

Corporate Parenting



Corporate Parenting Meeting
28th April 2023
MINUTES



Corporate Parenting **28th April 2023** **15:30-17:30**

ATTENDEES

Minister for Children and Education
Assistant Minister for Children and Education with Responsibility for Children's Services and Assistant Minister for Treasury
Minister for Health and Social Services
Assistant Minister for Health and Social Services and Assistant Minister for Social Security
Assistant Minister for Health and Social Services (via Teams)
Minister for Home Affairs
Minister for Housing (via Teams)
Chief Executive Officer Government of Jersey (via Teams)
Chief Officer CYPES
Associate Director for Innovation, Transformation & Business Support
Associate Director of Engagement and Participation
Chief Social Worker & Group Director
Head of Service for Care Leavers, Children in Care & Complex Needs (via Teams)
Senior Policy Officer
Senior Policy Officer
Interim Associate Director for Children's Social Care Services
Interim Head of Service Standards and Quality
Representative for Andium Homes
Representative for Brightly
Representative for Jersey Cares
Representative for the States of Jersey Police
Representative for the Children's Commissioner
Care Leaver Representatives
Research and Administration Officer

APOLOGIES

Assistant Minister for Children and Education Responsible for Early Years
Assistant Director of Policy

1. Welcomes and Apologies

The Minister for Children and Education welcomed members and Officers to the Corporate Parenting Board. This was the first full meeting of the newly re-formed Board after a review of the Children's Board structures.

The Board introduced themselves and their roles.



The minutes and actions of 16th January 2023 were approved.

2. Terms of Reference

The Minister for Children and Education welcomed feedback on the Terms of Reference (ToR).

The Representative for Brightly noted that he represented the Voluntary Sector and would like to receive the papers in good time to allow for consultation with the Children's Cluster Group. The ToR needed to be more explicit about when papers and agendas were circulated, and he suggested two weeks prior to a meeting. The Minister agreed that minutes and agendas could be circulated earlier, but supporting papers usually required more time for Officers to prepare. The Minister agreed that minutes could be circulated early and approved via email. The Associate Director of Engagement and Participation noted that the minutes would also be published on the website.

The Representative for Jersey Cares suggested that there needed to be a plan focussing on the long-term outcomes of the Board. The timelines for achievements of the Board could be mapped onto this plan. The Minister for Children and Education agreed that the Board needed to be delivery and task focussed. The Chief Social Worker & Group Director suggested that the outcomes of the Board could be linked to the Children and Young People's Plan outcomes. The Chief Officer of CYPES noted that many of the outcomes were already included in strategic plans. The Board could assist with system work with the wider Government to contribute to the Care Reform Program.

The Minister for Health questioned the function of the Board. The Chief Officer of CYPES noted that previously the Board had unfinished actions. However, now the new Board was underpinned by the Children and Young People's Law, and this was a good opportunity for the Board to reset.

The Senior Policy Officer noted it was within the gift of the Board to incorporate accountability into the ToR. The Board could provide support and challenge for Corporate Parents. This would become clearer when statutory guidance was published and developed. The Minister for Health and Social Services noted that the ToR needed to be clearer about the Board developing plans and evaluating effectiveness as a core function. The Representative for the Children's Commissioner suggested that the TOR could be underpinned by the 5 principles of a Children's Rights Approach:

- Embedding Children's Rights
- Equality & Non-discrimination
- Participation

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- Empowering children
- Accountability

The Representative for Brightly noted that Corporate Parenting was a difficult concept. The Board needed to be provided with appropriate guidance and support for the practical challenges of Corporate Parenting and work towards some tangible outcomes. The Board should focus on the particular challenges for children in care and leaving care. The Assistant Minister for Children and Education agreed that it was important to make commitments to work towards. The Representative for the Police noted that much time was spent treating symptoms, it was important to address the harder to fix underlying causes of issues.

The Senior Policy Officer agreed that strands could be pulled together to create a Board forward plan. She shared a slide showing the draft Board Forward Plan. The CEO agreed with the discussion regarding the ToR.

The Minister for Children and Education emphasised the importance to galvanise a vision of what Corporate Parenting meant in practice.

The Chief Officer of CYPES noted that there were already a number of Key Performance Indicators and that the Board could track progress on these. The Chief Social Worker & Group Director also noted that the Board could track performance information, such as stability of care placements, and provide challenge on the data. The statutory guidance on the new legislation would provide an opportunity for clarity on duties and responsibilities.

The Minister for Children and Education agreed that the ToR could be amended. At the end of the Board, she asked for a short discussion to highlight key themes and challenges emerging from discussions.

3. Overview of Care Leavers Offer - Interim Associate Director for Children's Social Care Services

The Interim Associate Director for Children's Social Care Services shared some slides outlining the care leavers offer. This included guidance and support during the transition into adulthood, including practical and financial support. She outlined eligibility under the law for "an individual aged 16 up to (but not including) the age of 25 who has been looked after by the Minister for a minimum period of 13 weeks, whether in aggregate or consecutively, from the age of 14 up to (but not including) the age of 18". This was a clear legal definition.

The Associate Director explained under the current arrangements care leavers cease to have an allocated Social Worker and are supported by Personal Advisors (PA) when they reach 18yrs old. The PAs co-produce a Pathway Plan with care leavers to enable them to access the offer. The PA could help support access to services and provide general advice and support. The PA might also help young adults with practical

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support, such as moving home or buying furniture. They helped care leavers live their lives independently, including transitions into training and employment. Sometimes plans could simply be achieving a sense of wellbeing and safety. Each co-produced plan is suited to the individual needs of each care leaver.

The Interim Associate Director for Children's Social Care Services outlined the circle of support covering six areas:

- Health and Wellbeing
- Finances
- Education and Training
- Housing
- Employment
- Relationships

The care leavers might be given support and advice on building relationships with family members if it is considered safe to do so. She also discussed the Care Leavers Board and the commitment from service areas to provide support for this Board.

The Interim Associate Director for Children's Social Care Services also ran through some service highlights, including the employment offer whereby the Government will sponsor employers to provide 6-month internships or training programmes for care leavers and the care leavers university bursary. Currently all 81 care leavers were engaging with their PAs and 95% of care leavers were in suitable accommodation. The Chief Social Worker & Group Director noted that previously there was an issue of not understanding the destinations of care leavers. More is known now about the group of young adults who have left the care of the Minister and the service is established to work with adults who have left care.

4. Experience of the Care Leavers' Offer - Care Leaver Representatives

The Board members introduced themselves to the care leaver representatives. The Minister for Children and Education invited them to share their experiences, including how they accessed the care leavers offer and what Corporate Parenting meant to them.

The young people highlighted that there had been a lack of support for forming a Children in Care Council, as previously promised. They had instead received support through CAMHS and Virtual School to help develop training for teachers on how to support children in care.

The young people highlighted the financial difficulties experienced by care leavers, especially around payments being made, in a timely and professional way. This could include payment of fees for health care, education, or accommodation. Care leavers could be denied services if the Government didn't make timely payments. The Minister for Children and Education asked how PAs worked.

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The young people highlighted gaps in the offer. Sometimes PAs would defend the Government as an employer, rather than advocating for the young people's needs. They also highlighted the stress of having to go to a Panel (Resource Panel) for a decision on payments for private therapy etc. There were gaps in the offer, where needs were not met.

The Assistant Minister for Children and Education noted that the Board members had not been aware of these issues. The Chief Officer asked the young people if PAs were conflicted by being part of Children's Services. However, the young people felt that PAs should be part of the Children's Services Department, as part of the role of Corporate Parents.

The young people felt that being a care leaver should be a protected characteristic, like disability, to prevent them from facing discrimination.

The Chief Officer of CYPES was not aware of the payment issues but noted that there had been wide ranging issues caused by the new finance system. The Chief Social Worker & Group Director noted that they needed to look into how payment issues were escalated and communication channels with managers. It was important to get communications working, as the current situation was not good enough.

The Jersey Cares Representative noted that the care leaver offer document had been lodged as a promise several years ago. The document was deficient, and the Government had not been able to keep the promises they had committed to. There was collective fatigue in the system, where no one felt empowered.

The Brightly Representative noted that when the care leaver offer had been launched, Brightly had been hopeful that they would be acting as a 'bank of grandparents', rather than as previously was the case 'the bank of mum and dad' providing top ups that went above and beyond the offer for care leavers. However, Brightly were still funding items that should be covered by the offer. It is still the case that some GoJ employees do not know about the offers for those in care or leaving care.

The young people felt that there was not sufficient budget to cover the care leaver offer and noted that they went to Brightly for some of their basic financial needs. They noted the embarrassment of asking for money, from a charity, to cover basic needs. They were frustrated that they had to come to the Board again to ask for help. The Board needed to take accountability for their neglect as Corporate Parents.

The young people also noted that those leaving care were entitled to have an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). However, this had not been signposted to them and this is why there had been a lack of uptake to access the IRO.

The CEO said everyone was listening and needed to take on the points and be more aware of these challenges.

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The Minister for Children and Education noted that this was a newly re-formed Board with new Ministers who wanted to understand what they needed to do. She asked what actions could be taken in the next three months and also longer-term actions for the Board.

The Chief Officer of CYPES noted that operational issues were impacting upon care leavers. The Board members needed to hold each other to account.

The young people highlighted the issue of difficulties paying Parish Rates and the risk of being called to the Petty Debts Court. The Assistant Minister for Children and Education noted that a Connétable would not necessarily be able to identify a care leaver. A way for dealing with the Rates should be investigated at an operational level.

The Representative for Brightly highlighted an accommodation cost issue with Andium, especially when moving between properties. He queried whether young people needed to pay rent for two properties during the transition between leases. The Representative for Andium noted that this was not the case. Although, this might happen when moving from the private sector to Andium. The Brightly Representative also highlighted the cost of new floor coverings, as in some cases the original floor covering might be in a good condition. The Representative for Andium agreed that in some cases options could be investigated for retaining floor coverings between tenants.

The Representative for Jersey Cares suggested that there needed to be more permissions in the system for PAs. Processes needed to start from the perspective of the person. Processes make people feel like they don't matter. A loving Corporate Parent would do bureaucracy well and reduce processes for care leavers. This would also reduce inefficiencies in the system.

The Representative for the Children's Commissioner highlighted that there was no operational guidance that sat alongside the care leavers offer. There was still no framework three years later and care leavers should be empowered to access the offer themselves. The CEO noted that it was absolutely right that those operational frameworks were needed. The Chief Officer for CYPES noted that the Care Leavers Board has huge representation at senior levels and so permissions and process shouldn't be an issue.

The Chief Social Worker & Group Director discussed changes to the process. She noted that there would be investment in leaving care services. It was important to reduce bureaucratic processes and reduce sticking points. She noted that budgets were available, and it was important to look at processes to prevent these issues occurring in the future. The Chief Social Worker & Group Director also made a commitment to look into the processes, including information sharing. She noted that care leavers shouldn't need to worry about Government or Departmental structures.

The Representative for Brightly thanked the young people for sharing their experiences. He noted that Brightly spent £175,000 last year on practical items. The

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care leavers offer was not fully embedded and there was confusion about what the offer meant as the document was often vague. There was confusion around the definition of a care leaver, the criteria were not inclusive. There had been a loss of trust and broken promises. The Government should only offer something they could deliver on.

The Representative for the Children's Commission noted that this was an entitlement, which should be guaranteed.

The young people were concerned about the public perception of care leavers and wanted to see this made a protected characteristic to prevent discrimination.

The Interim Associate Director for Children's Social Care Services was sorry for the young people's experiences and would commit to rectifying processes, especially around finance.

The Assistant Minister for Children and Education asked the young people to contact him directly if there were any further issues and he would get Officers to resolve them.

The Representative for Jersey Cares noted that it was extraordinary that the young people needed to come to this forum to have basic payments made. The function of the Board should also be to ensure that the offer effectively working and maintained. There should be discretions around access to the offer, including some people over 25 or those who might not quite reach the criteria.

The Minister for Children and Education noted it was important that the Board had a clear direction. The offer needed to be clear. She noted the importance of ongoing communication and support from the charitable sector, especially for advocacy. The Minister felt sorry for what had happened in the past and invited Board members to commit to listening and fixing issues to make changes. Feedback and communication were very important to achieving change.

The young people were concerned about how many others had been impacted, yet they may not have spoken up.

The Senior Policy Officer asked the young people how they would like to be included in the next meeting. They expressed a preference to join in discussions for the whole meeting.

The Associate Director of Engagement and Participation highlighted the best ways to engage with young people who were still in care, so that their views could be shared with the Board. She circulated a youth friendly version describing the Corporate Parenting Board. She would work with the Participation Standards to engage children in care and care leavers to help involve them in the Corporate Parenting Board.

5. AOB

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The Minister for Children and Education noted that it was important to spend time listening to the lived experiences of the young people and work on ways to resolve the problems. She invited the Board to share their thoughts on key themes and problems to solve going forwards.

The Representative for Jersey Cares noted the need to do data differently and look at data differently asking new questions.

The Minister for Health wanted to give more thought on how the Government had got into this position.

The Assistant Minister for Health and Social Security wanted to see better actions on the offer.

The Chief Officer for CYPES wanted to be clearer about the strategic priorities and use of data.

The Minister for Home Affairs thanked the young people for sharing their experiences. It was sad that the care leavers offer was in this position, and it was important to learn lessons.

The Andium Representative felt it was important to look at processes and structures sitting around the offer.

The Director of Delivery and Improvement wanted to listen better and take actions.

The Associate Director of Engagement and Participation wished to work with the young people and care leavers to engage them with the Corporate Parenting Board, so that their views could be heard.

The Chief Officer for CYPES was sorry it had been a difficult conversation. However, it was important to have these difficult conversations and the Board should be used as a forum to test whether the Government were getting it right. The Board needed the help of young people to understand their experiences. It was important to liberate processes and make them easier.

The Interim Head of Service Standards and Quality noted that she would need to think carefully about the meeting and chase up finance to resolve these issues.

The Interim Associate Director for Children's Social Care Services wished to think about the development of the leaving care service and develop a clear operating document. It was important to make clear to care leavers what they could access under the six areas. She also highlighted that she wants to increase the voices and experiences of all children in care and care leavers and would want to revisit the Children in Care Council to look at reforming this. The Interim Associate Director was keen to share the positive examples of how the leaving care service has helped young adults and acknowledged there is more work to do to refine the care leaver's offer.

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The Senior Policy Officer agreed that they needed to go away and think about how to do things better.

The Children's Commissioner Representative reflected from a children's rights approach and made a commitment from the office to support the rights of children and young people.

The Representative from Brightly felt that the six heading of the offer could be used as areas of focus. He noted that children relied on parents and the Government was the Corporate Parent for children and young people in care and leaving care.

The Chief Executive Officer considered it essential to have trust between Care Leavers and Government.

ACTIONS

Senior Policy Officer to review wording of Terms of Reference, including dates for circulating minutes and agendas and the functions of the Board.

Senior Policy Officer to draft forward plan for the Board.

The Chief Social Worker & Group Director to investigate payment issues and escalation processes for the care leavers offer and financial payments.

The Chief Social Worker & Group Director identify ways to assist care leavers with Parish Rates, including information sharing.

The Andium Representative to discuss options for care leavers rent and look at options for retaining floor coverings between tenants to reduce unnecessary cost of new flooring for care leavers.

Interim Associate Director for Children's Social Care Services to develop operational frameworks to sit alongside the care leavers offer.

Interim Associate Director for Children's Social Care Services to explore the collection and use of data to inform decisions and actions within the service.

The Chief Social Worker & Group Director to look into the processes for accessing the care leavers offer, including information share.

The Minister for Children and Education requested from the Officers to develop operational guidance that sat alongside the care leavers offer.