

CORPORATE PARENTING SPECIALIST ADVISORY GROUP

Wednesday, 5th October 2022

PRESENT – Councillors: Katrina Fielding (In the Chair), Julie Gunn, Phil Riley, Zamir Khan, Samim Desai, Jackie Floyd

OFFICERS –

Declan Smith – Vice Chair

Roisa McCusker – Care Leavers Representative

Joanne Siddle – Deputy Director, Schools & Education

Vicky Balmer – Deputy Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children & Looked After Children

Pamela Price – Service Lead Permanence

Amjad Rashid – Youth Support Worker Participation

Paula Quinn – FCA Committee

RESOLUTIONS

1. **Welcome and Apologies**

The Chair Cllr Katrina Fielding, welcomed all present to the meeting. Apologies were received from Charlotte Hesketh, Elizabeth Clarkson and from the following Councillors: Lynn Fields, Qesir Mahmood, Jacqueline Slater, Ehsan Raja, John Slater, Brian Taylor, Tasleem Fazal, Mark Russell, Stephanie Brookfield, Jean Rigby, David Smith, Sabahat Imtiaz, Zainab Rawat, Lillian Salton, Sylvia Liddle, Julie Slater, Salim Sidat, Tony Humphrys, Mark Russell, Sajid Ali, Jim Casey, Shaukat Hussain, Abdul Patel, Martin McCaughran.

2. **Minutes of the previous Meeting held on 25th July 2022**

RESOLVED – The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 25th July 2022 were approved as a correct record. Two matters were raised including an incorrectly noted Apology and typographical errors. With the amendment of these the minutes were agreed as correct method.

3. **Declarations of Interest**

RESOLVED – There were no Declarations of Interest received.

4. **Vice Chair, YPS and Participation Update**

Roisa McCusker informed the group that she and the Vice-Chair have undertaken Total Respect Training where they have learnt skills in confidence, presentation and sensitivity, which has enabled them to become confident, able, trainers. They would be working with Cllr Julie Gun to deliver a Total Respect Workshop at the next Corporate Parenting Specialist Advisory Group Meeting.

An upcoming meeting would be taking place with the Digital Team to discuss the digital offer for care leavers and also another meeting scheduled with Clare Bibby and Imran Akuji to look at the development plan and the entitlements offer.

The Vice-Chair informed the Group that they have undertaken a number of interview panels during this last month for the Young Person Panel, in addition they have also attended the Children in Care Council where they touched on the rights and entitlements of being a care leaver. It had been noted that the Care Leavers Offer on the website was currently out of date. This would need to be updated so care leavers were aware of what was accessible to them and how they could be supported by the local authority.

The Group were informed other local authorities were struggling for numbers when it came to Forums for Children in Care. The Blackburn with Darwen Council group attended as a team of four young people, however other local authorities only attended with one or two young people and expressed how they were also struggling to engage Children in Care.

Finally the Vice-Chair informed the Group that the Leaving Care Forum had continued and has progressed very well.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

5. Foster Carers Association

The Chair welcomed Paula Quinn from the Foster Carers Association Committee to provide an update to the Group.

The Group heard that the Foster Carers Association had from been working collaboratively with Children in Care and the Young Peoples Service to recognise the need to celebrate their achievements.

Paula informed the Group that the FCA and YPS would be hosting a joint Halloween Party and were also looking to arrange a Christmas Fair/Fundraiser. The entire downstairs of the Empire Theatre had been booked as the FCA will be performing a Pantomime on Saturday 3rd December. There were over 100 tickets available and the association welcomed anyone who may have a connection to fostering.

Paula confirmed on Sunday 11th December, the Royal British Legion had organised a Christmas Market where they had allocated a free stall to the Foster Carers Association. Physical and cash donations would be welcome for the stall as there will be a tombola.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

6. Corporate Parenting Dashboard

The Group was presented with an update from Pamela Price on the latest Children Looked After Statistics, and heard that 79 Children Looked After started in the last six months.

Of those, none of the 79 Children Looked After starters were unaccompanied asylum seeking children and 10 children returned to the care system after being looked after.

Pamela informed the group that 76 Children Looked After ceased in the last six months. Of the total number, 12 were adopted, 19 had special guardianship orders and 33 were referred to as 'other'. This meant they had either returned to their parents, been provided with support or had turned 18 and are living

independent.

The Group then looked at the 390 Children Looked After with an episode of care, with 6% of the children having a disability and 76% of the children being White British. From these children, 68% of them had been placed in foster placements as opposed to residential placements.

Pamela informed the group that there had been a larger proportion of children in care between the last 12 months. Foster Carers had also been provided with training for therapeutic support, this has explained the period of stability shown in the placements.

Pamela highlighted there had been a positive 90% of Children Looked After who have had health assessments. She advised there was still more work to be done on Dental checks as only 50% of the children had access to dentists.

The Group heard that there had been a reduction in the number of Missing from Home Placements and also a reduction in the number of children in care however situations with recruitment and foster placements were very challenging. The Foster Carer Payments have to be reviewed as Blackburn with Darwen were paying a lower rate to Foster Carers, who may compare this to elsewhere. The payment bands 1-4 had to be reviewed in order to make them more competitive.

Discussions were taking place suggesting experienced Foster Carers being rewarded with higher pay and incentives. There was also a suggestion for them to receive a reduction in Council Tax. Foster Carers already received free gym membership at BwD Council gyms.

In order to branch out of Blackburn with Darwen when recruiting Foster Carers, links have now been made with Burnley FC to raise awareness in areas such as Burnley, Colne, Brierfield and Nelson. Foster Carers had also been given a table at the One Voice Awards in February 2023.

Finally the Group were informed that The Limes, which used to be a specialist Fostering Service in 2015 and vacant for a few years, has now been renovated as somewhere Foster Carers and Care Leavers can meet. The Revive Team had converted one of the upstairs rooms in to a Therapy Room, alongside a Play Therapy Room in the Annexe. There would be an open day in the next few weeks where individuals were able to see the potential of the building.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

7. Safeguarding Children & Looked After Children Update

The Chair welcomed Vicky Balmer, Deputy Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children & Looked After Children, to the meeting who provided an update on the current position to the Group.

The Group heard that the Rossendale Dental Pilot would be rolled out and tested across Lancashire and South Cumbria. There would also be a Single Point of Contact for ongoing care for children without a dentist who were in need of priority appointments. This would be available by ringing 111 and the model would be in place next year.

Vicky Brown would also be updating the Group with the monthly reports she receives from School Nurses at the next Corporate Parenting Specialist Advisory

Group Meeting.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

8. Any Other Business and Date of Next Meeting

The Chair confirmed the date for the next meeting as 11th January 2023 and thanked everyone for attending.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

Signed.....

Date:

Chair of the meeting at which the minutes were confirmed