

Lancashire County Council

Corporate Parenting Board

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday, 10th September, 2020 at 6.00 pm
in Zoom Virtual Meeting - Zoom**

Present: Members

County Councillor Ian Brown	- Lancashire County Council
County Councillor David Foxcroft	- Lancashire County Council
County Councillor Philippa Williamson	- Lancashire County Council
County Councillor Julie Gibson	- Lancashire County Council
Marieta Birt	- Fostering Forum
Callum Kaci	- LINX Representative
Georgia	- LINX Representative

Co-opted members

Brendan Lee	- Children's Social Care, Lancashire County Council
Caroline Waldron	- Clinical Commissioning Groups
Audrey Swann	- Headteacher, Vulnerable and Looked After Children, Lancashire County Council
Amanda Mansfield	- Independent Reviewing Officers, Lancashire County Council
Roxanne McAllister	- Leaving Care, Lancashire County Council
Stephen Young	- Corporate Management Team, Lancashire County Council
Mia Leyland	- Barnardo's
Umer Khonat	- Business Intelligence Team, Lancashire County Council
Maureen Huddleston	- Clinical Commissioning Groups
Jenny Donnelly	- Clinical Commissioning Groups

Other Attendees

Shell Arliss	- National Youth Advocacy Service
Sharon Hubber	- Director of Children's Social Care, Lancashire County Council
Andreas Feldhaar	- Children's Social Care Team Manager, Lancashire County Council
Sam Gorton	- Democratic Services, Lancashire County Council
Cathy Trengove	- Barnardo's

1. Introductions and Apologies

All were welcomed to the meeting and apologies were received from Liz Donnelly-Nelson, Barbara Bath, Tracy Smith, Terri Crossland, Lynda Pearson, Judith Gault, Jane Hylton and Kirsty Clarke.

County Councillor Phillippa Williamson was replacing County Councillor Jayne Rear for this meeting.

Amelia Brummett, East Lancashire Clinical Commissioning Group was observing this meeting.

2. Notes of the Meeting and Matters Arising from 22 July 2020

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and there were no matters arising from them.

3. Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)/Education. Employment and Training (EET)

Audrey Swann, Headteacher of Vulnerable and Challenging Groups, Lancashire County Council provided the board with some background to the report that was circulated to members and details of a subsequent action plan that will outline the practical steps required to deliver it. The Corporate Parenting Board and partners alongside the Council need to accept this as a priority and support an increase in Education, Employment and Training (EET) for Children in our Care and Care Leavers by providing opportunities and resources to allow this to happen.

The Virtual School has a statutory duty to support and champion those children and young people in care to their local authority and care leavers. One of the key duties of the Virtual School is to ensure that across the Local Authority 'Top priority is given to creating a culture of high educational aspirations and that the authority strives for accelerated progress and age-related attainment or better for looked-after children'.

The duty to promote the educational achievement of a looked-after child extends to looked-after young people aged 16 or 17 preparing to leave care. It is expected that although clearly focused on children aged between pre-school and 18, Virtual School Headteachers should work with care leaving teams to ensure the education of those transitioning from care is supported at both a strategic and individual level. For those between 16-18 years, the Virtual School Headteacher should liaise with the young person's Personal Adviser during the initial transition to leaving care services to ensure the adviser understands the young person's educational goals and support needs.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 stipulated that advice and support needed to be available for all eligible care leavers until the age of 25. This included the provision of a Personal Advisor for each young person to assist with preparation for adulthood and independent living. This included support when required in relation to education and employment. The Local Authority must also provide a published care leaver offer to support and sign post young people to services and advice and guidance available to them.

It is good practice and expected by Ofsted, for the Virtual School to work closely with leaving care services and contribute to providing advice, guidance and support in relation to education, training and employment to care leavers beyond the age of 17 and in Lancashire we extend our support when required to care leavers up to the age of 25.

A detailed account of all the data contained within the report was presented to the Board which included:

- Care Leaver Education, Employment and Training (EET) Data
- Comparative Data from 2015-2019 within the North West, statistical neighbours and nationally.
- Details of the current role of the Virtual School in supporting Children Looked After (CLA) and Care Leavers into Education, Employment and Training (EET)
- Activity and Impact – Success Outcomes
- Future Plans
- Plans and recommendations from findings

In conclusion the contributing factors to Lancashire's high Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET) figures are complex and require a whole organisation approach, with buy-in at every level and every department. As corporate parents there is a desire to share the responsibility for our children's outcomes, whilst acknowledging the key roles needed in achieving this as Children's Social Care. There is a need to create an aspirational community and become corporate parents who offer exceptional opportunities to the children in our care and care leavers.

Roxanne McAllister, Children's Social Care Team Manager, Lancashire County Council presented the PowerPoint attached to the agenda – Aspirations for Children in our Care and Care Leavers which outlined the challenges that Children's Services had and presented recommendations that would help overcome them and move forward.

The aims of the services are to:

- To ensure that children in our care and care leavers have access to opportunities, have their aspirations raised and supported and to achieve in line with their peers and their own goals.

- To create an aspirational community and become corporate parents who offer exceptional opportunities to the children in our care and care leavers.
- To increase the number of care experienced young people in Education, Employment and Training to the number of young people generally.

53.6% of Lancashire care leavers are NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training). Over the past 4½ years, Lancashire's Leaving Care Services have made lots improvements in different areas, however the figure has stayed around the same throughout. This is not just a single service issue.

There are three different categories of NEET:

- G4 – NEET due to illness or disability (*account for 20.1% of NEET*)
- G5 – NEET for other reasons (*account for 63.1% of NEET*)
- G6 – NEET due to pregnancy or parenting (*account for 16.8% of NEET*)

In all three localities, North, East and Central Lancashire, G5 NEET 'Other' has the lowest proportion of long term (+6 month duration) NEET status, in both Central and East. G6 – Parenting had the higher proportion of Long Term duration whilst in the North G4 – Disability did.

Long term (LT) NEET made up the majority of Lancashire's NEET population, so as a service, thought needs to be given to those two categories and how young people are supported to enter into employment.

Further breakdown of data can be found in the presentation attached to the report.

Roxanne reported that she had carried out a piece of work that compared care leavers who had graduated university between care leavers that had been Not in Education, Employment or training for the longest period of times. Findings from the report found that stability and placement were the main key comparator factors.

Following this piece of work key themes on what an action plan should focus on, were presented as follows:

- Long Term NEET
- Placement type
- Disruption during high school
- Mental Health
- Pregnancy and parenting
- Placement stability
- Age coming into care
- Social work consistency

With regards mental health, it was noted that there should be a service culture change around mental health, rather than seeing it as a barrier to employing a young person, it should be seen as a way to improve someone's mental health.

In conclusion, recommendations from the findings are detailed below and these will be carried out in conjunction with the service redesign:

- Focus of the 13+ team will be to keep families together, offering bespoke packages of support for families managing teens and issues of contextual safeguarding, upskilling social workers in this team and taking learning from Children with Disabilities in this area.
- Family Safeguarding Model will focus on keeping families together and provide the resources to achieve this.
- Implementing targets for the proportion of children looked after who are placed in foster placements remaining in their existing schools.
- The proposed increased staffing levels will increase social work continuity for children looked after and lower caseloads of both social workers and Personal Advisors will increase quality of work and outcomes for young people.
- Increased training for Personal Advisors around coaching, careers advice and support in employment.
- Sexual health services and child care support.
- Accommodation strategy.
- Mental Health strategy.
- Recruiting our young people to our 'family business' by creating more opportunities for our young people within our own organisation and within our contracts with others.
- Creating a culture of aspirations and meaningful occupation for care leavers, at every level of the organisation.

Discussions ensued following the presentation and it was reported that the Advocacy Service were experiencing a high number of referrals due to the number of changes in social workers and placement changes which is of concern. Also there are more Education, Employment and Training referrals made compared to Not in Education, Employment and Training and the query was around what part advocacy played in that. The Advocacy Service offered to do some targeted work with Children's Services to try and increase that offer to young people. In reply, it was noted that there was continuing work being undertaken on social work retention and in moving to a new service delivery model, a new retention strategy was being developed to ensure social workers remain in Lancashire and are not moved across areas within Lancashire to cover high caseloads. A piece of work has commenced on placement stability, around where Lancashire's children live and will ensure it is linked to where their school, plan and details of their Personal Education Plan

There needs to be a joined up strategy from beginning to end and it needs to be on everybody's agenda across the Network, as the reality is, when you are Not in Education, Employment and Training between the ages of 11 and 13 and in a care setting, the data is telling us that it is significantly more difficult to get a young person engage in Education, Employment or Training regardless of what aspirations are behind that. The Corporate Parenting Board will underpin this strategy.

Within Lancashire County Council, employment placements have been offered to our young people in care and currently there are:

32 young people on work placements

21 on apprenticeships (three now employed full-time and 10 part-time)

Other young people are also placed in the private sector also.

With regards sexual health, there is an opportunity to review the existing pathways. Research tells us that the danger zone for children in care is when they leave care. When young people are in care the access to contraception and a range of services is available. One of the issues is around older children looked after and their willingness to engage in health assessments so there is a need for support from health colleagues going forward to improve this.

The Board were informed that this area of work had political support across the board and supported the plan which will be owned by the Corporate Parenting Board who will ensure its success and monitor the progress regularly.

There is a need to ensure that foster carers are kept well informed to have discussions with young people in their care around aspirations and that the plans for the young people are the right plans for that young person.

Expectations of the Corporate Parenting Board is to write to Universities, businesses (ie NHS, Police and other local businesses) and colleges as a Board requesting their engagement for our children and young people in care and care leavers and seeing what they can offer them, including employment at schools, colleges and universities.

In conclusion it was:

- Resolved:**
- i) That Brendan Lee and Shell Arliss would discuss more targeted work with the Advocacy Service outside of the meeting.
 - ii) That Brendan Lee would draft an action plan following the comments from the Board and will undertake conversations outside this meeting to develop a plan and to also include data that underpins it.
 - iii) That a draft plan will be presented at a future board meeting for it to approve and then to monitor the progress regularly, ensuring it is making a difference to our children in care and care leavers.
 - iv) That the Corporate Parenting Board agreed to support this report.

4. What Support Young People Would Like

Following on from the previous item, LINX (Lancashire's Children in Care Council) were asked to do a piece of work around what practical support young people would like in relation to NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) and the outcomes from the discussion was in the report circulated with the agenda which are the views of 12 children in care and eight care leavers and who were asked their opinion of what they practically needed to help them in education, employment and training. The key themes that young people reported were very similar to what the previous report found which is very positive and something that the young people noticed when they met to discuss the agenda and the reports for this meeting. Further details on the quotes/comments from the young children are found in the report.

Key themes were:

- Aspirations.
- Experience of the workplace.
- Financial support – balancing finances prior to that first wage.
- Work ethics – having conversations earlier, talking about different options available.
- Making education over work the preferred option.
- Practically helping young people to prepare for work ie develop the Curriculum Vitae (CV), interview practice.
- Hobbies that are related to studies, paid for and made available and support to help young people look at those opportunities.
- Within school, having 1:1 support if needed.
- Support around Mental Health – young people found it positive that discussions were happening on a Mental Health strategy.

Young people commented that it was useful to know that education and employment was still an option when dealing with mental health and that there were trained professionals in education and employment to support young people in dealing with the issues they may have and to support them positively.

Young people asked with regards to the different categories of Long Term NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) detailed in the previous item, as to whether it was to do with certain issues happening in the areas or what makes those particular issues stand out in those areas? It was noted that this is something that will be looked at under the new ways of working which are being introduced when the service will all be under the same management structure. This information will be reported back to the Board at a future meeting.

LINX were invited to participate in the development of the action plan and Brendan Lee will discuss this outside the meeting with Barnardo's.

An issue was raised around supported accommodation and the surcharges incurred if young people commence employment and advice that was being received from placements. It was reported that there is a recommission underway on supported accommodation and in terms of accommodation pathways this is a positive for our young people. Applications should be made for discretionary housing payments which comes from the District Councils and an idea is to change the commission for those placements so that it is not an issue, however, this is not always possible. An alternative would be to seek an offer from each District Council that says they will always give discretionary housing payments to those young people who want to work and are in placements or accommodation that incur an extra cost. This also needs to be included in the Action Plan and this is something the Corporate Parenting Board can raise with the District Councils.

Young people again, were encouraged to raise any issues they may be experiencing with Barnardo's/Personal Advisors as soon as they arise, so they can be dealt with timely and fed back into the Service and to Managers dealing with those young people.

- Resolved:**
- i) That Brenda Lee would contact LINX to work with them on the action plan.
 - ii) Roxanne McAllister will feedback at the Providers meeting, that they should not be encouraging young people to not get a job as their accommodation will cost the young person too much.
 - iii) That the Corporate Parenting Board liaise with district councils with regards discretionary housing payments for Children in Care and Care Leavers who are in a placement or supported accommodation and are wanting to gain employment.

5. Children in Care and Care Leavers Performance Information

Umer Khonat gave a brief overview on the children in care and care leavers performance information for July 2020 which was circulated prior to the meeting. It was also noted that information prior to this item and discussions that ensued, showed that issues within the data and explanations and narrative behind it were being challenged and addressed as to why it was happening and where the pressures are and what the strategic approach will be to improve the performance. There is still inconsistency on how data is reported ie with different definitions, indicators alongside the use of national indicators, there should also be some local information which would reflect Lancashire's area, approaches and plans as well as having benchmarking data to compare against.

The data in general showed that demand had decreased whilst in lockdown, however there are now signs of increase and timeliness of assessments is good, rates of children on child protection have declined, however at the same time, seen an increase on children in need plans as well as an increase in children looked after. This has an impact across how the Council plan for its' services.

The national rate for care leavers in Education, Employment and Training is 64% for 17-18 year olds and 52% for 19-21 year olds. Currently Lancashire is operating at 46% for 17-18 year olds and 39.8% for 19-21 year olds which means that Lancashire are quite a distance from the national average and there is work to be done and with the right plans in place this will improve.

Further interactive data can be found below.

Weekly MASH Dashboard:

<https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoieYThkZTIiYWltZjZiYS00ZjdLWE1ZmYtMTgyMTY3M2Y3NzU1IiwidCI6IjlmNjgzZTI2LWQ4YjktNDYwOS05ZWw0LWUxYTU2ZTRiYjRkMlslmMiOjh9>

Weekly Post Covid-19 Outbreak Weekly dashboard:

<https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoieZDZkYzM3OWltNWViNS00NmIwLTlkZTU2ZjZyZmNTVmNTNmNjJmIiwidCI6IjlmNjgzZTI2LWQ4YjktNDYwOS05ZWw0LWUxYTU2ZTRiYjRkMlslmMiOjh9>

For future meetings it was suggested that the data that is presented be compliance data including the dashboards, then review the service narrative if there is any and challenge managers to seek assurance that they are aware of the data and ask what is being done in terms of it.

Resolved: That the Board discussed and commented on the information presented and agreed the content of future performance information provided to subsequent meetings.

6. Care Leavers Christmas

It was noted that due to the current pandemic and that the majority of colleagues were working remotely, this year's Christmas Hampers collection would not be able to take place in its usual format.

Barnardo's were also collaborating on their ideas of how to provide the Care Leavers Christmas meal this year.

Action: Sam Gorton would speak to colleagues to look at how else we, as Corporate Parents could provide gifts for our young people this Christmas.

7. Any Other Business

Andreas Feldhaar updated the Board on the preparation for National Care Leavers week on 26-30 October 2020 by the Leaving Care Service. It is for all care experienced young people between 16 and 25 years of age and this year's theme is Future Me, which also highlights areas of work which is already being developed.

There are three areas in particular which are:

- i) Build on Lancashire's social engagement strategy, promoting virtual events and support for young people.
- ii) Education, employment and training working with the Virtual School to develop some workshops and also source some support from Further and Higher Education institutions around supporting young people that are going through College and University and have to adjust and adapt to the whole virtual learning concept.
- iii) To support the development of a stronger corporate parenting ethos. There will be a corporate parenting network event where all community partners will be invited, to enable wider communication, share learning and good practice, strengthening the understanding of everyone's role to support young people and how the individual service may impact on other areas. Also exploring further the Local Offer and looking for a stronger commitment from partners around it.

Resolved: That a copy of the programme will be circulated to all members of the Corporate Parenting Board.

8. Date and Time of Next Meeting

Tuesday, 24 November 2020 at 6pm, via Zoom.