

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on Wednesday, 16 March 2022 in Shipley Library, Meeting room 1

Commenced 4.30 pm
Concluded 6.35 pm

Present – Councillors

| LABOUR | LIBERAL DEMOCRAT |
|------------------------------|------------------|
| Duffy Thirkill Alipoor | Knox |

Officers

Kerwin Rogers (Bradford Children's Services)
Philip Segurola (Bradford Children's Services)
Louisa Kay (Bradford Children's Services)
Catherine Murray (CCG)
Amanda Johal (Bradford Children's Services)
Oliver Chrimes (Bradford Children's Services)
Jonathan Cope (Virtual School Head)
Chloe Byrne (Bradford Children's Services).
Megan Curtis (Bradford Children's Services)

Also present were a number of young people

Apologies: Councillors Smith and Pollard

Councillor Duffy in the Chair

1 Introductions were made by all present. Feedback from the January 2022 Session

Philip gave feedback from the end of January session held at City Hall.

1.1 Care Leaver Entitlement – The offer is available on the website but it was acknowledged that it was not well advertised and was not sufficiently clear. The

content was currently under review and would be completed by the end of this month. Further consultation had taken place with other young people to gain more feedback. It was made clear that it did not matter what type of care children were in as they would have the same offer.

1.2 Young People aged 16plus received free swim and gym passes to council facilities, both when in care or care leavers. Philip had asked the fostering service to explore if this could be negotiated for under 16's, but no progress had been made as yet. Cllr Sue Duffy agreed to take this to the Portfolio Holder for leisure services.

Action Sue Duffy

1.3 WIFI in Children's Homes was being tested this month to make it available to children and staff. Philip believed this would be resolved within

2 Ice Breaker (Quiz)

Caitlin asked all present what made them proud to be a corporate parent. Discussion took place at each of the tables.

Key points were summarised back to the group:

- Jonathan – is a teacher and believed that learning was important and he wanted to make sure schools were doing all they can.
- Mick stated that his motivation stemmed from his having worked in youth services, homes and hostels. He felt that corporate parents should always try improve services and make sure there was fairness.
- All young people in care should have the same opportunities as our children and grandchildren.
- One attendee had been involved in the Aim Higher project at college and universities and wanted to ensure that every young person reached their potential. Corporate parents could improve and help support this.
- To make things fair and to be a voice for young people.
- Support young people both practically and emotionally.
- To ensure consistency and a regular social worker for young people.
- Many enjoyed being a corporate parent and wanted to do the best they could.
- If corporate parents say they are going to do something, then they should do it.
- One attendee trained social workers and found it helpful to share the experience of being a corporate parent with them.
- To ensure that the Local Authority and its partners gave the best service, support and opportunities.
- To also look after the people looking after young people.
- To ensure access to health and to work with social care to safeguard young people.

3 Group Discussions

3.1 What qualities are required to be an efficient social worker and why do we need social workers.

- More time spent training
- Take you to nice places
- Move around different depts.
- Make sure everything is good where you live
- Voice your opinions for you
- Tenacity, compassion, tolerance, empathy, values, confidence, patience, understanding and knowledge

Caitlin summarised what the young people had identified as key challenges and asked groups to discuss these and come up with solutions. She highlighted that 19.4 was the average number of caseloads for a social worker so felt that there was not enough time to develop a bond or establish trust.

3.2 Relationships with the Social Worker

- The most important thing was a positive relationship, could be with a support worker.
- Continuity was key.
- Need long term committed social workers – employ the right people.
- Making the post attractive to work in Bradford.
- Were there too high caseloads? Overworked social workers.
- How to select social workers – maybe young people interview them.
- Acknowledged it was a struggle to recruit and more importantly to retain social workers – needed to get to the bottom of what was causing this.
- Want to get the right people who understood the service and could talk to young people.
- Caitlin felt that young people would help applicants appreciate what the job entailed.
- Some attendees thought that young people involvement had happened in the past and stopped due to covid.
- Hard to build relationships – appreciated by all that this was hard on young people.
- Noted that there was a shortage of social workers nationally.

Caitlin asked if there was an option for social workers to feedback anonymously to Bradford Council and it was confirmed that feedback was sought in exit interviews. The consistent message being that the job was not doable and caseloads were too high.

There then followed a group discussion as to how Bradford advertised posts and whether there was positive publicity of Bradford in terms of social work. It was also felt that the council website would benefit from improvement and including some inspiring stories about young people.

3.3 Permanent Social workers

Caitlin stated that there was an issue in Bradford using too many agency staff

who only had to give one weeks' notice, thus compounding the issues discussed. It was also noted that currently there were 124 vacancies. It was agreed that there was a need for more permanent social workers in Bradford and young people suggested to perhaps increase their contracts from 6mths length to 12 months.

Tyler gave some ideas. He felt that agency contracts should have a longer notice period, a month or 2 months. Caitlin said that she had had 7 social workers so far and it made her not want to recount her coming into care story again and again to different people.

It was suggested to explore overseas recruitment and to investigate if this was possible, although acknowledged that preparation and support would be required to get them to commit to a one or two-year contract. Amandip agreed to explore this possibility. It was noted that covid had stalled overseas recruitment.

3.4 Trusting Relationships

Cain informed the group that he wanted to do positive things with his social worker and not simply meet just at his house or school. He suggested meetings in a less formal setting like Macdonald's and KFC and days out sharing experiences such as: Theme Parks; Swimming; Going for a drive or a walk and going to the park.

The young people felt social work contact with families on birthdays was important as the worker became more part of their life and family. The key point was that contact and its setting should be led by the young person / child.

Caitlin wanted more of an informal relaxed chat rather than going through set questions as to what she had been up to in the last 6 weeks, and not just a box ticking exercise. Tyler raised his concern and upset that at his last visit his social worker had turned up with a trainee without him having been asked if he was comfortable.

It was suggested that the next August meeting should be held during the day and include more young people. Perhaps a sports day would be a fun setting.

Action Amandip Johal

4 Summary - Key 3 things to take away

1 Overseas recruitment of social workers to be explored

2 Steps will be taken to re involve CIC and care experienced young people in recruitment activity for social workers and managers

3 Children's Services would confirm their position as to what age Bradford Council would allow young people a mobile phone while in care.

5 Quiz

Attendees were asked to log on to cahoot for a quick quiz relating to topics

discussed today.

- 6 Emily thanked the young people for all of their hard work on the session.
Caitlin thanked everyone for attending

The meeting then closed.

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