

Corporate Parenting Board
Thursday 30 March 2023
5 – 7 pm
MS Teams

Present: Councillors Hackett (Chair), Councillor A Choudhry, Councillor N Hinchliff.

Young People: leasha Khan, Lukas Butler, Ellie Hatton, Lacey Phillips, Helen Kimber.

Officers: Michael Jarrett (Director of Children and Families), Emma Taylor (Chief Executive of Sandwell Children's Trust), Sally Giles (Strategic Partnership and Commissioning Manager), Mandip Chahal (Senior Joint Commissioning Manager – Children's Services), Claire Tate (Senior Transformation Lead for Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health), Teodora Bot (Director of Practice Quality and Partnerships SCT), Rosa DaSilva (Corporate Parenting Support Officer), Abdul Kahar (Participation Team Manager), Tom Davis (Partnership and Engagement Manager), Jayne O'Reilly (Designated Nurse) – NHS, Claire Hickman, NHS, Sarah Grant (Service Manager) Suzanne Allen, Employment and Skills Manager, Elaine Bennet IRO, Stuart Richards IRO, Rebecca Greenhouse Care Leavers Team manager, Amanda Carby – notetaker.

10/23 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from:

Steven Gauntley, Councillor Elizabeth Giles, Kelly Harris Balwant Bains, Gillian Douglas, Dr Indu Mahabeer, Michelle O Farrell Baines.

ACTION - Cllr Hackett would like a face to face goodbye and thank you for leasha Khan and Helen Kimber. Rosa to invite leasha and Helen to the next meeting of Corporate Parenting Board.

11/23 To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 12/01/2023
Agreed.

12/23 **Action Log 12.1.23**

1. Letters of support to be sent from Corporate Parenting Board to the Health Integrated Care Board.

Councillor Hackett shared that the Appeal against this decision is to go ahead, Councillor Hackett will raise this issue further, if the second briefing paper is declined. He would advise cabinet and may make this a public issue.

A letter was processed to be presented at the ICB board to support the Care Leavers free prescriptions business case. However, before the letter could be submitted, the board approved care leavers to receive free medical prescriptions. Our NHS Partners highlighted that a further business case will be presented to the ICB for care leavers to receive free dental and optical prescriptions.

2. Participation and engagement manager to bring Access to Services: Local Offer review - Task and Finish Group to next CPB meeting on 30th March 2023. How we can fund these ideas?

The board agreed that the next deep dive would be Access to Services: The Local Offer Review. However, to ensure the most impactful financial proposal is presented to the board, the Strategic Corporate Parenting Group proposed that a further review from partners and young people would strengthen the suggested offer.

Tom Davies shared that a lot of work had been done, and requested for this to be reported at a future CPB, with an improved proposal.

3. All Council reports must show how they will impact Children in Care and Care Leavers.

The Corporate Parenting implication guidance notes were submitted to Democratic services in February 2023. All council reports will now follow the report templates to incorporate corporate parenting implications and guidance note.

4. To set up a task and finish group to focus on tackling the Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET) data – 19-21-year olds.

The NEET strategy meetings have replaced the tracking group which sits alongside the NEET panel to address raised concerns.

The NEET strategy group is developing the NEET action plan and monitoring the actions, feeding back to the Strategic Corporate Parenting Group. A meeting on held Tuesday 28th March 2023 finalised the NEET action plan.

Updates:

There has been a delay with the action plan, SCGP will have sight of action plan at the next meeting, where challenge and scrutiny can take place before bringing to CPB

Confirmation the strategic priorities are in the action plan which has been reviewed and now it is a really clear and smart plan.

ACTION

- ***Update on the status of NEETs to be reported at the next CPB.***
 - ***A NEET Deep Dive exercise to be undertaken and focus on, identify the areas and approaches of work taking place (social value, apprenticeships), to look at what else can we do, identify how we will tackle specific issues?***
 - ***The NEET Action Plan to be on next CPB agenda.***
 - ***The NEET Strategy to be sent out for reminder***
- 5. Feedback to Corporate Parenting board Ofsted of Local authority children's services and the new separate judgement for care leavers: ILACS and the experiences and progress of Care leavers.**

Following a consultation with national and local practitioners and young people, Ofsted have introduced a new judgement to ensure care leavers have appropriate services available as they transition into adulthood. This came into force January 2023.

ACTION: Presentation will be shared with the board following tonight's meeting with members and partners.

Deep dive into safeguarding and stability for Children in Care:

a. Sandwell Children's Trust Services presentation and report provided from:

- Children in Care Services and Care Leaving Service
- Independent reviewing officers
- Fostering service
- Participation service

There are 84,867 under 18 YP in Sandwell, 811 children in care and 355 care leavers, 95.6% per 10,000 of children in care and care leavers.

Do we want to Move to an appendix and take out of the bulk of the minutes.

The journey of care T'seun was provided by representatives of SCT:

- He came into Care under a Court Order, and was subject to care proceedings, he was placed on a Full Care Order.
- Permanency Planning, a placement planning meeting was held within 72 hours.
- Visits to T'seun are made, one statutory review meeting within 20 days and another at 3 months. 6 months later health assessments take place, time is made for T'seun to have family time and contact with family.

IRO team – The role of the IRO is to ensure plans and outcomes that we wish for to T'seun to have. These are guided by statute in the IRO handbook. There are 18 full time IRO's, who are a stable and diverse team that follow children through all of their care journey.

- Within 3 days of T'seun coming into care, he will be allocated an IRO. T'seun will meet and speak with the IRO about reasons he is in care, the plans and gain his views
- Within 20 working days he will have his review, this is followed by a 3 month and 6-month reviews after this. If there is any clarity needed or concerns raised – will call a review for T'seun.

- We treat children as we would our own children – we speak to T'seun and ask him about his needs and devise a suitable care plan for him.
- Different ways to communicate with T'seun which is suitable for him and the best way to gain a response would be used.
- We write to child in a child friendly way, to confirm when and where things will happen, ask if they feel they have any barriers or issues. We will make sure T'seun is achieving the best outcomes and work with partners if there are highlighted issues.
- We try to make everything accessible to T'seun, we use a traffic light system for young people, we use a complaints system, we advise of an independent advocate. There is regular monitoring and audits completed.

Life and memory work for T'seun (previously known as Life Story) - we have an aspiration that every single child has a reliable, age appropriate, quality life and memory work.

- The SW is responsible to complete and bring this work together. A child needs to understand why they are in care, what is their story – the whole team (FC/IRO) also need to know and understand this.
- The child needs to have a relationship with their SW, they need to understand what has happened, be able to voice their concerns, some children need more time. These areas need to be rechecked with children and revisited and it is not a 1 off piece of work. Some children have traumatic experiences, we need a clear offer for our children to support this area.

Placement disruptions this is unavoidable for some children. With loss and trauma for our children, the impact of the pandemic, circumstance and standards of care, missed opportunities for good, quality care planning.

- We are working hard on care planning and matching is crucial for our children and for foster carers. There is an expectation of quality SW visit, oversight from the TM, and understanding and spot early warning signs, emotions, and behaviour changes.
- We hold signs of stability meetings which are critical. Occasional a change of placement can be in the best interest of the child.

Fostering – we are an independent agency in Sandwell. IFA was rated good in 2021:

1. Recruitment and Assessment
2. Mainstream support team – matching and placements
3. Connected carer support team

At present we have 97 mainstream carers and 94 connected carers. There is a continues to be a recruitment drive to increase the number of foster carers in Sandwell.

Adoption – Adoption arrangements are jointly undertaken with Adoption at Heart – it caters for children that are subject to placement orders across the Black Country and Sandwell is part of the consortium. They recruit adopters and prepare them become to become parents. The inspection outcome – a Good service. Since March 2022, 30 children in Sandwell have been adopted, the length of time for this process has significantly reduced and there is continued work to achieve positive outcomes. We are working on making further improvements with a focus on feedback from adopters.

Transition to Leaving Care – We would support T'seun from age 15 and 9 months.

- T'seun would have an allocated SW, a pathway plan, and assessment at 16. His SW would be within him until he is 18 years old.
- A PA is allocated at 17, with the aim to allocate earlier where possible. At this point the local offer will be introduced, and discussions about accommodation options and finances take place. Support is put in to ensure that opportunities are provided around education/training and health
- T'seun will be supported to help him to be resilient and start adult life with some chances and opportunities.

Participation offer for children in care

- Information is shared with children and the starting point to building relationships.
- The team share what groups are available and can be accessed, provide the website to review information. We engage with children in their spare time to look at what is available and what we can offer through Voices of Sandwell (VOS).

- We help to build their confidence and help them to meet other young people in care. We have holiday programmes, workshops, celebration events, activities for young people to access.
- Young people can join the FIYA Group as they turn 18, they have the opportunity to become a Care leaver ambassador for the Trust.

Emma - how confident are we getting at pre-empting vulnerable children and signs that a placement is breaking down. Can you assure the board?

Sarah Grant replied we have had a challenging few weeks – when we are faced with notice periods for a child, we go into action mode, tracking, updating PRF (profile) for child, we make the child safe, we have extra resilience around the placement whilst the notice period is being given, we would be trying very hard to save the placement, we would be revisiting family members, revisiting assessments of family members, fully into action mode, by the end of the notice period we have a plan for the child. We do have a placement crisis – we are working on this constantly.

Emma commented about the Notice Period and the challenge of this – for any child that comes into care they have suffered trauma and there is an element of risk of a placement breakdown. There is a clear criteria to access Camhs, as Corporate Parents we need to be proactive and be more aware of the fragility of children, with this, there needs to be more wraparound care and access to more support for EHWB to support those children.

Sally Giles – Are the council doing enough or could we do more to support the Fostering recruitment (friendly fostering) – can collectively support recruitment?

Sarah – We are currently looking with our housing partners, how we can support foster carers who want to foster more children are supported how this can be achieved – increasing bedrooms.

Teo – We are working with Housing in Sandwell and the Director of Housing, Gillian Douglas is a non-executive director

on the Trust Board, committing her time to looking at time to support foster carers. Engagement sessions have been completed within residential forums, to enable children to stay in Sandwell.

Emma – All partners need to be fostering friendly and a clear approach to how we can support internal staff who may need time off to support the child. 1 family per school would result in 100 families and increase the opportunities of placements.

Cllr Hackett - Placement Breakdowns – do we have assurance that change is happening and come back to this at a later date?

Emma – yes, it is a really challenging time, we have children with no identified placements, we need to change our mindset. The board must keep a close eye on this.

ACTION – Placement breakdown data – CPB – must keep a watching brief on this – any data to next Board?

ACTION – Fostering – SCPG to review how could we increase and encourage Sandwell's fostering number?

ACTION – Housing – how do we support housing opportunities for families wanting to be a foster carers and access to properties that can accommodate this.

ACTION – To return to CPB – For the development of the wraparound model whereby a whole multiagency offer of support is available for our young people – services then sign up to a model.

14/23

Redrafted Corporate Parenting Board Terms of Reference

Cllr Hackett – changes identified:

- Increase Cllr participation in CPB. In future CPB will include 8 Councillors, across all parties, from the new municipal year (May/June) the Leader and/or Deputy Leader will be members of CPB.
- Frequency of CPB meetings – to move to every 10 weeks.
- Children's Scrutiny Chair and Vice Chair to be full members of the CPB.

- For an regular agenda item for the chair and vice chair Scrutiny Chair and Vice Chair at each CPB meeting.

ACTION – A request for an agenda item for the Scrutiny Chair and Vice Chair at each CPB meeting.

Emma – Requested to review 4 points on TOR

- Quoracy
- Membership for the Trust – Service Manager for CiC – can be taken out,
- Cancelled and postponed meetings.

ACTION – Rosa Da Silva to meet with Emma/Teo to review highlight areas and feedback to Chair.

ACTION - Cllr Hackett to make slight amendments to ToR ready for full council in May.

15/23

Redrafted Corporate Parenting Board Pledge: Pledges and Promises

FIYA and VOS Forum presented an update on the 5 Pledges We have 5 pledges and 5 promises underneath each pledge.

What are we going to do about these pledges? These need to underpin all work of CPB and also of the strategic group.

Michael - Feedback to young people – when young people share experiences, what do people do after hearing your thoughts? Do they feedback to you?

Pledge/Promise - ‘Always listen to our voice and respect our decisions’ – we all understand what this means – YP just want to be listened to, we understand children need to be kept safe, explanations around why decisions are made – could be explained to YP – ACTION - Lucas to take back to FIYA and explain to YP.

ACTION - Strategic Group to look at how we all sign up to these Pledges and Promises and fulfil them.

16/23

Corporate Parenting Week: 12 – 16 June 2023

Rosa shared that it has been agreed to host a CPB week during 12-16 June 2023. A mini task group has been set up to pull events together. Dates to be added to calendars – LGA to deliver a training session 13 June, workshop to CPB on 13 June, 15 June – virtual training session for Cllrs and others.

ACTION – Communications to be sent to all partners and communication team at SMBC to be fully involved.

17/23

Strategic Corporate Parenting Update Group – Progress Report

Teo - Highlight report – working on:

- Targeted action for NEETs
- Local offer for care leavers and participation services
- Life and memory work – will be scrutinised by group
- EHWB HUB for CiC and CL
- Thrive Board finance streams to identify options for our care leavers
- CP week in June, and awareness of being a CP.

ACTION - CPB Annual Report – to be ready for Council in May.

ACTION - leasha and Lucas to be invited to join Council meeting 23 June (via Trisha Newton).

ACTION – CPB Annual Report also to be shared with the Trust.

18/23

AOB

Meeting ended: 18:45