

Corporate Parenting Panel – Meeting held on Thursday, 4th April, 2024.

Present:- Councillors Hulme (Chair), Dauti, Gill, Qaseem, Rana and Tomar,

Non-Voting Members

Caroline Bartos, Accommodation Group Manager (SBC)

Cherie Sears, Virtual School Head (SCF)

Lynette Jones-Jardine, Safeguarding Lead and Designated Nurse
for Children and Young People in Care - NHS Frimley ICB

Zainab Khan, Participation Officer (SCF)

In Attendance:

Councillor Puja Bedi, Lead Member for Education, Children's Service

Ben Short, Director of Operations (SCF)

Jo Spender, Head of Service, Sufficiency & Permanency (SCF)

Kate McCorrison, Head of Service, HR & OD (SCF)

Nikki Doneghan, Head of Children Looked After & Support Services (SCF)

Victor Mangwende, Head of Service, Quality Assurance & Performance
(SCF)

Tony Rawlings, Youth Worker (SCF)

Young people

Apologies for Absence:- Sue Butcher and Lianne Garstang

PART 1

43. Declarations of Interest

Councillor (Cllr) Dauti declared a personal interest by virtue of providing an individual support group for Kinship Carers, and as a carer.

44. Minutes of the last meeting held on 16 January 2024

The Panel Resolved to: Agree the minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2024 as a correct record.

45. Corporate Parenting Panel Strategy & Draft Action Plan 2023-24 Update

The Chair agreed to vary the order of the agenda.

The SCF Head of Service, Sufficiency & Permanency provided an update on the draft CPP Strategy & Action Plan 2023 -27, which set out a 3-year plan.

As part of the strategy, members would be appointed to lead in different areas putting the child at the centre and always considering 'as if this were my child'.

The strategy set out 6 priority areas including:

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- Participation - listening to voice of the child.
- Help support young people to develop the priorities.

Underpinning these would be the 6 Promises in tandem to the priority areas set out in the report.

(Cllr Qaseem joined the meeting (5.41pm)

The strategy would be included as a standard item on the Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP) agenda in order to ensure the actions were progressed and feedback was provided to young people.

. Stakeholders would be consulted, and training would be set up for all staff.

It was highlighted that the post of Participation Officer had now been filled and the terms of reference for the Housing Operation Group had been agreed with the first monthly meeting having been held today.

During discussion, it was reiterated that the strategy was in draft and that it had yet to go through the governance process, where it would be sent for finance, legal and commissioners' comments. The draft was currently being reported to the CPP for comments.

It was noted that the strategy would be rolled out to young people through various groups including the Participation Group and Children's Council. All young people including the hard to reach, would be targeted through various means including social media.

The Lead member for Education welcomed the strategy and confirmed that she and the Leader of the Council were committed, and supportive of young people.

The Participation Officer added that the Strategy needed to incorporate the 5 independent living skills to be taught to young people, such as taxes and opening a savings account. Also highlighted was the need for stability as young people coming into the system tended to find it difficult to feel that they were getting adequate support, due to lack of communication in dealing with issues such as identification documents. The Virtual School Head advised that such issues would be made clear in how young people would be supported to move on through their personal education plan (PEP).

The Lead member for Education confirmed that the issue of communication and sign posting young people to know where to go for support had been discussed with the Director of Children's Services, CE of Slough Children's First (SCF).

In response to a question about ensuring that there would be regular communication between officers and the lead assigned to specific area, it was confirmed that there would be a joint link with the officer leading in the specific area.

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The Chair advised that further discussion was needed to clarify how the Councilors (Cllrs) leading in specific areas would work with officers. The SCF Head of Service, Sufficiency & Permanency would arrange a meeting with Cllrs on CPP via Teams.

The Panel Resolved to: Note the Corporate Parenting Panel Strategy and Draft 2023-24 Action Plan.

46. Corporate Parenting Panel Scorecard to 2 February 2024

The Chair agreed to vary the order of the agenda.

The Panel received the Corporate Parenting Panel Scorecard to 2 February 2024 that set out the latest performance information.

Members discussed the progress being made on a number of specific indicators including:

- The number of Children Looked After (CLA) had reduced to 203 compared to 263 in the same period last year.
- There had been a reduction in CLAs Health Assessments from 94.6% in the same period last year to 86.3%. It was highlighted that this may be due to many young people being refusers, and work was being done to support them to engage.
- Change of social worker (SW) had reduced from 41.9% last year to 34.6% due to good staff retention. It was noted that the retaining of staff and carers, were Key areas of focus.
- Accommodation for Care Experienced Young People (19-21 years) had reduced to 88% compared to 94% in the same period in 2023.
- Care Experienced Young People's Advisor (16-25 years) workload had increased to 27.6 compared to 23.7 in the same period in 2023.

In response to a question about the reason for the reduction in the number of changes of SWs, the officers advised that the key issue had been related to retention. Collaborative work between Slough and Berkshire was being done to see how the stability of SWs could be managed.

Members noted that the SW workloads had increased from 13.9 person in the previous year, to 14.9 and queried why no statistical data for statistical neighbours had been provided. It was noted that no bench marking for this area was available, but the figure had increase marginally by one child and the average SW workload was 18/19.

A query was raised regarding the on-going issue of access to gym membership for young people. It was noted that the SCF Head of Service, Sufficiency & Permanency would discuss the issue of access to leisure for children and young people with the Lead member for education, and report back to the next meeting.

The Panel Resolved to: Note the Corporate Parenting Panel Score Card to February 2024.

47. Complaints Case Study

The SCF Head of Service, Quality Assurance & Performance provided an update on Young Persons' Complaints.

It was reported that a complaint had been received from a young person in February 2024, which had been accepted as a Statutory Stage 1 complaint. The complaint on various issues had been presented through the advocate.

The SCF Complaints Manager had responded to the complaints and all issues that had been raised had been upheld.

The outcome of one of the complaints was that the Review Officer would keep track of the child's trust fund account, which was held by the local authority until the age of 18 years, when the child would be able to access the money.

Lessons learnt from the complaint included the importance of better communication with young people regarding their pathway plans.

During discussion, it was highlighted that young people should not be required to complain to find out key information about themselves. The Lead Member for Education advised that she would follow-up this issue, as young people should be able to simply make a request to their corporate parent to get information.

The SCF Director of Operations stressed that complains were rare and those received were mostly resolved by the young people's SW and their personal PA. Members were reassured that more stable officers were now in place and work would continue to improve communication with young people. Members agreed that young people should not have to make a complaint and when issues arose, these should be resolved in a timely manner.

The SCF Head of Children Looked After & Support Services stressed that young people could approach her directly, if SW or PA were unable to resolve any issues they may have. It was also pointed out that it should be made clear to young people where they could raise issues they may have. Officers confirmed that every young person had an Independent Review Officer (IRO) who heard complaints and would advocate for any child. The SCF Head of Service, Quality Assurance & Performance would raise this issue with the team to make clear, the need for children to be aware of their rights, as part of the support provided through their journey in care.

The Panel Resolved to: Note the Complaints Case Study.

48. Championing Kinship Care - DfE Kinship Care Strategy 2023

The Panel noted the Championing Kinship Care - DfE Strategy 2023.

It was noted that the topic of Kinship Fostering Care should be included as an item on the agenda for a CPP meeting.

The Panel Resolved to: Note the Championing Kinship Care – DfE Kinship Care Strategy 2023.

49. Roles and Responsibilities - Health Update

The Safeguarding Lead and Designated Nurse for Children and Young People in Care provided a verbal update on the Roles and Responsibilities - Health Update.

The following points were highlighted:

- Secured CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) Pathways.
- Ensured NHS offer was available to care leavers - options.
- Undertaken a review of how information on health assessments for their children were disseminated.
- Screening for systematic blood tests.
- Health assessments data – different from social care as report was based on how quickly assessments were done. Initial health assessments were done within 20 working days and reported back to the social worker.

It was reported that in relation to out of areas, three out of four assessments had been delayed due to various difficulties relating to paperwork and provider not signing, but not significantly out of the timeframe. Sixty-two per cent were completed within timeframe.

The Panel Resolved to: Note the verbal update.

50. The Journey of a Care Experienced Young Person

The Char varied the order of the agenda.

Young people were invited to the meeting to give a talk on the Care experience and the following were highlighted:

- Lack of communication with SW
- Not spoken to in a private room
- Relied on youth worker for support as didn't have a SW
- Unaware that they could not be forced to speak to their parents if they didn't wish to.
- In certain situations, didn't feel that the child's voice was being listened to.
- Issue with having 5 to 6 Social workers within a period of one month.
- Promises made were not followed-up or communicated to young people.

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- Lack of support with the completion of documents and young people being left to complete them independently.
- Allocated a PA at aged 17 but had no Care Leavers or Post 16 packs that they were entitled to receive.
- Placed in foster care and been with them for a long period of time without being given the reason as to why they had been taken into foster care.

The Chair apologises to the young people for the poor experiences they had gone through.

During discussion, it was noted that young people in care should automatically be provided with their lifelong story. The SCF Head of Service, Sufficiency & Permanency would ensure that for those young people who did not yet have their lifelong stories, this would be addressed, as there were a number of ways that these could be done.

The SCF Director of Operation confirmed that work was ongoing in providing a better service for young people, including working hard on staff stability and on young people's lifelong stories.

Members thank the young people for sharing their stories and apologised for the poor experiences due to the failures in the system and the learning received from sharing their stories.

The lead member for Education pointed out that work was in progress in reviewing the number of stake holders involved in a child's life and looking at having just one person addressing their issues, to ensure all stake holders worked together.

(The lead member for Education left the meeting – 6.59pm)

Members welcomed hearing from young people and stressed the need for officers to provide feedback and update young people, so that they were aware of what actions were being taken to address their concerns raised.

It was agreed that the journey of care experienced young person would be a standing item on the CPP agenda.

51. Members Attendance Record 2023-24

The Panel Resolved to: Note the Members' attendance record 2023-24.

52. Date of the next meeting 16 July 2024

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 16 July 2024.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 5.30 pm and closed at 7.32 pm)