

**Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel
held on Wednesday, 7 December 2022 in The View
Room, Margaret Mc Millan Tower, Prince's Way,
Bradford, BD1 1NN**

Commenced 4.42 pm
Concluded 6.25 pm

Present – Councillors

LABOUR	CONSERVATIVE	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT
Duffy Thirkill Alipoor	Pollard	Knox

Non-voting co-opted members

Nineteen young people

Others

Helen Cliffe	Bradford Council, Service Manager, Safeguarding and Review, Commissioning & Provider Services
Jonathan Cooper	Head, Virtual School (HT/VS)
Caroline Dolan	Virtual School
Ali Jan Haider	Bradford District and Craven Integrated Health and Care Partnership
Amandip Johal	Bradford Council Interim Assistant Director Safeguarding and Review, Commissioning & Provider Services (iAD/SRCP)
David Johnson	Bradford Council Interim Deputy Director, Children's Social Services (iDD/CSS)
Dr Catherine Murray	Consultant Paediatrician and Designated Doctor for Children Looked After
Mick Nolan	Bradford Council Participation Team
Helen Osman	Helen Osman Governance Services (Clerk)
Richard Padwell	West Yorkshire Police
Emily Rhodes	Bradford Council – Participation Co-ordinator, Safeguarding and Reviewing Team
Carly Turpin	Bradford Council Care Leavers Service

Councillor Duffy in the Chair

Summary of actions arising from this meeting

Item/paragraph	Action	Person	Timescale
Item 5, para 7	LA to ensure all residential homes comply with Regulations requiring them to offer a weekly group activity planner, and that residents are aware of it.	A Johal	31-01-2023
Item 5, para 15	LA to re-circulate e-mail to young people regarding the Care Leavers Days.	L Kaye	31-12-2022
Item 5, para 16	LA to include on the agenda for the next Panel meeting with Young People a demonstration of the entitlements flowchart on the website.	A Johal	28-02-2023
Item 5, para 26	Virtual School to organise an annual session involving universities, colleges, Skills House, employers etc to talk to young people age 15+ about their ambitions; options such as jobs, college and university; and the support available (eg bursaries and other funding)	J Cooper	2022-23
Item 5, para 29	Head/Virtual School to prepare a written response to the question posed at paragraph 28 of these minutes for circulation to young people and members of the Corporate Parenting Panel.	J Cooper	31-01-2023

39. BUSINESS ITEMS –

UPDATE ON CURRENT CARE ARRANGEMENTS FOR OUR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

Introduction and welcome by Young Person Theme: Education

Aim – to give Corporate Parents an understanding of the education experiences of children and young people in care.

1. Two young people co-chaired the meeting. They welcomed participants to the meeting, which would focus on education. They allocated participants to discussion groups and introduced Amandip Johal to give feedback on the take-away themes identified at the meeting on 31 August 2022.

Feedback on the ‘take away’ actions from 31/8/22 Amandip, Assistant Director

Doc A (AJ notes)

2. Amandip Johal, Bradford Council’s Assistant Director, Safeguarding and Review, Commissioning & Provider Services thanked young people for attending this meeting and outlined the housekeeping arrangements for the meeting and the building. She gave feedback on the three take-away themes identified at the meeting on 31 August 2022, as follows.

Free gym passes for those living out of the authority

3. The Council had looked at the differences in gym membership between young people living in Bradford and those living outside the District. The Council would ensure that its social workers and personal advisers discuss health and wellbeing with all the young people in the authority’s care. Young people can follow this up with their Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) as part These arrangements apply to all Bradford young people in or leaving care, including those not living in Bradford.

4. **Asked** whether these arrangements applied to young people who were sixteen years old, Amandip Johal said that, if gym membership was the right thing for them, they should discuss it with their social worker, and the authority would try to make it happen for them.

A wider range of access activities to promote better physical and emotional health

5. Amandip Johal said young people had told the authority that they would like to engage in one activity per week, as a minimum. The Voice Forums had worked with young people to understand what activities were already available to improve the physical and mental wellbeing of the authority's children and young people, and whether and how often they participated in them. They had found that there were a lot of different activities across the District but that their availability varies depending on where young people live.

6. The residential services said that children living in children's homes are encouraged to engage in multiple activities each week, the more physical the better. In line with government regulations, all homes have a weekly group activity planner, and each child will also be encouraged to participate in individual activities.

7. Amandip Johal asked whether the young people here today were aware of the weekly group activity planners and was concerned to find that they were not. She would look into the matter and to ensure that the weekly group planners were in place in all children's homes and that the young people in each home were aware of them.

Action: Amandip Johal

8. Amandip Johal said that the Council's residential and fostering services team planned to consult young people on the availability of activities. Young people would receive a survey in the new year and a report would be sent to her at the end of February 2023.

9. The Council knows that children who lived in foster care with a relation or other foster carer sometimes do not have as many opportunities as they would like to take part in activities. The Council will consider how to ensure how to improve the access of these young people over the next twelve months, and fostering IROs will make sure that foster carers understand and offer children consistent activities. Children and young people cannot wait twelve months for this, so the Council has also asked IROs to talk to them about their access to activities to support health and wellbeing, and reflect those conversations in their care plans. This will cover all Bradford's looked after children and young people, including those who live outside Bradford.

10. **Replying** to a comment that it was all about money, Amandip Johal agreed that money is a factor, but it is also about ensuring that the Council provides opportunities for its young people. They should speak to their social workers about the allowances available for activities: replying to questions, she said that the allowances are available to young people between the ages of sixteen and eighteen who are living semi-independently.

11. Amandip Johal explained that, when the Council makes decisions about what it can deliver for its young people, it has to consider the needs of each individual and what else is going on in their lives. It will make sure that it listens to young people and will try to ensure that they are engaged in the activities that they want to do wherever possible.

Children and young people understanding decision-making processes and who they can ask for advice

12. Amandip Johal said that young people need to be able to track their journeys and understand the reasons for why things happen when they do, and this means that the Council needs to listen to them to make sure it gets it right. What the Council thinks and what young people themselves want may not always be the same, and the Council needs to get better at communicating with young people when this happens. Amandip Johal explained that this is made clear in the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (Article 12), which also says that the Council has to take the views and wishes of children and young people into consideration when it makes decisions about their lives. What children and young people say should influence what happens.

13. There are a lot of people who want to listen to children and young people, and there is information to help them understand what is happening and why. Amandip Johal gave the following examples:

- Community Resource Workers
- Social Workers
- Personal Advisers

- An advocate – these are independent advocacy services that are not linked to the Council
- Residential workers
- Foster carers
- IROs
- Fostering IROs
- Regulation 44 officers, for young people living in children's home
- Teachers
- Health services

14. Amandip Johal said that a new programme will replaced the unloved Viewpoint. The new Mind Of My Own app allows the Council to carry out surveys with all children who are in care or leaving care, and will be available from the end of January 2023.

Feedback regarding Care Leaver Entitlements. Louisa, Service Manager for Care Leavers.

15. Carly Turpin from Bradford Council Care Leavers Service said that feedback from Your Voice had shown that young people are keen to be involved in shaping the revised Local Offer. They had found the links on the site made it easier to navigate. The Local Offer is available on the website and will be amended as follows:

- The site will mirror Coram Voice, including a flowchart setting out Young people's entitlements.
- It will emphasise the importance of social workers and personal advisers taking the tie to explain legal and other terms to young people.
- There will be opportunities to talk through the eligibility criteria at the regular care leavers days, at which young people learn about what will happen when they join the care leavers service. It became clear that young people had not received details of these events: Carly Turpin will re-circulate the e-mail that was sent to young people about this.

Action: Louisa Kay

- Driving lessons will be available for young people up to their twenty-fifth birthday.
- The availability of gym membership for Bradford's looked after young people living outside the District will be clarified, as discussed earlier in this meeting.

16. **Cllr Duffy asked** that the flowchart setting out young people's entitlements be demonstrated to young people at a future meeting to make sure that it meets their needs.

Action: Amandip Johal

Table discussions regarding barriers to education

17. The co-Chairs invited the four discussion groups each to discuss one of the following topics:

- The entitlement to 25+ hours of education per week
- Pupil Premium
- Transition
- Expectations

The Clerk was present at parts of the discussions at two tables: the remainder of the minutes of this agenda item reflect her notes of those discussions and the content of the flipcharts used by the discussion groups and in the whole-group discussion that followed.

25+ hours per week

18. Information about the entitlement to 25+ hours per week of education and the availability of additional tutoring needs to be included in all communications. Social Workers should share this information with children and young people – **do they know about it themselves?**

19. More use should be made of social media platforms (eg Tik Tok, simple podcasts) to communicate with children and young people.

20. The availability of additional tutoring should be explained in more detail at PEP meetings. Young people prefer one-to-one or small group tuition.

21. The Local Offer needs to be improved by making it clear and less confusing.

Pupil Premium table discussion

22. Cllr Duffy asked the Clerk, who is familiar with Pupil Premium through her work with primary school governing bodies, to explain about Pupil Premium, she said that Pupil Premium is designed to enable schools to support disadvantaged children to narrow the gap in educational achievement between them and their peers. It is paid to schools according to the number of children in the school who are eligible for free school meals, looked after, or meet one of a number of other criteria.

Asked how the use of Pupil Premium funding was monitored, the Clerk said that this is the responsibility of the school's Governing Body. Schools have to publish a plan, approved by the Governing Body, showing how they will spend the funding to support their disadvantaged children, and they have to publish a report showing the impact of that spending. Typically, primary schools spend Pupil Premium funding on additional interventions for disadvantaged pupils, subsidising their access to trips and activities etc. The Clerk did not work closely enough with secondary schools to be able to say how they spent Pupil Premium funding.

23. In addition, Local Authorities receive Pupil Premium Plus funding for their looked after children. Half of this funding goes to the child's school and the other half is kept by the authority – specifically the Virtual School - and used as needed across the District. For example, if a school needs additional funding to support a looked after child, they can apply to the Virtual School.

Aspirations table discussion

24. **Asked** what proportion of Bradford's looked after children go to university, adults at the table said they believed that the national figure was around 6% to 7% but did not know the figure for Bradford – it was important to find out, as this was a key indicator of the authority's ambition for its looked after young people and of its success in realising that ambition.

25. It would be useful to know the hours of education for children and young people in different forms of care (e.g. foster care, residential homes etc.).

26. The table agreed that it would be useful for the Virtual School to organise an annual session involving universities, colleges, Skills House, prospective employers etc to talk to young people from the age of fifteen upwards about their ambitions; options such as jobs, college and university; and the support available to them, such as bursaries and other funding. The planning of the event would need to ensure that people in independent living are aware of it.

Action: Head/Virtual School

27. **Asked** how the progress and attainment of looked after children and young people at secondary schools is monitored and why it is different for primary and secondary schools, Councillors in this discussion group said that primary schools are smaller and each class sends more time with a single class teacher, who gets to know each pupil and their parents and carers well.

28. Jonathan Cooper, Head of the Virtual School, joined this table and was asked a number of questions:

- Are there counsellors and therapists in schools to support looked after children? Jonathan Cooper thought not, but would need to check.
- Are Pupil Premium and Pupil Premium Plus used in the same way by primary schools,

secondary schools and academies? Jonathan Cooper said that they should be: there are rules (Regs.) about how PP can be used, as well as an LA policy that schools should observe. **Asked** whether they actually are used in the same way by all schools, he said that all schools should record how Pupil Premium and Pupil Premium Plus funding is used in the individual Personal Education Plan (PEP) for each child.

- How do Pupil Premium and Pupil Premium Plus work for young people in independent living?
- Do academies have stricter rules than state schools that take less account of issues in the lives of looked after children and young people?
- If a looked after child is on a part time school schedule, how does the Virtual School know how Pupil Premium Plus is being used to support that child? Jonathan Cooper explained that schools only receive half of the Pupil Premium Plus funding for each of its looked after children: the other half is held by the Virtual School to use as required to support schools' requests for specific looked after children. This should be recorded in each child's PEP.
- Does the Virtual School always know if a looked after child is on a part time schedule for school? Jonathan Cooper said that the Virtual School only knows this if it is told by the school, and that depends on whether the school follows the government's Regulations for all children in part time education – that does not always happen. **Asked** what the Virtual School is doing about that and how it holds schools to account, Jonathan Cooper acknowledged that it needs to get better at this: the PEP is key, and the PEP system needs to flag things up automatically, such as when a child was not in fulltime education. **Asked** whether this system is in place, he said that it is not there yet. **Asked** when it will be in place, he said that it is partly there and that a fully automated system will be in place by the end of January 2023. **Asked** whether the system would just flag up hours in education or whether it would identify other matters such as participation in extracurricular activities such as clubs, he said it would include whether a school had allocated additional tutoring to the child.

29. The group apologised for “bouncing” the Head of the Virtual School with these questions. They thanked him for his initial answers and asked that he prepare a written response to these questions for circulation to young people and members of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

Action: Head, Virtual School

Expectations

Discussion prompt: In 2021 7.2% of looked after children achieved the grade 5 “good pass” threshold in English and maths GCSEs, compared with 40.1% of non-looked after children.

30. The group thought that this statistic might reflect missed education (for example due to exclusion for troubled behaviour) or the circumstances that had caused them to enter care.

31. If a looked after child or young person is excluded from school, what are they expected to do during the hours that they would otherwise have been in school?

32. Expectations are generally lower for looked after children and young people, though this does vary depending on the teacher. This reduces their motivation to do well: some are self-motivated, but others become disillusioned and disengaged. Teachers should not lower their expectations of children and young people just because they are in care. Young people want to feel motivated to achieve higher targets.

33. It can be harder for young people in or leaving care to maintain motivation at college. Some foster carers are supportive, but residential homes are less so – there can be an expectation that young people should manage on their own.

34. Young people in and leaving care often feel a sense of stigma, though this is less the case for those who have been fostered. Young people only tell their closest friends and try to avoid being “outed”. If people find out, young people feel that they are blamed for having been in care. When they are removed from classes they feel it is because they are not clever enough to do the work. Sometimes this is done with the best interests of the child in mind – for example if they have missed a lot of learning – but it is often said in a way that makes them feel stupid.

35. Social workers do not talk to children and young people much about their schooling – they focus

on other things and do not seem to care about education. There is little time for young people to bond with their social worker.

36. So, young people lack support to do well in education due to a combination of:

- lack of interest on the part of social workers;
- low teacher expectation leading to demoralisation and disengagement by young people; and
- minimal support from foster and residential carers.

Transition

37. Young people made the following suggestions:

- If they could be dropped off at school further away, they would stand out less.
- Similarly, they would stand out less of the vehicles that dropped them off were not identifiable as being from residential homes etc. ...
- ... and if the same carer could attend different events so that it was less obvious that they are not the child's birth parents ...
- ... and if their carers could avoid wearing identity badges for the care home.
- If young people had to move schools, it should be at the start of a new school year or, at least, a new term – joining a new school mid-term was particularly difficult.
- Young people – and not just their social workers – should be part of the decision-making process.
- Moving house and/or school was not always the best choice for young people - they lost contact with their friends and had to re-explain their lives to new people.
- It would be helpful to have a buddy or mentor.

Take Away Actions

The meeting agreed that the Council should take away the following priorities to work on and report back to the next meeting:

- 1) Ensure all YP know about their 25 hours' entitlement and the availability of additional tutoring.
- 2) Establish the proportion of Bradford's young people in care that achieve the grade 5 "good pass" threshold in English and Maths GCSEs. Narrow the gap between this proportion and the proportion of non-looked after children who achieve this standard nationally (40.1% in 2021).
- 3) Minimise the need for children to switch schools when they move house and, where a change in school is unavoidable, make the change at the start of the school year. Mid-term changes of school should be avoided at all costs.

Closing

The co-Chairs thanked participants for their attendance and contributions. The next meeting would be held on **29 March 2023**, when the authority would give feedback on the takeaway points.

Emily Rhodes, from the Participation Team, asked that young people and adults let her know what theme they would like to focus on at the next meeting.

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