

BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE COUNCIL
CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 December 2024 at 5.00 pm

Present:-

Cllr R Burton – Chairman

Cllr C Adams – Vice-Chairman

Present: Cllr S Mackrow, Cllr A-M Moriarty, Nicole Mills, Louise Harris-Smith, Education Representative, Foster Carer Representative, Insight Representative, Insight Representative and Unite Representative

78. Apologies

Apologies for this meeting were received from Cathi Hadley, Director of Children's Services.

79. Substitute Members

There were no substitute members

80. Declarations of Interests

There were none on this occasion.

81. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2024 were approved as a correct record.

82. Young Persons Voice - Housing (Icebreaker)

The Participation Officer introduced the item and explained the work that they had been doing recently with Care Experienced Young People. The Board was advised that the main feedback they had been getting from young people was related to housing. In response it was decided to do an in-depth piece of work over three months. Feedback from the young people were shared with the Board.

Young people had found that the different terms used related to housing were not understood by everyone. The information provided at the moment was not working for everyone and many young people could not understand. Young people highlighted some of the things that they wanted to know such as how to set up and arrange utility providers, whether they could afford private rental and what was included within the rent and understanding what they need to know in order to manage a home. The Board was informed that booklets were not an effective means of

communicating with young people in terms of accessing housing. It was noted that whilst much of the information was out there in various forms it was not landing with young people.

CEYP were being told different things about their housing band allocation, some were told that they would get Gold Banding, but other young people have been told that they can not get Gold Banding. It was noted that the Local Offer had been update but young people were confused and their experience with housing did not reflect the local offer. Young People had reported feeling pressure to accept housing offered even if they did not feel it was suitable.

CEYP were unclear on what could be purchased with the setting up home grant. Young people were provided with a list and could not purchase things which were not on the list. Different people were being told different things, regarding the grant and it should be clear how the grant was administered.

Young people had also had positive support from workers to help with the transition but there were still people reporting difficulties.

Everyone then split into two groups and considered what the issues were, how they could be fixed and who could fix them. Each group then fed back to the rest of the Board. It was noted that the AQA booklet wasn't always suitable, and that there should be a more individual approach. The setting up home grant was discussed Using individual intelligence to address the arising issues was suggested.

The Board was advised that clear communication was key and it was important to understand that there were a number of lessons which needed to be learnt through the in-depth work. It was noted that this would contribute to the beginning of an action plan and this could be developed further and be brought back to the Corporate Parenting Board in future.

83. Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report 24/25 and Summary

The Independent Reviewing Officer Service Manager presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'A' to these Minutes in the Minute Book. The Board was advised that the IRO annual report set out information in respect of BCPs Children in Care and the performance of the IRO Service. The Board was provided with a short overview of service progression and areas for development going forward. It was explained that there had been some turbulence in the IRO service staff, but this had now stabilised. Practices had been changed to make sure that the views of the child were now central to all reviews. Children were welcomed to Chair their own meetings or present power point if they felt comfortable. The vast majority of review meetings took place within the required timeframe. Checklists were now in place to ensure that a young persons' pathway plan was followed and the IRO service would remain involved if there were any issues with achieving this. It was noted that the take up of the advocacy service was very low.

A Board member asked around the reasons why children and young people would use an advocacy service. The service was provided by Coram Voice, and they have tried to promote their services to children. In the IRO review feedback it was explained that the advocacy service is available and people are asked if they want to access it. It was hypothesised that there was a level of informal advocacy taking place through, foster carers and social workers.

In response to a question, it was explained that the IRO service monitors a child's journey through care. It was noted that there appeared to have been a number of improvements within the service which was welcomed by the Board.

The meeting adjourned at 6.09pm and resumed at 6:20pm

84. Children in Care in the Youth Justice System

The Head of the Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'B' to these Minutes in the Minute Book. Children in care are over-represented in the national and local youth justice systems, both in terms of numbers entering the justice system and among those who are detained in custody. Information about the numbers of Children in Care in the local youth justice system is included in section 1.

There is a local multi-agency protocol to reduce the criminalisation of children in care. The scope and implementation of this protocol is summarised in section 1, along with other measures to reduce the numbers of children in care entering the justice system.

Section 2 includes analysis of the needs of Children in Care in the justice system. The Youth Justice Service provides a multi-disciplinary response, in partnership with other services, to reduce the risk of further offending and to avoid the use of custodial remands and sentences.

There were a number of areas of concern but particularly with placement stability, children were often placed in a completely new placement when coming out of custody and therefore had to deal with additional issues surrounding that. Education was also a major issue, a large number of children involved with the youth justice service had been excluded from school. A number had also needed to access the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service. The Service supported children with speech and language assessments in order to ascertain their communication needs.

There was concern about the overrepresentation of children in care within the youth justice service, this would be looked into further to try to find out why this might be the case.

Board members questioned what could be done to address issues arising with Children in care sooner. There was a project going on with the speech

and language therapy service for children in KS3 in order to help try to keep them in school and prevent them from entering the youth justice service.

Lots of work had been done with police colleagues to try to prevent formal actions being taken.

Dorset were using the serious violence duty funding. It was noted that this was moving to the office of Police and Crime Commissioner. It was noted that this was also discussed at the recent safeguarding partnership meeting.

RESOLVED that the Corporate Parenting Board notes and supports the work being done to reduce the criminalisation, offending and incarceration of children in care.

85. Feedback from LGA Peer Review and Action Plan

Nicole advised that the LGA peer reviewers attended the last meeting of the Board, and it was explained that they were given a number of themes to consider and provide feedback on.

Meetings were very corporate but were they corporate enough. Were there too many people in the room actively involved with children's services and could this be extended to people from other areas of the Council.

Capture what it was like to be a child in care in BCP, what is it like for a child coming into care now whose experience would be very different to the young people who regularly attend the meeting. Representation of Council members from different areas of the Council.

Met with the Chairs and Co-Chairs to consider how to move forward some of the actions and issues arising from the peer review. All future reports will be rephrased as questions which should hopefully bring forward more concise and direct reports.

There would be two formal Board meetings per year and then two more informal Corporate Parenting Board Panels which would be themed around areas suggested by children and young people, these would take on a more informal format would be more informal. There could be more working groups to help shape actions arising from the meeting and the meeting itself would then be more of an opportunity for summary feedback. This would help the Board to maintain ownership on certain issues and drive them forward.

The peer review was really positive in terms of some issues including the icebreaker activities but in other instances they raised concerns with the formality of meetings. A number of issues were discussed in terms of the suggested changes, but it was noted that lots more details needed to be worked out, including issues around timeframes, more easily accessible reports and summaries for children and young people and considering inviting different people from different groups and areas of the Council.

The Foster Carer representative extended an open invite for Foster Carer organised activities.

86. Forward Plan

It was noted that there would be a lot of work done around the Forward Plan in light of the changes prior to the next scheduled meeting.

The meeting was advised that the Bright spots survey results had already been received.

87. Future Meeting Dates

It was noted that the date of the next meeting was Monday 17 March 2025.

88. Children in Care/Care Experienced Young People Data and Analysis Report

This report was for information only. No comments were received on this prior to the meeting.

89. Children's Services Compliments and Complaints Annual Report 2023-2024

This report was for information only. No comments were received on this prior to the meeting.

The meeting ended at 6.45 pm

CHAIRMAN