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Corporate Parenting Panel

Meeting of Corporate Parenting Board held on Wednesday, 24 January 2024 at 5.00 pm
in Room 1.01 and 1.02 - Bernard Weatherill House, Mint Walk, Croydon CR0 1EA

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Maria Gatland (Chair);

Councillors Tamar Barrett, Amy Foster, Joseph Lee, Ian Parker, Helen Redfern
and Catherine Wilson

Co-optee Members

KH (Care Experienced Young Person Co-Chair)

Angela Christmas (Foster Carer Representative)

Dr Julia Simpson (LAC Nurse/Doctor)

Charity Kanotangudza (Health Commissioner)

Joel Pace-Jr (Youth Service Co-Ordinator)

T (Ambassador)

R (Young Person – Observer)

Shelley Prince (Head of Commissioning & Procurement CYPE)

Simon Robsen (Director of Adult Social Care Operations (Deputy DASS))

Mary Larbie (Director of Housing Management)

Beatrice Cingtho-Taylor (Director of Housing, Homelessness Prevention &
Accommodation)

Also

Present:

Roisin Madden (Director of Childrens Social Care)

Carolyn Jones (Interim Head of Service Children in Care & Care Experienced
Young People)

Tom Schaub-Jones (Service Manager CLA 0-16, Children's Social Care)

Jane Scott (Subject Matter Expert)

Sepiso Mushekwa (Participation and Collaboration Officer Care Experienced
Lead)

Apologies:

Councillor Tamar Barrett for lateness

Shelley Davies (Director of Education)

Manny Kwamin (Foster Carer Representative)

PART A

1/24 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 28 November 2023 were
agreed as an accurate record with the following additions to be recorded:

Shelley Prince (Head of Commissioning & Procurement CYP&E) had sent her
apologies for the meeting.

Councillor Tamar Barrett had requested for user's feedback for the local offer app to be included in the minutes.

2/24 Disclosures of interest

Angela Christmas shared that she was previously KH's foster carer and staying put carer.

3/24 Urgent Business (if any)

There was none.

4/24 Update on actions agreed at previous meeting(s)

The App

The Panel heard from officers that the local offer app was in the process of being setup with a contract. The ambassador's team had met up with the app designers for a preview to help with the co-designing. There was no timeline at present for completion of this app.

5/24 Update on Protected Characteristic Working Group

The Corporate Parenting Panel received a verbal update from the Transformation Lead, Jane Scott, and the CICC Joel Pace-Jr on the Protected Characteristic Working Group.

The Panel heard that the working group had met on two occasions and following the last meeting it was decided that a team survey was to be developed to cover diversity of young people and older children. This was currently in process to set up internal focus groups.

Officers added that the group had reviewed things on a national level. It was important to understand what a protected characteristic meant to a young person and what they had access to.

The Panel heard that wider work within the Council would also be part of the survey.

The Chair welcomed the update and requested to receive a feedback update at the next meeting on the survey once it was live.

6/24 Update from Children's Participation Team & Children in Care Council

The Corporate Parenting Panel received an update from the Children's Participation Team alongside Members in the Children in Care Council. The CICC coordinator shared with the Panel that their service would be at full capacity in the near future which would allow further reach to more young people, so they were aware of what was to be offered. The service welcomed a new team of ambassadors who were also present at the Panel meetings.

The team were also looking forward to the House Project which continued to progress, and the Panel heard that young people also contributed towards this project.

It was noted that there were other opportunities across other services to understand nuances and communication and that this should not just fall on social care.

The Ambassador, shared with the Panel their experience of being a young person benchmarking forum champion, and of being part of the forum was a nice opportunity to be involved and network with other boroughs to understand what other boroughs were doing and what Croydon was not.

The Chair welcomed the update and stated that they looked forward to further updates.

7/24 Health & Adult Transitions Sub-Group discussion

The Corporate Parenting Panel received a verbal update on the Health & Adult Transitions Sub-Group discussion which had recently taken place. The Sub-Group further highlighted on the health progressions and adult transitions.

The Head of Adults, Simon Robson, shared with the Panel the five headlines from the meeting which were:

- What does transitions mean? (how were young people using services) – the need to develop a better understanding for user services.
- Critical interdependencies with housing and education for young people and their experiences in participation
- Access to health-related activities and signposting for GPs and dentistry, and knowledge of how this was done.
- How would we meet the range of mental health needs and neurodiversity? How could we do it better and get it right?
- 24/7 support – appropriate or extended support.

There were three points taken away from the Sub-Group discussion, which were:

- The interpretation of health and transition of care experienced young people.
- How do we develop better responses
- How could what was already out there be made more accessible and the development of commissioning

In a discussion led by Ambassador, T, the Panel heard that transitioning should not start from the age of 16, as from experience it took a year to process change of independence i.e.. paying bills and providing for self, and in desperation where there was no help, things would often get tough for the individual.

The Chair acknowledged that young people required clarity in support they received and asked whether there was 24/7 support for young people, and who could young people contact in a time of need out of hours, late at night or at a weekend. Officers noted that the service were great at setting up preventions to crises and needed to do better when crisis happened.

Feedback fm the exercise in relation to:

- 1 Any further ideas for an extended (support service in Croydon) response for yp leaving home for the first time into independent living:
 - Collaboration with other boroughs
 - Preparation groups
 - Tool kit on basic maintenance
 - Handyman employed by the borough
 - Transition team to guide process and share information – checklist (I.e children with disabilities there was a team but not for children social care)
 - Ensuring that a young person knew what transition looked like – it should be a natural route.
 - Starter pack with practical information – link to resources such as You Tube, things that would be accessible for a young person whether it was a fridge magnet or via an app, and not just relying on one way to access information.
 - How would the service simulate “the village” – as in different circumstances, different people had different experiences; what network had been put in place for those people who went to university etc. the village feeling to finding support. What assets did this borough have?

- 2 What are you aware of in Croydon in different communities of what is already out there:

- Mentoring for young people with different life experience
- What was available and out there for people to contact?
- Starter flats in housing association links/house project
- Having conversations to avoid the crisis.
- Independent life skills where a social worker started this work which already existed in foster care teams – to address mental health and other issues – real travel training.
- Peer support groups - Working together with experienced people who shared their experience and life experience for others.
- Foster carers – utilising their service – having a trusted adult in different spaces.
- Designated space for care leavers – similarly to Legacy
- Workshops and tutorials

8/24 Performance Report

The Corporate Parenting Panel received the Performance report for the January data. The Interim Head in Service Children in Care and Care Experienced Young People, Carolyn Jones, spoke to the item:

The overview of the report in regard to the pathway plans for care experienced young people had shown that since September 2023 there has been discussions for how this would be addressed. The service looked at how we embed practice. Social workers and personal advisors were responsible for meeting with young people in a good way and in good time.

The data relating had shown a steady improvement over recent months, during the Christmas period there was a decline in performance in looked after children care plans and care experienced adults.

The unfolding story was that there was an issue with planning from Christmas, however the Panel were assured that children were being seen. The Panel heard that care plans did not take priority over seeing young people.

The Panel also learned that Children Looked After team had suffered with resources as staff had been off with sickness, therefore the practice was not embedded.

The Panel asked questions in relation to the up-to-date care plans which were shown on the performance report as 91% in October, but had now dropped to 77%, and asked whether this was due to the period that had covered sick leave. Officers confirmed that the figures in the report today related to the December data and the drop in percentage was due to sick leave and holiday period. The Panel heard that the next set of figures should have an improving picture.

The Panel discussed that each care and pathway plans were a legal document, and it was very important that the service ensured all the plans were up-to-date in case of any legal challenge. However, it was stated that

there were too many plans out-of-date, and the Panel enquired on what the consequences were and what were the service plans when the holiday period came into force. Officers responded that, at the service's practice and performance meetings, there were monthly discussions with senior management in ensuring better practice to maintain a better performance in data for care and pathway plans. The leadership team had clear direction and expectation for young people. Difficult conversations had been held for clarity in expectations, and the level of scrutiny was different now to what it had been in the past. There were pockets where practice was not at the service's expectations and thus change would need to be embedded within the service, which was ongoing, though the service was currently in a good place.

ACTION – For the Panel to have an update on the care and pathway plans at the next meeting.

The Panel had comments in relation to annual leave in the workplace, highlighting that annual leave should be compensated in the way it was organised, as foster carers and foster children and care experienced young adults, the holiday period were seen as the busiest time and services need to ensure staff were available for everyone's needs to be met. Addressing that the numbers were low every year, the Chair requested a plan to be put in place for improvement and further challenged what it meant when plans were not written up and how it affected young people. Officers stated that when a care plan was not written up the actions within the plan were not completed, though the actions pulled together the work on the record had not been completed but the work had been done. Further, it was said that the work was for all young people as it was a child's record of their life story, and the care and pathway plans was a review for their voices to be incorporated. The service would need to be better in practice in having a professional responsibility to address each young person's plan with their young person before any staff annual leave was to be taken.

A discussion was led by the Co-Chair that more transparency was required for young people when their social worker was to go on annual leave and for each young person to know when their social worker was unavailable. Experience had appeared that social workers and personal advisors would have to return from their annual leave to address matter that was not urgent. Officers noted that in the absence of social workers or personal advisors there was a duty team available to address any query a young person may have, though this was not communicated. The Care Experienced Ambassador added that from previous experience communication in supporting a young person has been poor. This applied to contact from a duty team or an on-call duty team also. In the discussion on communication, officers addressed that there was an emergency duty team (EDT) for children social care team though this was separate to the duty teams for each service division team and ensure that these team were active was to be revisited to ensure all young persons had the correct contact details.

The Panel further challenged on whether contact was made to young people when their social worker or personal advisor was off on long-term sickness,

and heard that the service had updated the way they worked where, should a social worker or personal advisor be off sick for a long period of time, the young person would be allocated another social worker for continuity and contact numbers for emergencies were also available in various teams for young people to have. This had been improved within the last twelve months.

ACTION – An update on communication (what, when and how) with young people to be provided at the next meetings.

The Panel reviewed the performance report in more detail and had asked questions in regard to:

- CLA7 (Rate of adolescents entering care per 10,000 (13–17-year-olds) population excl. UASC) and CLA8 (Rate of adolescents leaving care per 10,000 (13-17 year olds) population excl. UASC), where in April 2023 it had shown a big difference in that month for young people entering and leaving care. Officers did not have the explanation available and agreed to provide a narrative at a future meeting.

ACTION: For more information to be shared in relation to CLA7 and CLA8 in April 2023.

- AD7 [Average time between a child entering care and moving in with the adoptive family, for children who have been adopted (days) (12 Months rolling average)] where it was noticed that the figure in the report was the highest number of days over the last twelve months. Officers confirmed that the figure addressed a very small number of children. The days for adoption would take longer when children had complex needs.
- F4 (Percentage of Foster Carers' most recent announced visit within timescales (6 weekly), the Panel heard that the red indicator was in relation to the time of year and sickness.
- Health assessments completed within 20 days after a child became looked after had fallen to 25%. Officers stated that October was a good month with a performance of 73%. This was different to social care performance numbers which were recorded at 11 of 15 children that became looked after. In November, the health team saw 23 children. Work represented in the performance report did not reflect their work with children placed in Croydon by other boroughs. Health services also prioritised Croydon children before other young people from outside boroughs.
- CLA12 – this performance score was at 98% which was thought to be very good.

The meeting ended at 6.54 pm

Signed:

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Date:

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