

## **Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on Monday, 7 September 2020 remotely**

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Commenced 4.30 pm  
Concluded 5.40 pm

### **Present – Councillors**

<b>LABOUR</b>	<b>LIBERAL DEMOCRAT AND INDEPENDENT GROUP</b>
<b>Thirkill Farley Shafiq</b>	<b>Knox</b>

### NON VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBERS

Chair of Children in Care Council  
Jude MacDonald

Bradford District Clinical Commissioning Group

Apologies: Councillor Dale Smith and Sue Lowndes

### Councillor Thirkill in the Chair

#### **53. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST**

No disclosures of interest in matters under consideration were received.

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

No appeals had been submitted.

#### **55. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE LIVING OUTSIDE OF BRADFORD CITY RESIDENTIAL AND FOSTERING SERVICES**

The report of the Strategic Director of Children's Services (**Document "K"**) highlighted the need to address the sufficiency needs across Bradford Children's Services. The vision remained to offer Bradford children the right to remain living in their home city and that a suitable offer could be created for each child and young person.

It was reported that the number of children placed outside the district was high at 68, however this had been the right decision in each case and in the best interests of the child in breaking the cycle of harm or because their needs were so complex could not be met in Bradford. It was noted that there was capacity for 48 children in Council homes. Work was being undertaken with small providers who could open small homes in the area so that children could maintain family links. Steps were also being taken to reduce the number of children that came into care by strengthening the offer for those on the edge of care and keeping their time in care as short as possible.

It was noted that a target had been set to recruit 75 additional foster care households which would increase capacity by 100 -150 children. The proliferation of independent foster agencies had been a challenge. It was believed that in house foster carers were a significant asset and a huge resource to the authority. Training and remuneration were being looked at to strengthen relationships with foster carers. It was reported that 12 new foster care households had been appointed and it was anticipated that 18 more would be appointed in the near future. This would provide capacity for 60 – 80 children. There were 68 children in external residential placements that were subject to review to move back to Bradford in a timely way.

A discussion took place on the fostering network and the national Mockingbird Model which supported foster carers using experienced foster carers to support those with less experience. Bradford had been badged as a fostering friendly organisation, this would help with the recruitment of foster carers in the future. Information on Mockingbird would be circulated to members of the Panel.

A discussion took place regarding the fact that life experience should be taken into account rather than being used to consider someone as unsuitable to be a foster carer. It was accepted that in the past local authorities had set the bar too high and that people should not be excluded from being a foster carer because of something that had happened in their past for example someone with care experience in their early life.

#### **Resolved -**

- (1) That the contents of Document “K” be noted.**
- (2) That a further detailed report be presented to the Panel on 8 March 2021 about the Mockingbird programme and the current progress on its implementation in the Bradford District.**

ACTION: Strategic Director Children’s Services

#### **56. REPORT ON THE WI-FI ACCESS & MOBILE CONNECTIVITY FOR BRADFORD CARE LEAVERS**

Bradford currently had 647 young people identifying as Care Leavers. The report of the Strategic Director of children’s Services (**Document “L”**) explored the numbers of young people who had access to smart devices and Wi-Fi.

It was reported that access to Wi-Fi and IT for equipment for Care Leavers was a national issue. The National Leaving Care Advisory Services was lobbying Wi-Fi providers to give free Wi-Fi to care leavers.

It was noted that Since January 2020 all young people at 16 were being helped to get an email address and a smart phone or tablet. Since January only 9% of young people did not have a smart phone which was evidence that the smart phone policy was working. There was a need to look now at tablets and laptops. A business case had been submitted to provide laptops and target those young people who were NEET.

Links had been established with local business that would meet 50% of the Wi-Fi cost for young people. It was noted that as places with free Wi-Fi had closed because of Covid 19, there had been an impact on young people. The Council would provide a laptop to young people at entry level 3 or over.

Members were advised that 414 young people had access to Wi-Fi of these many were living in family settings. Ensuring that those who were not in family settings had access to Wi-Fi was an issue to be addressed. The majority of those without Wi-Fi were in unstable settings and 29% of them were NEET.

In retendering for block contracts the specification would include that all providers need to provide Wi-Fi.

Young people were getting devices at 16. There was a desire to look at that again at 18.

It was recognised that young people without access to Wi-Fi were at risk of becoming socially isolated and that there was a link between access to Wi-Fi and access to education and employment. It was acknowledged that Covid19 had highlighted the need for access to Wi-Fi and heightened the necessity to respond to this.

It was noted that some local businesses had agreed to provide 50% of Wi-Fi and broadband costs for young people living independently.

The issue of digital literacy training for social workers was raised so that they were aware of what help and support packages were available to young people. It was noted a new appointment was to be made to the Young Person's Apprentice post and that this could be taken considered at that time.

**Resolved –**

- (1) That the options listed in paragraphs 9.1, 9.2 and 9.3 be noted.**
- (2) That it be recommended to the Strategic Director Children's Services that it be working practice that social workers ensure that young people have access to training and digital services and equipment.**
- (3) That a further report on progress regarding Wi-Fi access for young**

**people be presented to the Panel in the 2021/22 municipal year.**

ACTION: Strategic Director Children's Services

**57. WORK PLAN 2020/21**

**Resolved –**

- (1) That the detailed report on the Mockingbird programme be added to 8 March 2021 meeting.**
- (2) That an update on digital and Wi-Fi access for your people be brought to the Panel in the 2021/22 Municipal year.**

ACTION: Strategic Director Children's Services

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