

Corporate Parenting Panel

Monday 18 October 2021

Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members

Councillor Jeff Morgan (Chair)
Councillor Peter Gilbert
Councillor Caroline Phillips
Councillor Marian Humphreys

Officers

Helen Barnsley, Democratic Services Officer
Shinderpaul Bhangal, Corporate Parenting (Team Leader - Participation)
Ian Donnachie, Children in Care 14-18 years Apprentice
Demi English, Practice Improvement Apprentice
Alisha Howe, Fostering Team Apprentice
Simon Lewis, Strategy and Commissioning Manager (Property Management)
Deena Moorey, Virtual School Head
Lis Phillips, Sessional Worker (NW & Bed)
Sharon Shaw, Service Manager - Corporate Parenting Service
Matt Smith, Targeted Support Youth Worker
Jessica Tarn, Practice Improvement Apprentice
Umar Teerab, Family Support Worker

Others Present

Jackie Channell, Head of safeguarding - Warwickshire
Becky Evans, Community Development Officer (North Warwickshire BC)
Jane Grant, Strategic Housing & Communities Manager (Nuneaton & Bedworth BC)
David Wortley, Community advice and support team manager (Rugby BC)

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and round the (virtual) table introductions were made.

(1) Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Penny-Anne O'Donnell and Councillor Jerry Roodhouse.

Apologies were also received from Ian Budd, Assistant Director (Education Services), John Coleman, Assistant Director (Children & Families) and Nigel Minns, Strategic Director (People Directorate).

(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None.

2. What is Corporate Parenting?

Sharon Shaw, Service Manager (Corporate Parenting), gave a presentation to the Panel “What is Corporate Parenting?” with the following introduction –

“Corporate parenting refers to the shared responsibility across the council to ensure that children and young people in our care or leaving care are supported to thrive”

The following points were highlighted –

- The Panel noted the key responsibilities in order to be a good corporate parent; for example, seeking the same outcomes any good parent would want for their own child and listening to the views of our children and young people and taking account of them.
- The Panel learnt of the role of Local Authorities in looking after children and young people and noted that all council employees should ask “would this be good enough for my child?”.
- Sharon Shaw introduced the seven Corporate Parenting Principles as per The Children and Social Work Act 2017. The Panel noted the areas where corporate parenting principles are most relevant including education, housing, health and wellbeing plans and local tax collection.
- Sharon Shaw introduced the Panel to the services included in Corporate Parenting providing a brief explanation for each one. Services include. Children’s homes, the asylum team, fostering and leaving care support.
- The discussion moved on to Warwickshire County Council’s Local Offer – a requirement for local authorities to publish information about services offered to care leavers as they transition to adulthood and independent living. Warwickshire County Council’s offer includes financial support, housing, health, education and training. The Panel saw comparisons between WCC’s offer and the offer from Nottingham City Council; it was noted that there are many similarities but areas where both authorities could improve.

Representatives were encouraged by the presentation and given the opportunity to pass any questions via Helen Barnsley, Democratic Services Officer after the meeting.

3. Inclusion of Young People in Corporate Parenting.

Shinderpaul Bhangal, Corporate Parenting (Team Leader) introduced the presentation to the Panel which will show how children and young people are able to influence the council’s services and how improvements can be made to provide a better future for children in care.

Umar Teerab, Family Support Worker stated that children and young people are given the opportunity to express how they are feeling and that it is key they are seen to have a name, and

not just be a case number. It was noted that young people look to officers for help and support, and to be the parent.

Alisha Howe, Apprentice (Fostering Team) spoke to the Panel in relation to the Care Leaver's Charter and The Warwickshire Pledge. The Panel was pleased to note the involvement of children and young people in helping to make decisions that impact their lives.

It was noted that as a result of the pandemic, the Children in Care Council had continued to meet virtually but that in person meetings were now being reintroduced. These meetings are a chance for officers to listen to young people and for young people to feedback, positively and negatively.

Demi English, Practice Improvement Apprentice confirmed that a range of virtual workshops have been held on topics such as Asylum and Carer Leaving services and Online Foster Care Conference. Children and young people were also invited to a recent Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting where councillors were able to listen to the concerns, ideas and priorities.

It was noted that young people had also attended full council and informed elected members of their achievements, such as the Baby Box Project. It was agreed that this shone a very positive light on the children and young people of Warwickshire. Young people will be given a slot at the Senior Leadership Team's Christmas meeting.

Following the recent Young Inspectors sessions, Jessica Tarn, Practice Improvement Apprentice confirmed that they would be meeting with the Minister of Housing to feedback.

The Panel learnt about the success of The House Project in Warwickshire which supports young people leaving care and moving to independent living. It was confirmed that there are plans to expand the project county wide and grow the team.

Matt Smith, Targeted Support Youth Worker confirmed that The House Project is part of a national project and has been running in Warwickshire for three years and is part of the core offer within the council. All young people are successfully managing their tenancies and ongoing support is in place. It is a solution faced way of working and we want it to move forward.

The Chair confirmed he has visited the House project and was really impressed with the young people and the staff; but help is needed to expand across Warwickshire.

Councillor Caroline Phillips asked if loneliness is an issue for young people move into their own properties and what can be done about it. It was confirmed that there is a large group of young people offering peer support and ongoing support from officers. Activities and events are arranged; covid permitting. There is a lot of mutual support from the project – a community of support.

Shinderpaul ended the presentation stating that he hoped the information that has been heard today highlights how important it is that children and young people have their voice heard.

4. Question and Answer Session

Jane Grant, Strategic Housing & Communities Manager at Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council thanked the Panel for the invitation to today's presentation and stated that she had learnt a lot from the young people who had spoken. In relation to the issue of housing supply across the county, with reference to The House Project, Jane confirmed that there is a commitment to support care leavers but it must be noted that there is a national shortage of housing.

A suggestion was made that a collection of data in relation to the shortage of housing would be useful for members of this panel to raise awareness of the acute shortage of housing and how the demand is met. It was agreed that care leavers are one of several priority groups but that Heads of Housing across the county could look at engaging with local housing associations and how they could support young people moving forward.

Sharon Shaw, Service Manager (Corporate Parenting) confirmed that the meeting aimed to identify the right people for the County Council to invite from the district and boroughs to each meeting to provide ongoing support. It was agreed that it would not always be appropriate for housing officers and managers to attend if the Panel were discussing topics such as leisure passes and other support options for care leavers.

Following a question from Jane Grant in relation to other examples of two-tier authorities and how their local offers work, Sharon Shaw confirmed that Worcestershire and Staffordshire are part of the same National Bench Marking forum; and that there is an option to ask questions of other members. It was agreed that this is something that officers can investigate.

Sharon Shaw asked that any expressions of interest in joining the Panel from officers from the districts and boroughs are to be sent via Helen Barnsley, Democratic Services Officer.

The Chair thanked everyone who attended the meeting and for their time and input. It was agreed by all that this meeting was the start of our conversation and not a one off and that we do all need to work together to support young people across Warwickshire.

5. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on 29 November 2021, at 10am.

The meeting will be held at Shire Hall, Warwick.

.....
Chair