

## Lancashire County Council

### Corporate Parenting Board

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday, 11th May, 2022 at 6.00 pm in Savoy Suite 2 - The Exchange - County Hall, Preston**

**Present:       Members**

County Councillor Stephen Clarke	- Lancashire County Council
County Councillor Andrea Kay	- Lancashire County Council
County Councillor Rupert Swarbrick	- Lancashire County Council
Jake	- LINX Representative
Georgia	- LINX Representative
Mary	- LINX Representative
Ripley	- LINX Representative

**Co-opted members**

Janice Laing	- Permanence Service, LCC
Lisa Gee	- Permanence Service, LCC
Gina Power	- Permanence Service, LCC
Paul McIntyre	- Fostering, Adoption Lancashire & Blackpool and Residential Services, LCC
Brian Wood	- Child and Family Wellbeing Service, LCC
Adam Riley	- Child and Family Wellbeing Service, LCC
April Rankin	- Child and Family Wellbeing Service, LCC
Jennifer Donnelly	- Lancs 0-19, HCRG
Caroline Waldron	- Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)

**Other Attendees**

Clare Smith	- Policy, Commissioning and Children's Health, LCC
Lois Taylor	- Permanence Service, LCC
Anna Vincent	- Permanence Service, LCC
Victoria Burbridge	- Permanence Service, LCC
Brendan Lee	- Permanence Service, LCC
Sam Gorton	- Democratic Services, LCC
Ralph Rushworth	- Looked After Children and Leaving Care Service, LCC
Saskia	- Care Experienced Young Person
Mandy Williams	- Family Safeguarding Service, LCC
Alex Latham	- My Covenant
Zaheer Abbas	- Internal Audit, LCC
Azra Akhtar	- Permanence Service, LCC

## **1. Introductions and Apologies**

All were welcomed to the meeting and apologies were received from Councillors Sutcliffe, Couperthwaite, Smith and Gibson, Graham Lindley, Barbara Bath, Andreas Feldhaar, Audrey Swann, Liz Donnelly-Nelson, Catherine Brooks.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Families also sent apologies.

It was noted that Jenny Donnelly was attending on behalf of Rebecca McGeown, Lancashire 0-19, Virgin Care Ltd and Lisa Gee was attending on behalf of Moya McKinney, Permanence Service, Lancashire County Council.

## **2. Notes of the Meeting and Matters Arising from 15 March 2022**

**Resolved:** That the minutes were agreed as an accurate record with the addition of Julie Dawkins as present for the meeting. There were no matters arising from the minutes.

## **3. Participation Team Update**

Young people from LINX (Lancashire's Children in Care Council), April Rankin and Adam Riley, Participation Team, Child and Family Wellbeing Service, Lancashire County Council gave a presentation on recruitment events, issues young people are passionate about and the young people's CPB meeting in July.

The Board were informed that April Rankin and Adam Riley have worked with team managers from the Children in our Care (CIOC) and Leaving Care Services on two events in May to share with those teams what participation is and to recruit new young people to the groups. The event was delivered to over 80 social workers on 4 May 2022 and actively engaged in discussions on barriers around young people participating and how these could be overcome.

Details of some of the barriers received were:

- Young people not wanting to attend due to the 'label' of it being for children in care. A suggestion was to use the same language and use the LINX term for the group.
- Ensure that young people receive feedback from sessions they have been involved with and if changes have been made following young people's input make sure they know what those changes look like, so they do not feel like they have wasted their time in those discussions, or if no changes are to be made, then feedback as to why those changes cannot be made.

It was noted that feedback had been received on how best to promote the groups and that coloured flyers would be delivered to social workers so they can distribute these to new children and young people when they come into care. There is also more flexibility of youth workers, in that they can set up initial introductory meetings on Zoom or face to face to meet a young person first before they join a group if this were what they would like.

Another event was planned for 17 May for young people aged above 17<sup>1/2</sup> years of age as well as care leavers and personal advisors (PAs), to gain an understanding on what The Care Leavers Forum is and take part in activities and table discussions, with an opportunity to sign up to that group.

Young people commented that LINX had helped build their confidence up to the point where they feel more comfortable to speak in front of adults, particularly Elected Members and Senior managers. LINX also needs the help of new young people, so there are more views on what they think should happen. There is a range of young people attending different meetings/events to enable their voices to be heard and they enjoy meeting new people and making new friends and getting different perspectives which enables them to have a louder voice across Lancashire.

Following a group session, young people had discussed what topics they felt were important to them and what changes can be made for themselves and for their peers. They also requested that support and help on the issues detailed, come from the Corporate Parenting Board. The issues are:

- Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Support in school/college
- Breaking down the stigma
- Support with bullying
- Finances, better understanding of what they are entitled to – young people would like to take up the offer from County Councillor Jeff Couperthwaite to deliver a money session with the young people.
- Support with transitions, ie moving out

In groups, the Board were then asked to discuss what topics come up when they are talking to children and young people and what can/have they offered to children and young people. Some examples were:

- Feeling a sense of not belonging
- Difficulties in school
- Not having the head space for school/education
- Stigma
- Identity as a child or young person in care
- Lack of confident
- Stability of housing and having a nice home

Further feedback can be found in the presentation attached to the minutes.

In preparation for the Young People's Corporate Parenting Board Summer Session, Board members were requested to find a minimum of five services in their local area that support children and young people. These could be to do with mental health, education, employment, finances, youth groups etc. This information will then be collated and shared with young people in those areas.

The Board were asked to discuss what they would like to see and get out of the summer session in July. Following discussion, a few suggestions were as follows:

- As many children and young people to attend the session and get an idea of what differences they can make.
- Diverse representation that reflects all of Lancashire's care experienced children and young people.
- The offer of some activities that meet the needs for their social development.
- Input/views from younger looked after children.
- LGBT representation.

Further feedback can be found in the presentation attached to the minutes.

Following this discussion, the Board were then asked to decide on a date for the session, time and venue. The Board agreed that the next meeting date should be changed from 21 July 2022 to Tuesday, 26 July at 1pm-4pm and that it would be held in an Outdoor Education Centre (either Borwick Hall or Hothersall Lodge). The venue will be confirmed following this meeting.

Young people thanked all present for their contribution in this item.

**Resolved:** That:

- i) The Board noted the presentation from LINX and the Participation Team.
- ii) That all members of the Board find a minimum of five services in their local area that support children and young people and present these at the July Young People's Corporate Parenting Board meeting.
- iii) April Rankin contact County Councillor Jeff Couperthwaite to arrange for a money session to be delivered for young people.
- iv) The date and time of the next meeting be rescheduled from 21 July 2022 to 26 July 2022 at 1pm-4pm and be held at an Outdoor Education Centre (either Borwick Hall or Hothersall Lodge).

#### **4. Update from the Four Corporate Parenting Board Priority Groups**

##### **Lasting Homes Priority**

Janice Laing, Permanence Service, Lancashire County Council provided the Board with an update on the Lasting Homes priority (on behalf of Andreas Feldhaar, Permanence Service, LCC) who met on 4 May 2022 and included from Lancashire County Council, CC Kay (Corporate Parenting Board Priority Lead), CC Clarke (Chair of Corporate Parenting Board), Brendan Lee (Head of Permanence Service), Roxanne McAllister and Amanda Barbour (Senior Managers, Permanence Service) and Andreas Feldhaar (Practice Development Lead, Permanence Service). CC Gibson Kay (Corporate Parenting Board Priority Lead) sent apologies due to illness.

The Board were informed that:

- Invites had been sent to District Housing Authorities and Registered Providers at Head of Service/Director level on 17 March 2022 and followed up again on 26 and 27 April 2022.
- Five out of the 12 districts in Lancashire attended (Lancaster, Chorley, South Ribble, Pendle and West Lancashire).
- One Head of Housing attending (Lancaster), four districts delegated attendance to other managers.
- Five out of the 10 invited Registered Providers attended (Key on behalf of Progress Housing, Great Places, Community Gateway, Onward Homes and Together Housing).
- Two Directors attended; three registered providers delegated attendance to other managers.
- Most apologies were only sent within days of the event by districts and registered providers.
- The agenda for the meeting included:
  - Corporate Parenting (what it means)
  - Joint Housing Protocol for Lancashire's Care Leavers
  - What Lancashire's young people in care have to say about their future home
  - Messages and commitments to Lancashire's Care Leavers.
- Following the meeting, the next steps were that:
  - Leaving Care Lasting Home Panel to be set up to improve early and joint planning.
  - Information sharing process between Leaving Care and Registered Providers to be confirmed to improve tenancy support for care leavers.
  - Corporate Parenting Board to consider follow up with Chief Executives and Lead Members of district councils regarding attendance and future commitment.

Some of the messages and commitments were shared with the Board, which included:

- I will make sure that this conversation will continue in Chorley, and I will highlight the need for focus on this work.
- The importance of the voice of young people and how we can do much more even while acknowledging the challenges for ourselves as partners.
- I will review our processes to try and make them easier to understand wherever possible.
- A greater understanding of the housing issues facing young people. Onward Homes will work with Lancashire County Council and the local authorities to ensure access to their homes is as stress free as possible.
- Making sure we have a fit for purpose process in place for 16 /17year olds to access tenancies.

Following the presentation CC Kay highlighted that the meeting had gone well and that it was useful to hear from everyone present what their offer was to Lancashire's young people. Going forwards the Priority Leads also want to meet with building companies to make them aware of the difficulties young people face when leaving care in Lancashire, whilst ensuring that they feel safe, comfortable and if possible, support them until they are 25 years of age. It was also suggested that inter-generational housing could also be an option, where young people live in a community where older people are, so they can support each other.

Elected members requested that senior officers provide the information on the issues that the Service were faced with, and this would then be shared with the 84 County Councillors and request that they each speak to their District counterparts and request that they look at their housing policies and look to change them if required.

CC Swarbrick also offered to do a session with young people on housing and work that is done in the districts around this.

### **Achieving Permanence Priority**

Janice Laing, Permanence Service, Lancashire County Council provided the Board with a brief update on the Achieving Permanence Priority and informed them that a meeting had taken place at the end of April with Jen Robertshaw (Permanence Service, LCC), CC Clarke (Corporate Parenting Priority Lead) and Janice Laing to talk through what permanence means, and outlined some of the projects that are being delivered in the Permanence Service alongside some of the barriers to permanence, which included availability of foster homes for children and young people, particularly teenagers and those with behavioural challenges and large groups of siblings. Next steps were that a request has been made to CC Clarke in terms of what he can do to help the service overcome some of those barriers and what County Councillors can offer in terms of offering challenge around this. The Board also noted that there were agencies and providers that were waiting planning and regulation decisions to open residential

homes and there was currently a backlog of planning permission, which CC Clarke said he would raise with Councillors/officers in districts where this happening. It was also noted that the negative public perception needed to change with regards to young people in care and that this was the responsibility of the Corporate Parenting Board.

Also, the Permanence Service has delivered on two pieces of work which the Board approved at its meeting on 13 January 2022 were:

- i) Life Story Work Policy and Procedure has been signed off and has now been launched at an event on 25 April 2022 and the policy is being rolled out across the Council.
- ii) Lasting Homes Panel Process is also now in place and the Panel held its first meeting on 9 May 2022, with others planned over the next few weeks.

**Resolved:** That the Corporate Parenting Board:

- i) Noted the update.
- ii) Requested that officers liaise with Councillors and provide them with information that can be passed on to County Councillors to share with District counterparts for the Lasting Homes priority.

## **5. Care Leaver Covenant**

Alex Latham, My Covenant was welcomed to the meeting. Alex provided a brief overview of what the Care Leaver Covenant was, which was a promise made by the private, public or voluntary organisations to provide support for care leavers aged 16-25 to help them live independently. Further information on the Care Leaver Covenant can be found in the [presentation](#) that was attached to the agenda. Alex Latham also informed the young people that a meeting would be arranged separately to brief them on the Covenant.

The Board noted that there were five core outcomes which are:

- i) Independent Living – where care leavers are better prepared to live independently.
- ii) Employment, Education, Training – where care leavers have improved access to opportunities.
- iii) Safety and Security – where care leavers feel safe, secure and stable in their living situation.
- iv) Health – where care leavers have improved access to health and emotional support.
- v) Finance – where care leavers are financially capable and independent.

The Board were informed that there are over 400 signatories that have created offers across England, including pro-bono legal aid, employability training, free counselling, tailored banking process and more. Examples of some of those signatories are in the presentation attached to the agenda. However, a lot of the signatories are not in Lancashire, and Alex Latham commented that this is where

the Corporate Parenting Board, young people and Lancashire County Council can assist, by engaging with local businesses and other local partners to build offers that are relevant to Lancashire's care leavers and their needs.

In working in partnership with the Local Authority on the Covenant, this will add value to the 'Local Offer'. As part of the Authority's review of current practice, they are strongly encouraged to engage with the Covenant. This is a voluntary indication of a desire to do their utmost to fulfil their role as a corporate parent to care leavers. The Covenant encourages Local Authorities to follow good practice in offering additional discretionary services in line with the recommendations of the National Implementation Advisor for Care Leavers.

The Care Leaver Covenant is working in partnership with sixty other Local Authorities to develop a 'Whole Council Approach' through:

- Raising Awareness – with both staff and care leavers within the Council. The Connects Portal for Care Leavers offers life skills, discounts and employment opportunities and is a direct way of reaching young people with offers and opportunities that matter. Personal Advisors and Leaving Care Teams can also register to receive the same offers, which will enable them to support young people in accessing them.
- Training and Employment – opportunities within the Council – leading by example. Local Authorities (in partnership with their providers and their supply chains) aim to offer up to 12 apprenticeships, internships or work experience (ring-fenced) opportunities for care leavers over a year. This also includes positive recruitment procedures to support care leavers.
- Policy Partnership – Care leaver proofing policy and governance. Reclaiming VAT on the setting up home grant to fund free broadband and digital devices when young people move into their first home. Multi-agency partnership between NHS Trusts and leaving care teams to develop a core offer for care leavers. This includes free prescriptions up until the age of 25. The Board noted that the role of Elected Members as champions and advocates cannot be underestimated. Members in Local Authorities have been asked to identify an employer or business from within their ward to become a Covenant signatory, and with Lancashire having 84 Councillors, this would provide fantastic opportunities for care leavers.
- Social Value Toolkit – transforming social value action plan, to improve outcomes for care leavers. Local Authorities could revise their Social Value Policy to ensure that meaningful offers of work, apprenticeships, internships and work experience for care leavers of a standard part of procurement practices. The Toolkit launched in March 2022 and is being used by over thirty Councils across England and an example of the partnership procured services, enabled the renovation of properties to support care leavers as they make their transition to independent living.
- Economic Development – taking advantage of the Council's local partnerships and connections. Local Authorities could work with small medium enterprise (SMEs), local employer groups and other partners to set and meet ambitious targets to increase the number, range and take up of employment, education



and training opportunities. Building a network of local Covenant signatories, supporting care leavers with opportunities, support and offers.

The Board were informed that in developing a 'Whole Council Approach' it requires strategic buy-in and support across the Council. This means accepting that the responsibility for being a corporate parent does not solely reside with those people and departments that have Care Leaver in their job title. This strategic partnership involves both the political leadership and Directors from across the Council.

Following the presentation from Alex Latham, My Covenant it was agreed that this was something Lancashire County Council should adopt. It was agreed that the Brendan Lee, Lead Officer, will liaise with Alex on how to take this forward which was key on a 'Whole Council Approach'. The Board noted that Brendan Lee, Lead Officer will take this forward and begin conversations with Corporate Management Team in order to sign up to the Covenant and then raise awareness through Full Council with Elected Members and report back to the Board on the progress.

**Resolved:** That the Board:

- i) Agreed to sign up to the Covenant and noted that discussions with Brendan Lee (Lead Officer) will take place on how to take this forward with Alex Latham and following his discussion with Alex Latham, will then address Corporate Management Team in seeking their approval.
- ii) Noted that Alex Latham will speak with the young people in detail to explain the Covenant.

## **6. Family Safeguarding**

Mandy Williams, Lancashire Family Safeguarding, Lancashire County Council updated the Board on the Family Safeguarding which was launched on 1 March 2021.

The Board were given an outline of the Family Safeguarding Service that has been introduced as part of the transformation of Children's Services within Lancashire and has meant investing significantly in Early Help to keep families together, develop teams around the schools and moving from localities to functions. A grant of £6.3 million was given to the Council to deliver the Family Safeguarding model and it was reported that this is working well.

Within the service, there has been changes to child protection, to keep more children safely within their families and by changing the workers behaviour with families they too can change their behaviour and accept support on offer. There is a focus on working with resistance and development parent's strengths. The Multi-disciplinary Teams are working together to support children and parents, tackling domestic abuse, parental mental health and substance misuse to improve children's lives. There are also locally developed intervention and group work programmes for families. The model also works with resistance and

developing family strengths which is a new approach to social work that creates sustainable behavioural change in parents so that children can remain safely at home. The Board noted that there was also the Family Safeguarding Workbook which is an integrated family assessment which frees up practitioners to spend more time with families, which reduces bureaucracy, provides guiding intervention, multi-agency recording and making the social work job achievable.

As a Council, it ensures that children in care have secure and stable homes and that it invests in the ongoing support for Care Leavers. The whole service is ambitious to deliver the best quality 'good and outstanding' service, to listen to Lancashire children, young people and their families and carers, and to work in a way that builds on family's strengths.

**Resolved:** The Board noted the update on the Family Safeguarding Model.

## **7. Any Other Business**

The Board were informed that Barbara Bath, Director of Children's Services would be retiring in August, however, due to leave this would be her last meeting. Unfortunately, apologies had been sent for this meeting and the Chair, on behalf of the Board thanked Barbara for all her support over the years to children in care and care leavers and the work she had done for the Corporate Parenting Board and wished her a long and happy retirement.

## **8. Date and Time of Next Meeting**

As agreed earlier in the agenda, the date of the next meeting will be Tuesday, 26 July 2022 at a venue to be confirmed from 1pm.