

Lancashire County Council

Corporate Parenting Board

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday, 11 September, 2024 at 6.00pm
in Savoy Suite 2 - The Exchange, County Hall, Preston, PR1 8XJ**

Present: Members

County Councillor Stephen Clarke	- Lancashire County Council
County Councillor Loraine Cox	- Lancashire County Council
County Councillor Julie Gibson	- Lancashire County Council
County Councillor Andrea Kay	- Lancashire County Council
County Councillor Sue Hind	- Lancashire County Council
County Councillor Ron Woollam	- Lancashire County Council
County Councillor Stewart Jones	- Lancashire County Council
David Russo	- Fostering Forum
Jake	- LINX/CLF Representative
Mary	- LINX/CLF Representative
Emry	- LINX/CLF Representative
Emma	- LINX/CLF Representative
Liam	- LINX/CLF Representative
Mohammed	- LINX/CLF Representative

Co-opted members

Chris Page	- Education Improvement, LCC
Andreas Feldhaar	- Permanence Service, LCC
Gina Power	- Permanence Service - Children in Our Care, LCC
Amanda Barbour	- Fostering, Adoption Lancashire Blackpool, and Residential Services, LCC
Adam Riley	- Child and Family Wellbeing Service, LCC
April Pollitt	- Child and Family Wellbeing Service, LCC
Louise Humphreys	- Department for Work and Pensions
Maureen Huddleston	- Enhanced CLA Health Teams, UHMB (via Teams)
Caroline Waldron	- Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board
Julie McShane	- Residential Provider
Katherine Ashworth	- Child and Family Wellbeing Service, LCC
Tonya Harrison	- Safeguarding, Inspection and Audit, LCC

Danielle Winkley - Safeguarding, Inspection and Audit Service, LCC

Other Attendees

Clare Smith - Policy, Commissioning and Children's Health, LCC

Hannah Sykes - Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board

Ripley Buswell - Child and Family Wellbeing Service, LCC

Rachel Blundell - Policy, Commissioning and Children's Health, LCC

Sarah Jones - Policy, Commissioning and Children's Health, LCC

Liz Tarling - Democratic Services, LCC

Emma Johnson - Targeted Youth Support, LCC

Sam Gorton - Democratic Services, LCC

1. Icebreaker

Young people from Lancashire Children in Care Council (LINX) and Care Leavers Forum (CLF) opened the meeting with an icebreaker.

2. Introductions and Apologies

All were welcomed to the meeting and apologies were received from Bev Maymond, Jen Robertshaw, Clare Platt, Moya McKinney and Jen Ryder.

Maureen Huddleston joined the meeting via Teams.

The Board extended huge congratulations to Liam and Jake (young people) who had both gained employment within Lancashire County Council. The Board wished them all the success in their new employment.

The Board welcomed the following new members:

- County Councillor Stewart Jones who has replaced County Councillor Howard Hartley, Lancashire County Council.
- Julie McShane who has replaced Alex Wood as the Residential Provider.
- Tonya Harrison has replaced Hayley Kinowski, Permanence Service, Lancashire County Council.
- Danielle Winkley has replaced Andy Smith, Quality Assurance, Inspection and Safeguarding, Lancashire County Council.

The Board noted that Katy Hodkinson, Fostering representative had resigned from the Board.

Replacements for this meeting were as follows:

- Louise Humphreys for Edna Skillen, Department for Work and Pensions.
- Chris Page for Audrey Swann, Education Improvement, Lancashire County Council.

The Board were informed that April Pollitt, Child and Family Wellbeing Service was leaving the Board to accept a new role within the Council and was wished every success for the future. Audrey Swann, Education Improvement, Lancashire County Council was retiring in October and has been a member of the Board for a number of years. The Board wished Audrey a long and happy retirement.

Hannah Sykes, Deputy Designated Nurse for Safeguarding and Children in Care, NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board was observing the meeting.

3. Appointment of Chair and Deputy Chair

Resolved: That the Committee noted the appointment by the County Council on 23 May 2024 of County Councillors Clarke and Cox as Chair and Deputy Chair of the Committee, respectively for 2024/25.

4. Notes of the Meeting and Matters Arising from 8 May 2024

Resolved: That the minutes were agreed as an accurate record.

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

5. Constitution, Membership and Terms of Reference of the Committee

The Board reviewed the Constitution, Membership and Terms of Reference as set out at Appendix 'A' and it was:

Resolved: That the Board agreed the Constitution, Membership and Terms of Reference with the addition of "Health Services" to be added at m) (v).

6. Participation Team Update

Young people from Lancashire's Children in Care Council (LINX) and the Care Leavers Forum (CLF) updated the Board on what they had been involved with since the last meeting of the Board in July 2024.

Young People's Corporate Parenting Board meeting - 24 July 2024

The Board noted that the young people planned and delivered the Corporate Parenting Board youth takeover meeting and thanked those who attended. There were a mix of activities and discussions for the session with the aim being

to get to know new people, provide updates and look at future support for care experienced young people.

Young people felt the meeting went well and people got involved in the discussions and activities. Those in attendance were asked what advice they would give young people who were looking for employment, what happened if they were unsuccessful following an interview and what advice they would give for interview preparation. The feedback gained from the session will be shared on the FYP Instagram page to raise awareness.

Following the meeting young people have started to plan for the Young People's meeting in July 2025 and are looking at mixing up the groups more throughout the session, so people get a chance to network, and have activities for different age ranges and to have background music playing during activities.

At the end of the meeting feedback was gathered and young people informed the Board that overall it was positive, however, young people did ask for more attendance from officers and different aged young people and that attendees commit to being present for the whole meeting.

Summer sessions

Preston Vocational Centre

Over the summer, young people had the opportunity to learn some DIY skills at Preston Vocational Centre, such as woodworking and decorating which will help young people be more independent and be able to help others.

Co-Production Days

Co production days were held, and April Pollitt and Adam Riley talked to young people individually about themselves and their interests, their hobbies and what they had done over summer. Each participant engaged well in the activities such as junk modelling which encouraged creativity and flexibility of being able to create anything with materials provided.

Views and ideas were also gathered for the Welcome Box project which will be reviewed with forum members and will lead to a name for the process and looking at what additional items the young people have added.

Bin the Name was an interesting tabletop activity as every young person had a different view on names. The most common themes were changing the name for family time, contact and placement, with "Respite" having a few dislikes. Young people were asked for different names for family time or contact and they liked the name "getting together" as it can resemble not just meeting family but other important people in their life.

It was noted that the event was a huge success and would take place again next Summer if not before.

Grease

Young people attended the theatre in Blackpool to watch Grease The Musical on 22 August 2024. They enjoyed socialising with the group, and it was noted that some young people had not been to the theatre, so it was a great experience for everyone.

Young Advisors' Day

Young people met at UCLan and looked at the job role of a Young Advisor, as well as a rewards and recognition plan. They planned a video to promote the service, and discussed different services they would like to inspect and what would happen during an inspection. A separate group discussed the Lundy model and how it could continue to incorporate this into the work.

Young people had been working with Clare Smith, Policy, Commissioning and Children's Health, Lancashire County Council to develop the beginning of a creative video about the new Get Involved process which would be shared with young people. The Board had been briefed at various Board meetings about this process.

There was also a development day – keeping our young people safe, where young people talked to several Personal Advisors, Social Workers and Professionals. Young people gave feedback on what they wanted from professionals, in their lives about keeping safe, and how trust was important to them. Flash cards were created to share the top tips such as different helplines ie Missing people, Shout and Samaritans.

Care Leaver Residential

Young people commented that on the residential they got to know Personal Advisors in a more informal way, whilst spending time with new people and encouraged each other to try something out of their comfort zone which boosted confidence. Activities that Personal Advisors and young people enjoyed were ghyll scrambling, low ropes, crate stacking, canoeing and leap of faith. Young people felt that the residential was something that should be done each year and maybe extend the stay.

Resolved: That the young people were thanked for their presentation.

7. Health Update

Gina Power, Permanence Service, Lancashire County Council, Caroline Waldron, Children in our Care and Care Leavers, NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board and Young People from the Care Leavers Forum provided an update on the Strengths and Difficulty Questionnaires (SDQs).

The Board noted that the Strengths and Difficulty Questionnaires (SDQs) is required by each Local Authority and is used to assess children's mental health and wellbeing and can be completed by children and young people themselves or by their parents/carers or by their teachers.

The Strengths and Difficulty Questionnaire (SDQ) is required to be completed once a year as a minimum and that is used to inform Government and Local Authorities about what is the overall state of children and young people emotional health and well-being. Best practice is that the Strengths and Difficulty Questionnaire (SDQ) should be part of the child's annual health assessment. The requirement is for the parent/carer to complete one independently and if a young person is aged 11 or above the expectation is that they would be encouraged or supported to complete their own. The Board noted that teachers are not asked routinely to fill in questionnaire as it is part of the Personal Education Plan (PEP) process, however it is often used when there is a need to understand further if a child has any issues.

The responsibility of issuing the Strengths and Difficulty Questionnaires (SDQs) is that of the Local Authority who the young person is in the care of.

In terms of the review of the process of the Strengths and Difficulty Questionnaires (SDQs), the following took place:

- Review of practice if what others do
- Review of available data
- Developed new practice and guidance
- Launched with young people

Young people were part of the Strengths and Difficulty Questionnaires (SDQs) Event and helped to plan and deliver at the beginning of each session. They did a hands up activity asking the audience their own Strengths and Difficulty Questionnaires (SDQs) from formal and informal questions. Young people asked about mental health in terms of resources and signposting and were disappointed with the results. It was hoped that this feedback was taken on board during the session and that further resources and support can be put in place to be able to improve services for children and young people.

Resolved: That the Board noted the update.

8. Supported Accommodation

Rachel Blundell and Sarah Jones, Policy, Commissioning and Children's Health, Lancashire County Council provided the Board with an overview of what was currently happening with regards to supported accommodation.

The Board received a presentation which outlined the following:

- Supported Accommodation Sector – Recent Changes
- Our Commissioning Priorities
- What have Young People Told Us?
- How did we Respond?
- Current Supported Accommodation Services
- Core Commissioned Services – Locations
- Core Supported Accommodation Services – Proximity to In-House Children's Homes
- What are we doing Differently under Core Contacts from November 2024?
- Benefits of our Core Commissioned Services
- How will we Monitor Core Commissioned Services?
- Key Short-Term Actions/Objectives

The Board noted the most recent changes which are:

- Regulation became mandatory on 28 October 2023 for supported accommodation services that are provided to Children Looked After/Care Leavers aged 16/17.
- Introduced a set of National Standards and an Ofsted-led inspection regime.
- Improved outcomes for young people
 - Ø Independent scrutiny of support and accommodation standards
 - Ø Stronger oversight of leadership and management
- Inspections will begin in September 2024.

The above are a real positive and welcomed, however there are some challenges ahead, eg sufficiency and potential cost implications.

In terms of Lancashire County Council's commissioning priorities, these were outlined as follows:

- Wide range of different services to meet different needs/preference.
- In locations where young people want to live.
- Good standards of accommodation.
- Affordable for young people.
- Support providers who hold the same value as the Authority does.
- Deliver value for money for the Authority.

The Board noted that the accommodation element of supported accommodation services are covered through housing benefit. For those young people who are not in employment and do not have an income through employment, the accommodation element is always met through housing benefit entitlement. However there can be an implication for young people who are employed, depending on their earning. This can be a disincentive to go into employment because the rent/service charges for supported accommodation services can be quite high depending on the type of service. To address this issue, in Lancashire an approach is made to the relevant District Council for Discretionary Housing Payments.

Following consultation with young people, the feedback was as follows:

- Young people were generally positive about the safety of their home and the support that they receive.
- Through an online survey, young people said they wanted improvements to the following areas:
 - Ø Better Wi-Fi
 - Ø More personalisation of their own space
 - Ø Clearer policies on visitors and curfews
 - Ø Improved information for new residents
 - Ø More regular 'house meetings'

The Service then responded as follows:

- The service specifications were amended to reflect young people's feedback. Additional areas were strengthened based on discussions held with Providers and through analysis of other commissioned services.
- There are now clearer expectations on;
 - Ø Referrals into the Advocacy Service
 - Ø Supporting young people to access participation groups
 - Ø Improving usage of Mind of my Own (digital participation app)

The Board were informed of Lancashire's supported accommodated services as of November 2024, which were:

- 22 core contracts (387 'beds') – a wide range of service types:
 - Ø Building-based services (between 6-25 rooms/flats)
 - Ø Dispersed community-based accommodation with visiting support
 - Ø Teenage parent services
 - Ø Supported lodgings arrangements
- Spot-purchasing through the North-West regional framework
- Lancashire House Project (in-house)
 - Ø Largely Preston-based, third cohort have now joined the project

The Board were informed what was being done differently under Core contracts from November 2024, which were:

- More consistency of services throughout the county
 - Dispersed community-based visiting support and supported lodgings services expanded into the North and Central localities.
 - An increase in the number of units for teenage parent services, introducing a dispersed visiting support model in the North/Central localities.
- Addressed some previous gaps in provision.
 - An additional building-based service in Burnley where demand is high
- Ultimately provide services that can better meet the needs and preferences of our young people.

In terms of benefits of Core Commissioned Services, they were detailed as follows:

- Can be accessed by young people aged 16-21, (up to age 24 in some circumstances)
- Young people moving at 16/17 can continue to live in their home post-18.
- Higher priority under the Choice-based lettings allocation schemes
- Accommodation costs can be met through Enhanced Housing Benefit
- Close relationships between the Authority and providers – more ‘joined-up’ working – which benefits our young people

The Board noted how the Core commissioned services will be monitored which was by:

Monitoring arrangements which will be in place on a monthly/quarterly basis led by our Contract Manager/ Commissioner. Arrangements will include:

- Monthly Forums to ensure Providers are updated with information, share best practice and to promote partnership working
- Cluster Meetings - All Core Providers will meet on a locality footprint to discuss move- on options, tackle local issues and to gather information to influence partners
- Young people who will have the opportunity to input into online and face- to- face surveys to inform if the Services are improving and to gather personalised information
- Internal communications will be continually reviewed, and processes will be strengthened where necessary to ensure young people receive the most appropriate support

In terms of key short-term actions/objectives, they were outlined as follows:

- Monitor the impact of regulation, supporting providers where necessary
- Work with District Housing to address the challenges faced by young people
 - Ø Discretionary Housing payments
 - Ø Choice-based lettings allocations process
- Strengthen our supported lodgings offer
- Scale up the Lancashire House Project, and further strengthen our partnerships with Registered Social Landlords
- Explore guarantor options for young people

- Resolved:**
- (i) That further work needs be done with the Districts, following up previous work that the Corporate Parenting Board initiated and invited Housing Leads from the Districts to attend a meeting with the Board.
 - (ii) That the Board noted the updated.

9. National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum

Andreas Feldhaar, Permanence Service, Lancashire County Council provided an overview from the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum Managers Event that took place in July 2024 and the Care Experienced Conference in August 2024.

The Board noted the key updates and inspirational practice that was shared at the July event.

Corporate Parenting and Housing Authorities

The Board noted that legislation has changed slightly and now explicitly states that Housing Authorities are a corporate parent and sets out the duties that Housing Authorities have towards care leavers.

Joint Housing Protocol for Care Leavers (intentionality)

The Secretary of State for Levelling Up Housing and Communities has written a letter which strengthens Corporate Parenting and promotes all Local Authorities to have a joint housing program for care leavers, which Lancashire already has. The goal is to remove intentionality as a reason to be homeless as a care leaver up to the age of 25, which is something that Lancashire will be working towards and a further update on this will be brought to a future Board meeting.

Care Leaver Hubs

In terms of Care Leaver Hubs, there is a lot of discussion nationally regarding this, around a bespoke building or room that is specific for Care Leavers where they can drop in, which has different facilities such as kitchens, washing machines etc and this is something that Lancashire are also working towards. Currently there are two in Lancashire (Burnley and Lancaster) and in Central a building has been identified and some changes are required to the building before it is suitable.

Staying Close

The Board noted that with regards to Staying Close for a young person that is in a foster home, they can continue under the Staying Put arrangements to continue living with those foster carers if everyone agrees to that, however, those young people who live in a residential home, the Government have introduced the idea of promoting a Staying Close arrangement which has been piloted and will be developed further.

Family Links and Support Networks

In terms of Family links and support networks there has been a lot of discussion around young people building and maintaining family links (Lancashire have the Lifelong Links work).

The Board noted that it was good to see that areas of national discussion are things that Lancashire are already doing.

Relational Working

The Peer Learning Programme 2023/24 was funded by the Health Foundation, and Lancashire County Council is one of 12 Local Authorities taking part and each run their own project. The aim of the programme is to build better professional relationships, collaborate more closely with colleagues to support young people better and the learning from the sessions contributes to continued practice development through the Development managers and the intention is to continue with local sessions. The Board noted that Lancashire had also been recognised at the National meeting with regards to good practice.

Young People's Benchmarking Forum - In their Own Words

This is the second year that the young people from the Forum have conducted this questionnaire which was available to all care experienced young people from 16-25 and is around what is important to them. There had been around 200 replies nationally with the main topics that young people found important to them being:

- Cost of Living
- Safe and Affordable Accommodation
- Access to Health and Mental Health
- Support after 21 and 25
- Creating Communities of Support

Resolved: That the Board noted the overview.

10. Residential Update

This item was withdrawn.

11. Care Leavers Covenant

Andreas Feldhaar, Permanence Service, Lancashire County Council provided an update on the current position of the Care Leavers Covenant since the last update to the Board:

- Guaranteed interviews for jobs with Lancashire County Council
 - Where essential criteria are met
 - Ongoing work from Lancashire County Council's People Service

- Get Ready and Join Us – bespoke application and interview support and employment opportunities with Lancashire County Council
 - Online self-referral portal linked to our Local Offer
 - Web content and self-referral template developed
 - Data Protection Impact Assessment to be completed
 - E-form to be developed
 - Launch date: Care Leavers' Week
- Care Leavers supported into employment with Lancashire County Council April to August 2024
 - 2 full time (Adult Social Care and Residential Children Homes)
 - 3 part time (Adult Social Care, Residential Children Homes and Transport)
 - 7 work placements (Adult Social Care, Residential Children Homes, IT, Libraries and Facilities Management)
- Employee Support Group
 - Employee Support Group Network
 - Executive Leadership commitment to be sought
- Lancashire's Skills and Employment Hub
 - Employers guide completed
 - Work ongoing to add Care Leaver Friendly Employer to Lancashire's Skills Pledge

Resolved: That the Board noted the update and welcomed further updates at future meetings.

12. Care Leavers Week

Andreas Feldhaar, Permanence Service, Lancashire County Council provided the Board with an outline of what is happening throughout Care Leavers Week which is 21-25 October 2024.

The Board were reminded that Care Leavers Week is about refocusing the mind about young people in care and care leavers and a reflection on being mindful of the ongoing challenges that young people face daily and how to support the challenges and make a difference.

The theme for Care Leavers Week is Sawubona which means "I See You" and is a Zulu greeting. The word embodies philosophy of deep human connection, respect and recognition.

During the week there will be Dinner with Dialogue, where young people from the Care Leavers Forum will meet with Directors of the Council. There will also be outdoor activities throughout the week.

There will also be an event at Crossgate Church Preston, where young people will create an art collage which challenges the negative stereotypes of care experience, and this will be created by young people and partners.

Partners and different teams within Children's Services will be asked to think about something that they could do for care experienced young people and to celebrate their young people's achievements and to share these at the event.

Resolved: That the Board noted the update.

13. Any Other Business

There was not any other business received.

14. Date and Time of Next Meeting

Wednesday, 20 November 2024 at 6.00pm in Savoy Suite 1, The Exchange, County Hall, Preston, PR1 8RJ.