

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held remotely on Monday, 18 January 2021

Commenced 4.30 pm
Concluded 6.25 pm

Present – Councillors

LABOUR	CONSERVATIVE	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT AND INDEPENDENT GROUP
Thirkill Farley Tait	K Green	Knox

Observers: Councillor Sarah Ferriby, Portfolio Holder for Healthy People and Places and Councillor Ross-Shaw, Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Planning and Transport

Apologies: Sue Lowndes and Steven Greenbank

Councillor Thirkill in the Chair

65. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

No disclosures of interest in matters under consideration were received.

66. MINUTES

That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 November 2020 be signed as a correct record.

Action: City Solicitor

67. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

68. STRATEGIES TRACKING

The report of the Strategic Director for Children's Services (**Document "R"**) was presented to the Panel to introduce two new strategies. The Children in Care Leavers Strategy and the Sufficiency Strategy formed the final stage of consultation.

The draft Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy was written in consultation with practitioners and partnership leaders which set out the ambitious and clear aims for children and young people and was prioritised under the following headings:

- A strong culture of Corporate Parenting
- Helping children to stay within their families
- Ensuring that our children and young people have a voice
- Having a safe, stable and secure home
- Having the right support to be safe, healthy and to achieve
- A positive transition to adulthood

The strategy needed to be written in a way which reflected the needs of Bradford so was re-written and covered a period of 12 months rather than the original 3 year plan. The reason was due to it becoming dated in an ever changing situation and as a consequence of an on-going improvement plan.

Officers advised that various meetings were due to take place to discuss actions and would include young people to get their views on an individual basis.

As a sub strategy, the Sufficiency Strategy was written to focus on issues in relation to the sufficiency of placements for children in care. This would be published as it was a legal requirement to do so. The strategy was supported by a strong action plan which was already in place and being monitored. This again was a one year strategy, the same as the over-arching Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy.

The Member questions and responses given are detailed below:

- A Member asked what still needed to be done and the 'how' seemed to be missing. In response, it was advised that the responsibility for actions still needed to be put in place.
- There should be more reference to children in care and their contribution with an emphasis on the people who are the subject of the strategy (i.e. young people). Officers stated that the strategy had been built on what had been said by children in care as there was a stigma to being in care. The aim was to dispel the myths and celebrate what had been achieved.
- The question of how would it be demonstrated that the views of young people had been acknowledged and made accessible and readable to them was raised. It was stated that this was already anticipated and work would be carried out with children in care and care leavers groups to achieve a 'you said, we did' environment. Conversations between children in care and OFSTED indicated that young people felt they were listened to but no action came about as a result of what they were saying

- Members wanted to know if any Care Leavers Ambassadors had been appointed and noted that training for all elected members as Corporate Parents needed to be of a high standard and not just a tick box. Officers were pleased to be advised that Ambassadors were in place, with one now recruited as an apprentice with the Council.

Resolved –

That Members of the panel note and approve the contents of the strategies and have the opportunity to offer feedback and comments that can further strengthen these important documents directly to the Assistant Director, Children’s Services.

Action: Strategic Director, Children’s Services

69. DEPARTMENT OF PLACE

The report of the Interim Strategic Director, Place (**Document “S”**) was presented to the Panel to provide information on the work undertaken by the Department of Place for Looked After Children and young people across the wide range of services. The report covered both the specifics of the work carried out and the general provision affecting all children such as health, environment and access to culture etc.

Members asked questions in relation to the report and the provision documented. Details of the questions and responses are set out below:

- Looked After Children had previously been given free membership to gyms (the Authority’s ClubActive sites) and Members asked whether this was still on-going as well as the possibility of developing the interactive activities provided by ‘JUMP’. Officers stated that some activities had been affected by COVID but would be discussed with the relevant Assistant Director.
- A Member asked if Children in Care had any role in determining what activities were included and whether young people, especially in the 11-17 age bracket be able to influence the Playable Places strategy. Officers advised they were engaging with young people and that a considerable number had been visited to seek their views. It was felt that young people missed out on cultural opportunities due to cost of tickets and travel etc.
- A Member also commented that some more detail was needed in relation to the offer on sports and culture as there was not enough information in the report and young people should be included in the City of Culture activities.
- A reference was made to information in the report which stated that looked after children and young people had access to reduced ticket prices for the Alhambra Theatre and St George’s Hall and whether these were the only concessions currently offered. Officers advised that an allocation of

pantomime tickets had previously been received and gym passes were available but were unaware of any additional offers or concessions. A joint report on a cultural offer from Children's Services and Place would be brought back to the Panel on 8th March 2021.

Resolved –

- (1) That a joint report from Children's Services and Place be presented by the appropriate Assistant Directors to the Committee to explore cultural access for young people, specifically Children in Care.**
- (2) That the joint report as detailed in resolution 1 be added to the work plan.**

Action: Interim Strategic Director, Place

70. YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

The report of the Strategic Director for Children's Services (**Document "T"**) was presented to the Panel to provide an update on developments within the Youth Homelessness team in Bradford. In 2018 it was identified in an Ofsted report that there were failings in the service provided to homeless young people. The work carried out for youth homelessness formed part of the Improvement Plan which was scrutinized by the Improvement Board.

The most recent audit which covered the period from July 2019 to June 2020, considered 64 young people, who presented as homeless, of which some were mis-classified as they were under 16 years old. Children in this age group did not qualify for youth homelessness services. Adequate risk assessments were carried out on the majority of the young people audited who presented as homeless at the now integrated front door. It was acknowledged that there was still and would always be room to improve and this was included in the Improvement Plan. Social work practice was deemed as consistent with consistent file recording but, again, this needed to improve.

Officers stated that in some situations mediation was possible to avoid instances of homelessness and some safeguarding concerns were not notified quickly enough. An apprentice has been recruited who would be able to provide a voice for homeless young people.

Improvements in placements were being looked into with responsibility for these passing to relevant teams whose staff possessed the appropriate expertise.

A telephone helpline was put in place in November and was being well supported by volunteer Social Workers. Officers were also looking into integrating Regulation 44 visits into post 16 provision to ensure due diligence as this was statutory for under 16s only at present. Feedback on this would be provided at a future meeting of this Panel.

Members asked questions, details of these and the responses given are as below:

- Members wanted to know the difference between homelessness and rooflessness and whether the mediation service had been put into place. They were advised that rooflessness covered a number of scenarios such as 'sofa surfing'. A mediation service would be put into place but training was still needed – there were no timescales available for implementation.
- In terms of moving over to a virtual service, Members asked if there was any progress in this direction. Officers advised that there was a queue for training.
- A Member asked about the 'One Stop Shop' and whether young people were involved and could make it theirs. Officers advised that a café had already been identified and was in use. Feedback was given by Care Ambassadors to say what they wanted and the Authority's staff knew and worked well with them.
- A Member expressed concern about the inconsistency of the 'Pathways' process and was advised that audits were being completed for 'Pathways' and a draft improvement plan was in place and would supplement the existing Improvement Plan. Officers were confident that work was going in the right direction and consistency would be achieved.
- A Member asked about staffing of the telephone help line and was advised that it was manned by qualified Social Workers who were volunteering. The response to the request for volunteer staff on this new service had been excellent and was continuing to be provided.

Resolved –

- (1) That the report be welcomed and the progress within the service, specifically the monitoring of unregulated providers, the introduction of a telephone helpline and mediation services.**
- (2) That a regular report be presented to this Committee to monitor progress going forward.**

Action: Strategic Director of Children's Services

71. LEAVING WELL UPDATE

The report of the Strategic Director of Children's Services (**Document "U"**) was presented to the Panel to provide an update on the Leaving Well 'app' which was a pathway planning tool for care leavers.

There was a legal duty on Local Authorities to provide a personal advisor and a pathway plan once children reached the age of 15 $\frac{3}{4}$ years. The plan was completed with the young person and reviewed either six monthly or in the event of any significant change. The plan needed to meet the needs of the young person through until they are twenty one years old or longer if an extension was required.

A Member commented that the report was positive and gave examples with evidence that the dashboard was being used.

Resolved –

- (1) That the report be welcomed and progress made is noted.**
- (2) That further information be presented to the Committee in the next municipal year to monitor the progress being made and on its use in capturing the voice of the child.**

Action: Strategic Director of Children's Services

72. ADVOCACY SERVICES

The report of the Strategic Director of Children's Services (**Document "V"**) was presented to the Panel to provide an overview of the advocacy service which enabled children and young people to be supported and heard in matters that affected them.

The report presented covered the period from February 2020 to the present day and included updates on the recommendations made in the report which was presented to the Panel in 2019.

The report concluded that it was critical that the feedback and issues raised were listened to and considered to ensure that the service was effective in supporting good outcomes.

Members then had an opportunity to ask questions. Details of these and the responses given are as below:

- A Member asked about the progress being made as the situation with COVID-19 continues to maximise engagement. Officers advised that the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) contract was overseen and that avenues were being explored to engage young people. The Service was asking how young people want to engage and this was under continuous review.
- In relation to Independent Visitors, Members would like more information on the role.

Resolved –

- (1) the report on progress be welcomed.**
- (2) More information be provided to Members so that additional appropriate people within the Local Authority could become 'Independent Visitors'**

Action: Strategic Director of Children's Services

73. WORK PLAN 2020/21

The latest work plan was discussed briefly by Members

Resolved –

- (1) That the meeting scheduled for Monday 5 April 2021 be moved to Monday 12 April 2021.**
- (2) That the following reports be added to the work plan**
 - **Update on the 'Leaving Well' app be presented in the next municipal year**
 - **Joint report by Children's Services and Place on cultural access for young people, specifically Children in Care be added to the 8 March 2021 including information on the 'JUMP' app**
 - **Homelessness update be presented in the next municipal year**
 - **the Mockingbird report be moved from 8 March onto 12 April 2021**

Action: Interim Assistant Strategic Director, Safeguarding and Reviewing

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