

CORPORATE PARENTING FORUM

Wednesday 8 February 2023

Present (virtually): Councillors Stuart Carroll (Chairman), Amy Tisi (Vice-Chairman), Gerry Clark, John Story and Carole Da Costa

Also in attendance (virtually): 2 Kickback members and Lynette Jones-Jardine

Officers (virtually): Suzanne Parrott, Nikki Craig, Isabel Prinsloo, Lin Ferguson, Elaine Keating, Marie Bell, Sarah Moran, and Laurence Ellis

Welcome, Introductions and Apologies for Absence

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked attendees to introduce themselves.

The Chairman notified the Panel that the meeting was being held virtually due to the standard meeting venues being unavailable.

Apologies were received from Rebecca Hatch. Councillor Tisi (Vice-Chair) had notified prior that she was going to arrive late to the meeting.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interests were received.

Minutes

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on 13th December 2022 be approved as a correct record.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the motion to exclude the public for the remainder of the meeting be approved.

Kickback Activity

As part of the activity, Elaine Keating, Youth Engagement Officer, presented a slideshow and the first Kickback member asked meeting attendees to find an item which told something about themselves. After a couple of minutes, the attendees took turns to present a brief explanation as to what item they brought and why it described themselves.

(Councillor Clark entered the meeting at 17:43)

After all attendees explained their items, the Kickback member challenged each attendee to re-tell another attendee's story back to them.

After the activity, the Kickback member then illustrated a couple of questions on their slideshow: "How does it feel if someone is not listening to you?" and "How does it feel not to have Your Voice heard?"

Nikki Craig, Head of HR, Corporate Projects and IT (RBWM), commented that the reason some people do not take in information from someone else was that people naturally try to concentrate on what they would be doing in the meeting, such as what they were going to say or looking at the camera in a virtual meeting, over listening to what was going on.

Isabel Prinsloo, Team Manager for the Children-in-Care and Care Leavers Service, commented that it would be frustrating that people try to convey something to other people, but those people were not receiving this, which could then cause disconnection. She agreed and reiterated that people would be too preoccupied on planning on what to say that they do not receive other information.

The Kickback member then gave some tips to the Forum, explaining that sometimes comments and feedback from young people in care may get “lost in translation”. These included:

- Not to jump to conclusions as another person’s opinion and point-of-view may not be accurate in one’s eyes.
- Include voices, thoughts and opinions in all meetings.
- Be mindful that personal conversations could be embarrassing as it could take time for someone to open up about themselves.
- Listen when help is wanted or unwanted.
- Be a good listener.

Kickback/Care Leavers' Forum update

The second Kickback member gave a Kickback update/Care Leavers Forum update, explaining the activities that have been undertaken. These included a cooking session and a meal out. The Kickback member also explained the plan for 2023, such as arranging a sports day, the first session of Total Respect Training of the year and the Business Event for local businesses to be held later in February.

Elaine Keating then showed a table of dates on events and activities relating to the Care Leavers Hub throughout 2023 as well as newsletter which she was planning to send out.

(Councillor Tisi entered the meeting at 18:01)

Deep Dive - 'Your Voice' Workstream

(The First Kickback member left the meeting at 18:06)

Elaine Keating gave a presentation on ‘Your Voice’ workstream. She explained that a lot of the work had been based around the Kickback letter written to the Corporate Parenting Forum as well as a list of tasks that was also forwarded.

Elaine Keating then informed that a workstream meeting had taken place, which included Councillor Clark as well as other RBWM staff, describing it as a positive step forward. She then listed some items which were established, including social media pages, Kickback monthly sessions, Pathway and Care Plans, ‘Have My Say’ app and direct contact social workers.

Elaine Keating then listed the workstream’s aims and a summary of the actions which had taken place relating to each objective.

- With members biographies, Elaine Keating hoped to create a booklet with the bios and then circulate them to young people in care.
- Some events and activities had been organised to which Elaine Keating had invited CPF members to attend.

- Continue and expand the use of the Gripe Corner to aid young people to have their voice heard.
- More work needed to be done to eliminate the use of jargon words by professionals.
- Lin Ferguson would produce a vlog to update Kickback members after the meeting. In addition, circulate Kickback summary reports of CPF meetings.
- Work was still in progress on working with the Fostering Team to teach foster carers about getting their voice heard.
- A list of questions had been circulated to Supervising Social Workers on what participation looks like for foster carers.
- The development of a 'Rainbow of Participation' had not been developed yet.
- The 'Local Offer' was almost completed and needed to be promoted widely. A focus group of young people and care leavers to create 'young person' friendly pages.
- A proposal for better communication with Children-in-Care (CiC) and Care Leavers was established as well as a Care Leaver Champion being appointed.
- An annual event to celebrate CiC and Care Leavers' achievements had taken place in November 2022, with the next one planned in November 2023.

Lin Ferguson requested that the Care Leavers Hub be discussed alongside Kickback at every meeting. In addition, she asked about the impact of the work that had been undertaken and what work was being done based on feedback received. This is being triangulated with work being led by Sarah Moran, Deputy Director Children's Services.

Suzanne Parrott, Executive Headteacher of the Virtual School (AfC), informed that young people in care had a radio station in which they conducted daily radio broadcasts. This allowed young people to share their thoughts, interview and talk about their care experience. She added that this was underused despite this being a positive platform. She stated that she would like to consider how to engage with young people to encourage them to take part in this radio station project.

Annual Care Leavers Impact Report

Isabel Prinsloo gave an update on the Annual Care Leavers Impact Report. She started off with a summary:

- Face to Face engagement with RBWM's 18-to-25 age group had significantly improved and remains at a higher level consistently.
- Participation of Care Leavers in the Care Leaver Forum from the 18+ age group continued to be a challenge to acquire more interest.
- The Local Offer cohort sought out PA's (Personal Advisors) for support when needed.
- The corporate parenting agenda was starting to move forward in relation to Care Leavers being supported by the whole Council; namely the hardship fund (where the Council agreed Care Leavers were a priority), exemption from Council Tax, CiC and Care Leavers agreed as a Protected Characteristic, etc.
- There had been success in offering more internal RBWM/AfC employment opportunities to Care Leavers in RBWM over the last year.
- The demand on the service had grown due to the mandatory UASC quota from the government set at 0.1% of the population, therefore the PA Team had expanded and there had been a growth from 5 to 8 permanent PAs.
- Pathway Plans were in date and signed off in the last 6 months continued to fluctuate although the position was still strong overall.
- EET (Employment, Education or Training) strong position and maintained.
- 'In Touch' was very strong and was consistently maintained in mid to upper 90%'s.

In terms of what had been working, Isabel Prinsloo explained:

- Regarding the under-21 cohort, the Borough and AfC was committed to meet with young people face-to-face at least once every 2 months or in line with each young person's Pathway Plan. There had been much more meaningful engagement as well as a consistent healthy picture in 2022.

- With the 21+ cohort, AfC PAs continued to keep in touch with these care leavers, who were young people who continued to be supported via a Pathway Plan post-21 and generally remained in higher education.
- Presently, 61 young people, compared to 52 in January 2022, were under the 'Local Offer': young people who were 21+ years of age and were not in Higher Education and who no longer needed formal pathway planning, but nevertheless kept in contact with the services. A majority of cohorts were staying in touch with the service, reaching out when needing support.
- There was a positive shift in the Care Leavers Covenant and corporate parenting duties, with young people acquiring access to the Hardship Fund and Council tax exemption.
- There had been success by RBWM and AfC in 2022 in offering employment opportunities to Care Leavers, with 3 Care Leavers securing employment at RBWM and AfC.
- The PA Team had grown from 5 to 8 due to an influx of asylum seekers.
- The position with EET (Employment, Education or Training) was robust. As of December 2022, the Borough was at 58% (38 out of 66 YP) although lower compared to December 2021 at 61%.
- Care Leavers in touch with the service was currently at 97% (December 2022).

Isabel Prinsloo the listed areas in which the Borough was concerned about:

- While a strong position overall was maintained with the Pathway Planning, there were occasional dips and a consistent position had not been achieved. This was partially contributed by staff sickness throughout the year. While there was a healthy picture, resilience in the service needed to be developed.
- The participation of Care Leavers in the Care Leavers Forum remained a challenge. A refocus had been done as well as Elaine Keating creating a program of activities for 2023 to try and secure more meaningful engagement.

The recommendations were:

- The service to build resilience around the fluctuation in pathway planning.
- Work to continue around Participation for the 18+ age group of care leavers in the care leavers forum.
- Ongoing work to drive Care Leavers Covenant and corporate parenting agenda to create more varied EET opportunities and other opportunities for our young people as adults.

The Chairman asked about the changed in the percentages relating to the Pathway Planning. Isabel Prinsloo explained that every young person should have a Pathway Plan that was in date and signed off in the last six months; and therefore, the percentages reflected where this was achieved. She added that sometimes a Pathway Plan had been formulated but may have not been uploaded into the system, not been signed off or been prepared on time by the PA when the next review date was due.

Lin Ferguson asked for confirmation if the inconsistency in Pathway Plans referred to Plans being signed off or was it based on some Pathway Plans not being updated in the way that they should. Isabel Prinsloo replied that it was more to do with sign off. She also confirmed that all young people had Pathway Plans.

Councillor Da Costa asked if there was any data or evidence which showed what the long-term outcome were for Care Leavers that remained engaged beyond the statutory period of time, elaborating whether continuous engagement and contact was beneficial. Isabel Prinsloo replied that, while there had not been any work to answer this question, from specific cases, it was known that it was generally very much effective and helpful for them.

Councillor Da Costa then suggested that it would be good to have some evidence on the benefits on continued in engagement, arguing that it may encourage 21+ year-old care

leavers to remain engaged with personal advisers and the service. Isabel Prinsloo responded that she and the Personal Advisers were seeking feedback from young people to work out why their experience in care was not positive and therefore improve the service.

Lynette Jones-Jardine, Safeguarding Lead for Children and Young People in Care (NHS Frimley), mentioned that she was scheduled to attend a Workforce HR meeting in March 2023 to talk about how to create some care experience, apprenticeships, or any opportunities. She was open to any support. Lin Ferguson offered to provide support.

Referring to Councillor Da Costa's question, Suzanne Parrott stated that she would go and find someone who had a study on Care Leavers continuing to engage with care services after the statutory period.

(Lynette Jones-Jardine left the meeting at 6:54pm)

Sarah Moran raised that her item (National Panel Review) was missed out on the published agenda. The Chairman allowed her to do her presentation.

Sarah Moran gave a presentation. She explained that the Children's Safeguarding Practice Review Panel undertook a national review into the experiences of 108 children placed at three independent residential settings operated by the Hesley Group in Doncaster. There were concerns raised which included significant abuse and serious harm to children.

In response to this, all Local Authorities were asked by their DCSs to undertake a review of any children in care placed in similar settings. RBWM's review focused on 5 children in care with disabilities and complex health needs which were placed in a residential specialist school which were registered as a children's homes. This review had provided RBWM with additional assurance about the safety and well-being of its children-in-care children living in similar types of placements.

Sarah Moran then explained the methodology of the review. An audit template was devised and used to review the 5 children. Part of the Quality Assurance work included Independent Reviewing Officers seeking the views of parents in terms of their children and the care they received in those placements. In October 2022, a multi-agency panel reviewed each of the children with the allocated social worker attending to support the panel discussion.

Sarah Moran then conveyed the positive key findings:

- Children's placements were meeting their needs and supporting them well.
- Feedback from parents and children was positive about the care they were receiving from the placement and progress the children were making.
- None of the residential settings had any LADO (Local Authority Designated Officers) referrals.
- Children were subjected to regular reviews and visits and there was good evidence of children's wishes and feelings being sought.
- Multi-agency working was strong. Support to families and access to advocacy services was good.
- Good evidence of contact with family members being promoted and supported.

Sarah Moran then conveyed the list of concerns:

- Communication and Behaviour plans for children were not consistently in place or recorded on the child's record.
- Strength and Difficulties Questionnaires needed to be consistently completed for ALL children.
- Commissioning arrangements for children placed through SEND were not subjected to the same quality assurance process compared to those placed through Children's Social Care.
- There was no formal process for information sharing between LADOs across different LA's.

Sarah Moran then listed the recommendations:

- Ensure contractual arrangements were in place for all children in residential settings going forward.
- Ensure that a child placed in a residential setting would be going to a school which was rated 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted.
- All children placed in residential settings would have full quality assurance checks regardless of who commissions the placement.
- AfC LADO would be notified when an allegation against an adult was submitted.
- Children with disabilities placed in residential settings would all possess a Behaviour Plan.
- Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires would be completed for all children placed in residential settings with complex needs and these would be reviewed annually.
- Commissioning arrangements for children in residential placements would be managed through the new SEND (Special Education Needs and Disability) commissioning role and Quality Assurance checks are in place prior to the child being placed.
- Governance for the action plan would sit with the Corporate Parenting Forum.

Councillor Tisi (Vice-Chair) was grateful that children and young people in care inside and outside of the Borough had not been in poor care situations. Sarah Moran commented that the review was a helpful in RBWM scrutinising in its responsibility and performance to ensure that the needs of young people were being met.

The Forum noted the update.

Diary Dates

Elaine Keating gave some dates for the Forum to take note:

- Total Respect Training on Thursday 16th February.
- Takeover Day on Tuesday 21st March.
- Half-term activity Wednesday 31st May.

The Forum noted the dates.

Forward Plan

The Forum noted the Forward Plan.

Dates of Future Meetings

The Forum noted that the next meeting was 18th April 2023 (5:30pm).

The meeting, which began at 5.32 pm, finished at 6.42 pm

Chair.....

Date.....