

## Lancashire County Council

### Corporate Parenting Board

Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday, 20 November, 2024 at 6.00pm  
in Savoy Suite 1 - The Exchange, County Hall, Preston, PR1 8XJ

**Present: Members**

County Councillor Stephen Clarke	- Lancashire County Council
County Councillor Andrea Kay	- 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
Andrew	- LINX/CLF Representative
Mary	- LINX/CLF Representative
Amber	- LINX/CLF Representative
Maddison	- LINX/CLF Representative
Emma	- LINX/CLF Representative
Mohammad	- LINX/CLF Representative
Liam	- LINX/CLF Representative

**Co-opted members**

Andreas Feldhaar	- Permanence Service, LCC
Chris Page	- Education Improvement, LCC
Moya McKinney	- Permanence Service - Leaving Care, LCC
Gina Power	- Permanence Service - Children in Our Care, LCC
Adam Riley	- Child and Family Wellbeing Service
Louise Humphreys	- Department for Work and Pensions
Caroline Waldron	- Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board
Natalie Englestone	- Fostering Provider
Julie McShane	- Residential Provider
Tonya Harrison	- Safeguarding, Inspection and Audit, Lancashire County Council
Danielle Winkley	- Safeguarding, Inspection and Audit Service, LCC

## **Other Attendees**

County Councillor Cosima Towneley	- Cabinet Member for Children and Families
Jacqui Old CBE	- Education and Children's Services, LCC
Ripley Buswell	- Child and Family Wellbeing Service, LCC
Jen Robertshaw	- Permanence Service, LCC
Louise Anderson	- Children's Social Care, LCC
Clare Smith	- Policy, Commissioning and Children's Health, LCC
Liz Tarling	- Democratic Services, LCC
Sam Gorton	- Democratic Services, LCC

### **1. Introductions and Apologies**

All were welcomed to the meeting and apologies were received from County Councillors Loraine Cox, Sue Hind and Julie Gibson, Amanda Barbour, Maureen Huddleston, Katherine Ashworth and Jill Riley.

The Board extended a huge congratulates to Emma (young person) who had gained employment within Lancashire County Council. The Board wished Emma all the success in her new job.

The Board welcomed the following new members:

- Chris Page for Audrey Swann, Education Improvement, Lancashire County Council
- Anna Bailey, for Clare Platt, Health Equity, Welfare and Partnerships, Lancashire County Council
- Jill Riley, for Neil Drummond, Lancashire Constabulary
- Louise Humphries for Edna Skillen, Department for Work and Pensions

Replacement for this meeting were as follows:

- Natalie Englestone for Bev Maymond, Fostering Provider

The Board also welcomed the following Observers to the meeting:

- County Councillor Cosima Towneley, Cabinet Member for Children and Families
- Jacqui Old, Executive Director of Education and Children's Services

### **2. Notes of the Meeting and Matters Arising from 11 September 2024**

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

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

### **3. Icebreaker**

Young people from Lancashire Children in Care Council (LINX) and Care Leavers Forum (CLF) led the Board through an icebreaker activity.

### **4. 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 September 2024. Further details can be found in the presentation appended to the minutes.

### **Care Leavers Week**

The Board noted that Care Leavers Week had taken place from 21-25 October 2024, where young people had come together and took part in various activities such as ziplining at Go Ape, Dinner with Dialogue and a Care Leavers Fair.

Young people reported that the week was fun and a great way of being themselves. Whilst at Go Ape, they helped and encouraged one another to complete the course and supported each other to face their fears and commented on how good they felt when they pushed themselves outside of their comfort zone.

The Board were informed that the Care Leavers Fair had seen significant participation from both young people and staff with over 100 attendees at the event. Young people decorated frames which will form part of an exhibition that will embark on a roadshow in January 2025 which will showcase the artwork in various libraries across Lancashire, with additional venues currently under consideration. They will also be on display at Lancashire County Council's Full Council on 12 December 2024.

Also at the Fair, the young people had the opportunity to engage with various stallholders from across Lancashire including participation groups, lifelong links, several universities, and resources related to employment and education. The "Get Involved" process was also launched which included a banner and video that had been produced by members of the Children in Care Council (LINX) and the Care Leavers Forum (CLF), in collaboration with Clare Smith, Policy, Commissioning and Children's Health, Lancashire County Council.

Feedback from young people at the event was collated and thanks were given Jane Hylton and her team for organising and planning Care Leavers week.

Young people from the Care Leavers Forum and the Lancashire House Project also took part in an event called Dinner with Dialogue, where they dined and met various Directors, Heads of Services and professionals from across Lancashire County Council and talked to those in attendance about their personal interests and professional roles.

As the meeting transitioned to a more formal discussion, a large group was convened to address topics that were relevant to the young people present which included the challenges they faced and suggestions for improvements within the services provided to care-experienced young people

Young people provided feedback from the event to the Director of Children's Services informing her, that they felt this was a great way to communicate with the Directorate and would like to meet again in six months to see if topics discussed have been actioned or whether further consideration has been given to the topics suggested. Young people were asked to make a Wishlist, and this included the following: mentorship, ring fencing portal and interview process and a leaving care package.

Further details of the young people's ask were as follows:

**Mentorship: 1:1 Guided process from application to Completion** - From the day a young person applies for a job they are provided with a mentor to talk through the process. The mentor will stay with the young person through their application journey, giving them updates on where the application is and how they are doing. The mentor can also help give them valuable experience.

**Ring Fencing Portal and Interview Process:** It has been mentioned previously that certain companies such as Merlin offer interviews for care experienced young people. During the application process, candidates can indicate that they are care experienced by selecting a designated checkbox, which guarantees them an interview. While this does not guarantee employment at Merlin, it allows candidates to participate in the interview process and enhance their skills. Young people feel that Merlin's approach is their commitment to development; if a young person does not secure the position, they are invited back for a discussion regarding the interview. This feedback session focuses on constructive insights about why they were not selected and advice on how to improve in future applications.

Young people urge Lancashire County Council to consider implementing a service tailored for care-experienced young people. Frequently, when applying for jobs, they often receive no feedback, leading them to question their performance and contemplate what improvements can be made. It was noted that this uncertainty can become overwhelming, ultimately discouraging young people from pursuing further opportunities. Having a dedicated worker to engage with them post-application would offer valuable insights and guidance, fostering their development and confidence in the job application process.

In addition to the guaranteed interviews and feedback, a second vital feature of the ring-fencing portal is its user-friendly interface for job searches within Lancashire County Council. Young people can easily select their areas of interest when searching for employment opportunities. Young people with care experience feel it would be beneficial to have access to targeted email marketing or even a dedicated portal specifically for care leavers. This would streamline

their job search process, eliminating the need to sift through numerous emails or navigate the Lancashire careers website. They believe that establishing a designated portal or implementing targeted email marketing would significantly enhance the number of applications submitted by care leavers.

Leaving care package: Leaving care and going into Semi or independent living is a huge step in a young person's life as they feel they lose a safety net and support they have had for a long time. They reported that they can feel alone or isolated and in need of help with different things. It is felt that one effective way to support them during this transition is through the development of a comprehensive leaving care package, which can be prepared by Personal Advisors (PAs), Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs), or Social Workers prior to them turning 18.

Young people feel that a leaving care package should include items such as two forms of ID with one of them being their passport, their national insurance number so they can apply for jobs, health passport so they can learn things about themselves which they might not know for example their blood type or the medication they need on prescription. They also feel it is important to have information on the Local Offer and what is available including information about the Hubs, "Get involved" process and how young people turning 18 can get involved in participation groups and get some extra support if needed and have the chance to create positive change.

It was noted that this process should happen, however, some young people feel they don't receive this information and are asking for this to become a mandatory component of the Final Care Review before reaching the age of 18.

It was noted that over the next few months, the Care Leavers Forum will work with professionals to seek feedback from other care leavers across Lancashire and add these to the Wishlist too.

Young people asked that the Board have a brief discussion on how, as Corporate Parents they can support them in achieving their asks before they meet again in six months' time.

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

## **5. Children in Care and Care Leavers Data**

Gina Power and Moya McKinney, Permanence Service and Caroline Waldron, Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board delivered a presentation which contained data for Children in Care and Care Leavers.

Relevant information was received around:

### **Children's Social Care – Context Data (October 2024)**

- There had been an increase in contact for support to Children's Services (Early Help and Children's Social Care).
- From those contacts there had been an increase to Children's Social Care, however this was lower than the England and Northwest rate.
- Children subject to a Child in Need Plan had remained the same and this was lower than England and the Northwest rate.
- There had been an increase in children that were subject to a Child Protection Plan, and this was lower than England and the Northwest rate.

### **Children in Our Care (October 2024)**

- On average there are about twice as many alternative orders (Special Guardianship Order), Child Arrangement Order, Supervision Order granted than are ordered.
- Children in care had reduced from over 2000 in 2020 to 1707 in October 2024 and this was lower than England and the Northwest rate.

### **Health and Wellbeing for Children in Our Care**

- Children with up-to-date Health Assessments has increased and are in line with England and the Northwest rate.
- Children with up-to-date Dental Check has increased and is higher than England and the Northwest rate.
- Children with up-to-date Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) has remained the same.
- Children with a Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) in the normal range had decreased.
- Children with a Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) in the borderline range had decreased.
- Children with a Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) in the elevated range had increased.

### **Where our Children Live**

- Children living in foster homes has remained the same.
- Children living in residential homes has increased.
- Most children supported by Children in Our Care who moved into a residential home moved from a foster home.
- Children living with their parents remained the same.
- 162 children have been discharged from care to parents and families by Children in Our Care Teams over the last two years and all had a plan, long term to be looked after by Lancashire County Council. This is due to the work that the service is doing.

## **Lasting Homes**

- Children who have lived in the same home for at least two years has decreased slightly however, it is higher than the England and the Northwest rate.
- Out of those that have not yet lived in the same home for at least two years, 43% have lived in their home for 12-24 months.
- Children in a Lasting Home (fostering, kinship or with parents only) has increased.

## **Care Leavers – General Data**

- Number of care leavers aged 18-20 years old has increased.
- Number of care leavers aged 21-25 years old as decreased.
- Number of care leavers aged 18-25 years old has remained the same.
- Number of eligible care leavers aged 16/17 years old has increased.

## **Care Leavers – Future Demand**

- Predicted number of 17 year olds by 2026 is showing a possible increase.

## **Care Leavers – Suitable Accommodation**

- 17-18 year olds in suitable accommodation has increased and is in line with England, however, below the Northwest rate.
- 19-20 year olds in suitable accommodation has increased and is higher than the England and Northwest rate.
- 21+ year olds in suitable accommodation has decreased.
- The Board received a breakdown of the unsuitable accommodation data for all age groups.

## **Care Leavers – Education, Employment and Training**

- 17 & 18 year olds in Education, Employment and Training has increased, however are below the England and Northwest rate.
- 19 & 20 year olds in Education, Employment and Training remain the same and are below the England and Northwest rate.
- 21+ year olds in Education, Employment and Training remains the same.

**Resolved:** That the Board received the data pertinent to children in care and care leavers.

## **6. Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) Annual Report**

Danielle Winkley, Quality Assurance, Inspection and Safeguarding, Lancashire County Council gave a brief overview of the Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) Children Looked After and Safeguarding Annual Reports 2023/24.

The Board received a presentation on the Independent Review Officers (IRO) Children Looked After and Safeguarding Annual Reports 2023/24 which detailed further information on:

- Key conclusions
- Good practice examples
- Priorities

The final Children Looked After and Safeguarding Annual Reports 2023/24 are appended to the minutes.

**Resolved:** That the Board noted both the Independent Reviewing Officers Children Looked After and Safeguarding Annual Reports 2023/24.

## **7. Lifelong Links**

Danielle Winkley and Jake, Quality Assurance, Inspection and Safeguarding, Lancashire County Council presented an update on the project which is around reconnecting children in care and care leavers with significant people in their life. Lancashire County Council is an Accredited Lifelong Links service and has met the requirements of the accreditation framework run by Family Rights Group.

The Board received a presentation which detailed further information on the service and what it has been doing:

- Aims and Objectives
- Lancashire's Lifelong Links Journey
  - Where we started
  - What we have learnt
  - Where we are now
- Who did children want to connect with?
  - Professional network
  - Isolation
  - Maternal and Paternal
    - Specific Maternal
    - Specific Paternal
  - Paternal Family
  - Not Specified
  - All the above
- Overview
- Outcomes from Closed Cases
- Stories from our Children and Young People
- Mollies Story
- What happens now...

Lifelong Links is available to all children and young people with plans of permanence in Lancashire and are referred via their Social Worker who has discussed this with the children and young people's Independent Reviewing



Officer (IRO). Care Leavers can also access the service up to the age of 25 years of age and can self-refer or be referred by their Personal Advisor (PA). Further information can be found on the Local Offer <https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/youthzone/care-leavers-local-offer/> and the Family Rights Group website <https://frg.org.uk/lifelong-links/>. Further work continues to highlight what the service is doing and how young people and care leavers can access it.

**Resolved:** That the Board welcomed the work the service is doing and wished it continued success.

## **8. Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) - Care Leaver Covenant**

Louise Humphreys, Department for Work and Pensions provided an update on the Care Leaver Covenant and what the service is doing in terms of support available for Care Experienced Young People. The Board received a short presentation which is appended to the minutes.

Further information on the Covenant offer can be found via the link: <https://mycovenant.org.uk/for-care-leavers/care-leaver-opportunities/>.

The Board noted that young people are encouraged to sign up as a user of the Covenant which will then give them access to Connect to provide additional support to the young person around employment.

Outlined in the presentation are ways that the Department for Work and Pensions and Lancashire County Council are working together to support Care Experienced Young People and what is coming soon.

The Board noted the plethora of support available by the Department of Work and Pensions to help care experienced young people gain employment.

**Resolved:** That the Board noted the update.

## **9. Calendar of Meetings 2025/26**

**Resolved:** That the Board noted the calendar of meetings for 2022/26.

## **10. Any Other Business**

There was no other business received.

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

Wednesday, 22 January 2025 at 6.00pm in Savoy Suite 1, The Exchange, County Hall, Preston, PR1 8RJ.