

**Minutes of the Children's Corporate Parenting Board  
Thursday, 23rd March 2023 at 6.00 pm  
In Conference Room 6, Saltwells Education Development  
Centre, Bowling Green Road, Netherton, Dudley**

**Present:**

Councillor R Buttery (Chair)  
Councillor S Ridney (Vice-Chair)  
Councillors H Bills, P Bradley, A Hughes, P Lee, A Millward, N Neale, D Stanley  
and E Taylor.

**Dudley MBC Officers**

K Graham – Service Director Children's Social Care, A Grove – Lead for Youth  
and Community, M McFadden – Corporate Parenting Co-ordinator and A Wright  
– Virtual School Head Teacher (All Directorate of Children's Services), J  
Edwards – Public Health Manager (Directorate of Public Health and Wellbeing),  
S Gay – Leisure Services Manager (Directorate of Regeneration and Enterprise)  
and K Buckle – Democratic Services Officer (Directorate of Finance and Legal).

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14. **Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence were submitted for this meeting of  
the committee.

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15. **Appointment of Substitute Members**

There were no substitute Members appointed for this meeting of the  
committee.

16. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

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17. **Minutes**

**Resolved**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 21st July 2022, be agreed as a correct record and signed.

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18. **Public Forum**

No issues were raised under this agenda item.

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19. **Children's Corporate Parenting Board Municipal Year Report April 2022 to March 2023**

The Service Director Children's Social Care introduced S Thirlway, the newly appointed Service Director for Education, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and Family Solutions and Members welcomed him to the meeting.

The Service Director Children's Social Care presented the report submitted referring to the impact and involvement of the children, young people and care experienced young people in relation to children's services, and the inclusion of them in some of the meetings of the Board.

Details of the Total Respect activities that children and young people were involved with were referred to together with the work conducted closely with their Reviewing Officers.

Children and young people had also developed profile cards and leaflets which had impacted upon the services delivered to them in a positive manner.

More recently children in care had become involved with writing and document sharing in relation to their education plans and had worked closely with the Virtual School Head Teacher and his team in developing this work.

On the morning of the Board meeting young people had provided their feedback on interviews that they had participated in within the Children's Services Directorate.

Details of the Leisure Offer that had been progressed finalised and developed was outlined.

The podcasts prepared by children and young people full details of which were contained in the report submitted were noted.

Members had considered the reports from both Dudley's Fostering Service and Adoption@Heart Regional Adoption Agency as part of the impact over the municipal year of the corporate parenting test of assurance and achieving early permanency.

Members also considered the challenges of recruiting foster carers, noting the move to providing more bespoke arrangements to recruit foster carers, following the appointment of a Marketing Manager.

The Gold Standard for Health Care for children and young people in care had been presented to Members by the Designated Nurse for Children and Young People in Care.

Members had noted that embedding the voice of the child in practice was essential and had been evidenced by the latest Regulation 44 Independent visits by an independent person, in relation of the Children Home Regulations (2015) when Ofsted Inspectors had reported that it was evident that children's views, wishes and feelings remained paramount and encouraged and managed through key-worker sessions and catch-up meetings.

Members had praised the Tipton Road Children's Home staff and recognised that the facility had been graded as 'Good' by Ofsted.

The Virtual School Head Teacher referred to the educational achievements of children and young people in care and the growing attention to the post 16 cohort of young people. Work with colleagues continued and it was reported that all young people had remained in education with none excluded during the municipal year.

In relation to the Children's Services Complaints, Comments and Compliments report, the fact that young adults were able to reflect on their experiences positively had been welcomed.

- (a) The Chair expressed her approval of both the report and the annual reporting method, referring to the positive outcomes for children and young people including securing the leisure offer and the methods utilised for shaping services for those wishing to access the leisure offer.

The Leisure Services Manager referred to the questionnaire that had been formulated, in order to shape the activities to be offered.

- (b) Councillor S Ridney referred to the fact that all Elected Members were Corporate Parents and stated that they should be encouraged to attend the Corporate Parenting Training event that would be organised following the municipal elections in May.
- (c) The Chair commented positively on the continued work of the Virtual School and their partnership working which had precluded any exclusions.

The Virtual School Head Teacher referred to the continuing partnership working and future partnership working in relation to post 16 children.

- (d) Councillor H Bills referred to the Care Leavers awards and those which had attained degrees advising that some care leavers had expressed the desire to work within the public sector, in order to share their experiences and achievements.

The Chair advised that care leavers could become role models within many professions.

- (e) Councillor A Millward advised that she had attended a Children in Care Council meeting at which some of the children had requested the review of 'pocket money'.

The Service Director Children's Social Care reported that pocket money had been bench marked against other local authorities, however there was the need to ensure that any savings accounts were transportable and followed a child through the care system. Particular reference was made to the Government ISA arrangement for children.

- (f) Councillor S Ridley raised concerns in relation to savings accounts advising that some children in care were not aware of those accounts, however advice had been provided that for children born between 2002 and 2011 every child received a Child Trust Fund and care leavers had been encouraged to visit the relevant internet site to obtain details, as approximately £1,500 would be available for those aged 16 to 17.
- (g) Councillor A Millward referred to the Castle and Crystal Credit Union and enquired as to why the Authority were not utilising that facility.

The Service Director Children's Social Care referred to the number of additional regulations in relation to how the Local Authority could invest money for children in care which involved a complicated system, and it was noted that pocket money was increased in scales subject to age.

It was confirmed that an item in relation to the 'Pocket Money and Savings Review' would be presented to the meeting in July 2023.

- (h) Councillor D Stanley enquired as to the participation level at the Borough's Leisure Facilities.

The Leisure Services Manager advised that 820 children and young people had received the leisure offer since January 2023 and undertook to present a report to the next meeting of the Board providing the further detail in relation to usage and the activities accessed.

The Corporate Parenting Co-ordinator advised that both the Lead for Youth and Community and the Public Health Manager would liaise with the Leisure Services Manager, in order to include all activities within the proposed report.

- (i) Councillor S Ridley stated that she had also attended the Children in Care Council meeting when young people had voiced their concerns in relation to changes in social workers, stating that they wished to build relationships with their social workers in a more relaxed environment.

It was accepted by the Service Director Children's Social Care that different local resources to provide that more relaxed environment should be offered to children in care and work continued in this regard.

- (j) Councillor A Millward referred to heightening anxiety when children and young people were not advised that social workers were taking annual leave and they were unable to contact their individual social workers.

The Service Director Children's Social Care advised that all teams operated a duty system expanding on group supervision in order that they could 'step in' should their colleagues be unavailable.

It was noted that the Children in Care Council had generally expressed positivity in relation to their foster carers and residential children's home placements, requesting a further visit to the Black Country Living Museum with their parents/foster carers; they were appreciative that the Children in Care Council could share their experiences with other children in care and expressed their appreciation for D Foley (Youth Participation Officer) and the activities that had been arranged for them.

- (k) Councillor P Bradley referred to the positive note for the year end report, advising of the progressive journey of children in care. In referring to the Action Tracker, the importance of identifying a drop in property for care experienced young people was expressed. Obtaining a small toolbox and obtaining funding for that was also required.

Councillor P Bradley reported that Councillor A Millward had referred to the possibility of rounding up pennies from salaries of those employed by the Local Authority and Elected Members (subject to their consent) in order to provide for a central fund for children in care and care leavers.

Councillor A Millward requested that the Director of Housing and Communities or an officer of similar calibre and the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities be invited to future meetings.

The Service Director Children's Social Care advised that young people had attending Tenancy Workshops that had been organised by the Directorate of Housing and Communities, and with regard to the possibilities of rounding up salaries referred to above the Service Director would consult with the Director of Finance and Legal Services.

Councillor D Stanley referred to the possibility of identifying a drop in property for care experienced young people with the Manager of Corporate Landlord Services.

Councillor E Taylor suggested the possibility of utilising the property adjacent to the Netherton Arts Centre for that purpose.

The Service Director Children's Social Care referred to scoping work being conducted to provide a useful space to include workshops for young people to access together with the provision of community resources. Discussions had taken place with the Authority's surveyors and young people, in order to ascertain their views. A report would be submitted to the next meeting of the Board as to progress.

The Chair referred to the organisation 'Home for Good' and the possibility of alternative options being pursued to access supporters who would be willing to support young people aged 18 to 25 within their communities.

- (l) Councillor H Bills referred to the attendance of housing representatives at the Care Leavers Working Group, advising that young people had suggested the provision of freezer provisions containing meals for one, washing facilities and continuing to celebrate events for care leavers. Congratulations were expressed for the continuing work of the Virtual School, the provision of Trust Funds and Leisure facilities.

The Corporate Parenting co-ordinator referred to the possibility of sourcing some beauty and vehicle resources for the end of school prom nights, advising of the Easter event that had been organised at the Source Youth Club with an invitation extended to all Elected Members.

The Public Health Manager advised that a healthy recipe booklet was almost complete and a training offer to young people's advisors on healthy cooking would be extended in order that they could assist care leavers with accessing healthy affordable options.

The Leisure Services Manager confirmed that he would consult catering services within leisure facilities and Brooke's Bar and Bistro in Dudley to ascertain whether they could provide an additional similar offer to care leavers.

The Virtual School Headteacher referred to the post 16 pilot scheme hosted by Dudley College which entailed a 10-week course around independent living, which included a mentoring session on cooking within a budget and financial management, detail of which would be reported on at a future meeting of the Board.

- (m) The Chair requested that an item on 'Care Experienced Apprentices' be considered at a future meeting, as Children's Services should not be the only Directorate tasked providing apprenticeships for care leavers and following consultation with the Chief Executive a report would be presented on how many work experience placements were being offered to young people providing a break down of each council department that offered those placements.

The Virtual School Headteacher referred to a guide to schools that would be prepared following the change in relation to the provision of work experience placements numbers from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2023.

The Chair thanked Members and Officers for their participation in meetings, enthusiasm and continued work and support.

## **Resolved**

- (1) That the information presented at the meeting be noted.
- (2) That the Head of Children in Care, Care Leavers, and Resources, be requested to arrange for the young people to deliver the Total Respect training/exercise to all Independent Reviewing Officers and relevant staff.
- (3) That the Corporate Parenting Board Co-ordinator, in conjunction with the Children in Care Council, be requested to arrange a date for the Board to attend a future meeting of the Children in Care Council.
- (4) That the Service Director Children's Social Care be requested to report the views and concerns raised by Board Members in relation to the Adoption Panels continuing to be held virtually to a future meeting of the Adoption@Heart Management Board
- (5) That the Leisure Services Manager be requested to promote the current leisure offer and explore the possibility of liaising with Connexions in relation to delivering courses to those wishing to become swimming instructors.



- (6) That the Service Director Children's Social Care be requested to submit a report to a future meeting on outcomes of children transitioning from the residential home
- (7) That the Interim Service Manager be requested to provide further information in relation to foster carer payments to the Board for information
- (8) That the Virtual School Head Teacher be requested to provide a breakdown of children and care experienced young adults who are NEET (not in employment, education, or training) figures as at the end of the academic year with comparative data from the previous two years, be presented to a future meeting.
- (9) That the Services Director Children's Social Care be requested to submit a report on the pocket money and savings review to the next meeting of the Board.
- (10) That the Leisure Services Manager be requested to liaise with the Lead for Youth and Community and the Public Health Manager and present a report to the next meeting on the detail regarding the usage of leisure activities including all activities offered to children and young people.
- (11) That the Service Director Children's Social Care be requested to invite the Director and Cabinet Member of Housing and Communities to future meetings.
- (12) That the Service Director Children's Social Care be requested to submit a report to the next meeting of the Board on the scoping work conducted and the provision of a useful space to include workshops for young people to access together with the provision of community resources and the possibility of utilising the property adjacent to Netherton Arts Centre.
- (13) That the Leisure Services Manger be requested to consult catering services within leisure facilities and Brooke's Bar and Bistro in Dudley to ascertain whether they could provide a further offer to care leavers in relation to healthy eating and report back to the next meeting of the Board following those consultations.

- (14) That the Virtual School Head Teacher be requested to submit a report to a future meeting of the Board the detail of the post 16 pilot scheme hosted by Dudley College which entailed a 10- week course in relation to independent living, which included a mentoring session on cooking within a budget and financial management.
- (15) That the Service Director Children's Social Care be requested to submit a report to a future meeting of the Board on Care Experienced Apprenticeships to include details of the provision of apprenticeships for care leavers, the number of placements offered to young people and in which Directorate.
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20. **Questions Under Council Procedure Rule 11.8**

There were no questions to the Chair pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 11.8.

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The meeting ended at 7.25 pm

CHAIR