

Corporate Parenting Board

Wednesday, 27 January 2021, Online - 2.00 pm

Minutes

Present:

Mr A C Roberts (Chairman), Mr R C Adams, Mrs L C Hodgson, Dr C Hotham, Mr J Grubb, Mrs F M Oborski, Mrs J A Potter, Cllr M Sherrey and Mr T A L Wells

Also attended:

Justine Bishop, Rhys Davies, Beverley Downing, Catherine Driscoll, Cassandra Holyoake, Adam Johnston, Heather Manning, Kerry Nicholl, Selina Rawitz, Celena Rossano, Tina Russell, Jane Stanley, Nina Warrington. Care Leavers: Mark and Shannon.

246 Apologies

Apologies were received from Members of the Board, Helen Dyke, Mike Johnson and Nyear Nazir. Julian Grubb attended for Nyear Nazir.

Apologies were also received from Kate Bailey, Helen Hey, Dr David Lewis and Colette Maynard.

247 Confirmation of the Minutes

The minutes of the last meeting held on 8 October 2020 were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting and would be signed by the Chairman.

248 Care Leavers Annual Report

Through Care Team Managers Kerry Nichol and Rhys Davies gave a presentation about the Care Leavers Annual Report, they were assisted by Mark Marshall.

It was explained that 100% of 17 year olds now have a PA; they work with young people aged 17 to 25. A Pilot scheme had expanded the role of outreach workers so they were working as PAs and had training on pathway planning. PAs previously handed over to the leaving care team a month before the young person turned 18.

With regard to homelessness, 6% had been in unsuitable accommodation, including those in custody which the Care Leavers team had little direct control over. The use of B&B accommodation was scrutinised and it had occurred a couple of times in the past year due to someone being in a desperate situation. Accommodation resource during Covid was stretched more than normal but the County Council worked with District Councils and two specialist PAs had been appointed. The Joint protocol would shortly be revised.

At Christmas 2019 the Care Leavers Team had organised ice skating and a meal but that was obviously not possible in 2020, however young people in independent or semi-independent accommodation were given £25 extra a week for 12 weeks. The money had been well received, with some spending it on treats but some using it to feel more secure and enable them to pay bills more easily. A Christmas newsletter had been circulated and a crisis card produced which gave details of where to go for help and advice. Events which could be done remotely such as gingerbread decorating and crafts were organised to help people feel connected. There was also a tombola which every care leaver was entered for. A virtual party was held with takeaway vouchers distributed and on Christmas day meals were supplied for 27 care leavers who were spending the day by themselves.

PAs kept in touch with young people using Covid safe ways of working, some using technology but with PPE available for PAs to carry out visits where appropriate. Each young person was RAG rated to assess whether they needed face to face visits and that status was updated when necessary. The numbers of up to date Pathway Plans had dipped due to Covid but numbers were now increasing. The Team were in touch with 95% of care leavers.

Mark Marshall informed the Board about what life was like for care leavers at the present time and how he was coping with the restrictions due to Covid. He was currently at Aberystwyth University in his 3rd year of a History degree with all lectures being done digitally. He was also a student Union Officer for Care leavers and Young Carers. He explained that it was a challenge to research while at home but he was trying to stay healthy; he found routines helpful as well as setting goals and having new things to do. He appreciated that due to support from the care leavers service he did not have the stress of finding a part time job to pay for his accommodation, which would be particularly difficult at the present time. He had zoom calls with his PA Cassandra which meant they were able see each other. He understood that it would be challenging for people living alone as everyone needed personal connections. He recognised that it was challenging for young people to find work due to lack of experience and sometimes lack of education with only 4% of Care leavers attending university. He felt that the Care leavers service would need to help care leavers with their CVs, helping them to

become part of a community and perhaps help with volunteering opportunities. The impact of Covid would be felt for years to come.

Board Members contributed comments and questions and it was clarified that:

- There was now more co-ordination with housing officers so PAs were able to get leaving care grants in place and know when housing would be available
- There were increasing numbers of apprenticeships at the Council but it appeared that not many care leavers had been taken on. It was acknowledged that although information about the opportunities were available more work was needed to allow care leavers to start slowly, perhaps with taster days or meeting employers informally to give them the confidence to apply and to 'get them through the first day'. It was confirmed that apprenticeships for care leavers were a priority for WCF management
- Work would take place with the virtual school for improved access to post 16 education and training.
- Board Members believed anyone going through care system and onto university was impressive after all the trials and inconvenience they would have experienced.
- The County Councillors wondered if care leavers knew who their County Councillors were, how to get hold of them and what they could do to help. It was suggested that some information could be put in the newsletter. Mark agreed that a bit of light political education would be good as lots of people would not know that Councillors help direct Children's Services.
- It was mentioned that each year Keep in Touch visits were organised to enable Corporate Parenting Board members to spend time with a care leavers in various activities. This would go ahead again this year and could be expanded so young people have a day with a County Councillor and they could then pass on the information about what they learnt.
- There were concerns about the reports that some care leavers were not well prepared for independent living so the extended time that PAs were available was seen as an improvement. It was clarified that things had improved over the last couple of years and it was recognised that the

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Services for
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needs**

reality of living independently was different to the theory. It was now part of the strategy, where suitable, for 17 year olds to live in very supported semi-independent living arrangements with wrap around support. A lot of supported accommodation was shared which also allowed for more support.

Tina Russell explained how services were being developed for children and young adults with disabilities and additional needs.

The vision of Worcestershire Children First was that Worcestershire should be a wonderful place for all children and young people to grow up. It was recognised that developing services for young adults with disabilities and additional needs was one of most complicated service developments due to the multiple strands; WCF and WCC development, the local offer, sufficiency planning including short breaks and care, Here2Help with the wellbeing offer, the SEND improvement plan as well as the Graduated Approach and Liquid Logic were all relevant to the service development and were running in parallel. It was therefore necessary to ensure good co-ordination.

The first phase of the project from now until March 2021 involved improving social work assessments and plans, reviewing levels of need and managing risk, assessing the use of short breaks, the direct payment system and social care input to EHCPs. For those with special educational needs and disabilities the quality of EHCP would be looked at along with input of partners, commissioning of SEND and the EHCP review process.

Phase 2, from April to September this year, would review the structure, role and function of the Children with Disabilities and the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities teams and create multidisciplinary teams. There would also be development of single plans for children. Educational residential care and commissioning of those placements would be reviewed and quality assurance measures would be implemented with a focus on service user feedback.

The All Age Disability Programme Board was meeting and had an independent project manager who was ensuring joint learning and co-ordination. The Strategy development was so complex it was necessary to be realistic with timescales and the different phases would ensure that it was possible to keep focus.

250 Work Plan

Board Members were being asked to ensure parents, carers and young people were kept informed and engaged with the process and it was hoped that they could enable co-production.

The Chairman noted that as future Corporate Parenting Board meetings would not take place until after the County Council elections, the work programme should be left for the new Board Members to decide.

251 Quarterly Data Report - Q3 2020-21

Noted.

Comment

The Chairman asked Shannon if she was able to share the opinions of other, perhaps less confident, care leavers with the Board.

Shannon reported that some care leavers did not want to have anything to do with service. She felt that was sometimes for a good reason because they had moved on with their lives but it was sometimes because they have had bad experience with the care service. However, she felt it was important that once young people had left, they all needed to know that support was there for them if needed.

She believed things had improved a lot in last couple of years but the service needed to continue to listen.

The Chairman thanked Shannon for her important contribution.

252 Future Meeting Dates

The next meeting scheduled for 27 May would be used as an induction session for Councillors following the County Council elections on 6 May.

The next Board meeting would therefore be 8 July 2021.

The meeting ended at 3.15 pm

Chairman

