

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Child Led Panel held on 20th September 2023

Present

Councillors

Cllr Sue Duffy (chair)

Cllr Carol Thirkill

Cllr Ursula Sutcliffe

Non voting co-opted members

Picklu Roychoudhury

Amandip Johal

Adam Gleenon

Jonathan Cooper

Charlotte Ramsden

Ruth Terry

Emily Rhodes

Jonathan Cooper

Mick Nolan

Apologies

Cllr Mike Pollard

Cllr Debbie Davies

Cllr Margaret Alipoor

Jude MacDonald

12 young people, two of whom chaired the meeting.

A. PROCEDURAL ITEMS

1. ALTERNATE MEMBERS (Standing Order 34)

Item not taken, no alternative members in attendance.

2. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST (Members Code of Conduct - Part 4A of the Constitution)

Item not taken.

3. MINUTES

Previous minutes not reviewed.

4. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

Item not taken – no reports submitted.

B. BUSINESS ITEMS

The theme for the meeting was Independent Living and questions had been prepared for group discussions.

1. What processes do we currently have in place to prepare young people for living independently and how are these being implemented and carried out?
 - Pathway plans are not always up to date and need to focus on these as they plan the future for children.
 - More training for Foster Carers to give young people the skills they need when living independently.

2. How can we assess when a young person is ready to leave care?
 - Discussed how young people may feel when going to live on their own: feeling lonely; nervous; scared; happy as free to do what they want.
 - Discussed what young people need to know when leaving care and what support they need and who would provide this, i.e. foster carers/residential workers.

3. If we're preparing young people to leave care and live independently, why are so many young people failing? Aside from physical preparation, how do we currently prepare young people for independent living emotionally, mentally and socially?
 - Discussed what young people would like in preparation for leaving care.
 - Ensure the right emotional support is in place for young people especially when they have experienced multiple moves as it makes more difficult to prepare to live alone.
 - Emotional support should be available and not something young people need to ask for.
 - Further conversation on how difficult it is when workers change and having to continually repeat things.
 - Should be there to support to live independently.
 - Ensure skills in place and children are heard, building skills and sharing experiences.

4. What problems do care leavers face whilst living independently that other young people may not face?
 - Supported networks, which resulted from being in care system, support was there in care but not there when transition, i.e. finance; managing debt; budgeting; housing; having the same opportunities as other young people, they may leave home and return where care leavers cannot do this; have a choice of which area live in and not just having what is available.
 - Health, particularly mental health which could be linked to stresses due to finances.
 - Isolation
 - Having people to talk to, a support network.
 - Independent living skills and knowing where to go to get support, where to go for advice when needed.
 - Having/building positive relationships and networks.
 - Support for young parents/becoming a parent.
 - Have to grow up quickly and not having opportunity to make mistakes and move on.

The young people's Wednesday group and today's meeting have picked up the same key aspects.

Further group discussion looking at what young people need to aware of when leaving care, how implemented and taught.

1. Mental and emotional preparation
 - Conversation linked to CAMHS and not getting timely support.
 - CAMHS appointment held in different settings.
 - Discussed other services that could be provided.
 - Discussed carers and what they do/what they need to do to be good.
 - Good conversation about a buddy system, i.e. a 14 year old has a 16 year old buddy who is going through the leaving care process to share information and pathway and hopefully build a lifelong friendship.

2. Financial learning and Personal Care
 - Discussed finances and having less money than when in care and how things cost money and how can make sure can pay bills. Whilst in care could look at managing money for example encourage saving some of pocket money. For paying bills need to know what type of bills may receive and how to pay them.

- In terms of personal hygiene/care need a straight way to teach and should continue to be monitored, should not be taught as check list but individual to needs. Also different cultures are taught different ways and this should not change. Suggestion this could be done by nurses and all children in care receive a 6 monthly health appointment but also combine training with staff.

How carers should work with young people

- Make it fun.
- Social integration.
- Be nice.
- Meetings to sort out problems.
- Learn how to do housekeeping, discussed what age this should be, 8 or 11.

Practical Learning

- This would be things like shopping, cleaning, cooking. Discussed what age would start learning, although some is what is done day to day.
- Treat children as own when doing learning.
- Discussed Foster Carers doing things but allowing young people to help/do themselves.
- Cooking classes.
- Training and guidance to be provided all through time in care so have idea of what is needed when leaving care.
- Some children will need more help and guidance than others, especially around getting a house.
- Talking to children in care and asking how they would like to be taught the skills as there will be different learning requirements.

Short break and group reconvened.

Group discussion and round up of table discussions and agreement for Takeaway Themes.

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.

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

Buddy System – including a youth forum which would have the knowledge and support of people who have been in care. Look into monthly workshops on different subjects i.e. what do bills look like and how to deal with them. Look into online videos for different areas of help and support needed. Everything does not have to come from professionals, it may be better received from people of a similar age and experience.

