

CORPORATE PARENTING SPECIALIST ADVISORY GROUP

Monday, 25th July 2022

PRESENT – Councillors: Fielding (In the Chair), Floyd, Gunn, S Hussain, Irfan, Liddle, Raja, Taylor, Patel, Smith.

OFFICERS –

Jayne Ivory – Director Children’s Services & Education

Joanne Siddle – Deputy Director, Schools & Education

Lynn Fields - Deputy Director Children’s Social Care, Children’s

Imran Akuji – Head of Service, Partnerships, Intensive Support, Policy and Performance

Paula Quinn – FCA Vice Chair

Sam Briggs – FCA Secretary

Judith Fennell - Head of Service Corporate Parenting & Performance, Childrens

Elizabeth Clarkson – Participation & Inclusion Manager, Children’s Services

Declan Smith - Care Leaver

Rosia McCusker - YPS Care Leaver

Victoria Balmer - Deputy Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children & Looked After Children (Pennine Lancashire)

RESOLUTIONS

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair, Cllr Fielding, welcomed all present to the meeting. Apologies were received from Martin Eden, Paula Quinn, Louise Hartley and from the following Councillors: Damian Talbot, Julie Slater, Abdul Patel, Jacquie Slater, Stephanie Brookfield, Zamir Khan, Zainab Rawat, Sonia Khan, Mark Russell, Tasleem Fazal, Sabahat Imtiaz, Abdul Patel, Dave Smith, Jean Rigby, John Slater, Tony Humphrey, and Dave Harling.

2. Declaration of Interest in items on this Agenda

RESOLVED - There were no Declarations of Interest received.

3. Minutes of the previous Meeting held on 3rd March 2022

RESOLVED – The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 3rd March 2022 were approved with one minor change to record. This was outlined as a name change from page four, Carol Walsh to Carol Smith. This was moved by Cllr Gunn and second by Cllr Floyd.

4. Vice Chair Update

Declan was welcomed to the meeting by the Chair, and provided an update. Two flyers were distributed around the group for Young People’s Interview Panels and Children In Our Care Fun Day. Declan then passed over to Rosia McCusker to provide a further update on Participation.

The group heard that since their last update, members of the LEAVING CARE FORUM have been gathering weekly to talk about what needs improving – we

have looked at the work that has been completed and what needs to continue, as shown by the Leaving Care Improvement Plan which we have co-designed.

The LEAVING CARE FORUM have created a document on what our expectations are when conducting our YP interview panels both from managers and from ourselves. (Please see handout)

We have worked very hard on these interviews and I would just like to urge anyone who ever asks us to do them to read the document and make sure we are being treated the way we should and we as young people will adhere to what is expected from us.

On Saturday 16th July a leaving care young people's interview panel conducted interviews at Duke Street for the social work recruitment day – we took part in a number of interviews as well as fed back to senior members of staff within social services. This was a great event to recruit potential new staff to our amazing children's services team.

We enjoyed this experience as we met plenty of new people and of course loved the buffet. We then continued to the commonwealth baton event just outside the town hall to support our youth MP Muhammed Bapu it was a great feeling as a young person to see how important our town really is, fantastic speeches from both Mo and of course Cllr Julie Gunn.

Hopefully in the next games we may well have an athlete from Blackburn with Darwen.

Soon we will be holding a Children In Care Fun day at Kaleidoscope – we ask any of you who can attend, please do it as it will be nice for all of the young people to talk to you in a less formal manner and understand how you can help us.

During the summer holidays we have a number of activities set up for our voice forums to have some fun in a range of activities such as watersports, archery, bowling and a zoo trip so that the children and young people have plenty to do even out of term time. Thank you.

Declan then passed onto Roisa for the update on Participation.

Resolved - That the update be noted.

5. Participation Update

The group heard that it is nice to see everyone and be able to update you all face-to-face regarding all the work we have been doing and what we continue to do in our drive to improve services for young people.

In regards to participation, we are really following through with all our plans we set out to complete. In respects of our young inspectors programme, which is where young people will be trained up to inspect services that young people have access to.

We planned to start off with in house organisations and work our way into the community sector such as GP and other health services, this has been going well so far and some of the young people have been involved in launching a pilot scheme, which consisted of young people who co-designed the project, inspecting Young People's Services – Targeted Youth Support Team.

From what I have heard, the managers of the team had never been so nervous in their life! The young people, along with support from staff are now in the process of finalising the structure for inspections and implementing a training package that other young people will be able to partake in.

I have recently been in contact with schools, after creating a PowerPoint presentation to explore opportunities for me to visit along with Amjad to promote our youth forum but also our voice groups and the leaving care forum to those in older year groups.

Many schools have taken up on our offer and we have visited both St Thomas' and BCHS, whilst securing dates for the new term in September to visit the likes of Our Lady & St Johns, Pleckgate, Darwen Studio, the heights and St Wilfrids. We have already recruited new members for our forum and hope to have some more young people with similar passion take up on the offer when we visit them in September.

Going back to the Leaving Care Forum, Julie Gunn and Taz, along with Clare Bibby to check that we were happy with the changes implemented to the leaving care development plan after our recommendations. We were all very happy that our feedback was taken on board and changes were made to suit our wants and needs.

We attended the FCA day at the Tipis and it was a lovely day to say the least. Myself and other staff at YPS provided the bouncy castle and borrowed the penalty shootout from Blackburn Rovers. We really enjoyed seeing everybody enjoy the sun – even though I wasn't too pleased about the sunburn that occurred shortly after.

I have recently devised a poster for the Children In Our Care Fun day, which takes place on the 20th August, and we have brought along some copies for you to have. Dec and I, as the organisers of this event, just want to reiterate our thanks to all the support we have received so far.

Discussions took place between the group regarding the above update regarding budget, planning, management and interview feedback.

It was discussed to ask whether the Mayor would like to attend future events and Fun Days and for the above updates to be pushed to all members.

Further discussions with the group were regarding the drop in membership and how to support increasing the membership. This included support from Fosters Carers Association and schools.

Resolved - That the update be noted.

6. Foster Carers Association Update

Paula Quinn and Sam Briggs were welcomed to the meeting by the Chair, and together updated the Group on the following:

- The FCA Funday at the Tipis was a huge success again. We expressed our gratitude to the Mayor for attending (despite it being Eid). Thank you also to cllr Julie Gunn and Katrina for attending (it would be nice to see more

councillors/Corp parents visiting our events)

- FCA committee members had met with Imran and Clare from Leaving Care. We are particularly concerned at the lack of funding they receive making it difficult for young people to stay put with their FCs, although this is often the best way to support young vulnerable care leavers.
- FCA have been working with YOU to provide activities for LAC over the summer and a possible residential in Sept for 8-12yr olds. A series of activities and a residential for 13+ has already been planned for Voice members. We are advertising these activities to all FCs as a recruitment exercise for the Voice.
- Recruitment - the FCA expressed concern over the recruitment opportunities CS have missed. The FCA held fundraising stalls e.g at the Royal British Legion funday. We have also visited other events e.g Royal Lands Show. We have seen many independent foster agencies at these events and feel BWD CS are missing opportunities to advertise and recruit.
- The FAR are partnering with YPS and running a tonsils at the CIOC Sunday at Kaleidoscope on 20th Aug (would be nice to see corporate parents there).
- Out of hours support for FCs is still an issue, however the FCA committee have a meeting scheduled for mid August with CS manager to further discuss the matter and look at possible solutions.

Discussions took place between the group regarding budget challenges, out of hours support and additional services. Further discussions took place regarding how there is a national crisis regarding placements in the UK. In addition, concerns regarding recruitment and retention and missed opportunities were discussed, with the outcome of more needing to be done to raise the profile more. Suggestions from The Chair was to find out how to get into more events and encouraged them to be more creative in their activities to be more engaging. Other suggestions from various members of the group included leaflets with council tax letters or bin collection leaflets and local newspaper articles. In addition, further suggestions included the strategy that was used for the Oral Health Strategy while other suggestions was to research shared lives and shared accommodation.

Resolved - That the update be noted.

7. **Corporate Parenting Dashboard**

The group was presented with an update by Judith Fenell on the latest monitoring report of Children Looked After (CLA) started and ceased in the last 6 months and heard that 79 CLA started in the last 6 months and 58 CLA ceased in the last 6 months.

It was presented that 0 of the 79 CLA starters were unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) and that 10 of the 79 CLA starters have been

previously looked after (13%).

Of the 58 CLA ceased in the last 6 months, 16% Adopted and 22% Special Guardianship Order, both of which are higher than the regional (11%, 17% respectively) and national average (10% and 14% respectively).

Judith informed the group that there are 406 CLA with an open episode of care with 52% reviewed in the last 3 months and 40% reviewed between 3 - 6 months. In addition, of the 406 CLA, 70% of children have been last seen in the last 6 weeks and 25% have been seen between 6 - 12 weeks ago.

Judith highlighted that within CLA placements, 277 of 403 were in Foster Placements. It was highlighted that 19 children had 3 placements, 10 children had 4 placements, 3 children had 5 placements and 1 children had 6 placements and 1 had 7 placements.

In addition it was highlighted to the group that long term placement stability had increased, however was lower than the regional and national average.

Judith informed the group of CLA health and missing / absent from placement. There are currently 279 open CLA looked after for at least 12 months. Within health assessments, 86% of current open CLA who have been looked after for at least 12 months have had an up to date health assessment (in the last 6 months for CLA aged under 5, and in the last 12 months for CLA aged 5-plus).

55% of current open CLA who have been looked after for at least 12 months have had dental checks in the last 12 months.

43 of 466 looked after children who had a missing incident in the last 12 months, equating to 9% which is 1% lower than the regional and national percentage (10%).

0 of 466 looked after children who had an absent incident in the last 12 months.

Judith informed the group of a case study presentation regarding a timeline of a 3 year old girl.

Out of borough placements were discussed between the group, in addition to discussing the dashboard and the case study.

Victoria Balmer advised that there has been a pilot scheme in dental care in Rossendale that has been agreed to be extended throughout Lancashire and Blackpool, to be rolled out around November / December.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted and future data will look at unaccompanied Ukrainian children.

8. Care Leavers / Ofsted Action

Imran Akuji was welcomed to the meeting by the Chair, and provided an update on Leaving Care Service.

- The group was informed of the areas for improvement identified by Ofsted.
- The quality of support, advice and guidance offered to care leavers over the age of 18
- The provision of information for care leavers about their entitlements and health histories
- The range and impact of participation and advocacy opportunities for children and care leavers
- The effectiveness and impact of internal auditing and monitoring processes
- New leadership was introduced post inspection, and a full service review has led to revised processes and approaches with really positive feedback from the Leaving Care Service.

The group were informed that 317 care leavers (aged 16 - 25 yrs) as at 08/07/2022 of which the team are currently supporting 306 young people, all of whom have an allocated PA and are currently receiving a service.

Key Notes:

Education, Employment & Training - Support & Engagement

- Covid has had an impact, and NEET figures have increased during the pandemic. This has particularly affected Y12 students who missed out on the usual transition arrangements such as college/sixth form visits and face-to-face meetings with staff and other students.
- The virtual alternative was not good for some, but did actually work for others. Overall this has resulted in some drop-out (which has also happened for non-looked after young people).
- Training Providers – shift to virtual and remote delivery of learning
- Apprenticeship opportunities fell during the pandemic, but are bouncing back in recent months.
- The Virtual School is working hard to re-engage young people up to age 18, and provide additional support through the New Directions Service
- The reach of the New Directions Service will be expanded to support young people aged 18 years to age 25 with a dedicated post to support SEND and Leaving Care.

The group were informed of the Children's Service Analysis Tool (ChAT) extract 08/07/2022 for Care Leavers Activity - Activity Types of 17 - 18 years old:

- We have a higher % of young people in Higher Education than regional & England averages
- For 'Education other than Higher' (*up to and including A Level*) – BWD is lower than the regional and England average
- The total EET is lower than the regional and England average – subsequently NEET is above the England average

The group were informed of the Children's Service Analysis Tool (ChAT) extract 08/07/2022 for Care Leavers Activity - Activity Types of 19 - 21 years old:

- We have a higher % of young people in Higher Education than the England average and the same as the regional average
- In training and employment we are slightly lower than the regional average and England average
- BWD has a significantly higher % of care leavers with an illness and disability than regional and England averages
- EET continues to be lower, with NEET above England and regional averages

The group were informed of The ILACS Inspection highlighting that Leaving Care data, in parts, was inaccurate, inconsistent and difficult to interpret.

We have reviewed all our data collection sources – EET/NEET alongside our colleagues in post 16 learning to ensure that we have accurate meaningful data that supports all our young people. A dashboard is being created to ensure that we capture accurate and live data for Leaving Care.

The group was informed of Progress Headlines:

Recruitment –for a social work qualified Team Manager, Business Support Officer, Finance Officer and a number of Personal Advisor roles. This will add capacity to build and forge meaningful, positive and long-lasting relationships.

A **Leaving Care Forum** for young people and young adults has been launched, and met for the first time in April. Young people / adults are currently putting together a list of names they feel the leaving care service should be called.

Co-production - Care Leavers are taking an active role in developing the Leaving Care Service, including the development of a young person's version of the improvement plan.

Duty Service - All young people on the duty service have been contacted and those who wish to receive a service have been allocated a PA. Those who do not want a service have been allocated a PA and a 'keeping in touch' letter sent.

Training and development across Leaving Care Service is underway including training on case recordings. All PAs have attended Trauma Informed training and the next stage is audit activity on case recording and supervision to determine how the approach has changed the support provided and the impact for the young person (based on language used and how relationships are building).
all staff (end June – Sept).

Pathway Plans for Care Leavers are being reviewed to reflect their living arrangements, and this process will be completed by the end of June. Pathway plan training is planned with an external provider to ensure all the pathway plans are SMART and ambitious.

Benchmarking - Contacted a number of LAs across the North West as a benchmarking exercise and also to gather good practice examples with regards to pathway planning and the leaving care service as a whole.

Quality Assurance & Practice Improvement

Pathway plan dip sample by Service Lead – findings mirrored that of Ofsted. We are sourcing pathway plan training through the SLIP – exploring with Warrington and North Tyneside

Dip sample audit of case recordings and case summaries is taking place in the coming weeks to explore what impact training has had on case recordings and the young people/ adults.

Education

Aspiration for a Virtual College to raise the EET over the next 12 / 18 months to 70%. The Virtual College will also establish links with the Employment & Skills Board which is chaired by the Council's Chief Executive.

New Directions have a dedicated worker for SEND and Care Leavers up to the age of 25.

Links have been established with Together Housing for a small cohort of 9 young people to be intensively supported back into EET through a tailored programme for the individuals.

DWP link worker established to support with PIP (Personal Independence Payment), and reintroducing people back to EET.

The group were informed of Impact of Changes and feedback from young people:

- "Changes are being made the way we want them to be made"
- "I think it's really good that people are now stepping up and really driving this improvement plan forward so young people who are care leavers in the borough are getting all the support they not only need, but deserve.
- It's good to be able to reflect and now be confident that all care leavers will be getting the same offer – meaning that we are all as important as each other, regardless of our backgrounds and current circumstances.

- I'm glad that professionals are now consulting with us and making us feel included in decision making because ultimately the service is for us and because of this, we should hold some power, to an extent, when it comes to shaping the offer.
- I think the improvements will ensure that we all have a good quality of life and support to achieve all our aspirations for the future.”

The group was informed of the next steps:

- **Staying Put Foster Carer Allowances** - exploring area and engaging with the Foster Carer Association around a revised structure for allowances
- **Reviewing accommodation sufficiency** with partners and housing providers
- **Exploring the use of an App/updated website** - young people have requested this as a way of finding out info and being easily accessible.
- **Establishing a Virtual College to include Children in Our Care aged 16-25** to prepare for adulthood, working with Adult Services and Children's Services
- **Routine audits** and ongoing management oversight

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

9. Any Other Business and Date of Next Meeting

The Chair confirmed the date for the next meeting of 5th October 2022 and thanked everyone for attending.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

Signed:

Date:

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Chair of the meeting
at which the minutes were confirmed