



## Corporate Parenting Meeting

20<sup>th</sup> September 2021

MINUTES



## **Corporate Parenting**

**20th September 2021**

**12:30-14:30**

### **ATTENDEES**

Minister for Children and Education, Chair

Assistant Minister for Children and Education and Health and Social Services

Assistant Minister for Children and Education

Minister for Health & Social Services

Minister for Home Affairs

Representative from the Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel

Children in Care Council Members

Director General of CYPES

Director of Safeguarding and Care

Group Director of Integrated Services and Commissioning

Director Children's Policy

Independent Reviewing Team Manager

Head of CYPES Informatics

Children's Commissioner

Chief Executive Officer of Jersey Cares

Chief Executive of Brightly

Private Secretary - Minister for Children and Education

Minute Taker, Research and Administration Officer

### **1. Welcome and Apologies**

- 1.1. The Minister for Children and Education welcomed everyone and noted that there had been a gap in the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board. The last meeting



had been cancelled due to the upcoming election for Children and Education Minister.

1.2. The following apologies were noted:

Representative for the Parish Constables

Representative from the Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel

It was noted that a second Representative from the Scrutiny Panel was in attendance. The Minister for Children and Education welcomed discussion input and observation comments from observers.

1.3. The Director of Safeguarding and Care welcomed the Children in Care Council Members and suggested that members of the Board introduced themselves.

1.4. The members of the Board introduced themselves and their respective roles.

## 2. Previous Minutes and Actions

2.1. The Minutes from the previous meeting held on 11 September 2020 were approved.

2.2. The Chief Executive Officer of Jersey Cares had provided some feedback comments via email prior to the meeting.

2.3. The Director General of CYPES noted that the previous minutes had referred to the inclusion of a representative from Family Nursing and Home Care. The Minister for Children and Education welcomed this idea and suggested a discussion should be held regarding the appropriate inclusion of stakeholders to include on the Board.

2.4. The Minister for Children and Education also suggested that the Minister for Housing and an accompanying Officer should be invited to future Board meetings.

## 3. Purpose of the Corporate Parenting Board

3.1. The Director of Safeguarding and Care felt that the most powerful way for Officers to think about Corporate Parenting was by listening to the opinions and feedback from the Children in Care Council.

3.2. The Children in Care Council explained that whilst the definition of Corporate Parenting was that every Minister has a responsibility to look after the best interests of looked after children, there was a need to be less corporate and more focussed on parenting. It is important to stick to promises and build trust. Children's homes should not be institutionalised, with the need to sign in and signs around the homes. The Council pointed out that corporate parenting is parenting.

3.3. The Director of Safeguarding and Care highlighted that corporate parenting was a unique responsibility shared across Government. Whilst there was a responsibility to put all children first, there was an additional responsibility to care receivers as a corporate parent. Corporate parents need to ask would this be good enough for our own children. The Director of Safeguarding and Care asked how can corporate parents feel like parents, when the corporate aspects get in the way. He gave the example of providing a home for care leavers at the age of 18. There was a bureaucratic process to get an Andium Home. Corporate parenting should be at the heart of what politicians and Officers do, working together seamlessly to support those in care. The Minister for Children and Education noted that it was everyone in Government's responsibility to oversee the good upbringing of children in care.



- 3.4. The Children's Commissioner quoted recommendation 6 from the Independent Jersey Care Enquiry. Whilst there had been one-off corporate parenting training, an annual refresher was important. She highlighted that despite the Corporate Parenting Board not meeting for over 12 months progress on corporate parenting had continued. Corporate parenting was more than a meeting. It was important to develop a culture of working across all Government departments and stakeholders. The Children's Commissioner recommended that all Director Generals needed to come together to reduce red tape to assist care receivers. It was the responsibility of Jersey. The Children's Plan needed refreshing with a more explicit meaning of the responsibility of corporate parents. The Children's Commissioner did not want to see any delays over including corporate parenting responsibilities in legislation. The Minister for Children and Education noted that the legislation was being reviewed so that there would be a short delay.
- 3.5. The Minister for Health & Social Services agreed that it was important to treat decisions made for children in our care as our own children. He highlighted that as elected Ministers and Officers moved jobs it was important to have different structures in place that achieve parenthood. It is important to think of ways to overcome these problems.
- 3.6. The Chief Executive Officer of Jersey Cares highlighted the Scottish Independent Care Review that gave guidance on allowing natural relationships to develop. She stressed the importance of advocacy and better understanding regarding corporate parenting across Governmental departments. The Minister for Children and Education agreed that there was need for collaboration across all departments and a better understanding of corporate parenting across Government.
- 3.7. The Independent Reviewing Team Manager highlighted the importance of promoting better understanding of corporate parenting. She noted you cannot fulfil a role if you do not have an understanding of what that role should entail. Considering this, she suggested that the Board should have a renewed focus. The Minister for Children and Education agreed that the Board should not just be an update from CYPES departments but should focus on implementing strategy throughout all departments.
- 3.8. The Director Children's Policy noted that for the first-time corporate parenting responsibilities would be written into the law. This was a good opportunity to write guidance on the responsibilities of corporate parents with the Board functioning to provide support, oversight, and co-ordination.
- 3.9. The Minister for Children and Education suggested a Silver or Gold Team across departments for faster more effective decision making regarding children in care.

#### **4. Status Report, Key Metrics, and Informatics**

- 4.1. The Head of CYPES Informatics provided a statistical update regarding looked after children and care leavers, noting that such data provided an overarching understanding of key issues. Overall, there had been a reduction of children in care. It was also positive that there had been a reduction in off-island placements. There were now 16 off-island placements. There were currently more older children and teenagers in care. Broadly the cohort of looked after children is getting older, with fewer children under 10. Whilst most children were in foster placements, there were



- pressures on residential placements for older children. She noted the pressures on placements and accommodation after 18.
- 4.2. The Head of CYPES Informatics noted an improved stability in Social Workers for children in care. There are now far fewer changes in Social Worker, which allows better relationships to be built. When the Stability Index was bench marked against England, Jersey had a better stability of placements. Sometimes if a child was brought back from a UK placement a change in social worker could represent a positive change.
  - 4.3. The Head of CYPES Informatics highlighted that 95% of looked after children had received their health assessment. Where some children had not received health assessments, this represented the challenges of Covid and UK authorities with different priorities. Some young people had also declined a health assessment.
  - 4.4. The Virtual School is now supporting 72 pupils who all had their education plans completed last term. The Virtual school has successfully recruited two case workers who are due to start soon.
  - 4.5. The Head of CYPES Informatics highlighted that there was a team of personal advisors to support care leavers. 80.6% of care leavers were in suitable accommodation. It was of concern that 6% were in unsuitable accommodation. She noted that our care leavers destinations were slightly worse than the UK, but this highlighted the challenges of Covid, especially regarding employment. 26.9% were recorded as seeking work.
  - 4.6. The Director of Safeguarding and Care noted that the data showed reduced instabilities, and this was a success. There was more engagement with care leavers as well. There were still pressures on finding foster and residential places. There was also a challenge finding appropriate accommodation. Whilst a house had been identified for a children's care home the tenancy agreement had not yet been signed. He also highlighted that there would be a struggle to find appropriate accommodation for care leavers when they turned 18.

## 5. Forward Planning

- 5.1. The Children in Care Council requested that training for corporate parents should involve as many young people as possible. It was important to reach and engage with the Fostering Association and other care partners, including a Young Inspectors Sub-Group.
- 5.2. The Director of Safeguarding and Care hoped that Children in Care Council will speak to more young people. He welcomed a strategy that is co-produced with the Children in Care Council, written up in the child friendly way and held to account.
- 5.3. The Minister for Children and Education highlighted that the statistics show the story of successes were already making an impact. Now there were fewer young people needing care, and this was a success. He stressed the need for a Silver or Gold Command Group for children in care. When you are a parent you put your children first, you find money for their needs. This should be the same for Treasury.
- 5.4. The Chief Executive Officer of Jersey Cares highlighted the problem of using England as a benchmark. She highlighted problems for care leavers in England resulting in a disproportionate percentage of the care leaver population experiencing imprisonment, homelessness, and poor mental health. There was the need for a



discussion of what a home means and how long a child can stay in their home. Children are often not ready to leave home at 18.

- 5.5. The Representative from the Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel thanked the Children in Care Council and highlighted the importance of meeting looked after young people. She highlighted that the political term of four years was a long time in a child's life and allowed the chance to build good relationships with the Children in Care Council. It was important that children in care had the opportunity to meet states members. She thanked the Children in Care Council for their time. The Minister for Children and Education noted that it was important not to politicise children in care on a personal level. The Scrutiny Panel Representative left the meeting.
- 5.6. The Independent Reviewing Team Manager noted it was an exciting opportunity for Jersey to lead the way. We should not compare ourselves to England. She highlighted that there was an urgency and that we didn't need to wait for the law to be passed. It was not acceptable for care leavers to be living in unsuitable accommodation and there was a need for consistent homes. The Minister for Children and Education agreed that the post-18 cliff edge caused problems for care leavers and it was important that care leavers could stay in their homes if this was suitable.
- 5.7. The Group Director of Integrated Services and Commissioning highlighted that the Board was united in the common endeavour of improving outcomes and getting it right while children were in care. It was important to have high ambitions and aspirations. She noted it was important to know the systemic issues and galvanise this in day-to-day working practice. There needed to be a piece of work looking at the right kinds of accommodation. Whilst there were lots of good intentions it was important to improve understanding. She also noted that everyday caring needs to be harnessed.
- 5.8. The Chief Executive Officer of Jersey Cares expressed concern about what can be done if a home cannot be found. The Minister for Children and Education noted that the Silver or Gold Command would be useful in such a circumstance.
- 5.9. The Director Children's Policy highlighted that a recurrent theme whilst talking to stakeholders was the confusion over the role of the corporate parent. There needed to be greater understanding over how you can perform the role of a parent in this context. There was a need to clarify this role and listening to the voice of children would help with understanding what it means to be a corporate parent. The Minister for Children and Education agreed. Officers should perform their role in a manner that keeps children safe as any parent would. The Chief Executive of Brightly agreed noting as parents we know the fundamental things that are important to children universally. It didn't need to be complicated; it was important to remember the needs of all children.

## **6. Further Business and AOB.**

- 6.1. MR highlighted the importance of routine in parenting and the Board meeting regularly after Covid disruptions was an important routine. There also needed to be a routine meeting of the Children in Care Council. The Director General of CYPES also noted the wider concepts of the universal family and the Children's Pledge.

Everyone needed to understand the importance and their potential contribution as a corporate parent. He also agreed with the importance of hearing voices from the Children in Care Council and developing a strategy led by young people. It was very important that children are front and centre in the strategy.

6.2. The Children in Care Council outlined some pledges that they wanted the Board to agree to. There was to be a wall painting of a tree in Liberté House and Board members could sign the pledge using handprints. Their pledges included:

- Make our voice your priority, actively listen to us
- Provide children in care with a safe, loving, and secure home
- Recognise our needs and promote our individuality
- Ensure your staff are trauma informed and use strength-based language
- Make sure what you say I can do is available
- Empower children and young people to be the best versions of themselves
- Involve and include us in decisions about us

The Director of Safeguarding and Care suggested that the Children in Care Council meet the Board regularly and hold them to account. The Director General of CYPES suggested adding detail to those pledges to describe what the outcomes might look like. It was important to formalise meeting arrangements and get into a routine. The input from the Children in Care Council would allow the Board to reflect on whether they were being good parents.

6.3. The Children's Commissioner enquired if there was going to be training for corporate parenting, who was delivering the training package and when would this be started. The Children's Commission was pleased to be included to ensure that Children's Rights were embedded in the training. The Director General of CYPES felt that training was important to reinvigorate senior leadership on corporate parenting. He suggested including the Children in Care Council to co-produce the training content.

6.4. The Children in Care Council asked for presentation training to help with their input for the Corporate Parenting Board. They also requested that meetings were held after 15:30 due to school finishing times and that an understandable set of minutes were produced. The Children in Care Council also asked to meet in an informal safe space and have input in the Corporate Parenting Board meeting agenda. They wished for no pressure or expectation to be placed upon the Council. The Council would also like Corporate Parenting Board members to meet them informally. The Children in Care Council asked to co-produce the Corporate Parenting Strategy and also get support setting up a Young Inspectors Sub-Group.

6.5. The Chief Executive Officer of Jersey Cares volunteered to share some training material from Who Cares Scotland.

6.6. The Minister for Children and Education noted that the Board needs to own the Corporate Parenting Strategy and suggested workshops could be held with the Children in Care Council. There also needed to be more papers and agenda items regarding corporate parenting brought to the Council of Ministers.

6.7. The Director of Safeguarding and Care noted that sometimes there needed to be decisions escalated quite quickly that require a Ministerial Decision, such as an individual who is homeless. This function could be supported by a Gold Command group. The Director General of CYPES agreed with the need for a Silver or Gold Command with the right membership to make rapid decisions. He suggested revisiting the Governance already in place and looking at the structures going



forward. The Minister for Home Affairs felt this might be a helpful tool. The Minister for Health & Social Services was also happy to proceed as suggested. He noted that the present children's law would address many of these needs, but it would be helpful to pull a group together to address any urgent decisions. The Assistant Minister for Children and Education and Health and Social Services felt a solution focussed meeting of Ministers or Director Generals would be helpful. The Assistant Minister for Children and Education also agreed that the group needed to be targeted and focussed. The Minister for Children and Education noted that a Gold Command Group was more specific.

6.8. The Director of Safeguarding and Care also highlighted access to limited housing on the island and that care leavers should be a priority. The Minister for Children and Education noted a sufficiency strategy would be brought before the next Council of Minister's meeting. The Children's Commissioner noted that it was urgent that care leavers were housed in appropriate accommodation and needed to be prioritised for Andium Homes. The Chief Executive Officer of Jersey Cares offered to share a case study on the pressure points for young care leavers.

6.9. The Board confirmed the forthcoming action points. There being no further business, the meeting closed at 14:30.

## **ACTIONS**

- Arrange Corporate Parenting Board Meetings after 15:30. To be completed by Research and Administration Officer.
- Produce a set of minutes for the Corporate Parenting Board suitable for young readers to understand. To be completed by Research and Administration Officer.
- Future meetings to be held in an informal space with the Children in Care Council. To be completed by Director Children's Policy.
- To share the joint agenda with the Children in Care Council before each Corporate Parenting Board meeting. To be completed by Research and Administration Officer.
- To provide presentation training for the Children in Care Council. To be completed by Director of Safeguarding and Care.
- Board members to meet and attend a Children in Care Council meeting to introduce themselves. To be completed by all Board members.
- Add the Housing Minister and appropriate officers to future Corporate Parenting Board meetings. To be completed by Research and Administration Officer.
- Co-Produce a Corporate Parenting Strategy with the Children in Care Council. To be completed by Director General of CYPES and Director of Safeguarding and Care.
- Provide support setting up a Young Inspectors Sub-Group. To be completed by Director General of CYPES and Director of Safeguarding and Care.



# Corporate Parenting



- Look at the decision-making structures and the need for a Silver/ Gold Command Group going forwards. To be completed by Director General of CYPES and Director of Safeguarding and Care.
- Discuss appropriate strategic representative and stakeholders from Health Care Services to be included in Board membership. To be completed by Minister for Children and Education, Director General of CYPES and Director of Safeguarding and Care.