

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on Wednesday, 26 January 2022 in the Banqueting Hall - City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 6.08 pm
Concluded 8.34 pm

Present – Councillors

LABOUR	CONSERVATIVE	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT
Thirkill Duffy Alipoor	Pollard	Knox

NON VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBERS

Sue Lowndes Assistant Director Schools
(AD/Schools)
Jude Macdonald *Bradford* District Clinical
Commissioning Group

Officers

Jill Bell Governance Officer, Corporate Resources
Salina Khan Care Leavers' Service (CLS)
Helen Osman Clerk – School Governor Service
Philip Segurola Assistant Director Safeguarding and Review, Commissioning &
Provider Services (AD/SRCP)
Shaheen Zahilda Care Leavers' Service (CLS)

Apologies: Councillors Smith and Dunbar

Councillor Duffy in the Chair

Summary of agreed actions

Action	Lead	Timescale
Chair to advise P Segurola on procedure for approval of the Sufficiency Strategy and the Fostering & Recruitment Strategy	Cllr Duffy	31-01-2022
IRO/FIRO establishment to be reviewed	P Segurola	April 2022

Next IRO report to be brought to the Panel	H Cliffe	May 2022
Chair to pursue the timing and approach to development of a Council-wide Participation Strategy as it related to Corporate Parenting.	Cllr Duffy	Next Panel meeting
Corporate Parent checklist: advice to be taken from the Communications Team on its effective communication	Cllr Duffy	28-02-2022
AD/SRCP to report to the next Panel meeting on work underway to promote recruitment of social workers.	D Johnston	Next Panel meeting
Clarify arrangements to signpost young people with SGOs and their carers to help and support, including on exiting the SGO	P Segurola	Next Panel meeting
Arrangements to be made for young people to have access to their pathway plans via the Care Leavers app.	M Helm	Next Panel meeting
CLS to explore the scope to work with the full range of housing providers and collaborate with other local authorities to identify suitable accommodation for care leavers.	M Helm	Update to next Panel meeting
Chair to ask Cllr Dunbar (lead Panel member for housing) to pursue the housing section of the Annual Report of Care Leavers with the appropriate officer.	Cllr Duffy	31-01-2022
Skills House to be engaged in multi-agency discussions about the future paths of care leavers.	M Helm	Next Panel meeting
CLS to clarify for Panel members the reference on p19 of the Annual Report of Care Leavers to "four new placement options for Separated Migrant Children"	P Segurola	25-02-2022
CCG to advise Cllr Alipoor on the frequency with which health passports are produced for young people leaving care.	J Macdonald	25-02-2022
CCG to address with Looked After Children nurses the lack of understanding among young people of how to access a doctor.	J Macdonald	Next Panel meeting
CCG to pass on the Panel's request for Health to be represented at both operational and strategic level, with an emphasis on social, emotional and mental health.	J Macdonald	25-02-2022
AD/SRCP to agree a schedule of meetings with the Secretariat and notify young people and foster carers of the date of the next meeting, to be held in Bingley.	P Segurola	18-02-2022
Cllr Dunbar and AD/SRCP to take forward development of a dedicated Looked After Children website and app	Cllr Dunbar E Rhodes	Update to next Panel meeting
AD/SCRCP to consult young people on the themes identified by the Panel to ensure they remain appropriate and update the grid for presentation to the Executive.	P Segurola	18-02-2022
AD/SCRCP to establish a process to record consultations with young people and convey the outcomes to the Panel.	P Segurola	Next Panel meeting
CCG to identify a representative to become a governor of the Virtual School	J Macdonald	25-02-2022
Chair, Chair/GB and AD/Schools to liaise on identification of governors for the virtual school and date of first meeting	Cllr Duffy Cllr Pollard S Lowndes	18-02-2022

5. ALTERNATE MEMBERS (Standing Order 34)

Cllr Pollard (alternate for Cllr Smith)
Cllr Alipoor (alternate for Cllr Dunbar)

6. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

No disclosures of interest in items under consideration were received.

7. MINUTES

The Panel noted that the Regulatory and Appeal Committee had approved the appointment of Sue Duffy as Chair.

The Panel noted the following progress on actions agreed at the meeting on 24 November 2021:

- The Sufficiency Strategy would be considered by DMT [Directorate management team] in the week beginning 31 January 2022 and by the Overview and Strategy Committee on 09 March 2022. The Chair undertook to advise AD/SRCP on whether it also required the approval of the Executive Committee.
- The Chair had discussed the Council-wide Participation Strategy, as it related to Corporate Parenting, with AD/SRCP. **Asked** about progress on this document, AD/SRCP said that further discussion was required on timing.
- The Corporate Parent checklist had been amended to clarify the distinction between Regulation 44 visits and visits to get to know homes/staff. A copy of the amended checklist was included in the papers for this meeting. The Chair would take advice from the Communications Team on its effective communication

Other actions had been completed, would be discussed at this meeting or had been overtaken by events.

Resolved –

That subject to the amendment below the minutes of the meeting held on 24 November be signed as a correct record:

- **Throughout: replace “Allipool” with “Alipoor”.**

ACTION: City Solicitor

8. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

9. ANNUAL REPORT OF CARE LEAVERS

1. The agenda paper was taken as read.
2. **Asked** about the eligibility status of young people who had been the

subject of a Special Guardianship Order (SGO), the Care Leavers' Service (CLS) advised that, where such a young person requested support, the team would consider a package of support for them. **Asked** to what extent SGO placements were monitored, AD/SRCP explained that, when a young person exited care due to the making of an SGO, Children's Services did not routinely remain involved unless the family requested additional support for a period of time: many preferred not to have continuing involvement with Children's Services, particularly if the child was young. **Asked** whether the CLS routinely made contact with these young people when the SGO ended at the age of 18 or 21, CLS advised that they did not: however, SGO carers could contact them if they needed support and advice.

3. AD/SRCP said that the position would be clarified and arrangements put in hand to signpost young people with SGOs and SGO carers to help and support.

4. **Asked** the reasons for the significant growth in the number of children who received leaving care services between March 2020 and November 2021, and the sharp spike in November 2021, CLS agreed that an increase in the number of migrants following the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan might have been a contributing factor. **Asked** whether it was possible to tell how much of the increase had arisen from this cause, AD/SRCP said that it was not. The number of Looked After Children was increasing and, because a large number were entering care at the age of 16 or 17, this was already starting to feed through into the number of young people leaving care.

5. **Asked** whether Covid 19 had led to an increase in the number of young people entering care due to family breakdown, AD/SRCP said that this did not appear to be a significant factor in Bradford. CLS noted that the Covid restrictions had limited the team's contact with young people: it was more challenging to monitor how they were doing over virtual platforms than face to face.

6. The Panel noted that young people had raised with Panel members at the consultation meetings with them in July 2021 and January 2022 their concerns about pathway planning: they had made clear that they did not recognise themselves in the pathway plans. This needed to be addressed. **Asked** to what extent young people had been involved in the work of the CLS, and how they would receive feedback, CLS described how they had changed their processes. In particular, they had moved to a single IT system so that all information was available on a single platform. Staff were being upskilled, with an emphasis on ensuring that they listened carefully to young people, rather than expecting young people to listen to them. **The Panel asked** to what extent young people had been involved in determining this approach: for example, it had been clear from the consultations that they would like to chair their review meetings. The Panel's was concerned to ensure that the design and delivery of services was determined by the lived experience of young people. CLS said that the new process had not yet been rolled out, but that the voice of young people was clearly heard, and drove the pathway plans: young people were involved in setting goals, actions and timescales.

7. The Panel noted that a review had been carried out that had been process-driven. It understood the need for efficient and effective processes, but **asked** whether young people would see any difference in how pathway planning worked for them. AD/SRCP asked whether young people were now chairing their own reviews: CLS said that review officers encouraged young people to attend their reviews and decide who should attend. Team managers informed social workers that they should not update a young person's pathway plan without discussing the change with them.

8. **Asked** whether young people had independent electronic access to their pathway plans, so that they could refer to them at any time, CLS said that the plans were sent to their personal e-mail addresses and shared with them during meetings and visits. They also had paper copies. The Panel took the view that young people should have access to their plans through the Leaving Care app. AD/SRCP said that GDPR and security issues would need to be addressed but that it should be possible to arrange secure access. The Panel welcomed this and **asked** that the necessary arrangements be made.

9. Noting the statement that “*The service has reviewed the effectiveness of the platform [the Leaving Well app] concluding that the app will be discontinued by the end of the calendar year*”, **the Panel asked** the reason for this decision and what would replace the Leaving Well app. CLS explained that pathway plans on the Leaving Well app did not feed through into the Care Leavers app. By discontinuing the Leaving Well app and moving pathway plans onto the Care Leavers app, the pathway information could be accessed by managers and practitioners, allowing them to see when and by whom young people had last been seen, their goals etc. AD/SRCP added that Ofsted expected to find all information in a single place. **Asked** the date by which all data would be satisfactorily migrated to the Care Leavers app, AD/SRCP said that pathway plans were reviewed on a six-month cycle, so should all be on the Care Leavers app within that time frame. CLS confirmed that staff had been instructed not to add new information to the Leaving Well app.

10. Noting that young people had put a lot of work into the Leaving Well app, **the Panel asked** whether they had been informed that it was being discontinued and that their pathway plans were being migrated to the Leaving Care app, to which they did not currently have access. CLS understood that practitioners were informing young people, and that young people were not concerned about it. The Panel expressed concern about the services taking decisions on such matters without prior consultation with young people: it might be that young people did not raise concerns when they were informed of decisions after the fact because they did not believe that their views would have any impact. The Panel understood the need for process and to meet regulatory requirements, but emphasised the need to consult young people on changes that affected them in time for their views to shape the proposals, not just the implementation of those proposals after they had been decided. The Panel recognised that this was challenging, but providers of services to young people needed to embed early consultation with young people as a routine element of developing proposals. The Panel would be pressing for this in all aspects of services to young people.

11. The Panel expressed concern about the issue of accommodation for young people leaving care. There was a small but steady decline in the proportion of 17 to 18 year olds for whom suitable accommodation was found. The balance between the proportion of young people in unsuitable care and the proportion for whom information was unavailable was troubling, and the definition of “unsuitable” accommodation (“*Accommodation that clearly exposes the person to risk of harm or social exclusion by reason of its location or other factors*”) rang alarm bells, given that an unknown proportion of current care leavers in Bradford were living in such accommodation. This chimed with the view expressed by young people in the Panel’s summer 2021 consultation with them that they had no choice about the accommodation they moved into: they had either to accept the accommodation that was offered or move into a hostel. Some of the accommodation that they had to accept was not of a standard that Panel members would consider acceptable for their own children.

12. CLS said that the service struggled to find suitable accommodation for care leavers. It had invested in a dedicated Personal Advisor with a focus on preventing homelessness among care leavers, who was involved in the assessment of accommodation and was trying to build more collaborative and integrated ways of working with housing. **Asked** with which specific housing services they worked, CLS said they worked with the local authority's Housing Options service and In Communities, which conducted timely assessments and gave priority status to care leavers. The Panel asked that CLS explore the scope to work with the many other housing providers and to collaborate with other local authorities.

13. The Panel agreed that the Chair should ask Cllr Dunbar, as the leader for the Housing theme, to pursue this element of the Annual Report of Care Leavers with the appropriate officer.

14. **Asked** about the reference to "Blanks" in the table on pages 8-9 of the Annual Report of Care Leavers, CLS explained that this indicated that the worker had not included information in the relevant tab of the system, and the information had not been pulled through from the other system. Panel members did not consider this satisfactory but noted that the service was moving to a single system. **They asked** whether this information was recorded on the Personal Education Plans. AD/SRCP said that the number of young people accessing *Education, Employment or Training* (EET) could be higher and, indeed, might be higher than appeared: the current issue with information from one system not feeding into the other, which was being addressed, might make it appear that fewer people were accessing EET than was in fact the case.

15. **Asked** to what extent CLS linked with Skills House to explore different routes for young people, CLS confirmed that they discussed access to EET in team meetings and worked with Skills House, the Virtual School, the Youth Offenders service and other services. Multi-agency panels met to discuss young people whose future paths were challenging or unclear. **Asked** whether Skills House was involved in these multi-agency discussions, CLS said that it was not at present. The panel asked that this be addressed.

16. Panel members were surprised by the decline in the proportion of young people who attended their *Child Looked After Review* and spoke for themselves between April 2020 to March 2021 and April to October 2021. They were troubled by the proportion (18% to 27%) who did not attend their Child Looked After Review, but instead shared their views through prior communication with their Independent Review Officer (IRO): **they asked** whether young people were able to share their views meaningfully in this way. CLS explained that young people were contacted by their IRO up to two days before the review meeting and talked through the documentation. If the young person did not wish to attend the review, they were asked for their reasons, but their view was respected.

Replying to questions, CLS confirmed that the young person was asked the same questions by the IRO as they would have been asked at the review meeting, and their responses were discussed at the review meeting.

17. **Asked** whether young people could access Viewpoint independently, without dialogue with their IRO, CLS said that they could. The IRO would ask the young person about their preferences: IROs knew their young people well, having worked with them for a number of years. Panel members said that this was not the picture gained from the recent consultations with young people, some of whom had said that they did not know who their IRO was.

18. **Asked** how the service picked up young people who chose not to participate in their Reviews, AD/SRCP said that would be a sign that all was not

well with the young person and should trigger alarm bells. **Asked** whether such signs were, in fact, picked up, he said that they would be visible to the IRO, social worker and manager. Panel members observed that there were a number of young people who did not participate.

19. **Asked** for clarification of the reference (page 19 of the report) to “*four more placement options for Separated Migrant Children*”, CLS undertook to advise Panel members following the meeting.

20. Turning to the section of the report on *Health Assessments*, the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) said that Covid 19 had led to a significant reduction in the number of health reviews. The need to address the significant backlog in initial health assessments and long waiting times had stretched the system to capacity. A full service review had been undertaken and a new model of service delivery had been implemented from 01 April 2021. An interim Designated Doctor had been appointed; four GPs were carrying out the initial health assessments and a fifth was being recruited. There were two Named Doctors for safeguarding. Additional staff had been recruited into the nursing team. Weekly triage meetings were held to prioritise young people for early initial health assessments.

21. This new model appeared to be working well: hard impact data was not yet available, but rigorous monthly data suggested that the next annual review would demonstrate progress, including a reduction in the backlog of reviews.

22. **Asked** about the frequency with which health passports were produced for young people leaving care, CCG undertook to advise Cllr Alipoor following this meeting. This was part of the work that would be undertaken now that the service was able to invest in additional capacity for Looked After Children.

23. The Panel had been concerned to learn from their consultation meetings with young people that a number of them did not know how to access a doctor. CCG undertook to ask the Looked After Children nurses to look into this.

24. Referring to the graph on page 28 of the report, Panel members discussed the substantial drop in the number of young people receiving a care leaver’s service in the second half of 2021: this appeared to be at odds with data provided to the Scrutiny Committee, which had not suggested such a reduction. CCG said that children who entered care were allocated a nurse who remained with them throughout their time in care. The drop shown on the graph reflected a reprioritisation of initial health assessments. A drop had been expected, but a number of other contributory factors had not been anticipated. **Replying to questions**, CCG said that the waiting time for initial health assessments had reduced from 180 days to 70 days. There were now 86 young people on the waiting list, a substantial reduction. For approximately 48% of young people, consent had not been given. Triage meetings were held to prioritise young people for health assessments.

25. The Panel was concerned about the rate of teenage pregnancy among care leavers and agreed that the effectiveness of preventative measures should be considered as part of its Health theme.

Salina Khan and Shaheen Zahilda left the meeting at 7.35pm

Resolved –

That Document “E” and the detailed discussion on its contents be noted.

ACTION: Director of Children’s Services

10. CORPORATE PARENTING TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. The Chair confirmed that the quorum for the Corporate Parenting Panel was three members. The Panel confirmed that the Terms of Reference provided sufficient flexibility to appoint co-opted members.
2. The Panel agreed that Health should be represented at both operational and executive level. It would be helpful to the Panel to have a line of sight on social, emotional and mental health. In light of the themed approach that the Panel had adopted, it might not be necessary for an executive level representative to attend every meeting, and the Panel would welcome the attendance at meetings of individuals with particular areas of responsibility to present reports. The intention was to strengthen partnerships. CCG would pass on this request, drawing on the support of the Chair as required.

Resolved

That the Terms of Reference of the Corporate Parenting Panel as set out in Document “F” be agreed.

ACTION: City Solicitor

11. PROPOSALS FOR CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

1. The Panel noted that, as agreed at its meeting on 24 November 2021, the proposals included formal Committee-based meetings to address statutory, regulatory and strategic issue, alternating with meetings taking the form of a forum led by young people. Panel members welcomed the emphasis in the paper on engaging closely with young people.
2. AD/SRCP would liaise with the Secretariat to schedule meetings accordingly, taking account of local election purdah. The Panel agreed that the next meeting should be held in March 2021, be led by young people and be held in Bingley. Noting that consultation with young people and foster carers indicated that they did not receive sufficient notice of events, AD/SRCP undertook to ensure that they were notified as soon as a date had been agreed.

Resolved –

That the proposals for Corporate Parenting Panel as set out in Document “G” be agreed.

ACTION: Strategic Director of Children’ Services

12. CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

1. The Chair reported that a further consultation meeting with young people had been held on Monday 24 January 2022. The discussion had been valuable and they had been content with the Panel’s proposed way forward. They had raised three key points, which the Chair had undertaken to resolve:
 - The need for functional wifi access in children’s homes

- Leisure access for under 16 year olds
 - A request for an app that they could use to see their entitlements and related information.
2. The Panel discussed the scope for a dedicated website for Looked After Children, linked to an app, and agreed that Cllr Dunbar should pursue this with AD/SRCP, who would engage the IT and Participation teams, in consultation with young people.
3. The Chair reminded the Panel that the themes that it had identified had emerged from the consultation with young people in July 2021 and an overview of the work of Corporate Parenting Panels in local authorities that had been judged as Good or Outstanding by Ofsted. Feedback from young people was now needed to ensure that these themes remained appropriate. AD/SRCP undertook to check this and update the grid as necessary in time for the meeting of the Executive Committee. **Replying to questions**, he said that a process would be established to record consultations with young people and convey the outcomes to the Panel.

Resolved

That the consultation feedback contained in Document “H” be noted.

ACTION; Strategic Director of Children’s Services

13. GOVERNING BODY FOR THE VIRTUAL SCHOOL FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

1. AD/Schools said that it was standard for local authorities to establish a governing body structure for their Virtual Schools. The School Governor Service had researched models and suggested four options. In light of advice from the legal department – which had differed from other local authorities’ legal advice – the recommendation was that the Panel establish a working group to act as the governing body. Draft Terms of Reference for the governing body were set out in the report.
2. The Panel discussed whether, in light of their responsibilities in relation to the Schools Forum, schools would be in a position to take up the role of governors for the Virtual School. They concluded that school representatives need not be taken from the Schools Forum: they might, for example, be recruited from organisations such as The Bradford Primary Improvement Partnership, or from schools with a large number of Looked After Children on roll.
3. The Panel considered whether Looked After Children and/or recent care leavers should be represented on the governing body. There was a risk that representatives who were comfortable in the formal setting of a governing body meeting would not be fully representative of their peers. On this basis, the Panel concluded that it would be better to collect and feed their views into the governing body through the Panel’s consultations with young people on education and schooling.
4. CCG undertook to identify a health representative for the governing body.
5. The Chair would liaise with the Chair of the governing body and AD/SRCP on other potential governors, which might include a representative of the Foster Care Association, and on a date for the first meeting.

6. **Asked** whether it was the intention to reinstate the annual awards ceremony for the Virtual School following its suspension during Covid, AD/SRPC said that he envisaged that there would be an annual celebration of achievement for young people and carers. The Panel asked that this be added to the list of developments for the Panel.

Resolved –

(1) That the Corporate Parenting Panel agree to establish a working group to act as the Governing Body of the Virtual School and to the proposed Terms of Reference and membership set out at Appendix A to Document “I”

(2) That the Governing Body should determine the frequency of its meetings

(3) That the following be appointed governors of the Virtual School:

Councillor Pollard (lead CPP member for education) – Chair of the governing body

Councillor Knox

Councillor Thirkill

Jonathan Cooper, Head of the Virtual School

(4) That the Governing Body should, at its first meeting, recommend a Vice Chair for appointment by the Panel

ACTION: Strategic Director of Children’s Services

Chair

Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a correct record at the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel.