

**Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel
held on Thursday, 25 January 2024 in The View Room,
Margaret McMillan Tower, Bradford, BD1 1NN**

Commenced Time Not
 Specified
Concluded Time Not
 Specified

Present – Councillors

LABOUR	CONSERVATIVE	GREEN
Duffy Thirkill	Pollard	Sutcliffe

Non voting co-opted Members

Sharon Woodcock

Ophelia Rix

Jonathan Cooper

Richard Crane

Amandip Johal

Charlotte Ramsden

Ruth Terry

Caroline Dolan

Adam Glennon

Helen Cliffe

Observers: Cliff James, Karen Bradshaw, Garry Bridges (LGA Observing)

Apologies: Councillor Margaret Alipoor and Jude MacDonald

Councillor Duffy in the Chair

16. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

No disclosures of interest were received.

17.

INSPECT

n/a

18. AGENDA DOCUMENT

19. INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME BY YOUNG PERSON

20. TABLE DISCUSSIONS

Child Friendly Language – Table 1

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- Do not use certain words, like placement it is home.
- Contact – should use family time, it is about meeting family
- Use ordinary words not special/different ones. For example someone not in care wouldn't know what a placement was.
- Language should be appropriate to age and level of understanding
- Maturity of young person, some things are individual choice and important knowing the person and their choice, for example how their carer is referred as. Important to know the person and make them feel valued.
- Can easily be forgotten when busy or change of worker but gives wrong impression.
- Language shouldn't be any different.

One of the first conversations with a young person should be establishing which words/phrases they want to use.

Ways to communicate – Table 2

- There shouldn't be a difference from how a teacher, carer or social worker talk to a young person. It is about getting to know the person you are talking to, if don't know personality it is going to be harder to communicate with each other.
- Communication isn't just talking, older children might prefer texts and/or calls. If appointments are cancelled Social Worker speaks to carer to pass message on, could have a group message.
- Top tip to Social Workers – give as much support as children need, if don't they won't understand what is going on, why moved into care. Little things like that makes them think why moving, what's going on. When there and settled in a bit have to tell them what is going on. Young person on table 2 had been there 3 years but not told why. This tip could be for all workers including teachers.

Giving an Answer – Table 3

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- It is human right to be given an answer and reason. A lot of time told "no" and when ask why told "manager said no". If we

understand reasoning it is easier to come to terms with. Young person needs to be part of journey of wants and needs and needs to be part of discussion. This will create better relationship between everyone in that young persons life.

- It is difficult creates a barrier to be told “no” and may not have confident to ask why. Upsetting if people don’t want to answer you and creates a lack of trust which is spread across young persons life.
- Need to get better at saying “don’t know but will come back to you”.

Understanding of somebodies life – Table 4

- Heart of everything we do – bit of a slogan, what does it mean? Didn’t have answer but talked about how we make it real.
- Impact of young people having to repeat their stories over and over and how traumatic it might be – do we need more trauma training for professionals especially when first come into care how understand trauma and how deal with it.
- Listening most important part of communication, talked about hearing but not listening.
- Important to understand how children are feeling.
- When professionals are repeating use their actual words and not para-phrase.
- Toolkit of skills needed? Knowing how they feel; active listening; not interpreting what you hear use actual words.

Trauma Informed Practice

Everyone should have been trained especially working with children in care, including teachers and social workers.

Restorative Communication

Talking about impact on young people’s lives, could easily remember bad experiences had, when delved into it a lot of relationships were not restored. It is about owning and discussing what happened and getting back to a better place.

21. CASE STUDIES/PERSONAL STORIES AND PROBLEM SOLVING

Scenario set: 15 year old whose home is closing. ?

There was a lack of communication and planning. It must have been really hard

for a 15 year old. A lot of children in care have problems communicating with Social Workers, they don't answer calls. Placement thought place was going to be given to another child. Problem being moved away from girlfriend and family network. Sam's packed bags are a constant reminder of uncertainty. From young people's perspective need to know what is going to happen, where was his voice? Need to change schools again. He needed to be involved in decisions and placed near family and friends.

This is a real case of a person currently working with and this is his current situation. When asked how he felt he said it make him feel scared, he did not know what was happening and could have gone to sleep and been moving in the morning. Sam is autistic and didn't want to move, he understood why and knew wasn't his fault but for the last 3 months his belongings have been packed in a suitcase because he had been moved so many times didn't see point in unpacking. He did not know if all the relationships he had were just going to go and he would have nobody to fall back on.

How powerful was the case study, he still doesn't know where he is going. Young person wasn't at the heart of everything we do.

Case Study 1

24 year old who wanted to access driving lessons. Social Worker wouldn't prioritise as nearly 25.

What was wrong?

No recognition of value of young person, no empathy, no respect for needs. Needs of worker took precedent. Young person didn't know what rights were and should have had driving lessons offered at 17, this leads to the question, how aware are children of their entitlements? This case escalated through management, had not been advised to use proper routes. Lots of emphasis on age. Attitude of social worker very dismissive, follow on from first session no understanding. Should have been better response and passed information on. The rights of the young person were not taken into consideration.

Again, this is a real case study, it is Trish's experience.

This is how the social worker treated me, hurtful for me. It's a scary time as going to be leaving soon. I don't like making emails to management, had to do it. Got phone call two minutes after email with social worker having a go at me and saying shouldn't have done it. I asked for my file and was denied it, asked 3 times, was told "no, can't be bothered, haven't got time". When met him said he was "really disappointed in me, won't go into this or talk about it now. If they do make me do your file because I've got problems and will send to someone else to do it because I can't be bothered". They did not talk to me about my rights or how to make a request.

This comes back to supporting and if have a go at someone it is wrong, it impacts on relationship, understanding your life and understanding what gone on in life.

Brainstorming – What does perfect communication between professionals and young people look like?

Easy to understand, open and honest, check they understand. Use right language and level of development for child. Got to be relationship based. Need to feedback/respond to questions. Give proper answers, explain well. Know who allowed to share with, if anybody, no lies no false promises.

Option or choice, give format get them involved. Social workers need to be supportive, questioning and listen. Give some respect and take some action.

Positive attitude, help people feel comfortable, have a laugh when share stories etc. Not being rude, use proper tone, it is not nice being shouted at. Let people speak one at a time.

Listening, every topic talk about and should focus more on listening. There isn't such a thing as perfect and everyone's perfect world is different, it's about listening to what everyone's perfect world is.

22. FEEDBACK REGARDING OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

Pathway Plans: *including readjusting expectations of what young people need to do/be able to do by the time they leave care. Ensure children are involved in writing the plan and not a tick box exercise.*

This is still being discussed and an ongoing process. We are looking at how they can be child friendly and have focus on who doing what.

Mental Health Support: *needs to be proactive and ensure support is available when required and not on a waiting list. Also, investigate what other support in addition to CAMHS is available. Entering care is traumatic, some form of therapy at this time would be helpful. Look at work with Foster Carers and schools being trained in mental health first aid. Consistency as responses can vary, look at supporting foster carers and care homes.*

Buddy System:

This was raised at the Corporate Parenting Strategy meeting. There is not an identified person who says will teach care leavers how to do things. Talked about flats that are set up and whether there should be a buddy system for that. Earlier in the meeting talked about cliff edge that aged 25 if a care leaver. As a family would not cut someone off at 25, it is about making sure there is a support network outside of care. William Dixon from Become charity has been asked to come and do a talk about what changes have been made.

23. TAKE AWAY THEMES

Relationships professionals have, who else have relationship with who are not children.

Have a great Youth Service, what support could Youth Workers provide. Social Workers and Youth Workers could learn from each other.

Training: The best people to give training to Social Workers are the children and young people. How we support Social Workers to be better at listening. How we

get everyone to listen – schools, health etc. The training needs to be mandatory. Needs to be consistency in language and support. Start small and grow to include housing providers, police etc. Training should also include ensuring children and young people are told what is happening in their life.

Training is done for AYSE academy as a bolt on could provide to newly qualified Social Workers; those just out of university and those who have been Social Workers a long time.

Amandip will produce a plan on how this can be done and work. This is shared ownership and commitment to drive this forward.

Language: A list of words Social Workers use that the children and young people would like us to change. Commitment is needed and maybe at first review get agreement and once agreed those are the words used.

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