

CORPORATE PARENTING FORUM

Tuesday 18 April 2023

Present: Councillors Amy Tisi (Vice-Chair), Gerry Clark, John Story and Carole Da Costa

Present (virtually): Councillor Stuart Carroll (Chair)

Also in attendance (virtually): 1 Kickback member and Shula Tajima

Officers: Nikki Craig, Sarah Moran and Laurence Ellis

Officers (virtually): Suzanne Parrott, Rebecca Hatch and Elaine Keating

Welcome, Introductions and Apologies for Absence

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

Apologies were received from Lynette Jones-Jardine and Lin Ferguson.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interests were received.

Minutes

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on 8th February 2023 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 and Care Leavers Hub Report and Activity

The Kickback representative informed that there would not be a Kickback Activity; instead, she read an update, explaining the activities which had recently taken place.

- Since the last Corporate Parenting Forum meeting in February 2023, there had been two regular Kickback sessions, two activity days, one Care Leaver Hub session, one UASC Information Session and One Total Respect Training session.
- A Berkshire-wide children-in-care council event took place where children-in-care councils from Slough, Wokingham, Bracknell and West Berkshire were invited to the Kickback centre in Windsor.
- A bootcamp was established by the Family Hub.
- Smoothies were made and there was discussion on the importance of fruit and vegetables in the diet.
- Lynette Jones-Jardine, Safeguarding Lead for Children and Young People in Care (NHS Frimley), spoke about a water safety campaign as well as the best methods to communicate with young people in care.
- Had dance lessons, including street dancing.
- During the February 2023 meeting, Kickback members planted some flowers.

- For the March 2023 meeting, there were plans to make sushi.
- Total Respect Training was held during the February half-term which had a full house. The next session would be held in the session.
- Some tickets were received for the King's Coronation Concert at Windsor Castle in May 2023.
- The first Care Leavers Hub of 2023 was held in February 2023 in Windsor, with the topic of discussion being 'Your Independence' workstream. Unfortunately, no young people turned up, leading to suggestions of hosting the Care Leavers Hub at one of the semi-independent houses to encourage young people to attend. The next Hub meeting was to take place in the following week as of the date of the meeting.
- Many activities took in February 2023, including 22 young people attending a session for Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers; health workers doing a presentation; and a presentation on the role of the police.
- Two newsletters had been produced, one for children of care and another for care leavers, to allow communication between corporate parents and young people in care.
- Better Future Business Event took place in February.

The Kickback representative concluded by displaying some top tips for young people to make them feel good and healthy.

Councillor Tisi, Vice-Chair, asked why none of the care leavers attended the Care Leavers Hub in February 2023. Elaine Keating, Youth Engagement Officer, replied that PAs were investigating the reason for this. Reasons included that the meeting took place too early in the evening or too late, and a lot of care leavers did not live in the Borough and therefore it was difficult for them to travel to Windsor. Elaine Keating stated that officers would further look into this to resolve the lack of attendance.

Sarah Moran, Deputy Director of Children's Services, reiterated that they would look into taking the Hub meeting to the care leavers at their semi-independent accommodation.

Children in Care and Care Leavers Advisory Group

As Lin Ferguson, Director of Children's Social Care and Early Help (AfC), was unavailable, Sarah Moran and Elaine Keating presented the report. Sarah Moran informed that Lin Ferguson had recently become DCS (Director of Children's Services). In this new role, she had bi-monthly meetings with children and young people in care (around 6 meetings per year). As of the meeting, 2 meetings had already taken place. The purpose of this was to provide better engagement and communication between Lin Ferguson and young people in care. Lin Ferguson was also using these meetings to engage with them on different activities which were going to take place. In the last meeting, care leavers were tasked with looking into the Care Leavers Local Offer, which had recently been published on AfC's (Achieving for Children) website and giving some feedback.

Elaine Keating added that while Kickback was a good platform, Lin Ferguson wanted to improve engagement with young people.

The Chair asked what the next step would be. Elaine Keating replied that the next step would be to look at the Local Offer and then give feedback on what young people thought and make any changes based on this. The next meeting was to take place in mid-June 2023.

Deep Dive - 'Your Independence' workstream

Sarah Moran, as chair of the 'Your Independence' workstream, gave a presentation on the workstream. She started off with a review of the progress which been made:

- Good attendance at each workstream.
- Staff groups are committed and passionate about the work.
- Of the 7 priorities 4 had been already achieved.

- Better Futures Event had raised the profile of CL's and local employment opportunities.
- Foster Carer Consultation Documents have been reviewed and now include a section on independence.

Regarding areas of concern:

- Duplication of work as the actions in this workstream were being captured by other workstreams.
- Membership of this group were also members at other Workstreams which was impacting practitioner time and capacity.

Sarah Moran's recommendation was the Independence workstream actions were to be included as an overarching set of priorities in each of the other four workstreams. The independence workstream would remain in place but as a virtual workstream with the current chair having oversight of the action plan only. Membership of the Independence workstream would continue to remain part of the four other workstreams.

Sarah Moran then listed the seven Independence workstream action plan with an update on the status of each action.

When the Chair asked about the frequency and focus of the other workstreams, Sarah Moran replied that the four other workstreams would continue to take place, but the 'Independence' workstream would be an overarching focus for each workstream. She would ensure at the workstream chairs' meetings that the actions around 'Independence' workstream were not lost.

Suzanne Parrott gave some short brief updates and reports. She reported that SUEZ attended the Better Futures event and also became members of the executive board, which would help with extending the message across the Borough. She then informed that John Lewis had contacted her and offered apprenticeships to any young people in care or care leavers. The NHS were also offering apprenticeships.

Members Training

As the responsible officer, Lin Ferguson, was not available at the meeting, the Chair requested for an update to be circulated through email. Sarah Moran stated that she would follow this up.

ACTION: Sarah Moran to circulate the Members Training update to Forum members.

Advocacy and Independent Visiting 2022-23

Shula Tajima, Director of Windsor and Maidenhead Counselling Service, gave a presentation on Number 22, a counselling charity, and its delivery of Advocacy and independent visiting. She first explained the role of an advocate: supporting children subjected to a child protection plan as well as the parents of the child or children.

Shula Tajima then explained the background and changes. She explained that the Advocacy service was set up by Number 22 of the request of RBWM and financed by Achieving for Children (AfC) under contract.

Shula Tajima then presented some statistics of Child Protection Conferences attendance. For example, Number 22 attended 95% of Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPC) and Review Child Protection Conferences (RCPC). She also presented the hours of support to child protection and looked after children. Advocates also attended Care Groups, court order proceedings and CiN meetings when requested by IRO or social workers.

Shula Tajima then presented feedback from clients and parents/carers, which were mostly positive.

Suzanne Parrott suggested some work collaboration with Number 22 and the Virtual School, such as a welcome programme for asylum seekers. She also asked Shula Tajima if Advocacy work was restricted to within the Borough or outside of it, as well as what were the age groups. Shula Tajima replied that it was restricted to within the Borough. She also stated that some IVs (Independent Visitors) and counsellors may be interested in Virtual School's programme.

Councillor Da Costa requested for the meaning of acronyms to be illustrated. She also asked the difference between an independent visitor and an advocate; and whether Number 22 was a national service or children allocated across the country as Shula Tajima mentioned that advocates were located from Newcastle to Devon. Shula Tajima replied that children were allocated across the country, but only provided Advocacy within the Borough. She explained that an advocate attended meetings (e.g., child protection conferences) and help support the young person at the meeting; an IV was a volunteer committed to engaging with a young person, similar to a mentor.

Councillor Story asked how advocates were recruited and trained. Shula Tajima replied that the vast majority of advocates came from Number 22's counsellors, who would then go through some additional training to be advocates. A small number of advocates came from other areas of social care.

Councillor Story asked where other sources of funding would be obtained if there was a shortage of funding. Shula Tajima answered that the counselling service was already fundraised hugely; but the Advocacy and independent visiting services were commissioned services by AfC in order to deliver the service. It was seen as inappropriate to fundraise to supplement the service; instead, the budget which AfC provided was followed. Employees, Shula Tajima mentioned, were already working hard to keep the counselling service funded as most of the finance was provided through fundraising; therefore, Number 22 did not have the capacity to fundraise for the Advocacy service in addition.

Councillor Da Costa asked if the funding for Number 22 came from the Borough's annual budget. Shula Tajima replied that AfC provided finance to Number 22 based on the money it would receive by RBWM. Sarah Moran elaborated that RBWM commissioned AfC to provide Advocacy. She added that there was a reduction in funding. In response, a review was taking place on children, young people and adults who were in receipt of a service and determining whether the services could still be provided. She reassured that this did not encompass RBWM's current children in care, elaborating that it was primarily adults who were under review and reassured that children and young people were the priority cohort.

Councillor Tisi asked if the independent visiting service was a statutory requirement or simply extra support. Sarah Moran confirmed this.

Rebecca Hatch, Head of Strategy, asked who the adults were who received support and why they were recipients of support from AfC. Shula Tajima replied that it was a combination of people as well as reasons, with some of them being care leavers being given additional needs after leaving care.

The Kickback member asked why a young person did not automatically get allocated an advocate while they were in care and whether it would have been possible for that advocate to be a phone call away under Advocacy. Shula Tajima explained that in the past, a young person was assigned an advocate and could have that same advocate for 5 to 7 years while they were in care. She added that Number 22 were seeking to sustain this or at least ensure continuity.

Dates of Future Meetings

The Forum noted the future meeting dates (5:30pm):

- 15 June 2023
- 13 September 2023
- 17 October 2023
- 5 December 2023
- 20 February 2024
- 16 April 2024

The Chair gave his gratitude to everyone in the Forum.

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

Chair.....

Date.....