

Children's Services Corporate Parenting  
Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Panel  
17 March 2014

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Councillor Chris Wakefield - Chairman; Councillors Nicola Greene, Susan Phillips, Allister Russell and John Wilson.

**NON-ELECTED MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Lesley Bond	Foster Carer Representative
Ella Christopher	Action for Children
Lynne Giles	Action for Children
Sarah Fletcher	Community Health Representative
Ted Taylor	Virtual School Governing Body

and 3 members of CLICK

**ALSO PRESENT:**

Lisa Male	Looked After Children Participation Worker
Kim Drake	Service Director, Children's Social Care
Hilary Evans	Strategy Leader, Vulnerable Groups/SEN & Inclusion
Geraint Griffiths	Head of Integrated Youth Service
Emily Bridgen	Practice Manager, Looked After Children and Care Leavers Team
Suzie Levett	Head of Virtual School
Lisa Green	Interim Service Manager

The meeting started at 4.33pm and finished at 6.32pm.

Apologies for late arrival were received from Councillors Susan Phillips (arrived at 5.57pm) and Nicola Green (arrived at 6:12pm).

The meeting adjourned between 5.27pm and 5.36pm.

Note: To see a copy of the public reports that were considered by the Panel at this meeting please visit:

<http://www.bournemouth.gov.uk/CouncilDemocracy/Councillors/BoardsPanels/CorporateParentingPanel.aspx>

Please note that the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel is scheduled to take place at the Town Hall at 4.30 pm on 2 June 2014.

It is recommended that you check this information with Democratic Services closer to the scheduled date of the next meeting in case the arrangements have been changed.

Contact: Tom Hancock, Democratic and Member Support Officer  
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## Children's Services Corporate Parenting Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Panel, 17 March 2014

Agenda Item / Report No.	Minute No.	Matter Considered	Decisions Made
Item 1	1.	<p><b>Membership of Panel</b></p> <p>Councillor John Wilson attended the meeting as a substitute for Councillor Rey who sent her apologies.</p> <p>Apologies were also received from Councillors Malcolm Davies and Beverley Dunlop.</p> <p>In response to a query about additional members of the Corporate Parenting Panel the Chairman reiterated that the Panel would welcome input from outside bodies via appropriate channels but given the size of the group currently the Panel would not expand its membership.</p>	
Item 2	2.	<p><b>Declarations of Interest</b></p> <p>There were no declarations of interests made by Panel members on any of the agenda items.</p>	
Item 3	3.	<p><b>Minutes of the last meeting held on 4 November 2013</b></p>	<p>The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record.</p>
Item 4	4.	<p><b>Ice Breaker</b></p> <p>The CLICK Members presented their ice breaker and everyone present took part. The ice breaker centred on understanding the challenges looked after children face in</p>	<p>The Members of CLICK were thanked for organising the ice breaker and it was highlighted that the ice breakers are always a thoughtful and worthwhile exercise.</p>

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		finding help from the relevant people and authorities.	
Item 5	5.	<p><b>Looked After Children At School</b></p> <p>The Head of the Virtual School informed the Panel of the function of the Virtual School. The Panel was told that the Virtual School acts to help the Council meet its statutory responsibility to promote the educational achievements of looked after children and that it works very hard to stop looked after children suffering permanent exclusions. The Panel was informed that it attempted to achieve these aims by holding regular meetings with the interested parties including the relevant schools and by developing Personal Education Plans for each of the looked after children which set targets for the looked after children to try and achieve.</p> <p>The Head of the Virtual School tabled the latest data on the attainment levels of looked after children in the Borough. The Panel was told that given the low number of children receiving attainment results the figures were not deemed to be of statistical significance but were still useful. It was noted that the Key Stage 4 attainment levels showed that Bournemouth's looked after children were achieving higher than the national average for looked after children although there was still a sizeable gap between the attainment of looked after children and other children.</p> <p>The Panel was informed that the pupil premium, a</p>	<p>The Panel noted the report.</p> <p>The Panel asked to receive the Virtual School newsletter on a regular basis.</p>

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		<p>mechanism whereby children who receive or have received free school meals within the last 6 years - and looked after children - attract a higher amount of funding every year at school, is to change as the pupil premium funding for looked after children will go to the head of the Virtual School who will help decide how the money is spent and link it to the Personal Education Plan targets. It was also highlighted to the Panel that the role of the Head of the Virtual School was to become a legal requirement as part of the changes.</p> <p>The Panel made a number of comments on aspects of the presentation including:</p> <p><b>Personal Education Plans</b> - CLICK members informed the Panel that often looked after children are pulled out of classes to attend meetings related to Personal Education Plans and that this drew attention to the fact that they are looked after children which may not always be desirable. CLICK members also informed the Panel that meetings do sometimes take place without them present and as such targets can be set in their absence which they felt may not be best practice.</p> <p><b>Pupil Premium</b> - The Panel noted that the Pupil Premium stopped at the age of 16 despite the desire for looked after children to go to college and the rise in the participation age to 18. The Panel felt that this was a real problem and could end up in looked after children missing out on</p>	<p>The Panel asked that the Head of the Virtual School return to the Panel in September to inform the Panel of progress made on points raised at the meeting.</p> <p>The Panel asked that the issue of support for 16-18 year old looked after children be looked at by the Looked After Children Strategy Group and that they report their views to the Panel.</p>

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		achieving their potential in higher and further education or miss out on it altogether.	
Item 6	6.	<b>Break</b>	
Item 7	7.	<p><b>Care Leavers</b></p> <p>The Practice Manager, Looked After Children and Care Leavers Team and the Head of the Integrated Youth Service gave a presentation to the Panel on the support provided for looked after children when they leave care.</p> <p>The Panel was informed that as of January 2014 there were 151 care leavers with 138 receiving the full care leaver service.</p> <p>The Panel was told that as a result of a recent internal audit there was a recognition that early support needs to be improved and that the Looked after Children and Care Leavers team would like to hear from looked after children to get their views.</p> <p>The Panel was informed that as part of the early support provided looked after children receive assistance from a pathways worker at the age of 15/16 who is able to help them navigate issues such as housing and tenancy support.</p>	The Panel noted the report.

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		<p>It was noted that the Council has now successfully acted as a guarantor of rent for a looked after child and that this should now be highlighted to looked after children as a viable option to help them move into their own homes when leaving care.</p> <p>The Panel was told that the Council, through the Integrated Youth Service, can also help support looked after children into the world of employment, further and higher education and training. The Panel was informed that an analysis of looked after children in Bournemouth who were not in education, employment or training - commonly known as NEET's - had found that there were two key themes amongst these children. Firstly a lack of stability which in the first instance arises from the problems that see them become looked after children and then is exacerbated by shifting between foster carers and schools and secondly that there seemed to be a drop off at the age of 16 at which point it became harder for looked after children to stay in education or training.</p> <p>It was noted that the Council are in discussion with a number of private sector businesses about offering opportunities and training to looked after children in the Borough.</p> <p>The Panel was further informed that the Council is in the process of setting up an agreement with the Department for Work and Pensions to allow looked after children to</p>	<p>The Panel asked that the Council's lifelong commitment to looked after children be affirmed with the Chief Executive to ensure support is provided for Care Leavers.</p>

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		<p>claim for benefits in advance of turning 18.</p> <p>The Panel was told that currently there are three care leavers living in unsuitable accommodation and that the reasons for this would be studied so that they can be avoided in future.</p> <p>The Panel asked a number of comments on aspects of the presentation including:</p> <p><b>Emotional Support</b> - Members of the Panel felt that it was crucial that there is a recognition that alongside the practical support offered to looked after children there needs to be a level of emotional support offered. It was highlighted that this was crucial to looked after children when they entered further education as the environment is very different and more challenging than a school classroom and often they have missed out on the emotional support given to children throughout their lives.</p> <p><b>Pathways Worker</b> - CLICK members highlighted that there is a need for Pathways workers to become involved at an earlier stage as children are often in need of a lifetime of preparation for further and higher education and the world of work.</p>	
Item 8	8	<p><b>Advocacy Service</b></p> <p>The representatives from Action for Children presented a</p>	

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		<p>quarterly report to the Panel on the advocacy service.</p> <p>The Panel was informed that the advocacy service had received 205 referrals this year and it was noted that this included a number of children who lived outside of the Borough.</p> <p>The Action for Children representatives told the Panel that the service they offered could be accessed in some way over the weekends and into the early evenings however night visits were not offered due to lone worker safety restrictions. It was emphasised that the service is open to any child who wants it.</p> <p>The Panel was told that advocacy workers can work with the child over a long period of time which helps to add some stability in their lives and that it helps if children access the service at an early stage as this can help ward off problems.</p> <p>The Panel made a number of comments on aspects of the report including:</p> <p><b>Awareness</b> - The Panel emphasised that it is important children are informed of the advocacy service, what it is and how they access it. CLICK members suggested that the term 'advocacy' does not mean anything to some young people and that a re-branding of the service so it is more obvious what it is would be welcome.</p>	<p>The Panel requested that an internal audit on services offered to out of Borough looked after children be brought to the Panel for discussion.</p>



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Item 9	9.	<p><b>Clothing Vouchers</b></p> <p>The Panel received a brief update from the Service Director for Children's Social Care on investigations into offering looked after children clothing vouchers instead of letting them buy clothes out of their money.</p> <p>The Panel was informed that investigations were ongoing but at this stage the feedback from looked after children was that this change would not be supported by them as it does not teach them how to budget.</p> <p>CLICK members also raised concerns that vouchers would be sold for cash at less than their face value.</p>	<p>The Panel requested that an update on investigations into clothing vouchers be presented at the next meeting of the Panel.</p>
Item 10	10.	<p><b>Any Other Business</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Annual Report to Council</b> - The Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services reported to the Panel that at the next Full Council meeting the annual report of corporate parenting would be given and that any suggestions on what should be highlighted, whether successes or challenges, would be very welcome.</li> <li>2. <b>Celebrating Success Awards</b> - The Chairman expressed the Panels thanks and congratulations to the looked after children and the Looked After Children's Participation Worker for the celebrating</li> </ol>	

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		success awards event that recognises the achievements of the looked after children in the Borough that had recently taken place.	