in the report was slightly deceptive in its layout and in terms of education, employment and training, statistical neighbours were actually doing worse than Bradford due to a further 10% more children on their registers. Bradford was ahead of its statistical neighbours and therefore on an average par in comparison to England as a whole as opposed to last year when Bradford was behind the national average.

**Resolved –**

1. That the information contained in Document “A” be noted.
2. That School Admissions give the necessary support to the office of Virtual School to ensure that applications for new admissions to schools are actioned as soon as possible.
3. That a further report be presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel explaining the usage of the additional pupil premium plus and how the premium is supporting children not in mainstream education and children in care.

**Action:** *Virtual School Head  
Strategic Manager Admissions & Exclusions*

**43. INDEPENDENT MONITORING OF RESIDENTIAL & RESPITE CHILDREN'S HOMES DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS**

The report of the Strategic Director, Children’s Services (**Document “C”**) detailed the support being provided for Care Leavers living independently during the COVID-19 crisis including how the service had kept in touch with care leavers, partnerships formed with other agencies and how this supports care leavers.

In response to seeking clarity on the overall number of staff that were shielding themselves or others during the present unfortunate Covid-19 global pandemic, it was explained that there were some individual homes in which a great percentage of staff were keeping themselves shielded, as they were working with individuals. In addition, there were also workers who had failed in their health tests therefore making them more vulnerable. The process had been managed very sensitively and managers had been very supportive of their staff. To date, the staffing levels were fairly stable in order to ensure that shielding worked effectively.

The Chair concluded the discussion by thanking everybody involved in the authority’s children’s homes. She further stated that there had been some fantastic on going work to protect the most vulnerable children in the district, equally praising Quality Standards Manager Regulations 44 for the work to date.

**Resolved –**

**That Regulation 44 Independent Monitoring process continues to be completed via virtual visits, on a monthly basis offering a “business as usual approach”, rather than applying the government guidelines. This will maintain continuity of monitoring and contribute to the robust safeguarding arrangements which are in place.**

**Lead:** *Regulation 44 Quality Assurance Manager*

**44. REPORT ON SUPPORT FOR CARE LEAVERS LIVING INDEPENDENTLY DURING THE COVID CRISIS, INCLUDING AND UPDATE ON DIGITAL INCLUSION IN THIS GROUP**

The report of the Strategic Director, Children's Services (**Document "C"**) detailed the support being provided for Care Leavers living independently during the COVID crisis including how the service had kept in touch with care leavers, partnerships formed with other agencies and how this supports care leavers.

The Head of Service 16+ was invited by the Chair to make representations to the Panel.

A question arose in relation to assessments of housing, in particular, were conditions such as Wi-Fi accessibility and connection part of the assessment process. In response, it was explained that this factor was one of the requirements during the assessment of housing.

During the discussion, the following comments were made. A Member of the Panel expressed his appreciation to the various voluntary groups and people within the service who had supported the care leavers through the Easter period, in particular, ensured that the young care leavers received the best transitional service. The Council had been working arduously to transition young people to become independent and the work achieved had shown that a fantastic service had been provided to them.

**Resolved –**

- 1) That the information contained in Document "C" be noted and in addition, the innovative work undertaken to date, the inclusion of in house services and partner agencies with the progression of maintaining links with partner services and young people be recognised.**
- 2) That an update report be presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel in 6 months time that details how the Council and partner agencies have continued delivering services.**
- 3) That the digital offer for young people be continuously reassessed and continued.**
- 4) That the Head of Service 16+ provide the Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel on the contact details of partner agencies so that she may write to the providers and praise them for their invaluable services and thank them for their continuation of providing vital services to care leaver.**

**Action: Head of Service 16+**

**45. PROGRESS REPORT - CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT BOARD**

The report of the Deputy Director, Children's Social Care (**Document "D"**) detailed progress in relation to the key issues raised in the Ofsted report and the Improvement Plan.

Following an invitation by the Chair, the Deputy Director highlighted the key points contained in his report to the Panel.

A question and answer session ensued -

- Clarification was sought on the abbreviation NFA?
  - The National Fostering Agency. The NFA was a fostering agency that had been operating over fifteen years to provide safe and caring homes for children and young people who were unable to live at home. The NFA operated in England, Wales and Scotland. The authority's foster carers were supported by NFA's experienced and qualified staff; who were categorised as supervising social workers. Supervising social workers support foster carers and also work closely with social workers;
- Had any key learning points been established from the areas of practice support systems developed by the Improvement Board?
  - The system went live on Tuesday 23 June and therefore a report would be put together on 30 June. Following receipt of the report, the service would be able to see the breakdown of those no further actions, which will effectively tell us why a case had not progressed to an assessment with an explanation to the reasons, such as a no consent status or the fact that it could be because the referral was routed to another part of the system or agency to deal with, or it simply could be because the referral did not meet the threshold for children's social care intervention. Hence, a number of selections that social workers can now use to explain the rationale as to why a case was marked as no further action, as opposed to no further action without reason. Therefore through a formal resolution process set in place, where an independent review in relation to a child protection case conference coordinator, have concerns that a particular case, or care plan is not being progressed in a timely manner or in essence, a case can formally be escalated towards a speedy resolution, of course, not ignoring certain stages of the process before reaching resolution.
  - In general terms the authority's improvement work had continued in pace and the service had not stalled on the improvement work, but continued to work towards the Improvement Plan, which had been refreshed. The Improvement Plan was to be presented to the next Improvement Board with an update in terms of what work had been completed thus far including the work proposed to for completion in the next 12 to 18 months;
- In relation to Section 4.1.2 of the report, explanation was sought on the voice of the child?
  - The authority was improving in terms of a child being heard as per a indicator highlighted by Ofsted that outlined the fact of children's voices not being heard;
- Could further information on the area of improvement be provided in the future?

- A report in this area could be provided following conversations on how the service could capture some feedback through an audit, in respect of the voice of the child. This was a priority area of concern for action; and,
- What was the present status on vacancies and recruitment?
  - The service was confident that all management posts would be filled by the end of July 2020 with the exception of those covering maternity leave or staff illness. The recruitment of Level 3 experienced Social Workers continued to be a challenge. For the long term, there were discussions relating to the investment in the recruitment of additional ASYE (4 aligned to each Practice Supervisor), however, it was recognised that alternative interventions may be required as this was a national concern.

**Resolved –**

**That a further report on the Area's for practice improvement over the coming months (*bullet points listed in 4.1.2 contained in Document “D”*) be presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel in 6 months time.**

**Action:**     ***Deputy Director, Social Care***

**46. UPDATE ON CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES**

The report of the Head of Service, South Locality (**Document “E”**) provided an update on Children's Social Care Services arrangements during covid-19.

The Head of Service gave a further insight to the report. He stated that social distancing had been observed where possible, and equally the conducting of meetings and visits virtually, where possible. A snapshot of performance had been provided in the report that illustrated an upward trajectory in terms of performance that had continued during COVID-19 and some areas had improved quite significantly during the pandemic. Of course COVID-19 had adversely affected the frequency with which children were seen by their social workers, the speed with which assessments were undertaken also. Further information in relation to children entering and exiting the care system had continued during COVID-19. In terms of referrals, the continuation of undertaking assessments, undertaking Child Protection inquiries and bringing children into the care system was also detailed in the report.

In relation to visiting children, this was an area that had changed from the outset with virtual visits unless it was absolutely essential for a physical visit. It was important to protect carers and their families because the impact of carers becoming ill would have a detrimental effect on the children. That said; a few visits were undertaken but as and when required. A significant number of mobile phones had been provided to foster carers and families to enable them to have phone contact with the service. As a result, foster carers had maintained contact with children's parents with the addition of providing photographs of children and their good health. The service was in the process of cautiously phasing the reintroducing contact for certain groups that were most in need, but remaining extremely careful, in particularly for, very young children.

In terms of foster care services, one of the things that the fostering colleagues did right at the start was to undertake a piece of work to identify in consultation with locality social workers to identify those placements that were the most fragile and prioritise those for virtual support during the pandemic. This process had continued in terms of children's homes.

**Resolved –**

- 1) **That the report be welcomed.**
- 2) **That an update be presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel detailing how the recovery plan had been implemented, how services had progressed following Covid 19 outbreak and what new select change of services would be maintained for children's social care services arrangements.**

*Action: Head of Service, Social Work South*

**47. WORK PLAN 2020/2021**

**Resolved –**

**That the Corporate Parenting Panel Work Plan for 2020/21 be kept under review.**

*Lead: Assistant Director, Performance, Commissioning & Partnerships  
Chair of Corporate Parenting Panel*

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