

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held remotely on Monday, 8 March 2021

Commenced 4.30 pm
Concluded 6.00 pm

Present – Councillors

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

NON VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBERS

Jude MacDonald
Sue Lowndes

Bradford District Clinical Commissioning Group
Bradford Education

Observers: Chief Inspector Daniel Ware West Yorkshire Police

Councillor Thirkill in the Chair

74. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

No disclosures of interest in matters under consideration were received.

75. MINUTES

Resolved –

That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2021 be signed as a correct record (previously circulated).

ACTION: City Solicitor

76. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

77. POST 16 SERVICE

Resolved –

That consideration of this item be deferred to the meeting to be held on 12 April 2021.

ACTION: Strategic Director of Children's Services

78. ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE FOR CHILDREN IN CARE

The report of the Director of Children's Services (**Document "Y"**) provided the members of the Corporate Parenting Panel with an overview of performance in respect of a number of key, health-related indicators as well as information in respect of several key areas for development.

Members were advised that an initial health assessment was carried out when children entered care as they may have additional health needs and to assess their physical and emotional wellbeing. This was followed up with a health check every year, however Covid 19 had presented the Council and health partners with challenges and work was being undertaken to streamline health assessments. It was reported that there had been a slight dip in the percentage of Children in Care who have had their annual health assessment to 85% compared to a target of 92% and that work was being undertaken to address this. It was noted that this was not unusual to Bradford and that access to a dentist during the pandemic had made it more difficult to arrange appointments. Foster Carers had been contacted on how to access dental treatment and they had been advised that they may go privately if needed.

An area of performance that had improved significantly was in relation to the completion of Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQs) which provided alerts to a child in care with emotional issues that could be measured over time. The findings could be aggregated to identify specific themes for groups of children. Performance had improved significantly and over 87% of relevant children and young people had an up to date SDQ. It was important to use the information in the SDQs to identify how to support the child. There was no evidence that SDQ scores had gone up during the pandemic.

A member asked the reason for the reduction in the percentage of children in care having their annual health assessment to 85% and was advised that the Covid pandemic overall had an impact. December in particular had been a busy month with the numbers of children entering and significant numbers leaving care coupled with the Christmas holiday period. Increasing numbers of children entered care in January and February. Work had been undertaken on obtaining consent to medicals and the process had been streamlined which should have an impact on timeliness. It was agreed that a concise update on the percentage of children in care having their annual health assessment would be provided for the Panel in six months.

Resolved –

- (1) That officers be thanked for the report and the data contained within it.**
- (2) That a concise report be presented to the Panel in six months including whether or not the percentage of children in care who had an annual health assessment had increased and reasons for this.**

ACTION: Strategic Director of Education

79. SUPPORT CHILDREN IN CARE AND CARE LEAVERS TO ACCESS CULTURE AND ARTS ACTIVITIES

The joint report of the Strategic Director Children's Services and Strategic Director Place (**Document "Z"**) provided the members of the Corporate Parenting Panel with an overview of current activity undertaken by Department of Place and Children's Services. This report was requested following a report to the Panel in January 2021 by Department of Place in relation to support for children in care. This led to further discussion about support specifically in relation to cultural activities and the arts and the extent to which we help our children and young people to access these. It was agreed that Children's Services and Department of Place would come together to review current activity, think about future activity and jointly prepare a report.

Members were advised that Bradford Theatres were working on offering tickets for shows at reduced or little cost to children in care and care leavers. Opportunities were being explored to reduce fees to encourage access to sports facilities. Offers were also being identified to increase access to the Museums and Libraries service. Work was being undertaken on a specific offer for looked after children providing activity packs; creativity cards allowing looked after children to access activities in museums; Proud to be from Bradford encouraged young people to explore the heritage in their area.

It was highlighted that it was important to produce an offer following discussions with young people about what they wanted and it was noted that local history was an area in which young people has expressed an interest. It was noted that most of what libraries offered was free and for young people and that there was a need to work with looked after children specifically to encourage them to visit and engage with libraries and make library use a regular habit that would stay with them for the rest of their lives.

It was noted that work experience and placements and opportunities to volunteer were offered in Bradford theatres and that they could ensure that they were offered to looked after children.

Members of the Panel were pleased to note the offers being identified to encourage children in care and care leaves to access cultural activities which could contribute to their emotional health and wellbeing.

In response member questions, officers endeavoured to contact organisations

outside the Council such as local professional sports teams or voluntary organisations regarding concessions and offers that could be made to looked after children. It was noted that relationships were being built with the Chamber of Trade and the third sector going forward.

It was pointed out that there was a disconnect between the opportunities that were available young people being aware of them. Work was needed to ensure that young people were made aware of what was available and that this was followed up. It was suggested that the Children in Care Council be asked to consider involving young people in the ongoing discussions taking place.

Resolved –

That officers be thanked for the report and that it be requested that consultation take place with the Children in Care Council with a view to them being represented in the ongoing discussions about support for children and care leavers to access culture and arts activities.

ACTION: Strategic Director of Children's Services

80. ADOPTION AND PERMANENCE UPDATE

The report of the Director of Children's Services (**Document "AA"**) provided the members of the Corporate Parenting Panel with an overview of the subject of adoption and permanence for children in care in Bradford. The report included Bradford's adoption data and performance, the action plan in respect of adoption and the wider issue of "permanence" for our children in care.

It was noted that the Assistant Director Safeguarding and Reviewing was now the decision maker regarding permanence rather than an outside agency, which would reduce delay in these decisions being made. He outlined the complexity of the adoption process and the need to plan for a number of outcomes. He noted that the authority's performance was mid table in the region but that it was hoped this would increase within the next six to twelve months. He stressed weighty decisions were being taken that were life affecting and that it was important to do them well but not to build in delays in the system. Other forms of permanence were referred to such as Special Guardianship Orders that lasted until the child was 18.

It was noted that new mechanisms had been put in place to ensure that the authority remained focussed on plans to achieve permanence which were detailed in paragraph 2.21 of Document "AA".

It was noted that it was not possible to identify the number of children who had been matched long term with Foster Carers and that work was being undertaken with IT in this regard. These children could be identified as individuals but not the number in the cohort.

In response to a member question on whether the numbers of Special Guardianship Orders could be reported it was noted that this was not possible

because they had minimal contact with the authority and this was the right outcome for those children. It was noted that more than 40 children had their Care Orders successfully discharged.

Resolved –

That a progress report be presented to a future meeting of the Panel including an update on reporting the overall number of children that have been matched long term with foster carers.

ACTION: Strategic Director of children's Services

81. WORK PLAN 2020/21

Resolved –

That the report on the Post 16 Service be considered at the meeting on 12 April 2021.

ACTION: Strategic Director of Children's Services

Richard Fawcett – 01274 436041

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