

Lancashire County Council

Corporate Parenting Board

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday, 21st September, 2021 at 6.00 pm
in Zoom Virtual Meeting - Zoom**

Present: Members

County Councillor Stephen Clarke	- Lancashire County Council
County Councillor Ash Sutcliffe	- Lancashire County Council
County Councillor Jeff Couperthwaite	- Lancashire County Council
County Councillor Andrea Kay	- Lancashire County Council
County Councillor Scott Smith	- Lancashire County Council
County Councillor Rupert Swarbrick	- Lancashire County Council
County Councillor Julie Gibson	- Lancashire County Council
Graham Lindley	- Fostering Forum
Lynsey Evans	- Fostering Forum
Georgia	- LINX Representative
Mary	- LINX Representative
Emma	- LINX Representative

Co-opted members

Helen Hargreaves	- Morecambe Bay Clinical Commissioning Group
Audrey Swann	- Vulnerable and Looked After Children, LCC
Andreas Feldhaar	- Permanence Service, LCC
Gina Power	- Permanence Service - Children in Our Care, LCC
Stephen Young	- Corporate Management Team, LCC
Catherine Brooks	- Child and Family Wellbeing Service, LCC
Neil Drummond	- Lancashire Constabulary PPU
Adam Riley	- Child and Family Wellbeing Service
April Rankin	- Child and Family Wellbeing Service
Rebecca McGeown	- Lancs 0-19, Virgin Care Ltd
Maureen Huddleston	- Enhanced CLA Health Teams, UHMB

Other Attendees

County Councillor Cosima Towneley	- Lancashire County Council
Barbara Bath	- Children's Social Care, LCC
Jo Swords	- National Youth Advocacy Service
Sam Gorton	- Democratic Services, LCC

1. Introductions and Apologies

All were welcomed to the meeting and apologies were received from Julie Dawkins, Kirsty Byrne, Moya McKinney, Brian Wood and Hans Mundry.

The Board noted the following permanent membership changes:

New Members:

County Councillor Rupert Swarbrick for County Councillor Joan Burrows, Lancashire County Council.

Co-opted Non-Voting Representatives:

Catherine Brooks for Nighat Parveen, Child and Family Wellbeing Service

The Board also welcomed County Councillor Cosima Towneley, Cabinet Member for Children and Families to the meeting.

2. Notes of the Meeting and Matters Arising from 22 July 2021

Resolved: That the minutes were agreed as an accurate record and there were no matters arising from them.

County Councillor Julie Gibson requested that her apologies be noted for the meeting 22 July 2021.

A request had been made at the July meeting by the Chair to the Elected Members on the Board for four Champions for each of the following objectives:

Placements and Provision
Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health
Safeguarding
Education, Employment and Training

It was noted that County Councillor Rupert Swarbrick had confirmed that he would like to take on the champion role for one of the objectives, therefore leaving three more champions required.

Resolved: that Elected Members inform the Chair, County Councillor Clarke if they wish to become a champion for one of the three remaining objectives as soon as possible.

3. Children in Care - Mental Health Act

Charlotte Hammond, Learning Disabilities, Autism and Mental Health and Mairead Gill-Mullarkey, Adult Social Care, Lancashire County Council gave a presentation on mental health activity and the Mental Health Act. Board members had received the presentation with the agenda prior to the meeting and further information on the following can be found [here](#):

- Purpose
- Mental Health Risks for Children in our Care
- Children and Young People Mental Health Act Detail for the last six months (March-August 2021)
- Corporate Parents as Nearest Relative – Section 27 of the Mental Health Act
- Children and Young People Monthly Reporting (August 21 performance data)
- System challenges
- Action taken by System Partners
- Opportunities for Joint Working/Improving Practice

Following the presentation the following issues were discussed:

The responsibility of highlighting mental health issues, where an assessment is needed, depends on the care and support that is being provided to the child/young person at that time. Some children/young people are involved with Children's Services, Child and Adult Mental Health Services (CAMHS) or Tier 4 and if they have a package of care around them or support in place, the Community Team should be identifying and managing the risk.

It was noted that there had been 113 referrals and assessment in the last six months and a question was raised as to whether this was higher than in previous years due to the impact of COVID-19. The Board were informed that this figure was higher and had seen increases at times when there had been lockdowns and then subsequently lifted.

There was also a query as to the timeliness of the process for the Local Authority to Child and Adult Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and the Board were informed that this was the same process for the Authority as it was for the public. The Board were informed that there was a package being introduced in Wyre to all seven High Schools looking at early interventions and agreed that this was something that should be offered to children in care in Lancashire.

The Board were informed that Health colleagues from Lancashire and South Cumbria Foundation Trust could attend a future meeting of this Board with Charlotte Hammond and Mairead Gill-Mullarkey to provide over-arching information on services and what plans were in place in relation to the system issues that are being seen.

A suggestion was made as to whether children and young people could use the Mind of My Own (MOMO) app to provide feedback on their own mental health which could then be sent through to their Social Worker, who in turn could seek further support for the children/young people if necessary. The Board were informed that there had been lots of digital apps used during COVID-19 and when further discussions take place when Charlotte Hammond and Mairead Gill-Mullarkey return with Health colleagues, this was a further conversation that could be had specifically for children in care.

It was noted that there was a commitment from the Police to helping and that there was a vulnerability app for Samsung devices as well as access to helplines and that these were used a lot. It was clear that whilst the Police were there to safeguard and look after children, children in the care of Police Officers were not where they should be, and the right place was with people who can offer the children/young people the right care. Work that the Violence Reduction Network together with all partners was doing in relation to trauma informed approach training across all agencies to practitioners was a game changer for the future and would change how the Police approach vulnerability of all children including children looked after.

The following suggestions were made to the Board on opportunities for joint working/improving practice:

- Lancashire County Council Approved Mental Health Professional (AMHP) Service to review current practice with joint working with Children Services for children in care.
- An agreement between Services on who will undertake the role of Nearest Relative for Children in Care – this was agreed that through the Scheme of Delegation that this would be either or both the Head of Children Looked After and Leaving Care or the Director of Children's Social Care, Lancashire County Council.
- Approved Mental Health Professionals (AMHPs) to do briefing sessions for staff in Children's Services on the role of the AMHP.

Resolved: The Board agreed:

- i) That this was an area of work that requires a workstream to be set up and would be led by Senior Officers and the Champion for Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health.
- ii) Brendan Lee, Head of Children Looked After and Leaving Care, Lancashire County Council would speak with Mairead Gill-Mullarkey outside of the meeting on the low numbers of children looked after accessing mental health services for August, in the care of Lancashire County Council.

4. Fostering Statement of Purpose 2020-2022

Catherine Gill, Fostering, Adoption- Lancashire, Blackpool Services, Lancashire County Council outlined the report and briefed members on the Fostering Statement of Purpose 2020-2022 as set out in the [agenda](#) and it was:

Resolved: That the Corporate Parenting Board approved the Fostering Statement of Purpose 2020-2022 so that Lancashire Fostering Services were able to comply with Fostering Services England 2011 and meet minimum fostering standards and the Fostering Service can ensure that Lancashire's children and young people feel safe and well care for within their fostering families.

5. Virtual School Annual Report

Audrey Swann, Education Improvement, Lancashire County Council presented a summary of the Virtual School Annual Report 2020-21 to the Board which is attached to these minutes as it was slightly amended to the version that was attached to the agenda.

The presentation outlined further details on the following:

- Context to the Virtual School Annual Report 2020-21
- Attainment
- How do we know how our primary children are doing?
- 2019-2020 - The % of primary pupils who were doing really well or on track
- 2019-2020 - Year 11s of 2020 attainments compared to 2017-2018 and 2018-2019
- How Lancashire compares from the previous year and within the North West, statistical neighbours and nationally
- Early indications for 2021 GCSE cohort
- Post Year 11 young people information
- Education, Employment and Training (EET)
- Planning for progress – the Personal Education Plan (PEP)
- Quality matters – quality of the Personal Education Plan (PEP)
- Funding
- High needs pot/funding and how it helps
- What else is included in the Annual Report
- Priorities 2021-2022

A copy of the full Virtual School Annual Report was circulated to members following the meeting for reference.

Resolved: That the Board noted the summary that was outlined in the presentation.

6. Education, Employment and Training Strategy

Roxanne McAllister, Looked After Children and Leaving Care Service, Lancashire County Council provided the Board with an update on the Education, Employment and Training Strategy and outlined the progress so far:

- Recording options have been amended to include pre-employments activity and volunteering, this has captured 76 young people who were previously thought to be Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).
- Established communication between the Virtual School and the Permanence Service via Microsoft Teams to ensure better joint working and information sharing.
- Joint working between the Education Department, Inclusion Service and Child and Youth Justice Service has started to improve Education, Employment and Training (EET) outcomes for Children in Our Care (CIOC) and Care Leavers.
- Campus day arranged and attended by Personal Advisors and the Leaving Care Service.
- Empower academy dates set.
- Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET) young people being tracked as part of the service Performance, Audit, Challenge and Track (PACT) meeting.
- Pathway plans being updated with a focus on Education, Employment and Training (EET) planning.

The Board were informed of what was still needed, which was:

- Gaining consent for information sharing with Further Education (FE) provisions.
- Required changes made to the Personal Education Plan (PEP).
- A focus on placement stability with Education, Employment and Training (EET) outcomes at the forefront of planning.
- Work experience opportunities for Children in Our Care (CIOC) and Care Leavers.
- Employment opportunities within the council and the communities.

Resolved: The Board noted the progress on the Education, Employment and Training Strategy and what work was still needed to be undertaken.

7. Housing Policy

Roxanne McAllister, Looked After Children and Leaving Care Service, Lancashire County Council outlined the Council's Joint Housing Protocol for Care Leavers which would ensure that all Lancashire Care Leavers felt at home. The Protocol had been developed over the last 12 months working jointly with the 12 local District Councils and housing providers. Provided within the presentation which had been circulated to members prior to the meeting were further details on:

- What the aims of the protocol were
- The progress so far

- What the protocol entails:
 - Preparation for independence
 - Pathway to homes
 - Local connection
 - Priority
 - Second chances
 - In the event of homelessness
- Challenges and what can be done to resolve them
 - Inconsistencies within the various Lancashire Districts' allocation policies and possible solutions
 - Housing shortage and possible solutions
- Corporate Parenting Cultures

A request was made to the Elected Member who became the Placement and Provision Champion to liaise with those District Councils who have inconsistencies within the various Lancashire allocation policies to encourage them to afford the highest priority for social housing for Care Leavers in Lancashire. This included most East Districts, West Lancashire Borough Council and Lancaster City Council. Districts have commented that the issues are around demand and stock of housing and also how many care leavers were in that particular District and what it looked like for demand. At the time of the meeting, there were five young people in Bed and Breakfast accommodation, some of which, it was their second time in this sort of accommodation, and over the last six months, it was being used at an increased rate, again, due to a housing shortage. This was a position, that as a Council, was felt not to be acceptable for Care Leavers to be in this type of accommodation, however, due to the situation and shortage of acceptable provision it was either that or nothing. There was also an increased usage of commissioned placements for 18+ young people with 32 in commissioned placements over the last three months, at a cost of £78,991.67 and this figure was relevant as the Council did not have a duty under the Leaving Care Act to house young people, this should be done within the community and not part of the budget from Central Government. However, as an organisation, Lancashire County Council provides commissioned placements for its' young people and which indicated a huge housing deficit in the community for Lancashire's young people. The Board were informed of a number of possible solutions for the housing shortage which were:

- Involve the housing associations directly to create pathways for young people
- The implementation of this protocol to aid smoother transitions and support access to social housing
- Senior executive/cross county discussion about affordable housing stock and availability with help from the Corporate Parenting Board
- Consulting on a guarantor scheme for Care Leavers
- National House Project

There was also another issue with regards to Corporate Parenting cultures where it was not a consistent application and a lack of understanding of Corporate Parenting principles within the Districts. The solution for this would be to outline

the Corporate Parenting responsibilities to the Districts and for it to be imbedded from a Senior level within each District.

Following the presentation, the following points were raised:

Block Contracted Services were the supported accommodation and youth accommodation housing offer that used to be funded through the "Supporting People" budget. Lancashire County Council took this over as part of the Block Contracted services as this was also a good pathway for 16+ years looked after children into social housing. In respect of the supported lodgings offer of the Block Contract, the take up in Lancashire is low compared to other Local Authorities, partly due to where the host families live and the need for improved transition planning in social work. The current contract for supported lodgings is with Barnardo's and M3 and it was noted that further work needed doing in terms of promoting this service.

Further issues that were raised for discussion at future meetings were:

- Who assesses the Bed and Breakfast accommodation when care leavers are placed in them?
- Who were children in care and care leavers competing against for housing?
- In terms of new builds, it was suggested that the Council should be requesting at least one house per 100/200 built and propose this to housing and planning with young people present in the form of a meeting/conference.

Resolved: that the Board noted the update.

8. National Housing Project

Andreas Feldhaar, Permanence Service, Lancashire County Council provided the Board with an update on the National House Project which Lancashire had secured with the support of young people who were involved in the pitch. Lancashire was only one of 13 Projects running nationally.

The Board were informed about what the Project entailed and members had received this [information](#) prior to the meeting. It has four pillars in how it operates and succeeds which are:

- Project bases
- Project lead and two facilitators
- Independent living framework (Autonomy, Competency, Relatedness)
- Access to Social Housing Properties

The Board noted that this was a young person led incentive and approach and it would support approximately 10 young people in care aged 17+ years of age per year. The Project was a very successful pathway from care to independence and it had increased the permanence and achieving permanency and also significantly reduced the risk of homelessness. Since the Project began in 2018 it was reported that it had not had one young person evicted from their property

who were involved with the Project. It also focuses on (re)integration into education, employment or training and was an accredited process.

Also outlined to the Board, was that there were six implementation stages which were:

- i) Feasibility (month 1) – completed
- ii) Project Development (month 2-7) – completed
- iii) Project Set Up (start month 7) – In Progress
 - Establish Steering Group
 - Confirm areas of future social housing (West Lancashire has committed to this and discussions are ongoing with other districts and registered providers to finalise this process over the next few weeks)
 - Identify project base near to where most young people will be living
 - Recruit project lead and facilitators; induction and training
- iv) Project Implementation (first Group of young people) – due to start at end of the first year
- v) Second group of young people – due to start around the middle of the second year
- vi) First group of young people graduate (tenancy transfer) – due to start in the middle of the third year

Resolved: that the Board noted the update.

9. Executive Group for Achieving Children and Young People's Permanence

Andreas Feldhaar, Permanence Service, Lancashire County Council informed the Board that the former 'Permanence Board' had been replaced by an Executive Group for Achieving Children and Young People's Permanence which supported the permanency of Lancashire's young people where there was an effective partnership working with internal and external partners alongside decision makers at senior or head of service level. The Executive Group would support all aspects of permanence and corporate parenting and provide strategic direction and remove barriers beyond the individual organisation. The Board noted that regular updates from the Executive Group would be reported to the Corporate Parenting Board.

The Board were provided with an overview, which was included in the agenda pack, of the four workstreams that the Executive Group would focus on, which were:

- i) Achieving Permanence
- ii) Improving Placements and Provisions
- iii) Improving Health and Wellbeing Support and Outcomes
- iv) Improving Education, Employment and Training Opportunities and Outcomes

Resolved: That the Board noted the update.

10. Actions for Next Meeting

Brendan Lee, Permanence Service, Lancashire County Council summarised the meeting and requested that Elected Members come forward to champion one of the four workstreams in order to support the Executive Group for Achieving Children and Young People's Permanence in enabling those links with District Councils and to drive the work forward. Brendan Lee offered to speak with Elected Members if they wished on the workstreams and how they could support officers in taking this work forward.

- Resolved:**
- i) That Elected Members inform Brendan Lee, Permanence Service, Lancashire County Council of the workstream they would like to lead on.
 - ii) That County Councill Gibson speak with Brendan Lee, Brendan Lee, Permanence Service, Lancashire County Council outside the meeting on the role of the Champion.

11. Any Other Business

There was not any other business received.

12. Date and Time of Next Meeting

Wednesday, 24 November 2021 at 6pm, format to be agreed.