

**Corporate Parenting
Panel
4 September 2017**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillor Nicola Greene (Deputy Leader) - Chair; Councillor Bobbie Dove - Vice-Chair; Councillors Blair Crawford, Rae Stollard and Michael Weinhonig.

NON-ELECTED MEMBERS PRESENT:

Lisa Male Participation Worker, Children's Social Care
CLICK Members

ALSO PRESENT:

Mike Felstead (Lead Officer, Corporate Parenting Panel) Service Manager -
Quality Assurance and Safeguarding
Kaleigh Jones Participation Officer - Care Leavers Team
Penny Lodwick Service Manager - Looked After Children and Care Leavers

FROM POD

Victoria Stone Team Manager (LAC team)
Alex Brummitt Social Worker (LAC team)
Sarah Hebden Advanced Social Worker (LAC team)
Jessica Jackson Advanced Social Worker (16+ care leavers team)
Kim Rampling Social Worker - level II (LAC team)
Sharon Robertson Social Worker Level II (LAC team)

The meeting started at 17.03pm and finished at 18:37pm.

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

<https://www.bournemouth.gov.uk/councildemocratic/CouncilMeetings/CommitteeMeetings/CorporateParentingPanel/2017/09/04/agenda/agenda-and-reports-package.pdf>

Please note that the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel is scheduled to take place on 4 September 2017.

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.

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Agenda Item / Report No.	Minute No.	Matter Considered	Decisions Made
Item 1	21	<p>MEMBERSHIP OF THE PANEL</p> <p>Apologies were received from Councillor Lynda Price.</p>	
Item 2	22	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>There were none.</p>	
Item 3	23	<p>MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 05 June 2017</p> <p>There were no actions arising from the minutes.</p>	The minutes were agreed as a correct record.
	24	<p>EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC</p> <p>That the press and public be excluded for the following items of business under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 as they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 and 2 in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, and the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.</p>	To exclude the press and public.
Item 4	25	<p>ITEMS CIRCULATED TO PANEL MEMBERS FOR INFORMATION</p> <p>Performance Data - The Chairman thanked the Lead Officer for the information provided and commented that it was extremely helpful to receive this information.</p>	

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Item 5	26	<p><i>CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE RESTRUCTURE UPDATE</i></p> <p><i>The Service Manager - Looked After Children (LAC) and Care Leavers explained that over the last 6 months a new 'Pod' system had been developed and successfully implemented. The LAC and Care Leavers teams were both fully staffed, for the Care Leavers team this was the first time they had been in this position for five years. The LAC team had also increased their capacity, however, there were still a couple of vacancies in other teams.</i></p> <p><i>The teams were made up of a mixture of experienced and newly qualified staff, who brought their own unique skills to the team. Caseloads were imbalanced but this was because a decision was made to keep the LAC's current social worker the same where possible. The service wanted to avoid changing social workers' cases unless it was unavoidable, to give the child or young person greater stability. It was expected that the imbalances would even out in 6-10 months. The imbalance did not result in an uneven amount of work between employees because those with less casework were allocated more assessments and joint work.</i></p> <p><i>The teams were also reviewing children and young persons placements outside of Bournemouth and were bringing them back to the town where appropriate. In addition to this, there was work on quality assurance and a robust business plan, intervention prior to the need for care via the family support hub and work on the children and young persons' 'life story'. There was also 3-6 months' support provided by the team for children and young people who were re-entering their birth families home.</i></p> <p><i>The social workers reported that they felt a difference since the restructuring. They felt that the new system worked well and there was an increased sense of being part of a team. The caseloads were not as high since the pods were</i></p>	<p>Click to find out young peoples' experience of transitioning to a PA and whether it would be easier to transition at the beginning of the academic year before exams.</p>

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		<p><i>established, with caseloads now at a maximum of 15. The new system had provided the opportunity for social workers to be 'matched' to cases in the future.</i></p> <p><i>The new system involved two teams, one for under 16's and a separate team for 16+. All LAC are allocated a Personal Advisor (PA) before their 16th birthday. Their social worker would not be instantly withdrawn, there would be a planned withdrawal conducted on a case by case basis. A member asked how the children felt about changing to a different social worker. They said it depended on the child, some may be eager to move on whereas others may need support, the individuals needs would be taken into consideration. A member asked whether it would be worth changing to a PA at the beginning of the academic year to avoid change during the young person's exam period.</i></p> <p><i>Two Click members spoke of their personal experience of the transition to the 16+ service, both were negative. One had no support at all during a two-month period in the run up to his exams, the other said his social worker left and the PA turned up with no prior notice. The Click members said that young people often don't see the importance of investing in their relationship with their Care Leaver's Social Worker as they knew the relationship would only last two years. The service manager said the situation was significantly different after the restructuring, resulting in improved stability for young people compared to previously. The benefit of future collaboration with educational LAC caseworkers was also raised and a desire for potentially co-locating.</i></p> <p><i>The chair asked the social workers what attracted them to their post, the answers referred to opportunity, new knowledge and experience, previous experience of family in care and confidence in new management.</i></p>	<p>Contact to be made with local colleges to see if clearer pathways for college and internships could be organised, especially considering the new cohort of young people. The Service Manager - LAC and Care Leavers would also follow this up with the Virtual School Advisor.</p>

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Item 6	27	<p>CLICK PRESENTATION - PERMENANCY</p> <p>Click members didn't like the word permanency and felt it had several negative connotations. The word didn't reflect their lived experience; they didn't feel that they had or necessarily wanted permanency as they associated it with being stuck or trapped. They told the panel they would prefer the word consistency because they often suffered from feelings of rejection and insecurity. This meant they needed time to build relationships with people. They advised the Panel that they needed to be told that they are cared for and that they can express their opinions without being rejected.</p> <p>Click members also told the panel their personal stories of being in care and how going into care can lead to feelings of uncertainty and confusion. One young person said that despite being placed in a loving foster home, where he did feel secure, it took him two years to understand what had happened. Another young person said that she still felt a sense of insecurity despite becoming a mother herself. The Click members said that being more involved in the development plans would help them to understand their situation and would allow them to feel a sense of autonomy rather than being told what is good for them, without them having any options.</p> <p>They also said that honesty is important. They felt ready to hear more than they were being told and when information was withheld or they were given misinformation to 'protect them' they felt like they were being lied too. They said they often had responsibility from a young age and when they move into care they feel as though that is taken away from them. They reiterated that they would like social workers to be honest and open with them, treat them respectfully and involve them in the care process.</p>	<p>The Chair thanked the Click Members for their presentation and requested that they raise any future issues with the Panel.</p> <p>It was agreed that Click would give the presentation to the LAC teams.</p>

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		<p>They also said that 'respite' made them feel unwanted and they didn't feel like it was explained to them adequately when it happened. They said it led to a reduction in trust and stopped emotional investment. Click members reported that it could feel like they were being rejected and they would blame themselves. They also said that the 'life story' project helped them and they thought it was important that their social worker also understood their learning style.</p>	
Item 7	28	<p>DISCUSSION - PERMANENCY</p> <p>The Service Manager - LAC and Care Leavers briefly introduced the report to the Panel and the Chairman and asked for any questions on the report or the presentation. A Member said that it's instinctual to shield young people but the question was how much should we be telling them and how do we tell them they are loved. A Click member said that it is important that children and young people are shown love, rather than being told they are loved.</p> <p>A Member said that there seems to be an adversarial relationship between social workers and LAC, especially when they are first taken into care. She asked how that is dealt with? The Service Manager - LAC and Care Leavers said that there are several avenues of formal and informal support for the social workers, a reasonable workload and debriefings are also important. A member asked whether we should be hiring social workers with inbuilt resilience.</p> <p>There was some discussion on the interpretation of the word permanency. Including that it was regrettable its meaning had negative connotations. There was an acknowledgment that it was a statutory word decided by central government. A member asked whether the LAC and Care Leavers team were managing expectations properly or setting themselves up to fail. The response was that realistically the statutory responsibilities were ambitious and whilst the structure and enthusiasm</p>	

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		<p>was there it would not be possible to deliver that every time, although it was important to remain ambitious. They acknowledged that the service could be more lined up.</p> <p>A Click member said that the worst thing about being in care is the 'not knowing', being kept involved will help LAC with the anxiety that they often suffer with for the rest of their lives. It was also important that they didn't have to seek help because it was consistently available. It was said that some LAC struggled to even accept an invitation for drinks because they felt they didn't know how to respond to the relationship. A Click member said that foster carers and social workers should sign a commitment before they start, another said it sets a bad example when the social workers aren't consistent.</p>	
Item 8	29	<p>Regional Adoption Agency - Verbal update</p> <p>The adoption agency was almost fully staffed. It had a high-quality skill base drawing from a wider pool of recruits. The number of children to be adopted nationally was increasing but the number of people who wanted to adopt was decreasing, although there was a higher volume of cases in the service for assessment. There had been an increasing number of step-parent adoptions. Those who are over 4, sibling groups and those with additional needs took longer to place.</p> <p>The Chairman confirmed that the Children's Services O&S panel would continue to receive updates on the adoption service but that it was important the Panel had an overview of some of the youngest LAC. She also offered her congratulations to all involved with the establishment of the independent fostering agency.</p>	

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Item 9	30	WORK PROGRAMME The future work programme of the Panel was noted.	
Item 10	31	ANY OTHER BUSINESS The Participation worker reported that the 25 October was the start of Care Leavers week	