

**CORPORATE PARENTING SPECIALIST
ADVISORY GROUP
Monday 22nd June 2015**

PRESENT –

Cllr Pat McFall	Chair of the Group and Assistant Executive Member for Children`s Services
Cllr Mohammed Khan	Leader of the Council
Cllr Andy Kay	Deputy Leader of the Council
Cllr Michael Lee	Main Opposition Leader and Vice Chair of Standards Committee
Cllr Maureen Bateson	Executive Member for Children`s Services
Cllr Julie Gunn	Assistant Executive Member Children`s Services
Cllr Dave Harling	Executive Member for Schools and Education
Cllr Damian Talbot	Executive Member Leisure Culture and Young People
Cllr Yusuf Jan Virmani	Executive member for Neighbourhood, Housing and Customer Services
Cllr Brian Taylor	Assistant Executive Member Health and Adult Social Care
Cllr Sylvia Liddle	Chair of Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Cllr Jim Shorrock	Chair of Policy and Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Cllr Ron O`Keeffe	Chair of Health and Adults Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Cllr John Wright	Chair of Licensing Committee
Cllr John Roberts	Assistant Executive Member Environment
Cllr Julie Daley	Shadow Executive Member Children`s Services
Cllr Denise Gee	Shadow Executive Member Schools and Education
Cllr Julie Slater	Shadow Executive Member Neighbourhoods Housing and Customer Services
Cllr Imtiaz Ali	Shadow Assistant Executive Member Regeneration
Cllr Quesir Mahmood	

Also Present –

Linda Clegg	Director of Children`s Services
Robert Arrowsmith	Head of Service (Policy, Planning & Performance)
Karen Barrick	Head of Service – Permanence
Jessica Byrne	Head of Service – Education Excellence
Charlotte Hesketh	Head of Virtual Governors for Looked After Children
Aldo Staffa	Children In Our Care Education Manager
Sarah Barr Frost	Safeguarding Lead NHS Central Lancashire Children and Families
Ben Aspinall	Democratic Services Manager
Rebekah Mottershead	Dedicated Group Support Officer

RESOLUTIONS

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the municipal year of the Corporate Parenting Specialist Advisory Group. Apologies were received from Cllrs Entwistle, Hussain S., Khonat, Rigby, Smith D., J Smith and Tapp. Apologies were also received from Angela Allen, Sam Briggs, Sharon Burns, Elizabeth Mannion, Sheila Morris, Gavin Redhead, The VOICE Group and Christy Walsh.

RESOLVED –

That the apologies be noted.

2. Action Notes of the Meeting held on the 23rd March 2015

RESOLVED – That the Action Notes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Specialist Advisory Group held on the 23rd March 2015 be agreed as a correct record.

3. Pupil Premium- a spending outline

The Chair welcomed Aldo Staffa, Looked After Children's Education Manager, along with Charlotte Hesketh, Looked After Children (LAC) Virtual Head and Assessment Officer, to the meeting and invited them to provide the Group with an overview and update on how the Pupil Premium Fund had been allocated for the 2014/15 financial year the key developments around funding allocation since its last meeting.

Aldo Staffa provided the Group with a report on allocation of the Pupil Premium Plus funding for the financial year 2014-15. He advised that the figures were as follows;

Funding to maintained schools

- Primary - £145,006
- Secondary - £39,465
- Special Schools - £9600
- Pupil Referral Units - £8124

Funding to Academies

- Primary - £6224
- Secondary - £32,559

Funding to Free Schools

- £6016

Funding to non-Blackburn with Darwen settings

- Primary - £94,495
- Secondary - £75,596

It was reported that the total Pupil Premium funding paid to schools in the last financial year was £417, 085.

Members queried why the funding allocated to maintained primary schools was significantly higher than that given to maintained secondary schools. It was reported that as a result of a number of secondary schools converting to academies part way through the financial year, the funding allocation was split between the two categories (maintained and academies) in the report. Aldo advised that figure for maintained secondary schools and academies could be combined to give a more accurate indication of the overall funding allocated to secondary schools.

Members questioned why the figure for funding provision for schools outside the borough was so high. Aldo advised that even though many Looked After Children were placed with Foster families in surrounding areas, they were still classed as a child in the Care of this Authority. The Group was informed that because of this, Pupil Premium funding for them must be provided by Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council.

It was reported that whilst the majority of the money given to schools was spent on one to one tuition, a significant amount was used on such items as; Laptops, computers, internet connection and out of school activities and clubs to help to build the child's confidence and self-esteem. The Group was advised that a report identifying the full breakdown of funding allocation would be emailed to Members after the meeting.

Aldo informed the Group that Pupil Premium funding had previously been distributed to schools to use as they saw fit. He advised that it had become apparent that some schools may not be using the monies for the educational benefit of the Child In Our Care and therefore the department decided to introduce a policy to take control over the allocation of funding.

The Group heard that the Virtual School Headteacher (VSH) had the statutory power to carry out the duty to promote the educational achievement of children it looks after, and that the VSH was required to manage the grant allocation to ensure it was used for the benefit of the Looked After Child's educational needs as described in their Personal Education Plan (PEP). Charlotte Hesketh informed the Group that she had been appointed as the VSH in May 2015, and since then had been developing a School Improvement Plan to implement more structure to the allocation of funding, and to ensure that schools provided an audit trail to demonstrate how the monies had been utilised to the educational benefit of the children and young people in our Care.

Charlotte provided the Group with the draft policy 'Blackburn with Darwen Pupil Premium Plus Policy for Children in Our Care 2015-16.

It was reported that for the financial year 2015-16, the basis of the Pupil Premium Plus allocation to the Local Authority for Children in Our Care was calculated on a per pupil basis from years Reception to 11 of £1900. Charlotte advised that the VSH would now have the authority to assign that money on a needs driven basis rather than per pupil, and that monies could also be withheld should the school not have satisfied the team that it was being utilised appropriately.

The Group was informed that children in care did not perform as well educationally as their peers, and that the introduction of the Blackburn with Darwen Pupil Premium Plus Policy and the School Improvement Plan would allow the Council to engage with key stakeholders to encourage a strong focus on raising the academic attainment and achievement of children and young people in Care.

Charlotte advised that the department would be asking schools to complete a provision map to provide data demonstrating how the allocated funding was used by the school. The group heard that this map would need to be signed off by the Headteacher of the school as well as the child's Designated Teacher.

It was reported that the regularity of funding allocation had now changed from twice a year to once a term. Charlotte informed the Group that this was to ensure that the child's academic needs were being met on a regular basis.

The Group heard that every Child In Our Care would have a Personal Education Plan, and that this would now be linked into the allocation of Pupil Premium Plus funding. It was reported that the Designated Teacher should play a key role in planning the use of the Pupil Premium for each child/young person, and in reviewing the impact of any intervention and making any adjustments as appropriate. Charlotte advised that it was important that children and young people in Care had the opportunity to express their views as to whether they felt the money had been spent appropriately and to have an input in their PEPs.

Charlotte indicated that currently children and young people had this input at their Personal Education Plan meetings, but that further avenues to allow them to express their concerns or make suggestions with regards to Pupil Premium Plus funding was being investigated.

The Group noted that academic attainment of the children and young people in our care was a key priority, and questioned as to how achievement and attainment would be measured since the eradication of the National Curriculum. Charlotte advised that this would be a major challenge, and that the department was looking to create a standardised report which would

ascertain if the child was meeting age related appropriate targets. It was noted that the VSH would be liaising with the Virtual Governing Body to develop this measuring policy. The Chair stated that it was also important to measure achievement on an individual basis rather than simply on the grades they attained.

Concerns were raised by Members that a PEP could take time to come into effect, and as the Pupil Premium Plus funding would now be linked to the Education Plan it was questioned as to how quickly funding would be made available for the child/young person in Care once the plan was set in motion. Charlotte informed the Group that a PEP was completed within 20 days of a child entering Care. She advised that as funding was to be distributed on a termly basis upon the completion of a provision map, there should be no delay in allocating appropriate funding quickly.

It was reported that not all Local Authorities allocated all of their Pupil Premium Funding directly to schools. It was advised that sometimes up to 25% of the budget was held by the Authority to allow for provisions such as; dedicated Educational Psychologists for children in care, individual tutoring and for letterbox parcels of books.

Councillor Bateson questioned how Foster Carers were involved in the process, whether the funding followed the child if they changed schools mid-term or if the school kept it, and what would happen if the child did not attend school. Charlotte advised that Fosters Carers were always invited to the termly PEP meetings to ensure that they had an input on the choices being made for the child. She informed the Group that if a child was to move schools early in a term then the team would liaise with the two schools in question to look to arrange a funding transfer. It was reported that if the child moved towards the end of term then the budget would be allocated to the new school upon the next review meeting. In response to concerns raised about children who did not attend school, the Group heard that there were no children and young people in the Care of the Local Authority that were not on roll at a school, and that should children not turn up to school, Pupil Premium Plus funding could potentially still be allocated as encouraging school attendance was one of its designated uses.

Questions were raised as to whether PEPs and provision plans could lead to the development of a league table of schools that offered the best educational provision for children in care or if areas of best practice could be shared to ensure that all schools were aware of what worked well for Looked After Children and what did not. The Group was advised that schools and Designated Teachers were very keen to share areas of best practice, and that school admission guidance indicated that children in Care should attend a school rated "Outstanding" or "Good" wherever possible to ensure that they were given the best educational provision possible.

The Group was informed that the department was working to ensure that the majority of Pupil Premium Plus funding was spent in school to promote education and to allow Looked After Children to fulfil their academic potential.

RESOLVED –

1. That the draft policy 'Blackburn with Darwen Pupil Premium Plus Policy for Children in Our Care 2015-16.
2. That the Group receive a comprehensive breakdown of the Pupil Premium Plus funding allocation
3. That the Looked After Children's Education Manager and LAC Virtual Head and Assessment Officer be thanked for their attendance

4. Corporate Parenting: What it means to the organisation

The Democratic Services Manager provided the Group with an overview of what it meant to be a Corporate Parent.

It was reported that a key priority of the Group for this municipal year was to ensure that they produced meaningful, tangible outcomes from its chosen work topic areas that would add value, and make a real difference to the Looked After Children of the borough.

The Group was reminded that efficiency savings had decreased the amount of funding available to the department, and that collectively there would be further challenges and hard decisions to make going forwards as a result of prospective budget reductions.

Members were informed that an inspection of the Virtual School by OFSTED was imminent. Robert Arrowsmith, Head of Service (Policy, Planning & Performance), provided the Group with a list of 8 hot topic areas that were likely to be the focus of that inspection.

These topics were under three designated headings and were as follows;

Outcomes

For the Group to

1. Receive and consider the Public Health Commissioned research on Health Outcomes for Children in Our Care (completed by John Moores University, Liverpool)
2. Consider and assess the progress made by the Virtual School (in winter after exam results)

Support for children in Care in placement and in permanently leaving care

For the Group to

3. Consider support for out of borough placements, especially those who go missing from home
4. Consider the support for children in Care going missing from home
5. Consider the range of options for placements of children in our Care, especially for children aged 10+
6. Consider the effectiveness of permanence, planning and exits from Care, especially through adoption

Context

For the Group to

7. Consider the expectations of Local Authorities, including elected Members, around children in our Care, as expressed in the current OFSTED Single Inspection Framework
8. Consider trends of children in Care and entering and leaving Care, in comparison to other Local Authorities (nations, regional, similar) – age, sex, ethnicity, home area, length of time in Care and exit routes from Care

The group held detailed discussions around the challenges faced by the department for each of the above suggestions, and the potential difference that could be made to Looked After Children should the item be looked at as part of the work programme. In noting that there was a strong link between numbers 3 to 5, it was suggested that these topics be looked at as one item.

Concerns were raised that young people had not been invited to make suggestions as to what they wished the Group to look at this year. Councillor Bateson advised that the end result should be a positive impact on the young people in the borough, and that young people's input was paramount to achieving this. The Group was advised that a key concern for Care leavers was the impact of the Welfare Reform, and that the budget announcement on the 8th July 2015 could have a significant impact on the provisions for young people once they leave the Care system. It was suggested that the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee provided the Group with a report on their findings on this topic.

Members noted that the reports presented focussed on Looked After Children, and indicated that it would be useful for the Group to receive an updated report which included the number of children and young people at risk of being taken into Care to allow for a true indication of the magnitude of need throughout the borough. Members were concerned that there would be a negative impact on Looked After Children, and those on the edge of Care, once further budget efficiencies were implemented and when the outcomes of the Welfare Reform began to come into effect and suggested that this be investigated to prevent a 'firefighting' scenario further down the line.

Members raised concerns that waiting until exams had been sat to measure progress and achievement could have a detrimental impact on the child as areas where they required additional support could be missed. The Group was advised that the end of the year had been suggested for this topic to be considered to allow national exam result figures to be compared to our own; thus indicating how well Blackburn with Darwen children were performing at a national level. It was reported that as PEPs were reviewed on a termly basis any additional support needs would be identified and addressed accordingly.

The Democratic Services Manager advised that a document indicating the additional ideas and amendments for the Group's work programme would be circulated to all Members as soon as possible. It was suggested that these action points and outcomes be ranked by Members in order of preference. The VOICE Group and the Youth MPs would also be asked for their opinions on what they felt would be the best focus areas for the Group.

The Democratic Services Manager informed the Group that once this information had been collected, to ensure that work topics were not duplicated, the Chair of the Corporate Parenting Specialist Advisory Group, the Chair of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Director of Children' Services would meet and agree the work programme of the Corporate Parenting Specialist Advisory Group for the municipal year.

Cllr Kay requested that all papers be emailed out in advance of the next meeting.

RESOLVED –

That Members receive a compressive list of suggested and amended outcomes and work programme ideas and rank them in order of preference. Subject to consultation with the Chair, Director of Childrens Services and the Chair of Children and Young Peoples Overview and Scrutiny Committee, a work programme, in outline, with update, will be brought to the next meeting of the Group.

Signed.....

Chair of the meeting at which the Minutes were signed

Date.....