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Corporate Parenting Board

Meeting of held on Wednesday, 27 November 2024 at 5.30 pm in Room 1.01 and 1.02 -
Bernard Weatherill House, Mint Walk, Croydon CR0 1EA

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Maria Gatland (Chair);
Councillors Janet Campbell, Patricia Hay-Justice, Joseph Lee, Ian Parker and
Catherine Wilson.

Co-optee Members

Children Looked After/Care Experienced Young People living in and out of
Croydon Borough (non-voting): J, MC, S
Carer Representatives (Voting): Angela Christmas
Director of Education (non-voting): Shelley Davies
Director of Housing Management (non-voting): Mary Larbie
Director of Adult Social Care Operations (non-voting): Simon Robson

Also Present: David Fry (Strategic Commissioning Lead for Sufficiency and Children in Care)
Deborra John (Head of Service Children in Care & Care Experienced Young
People)
Joel Pace-Jr (Children in Care Council Youth Engagement Coordinator)
Kerry Crichlow (Director of Quality, Commissioning & Performance (Deputy
DCS))
Róisín Madden (Director of Children's Social Care)
Sara Horvatova (Project and Improvement Manager)
Sepiso Mushekwa (Participation and Collaboration Officer Care Experienced
Lead)
Hannah Cretney (Senior Democratic Services and Governance Officer)

Apologies: Councillors Sue Bennett and Amy Foster, KH (Co-Chair, Care Experienced
Young Person), Manny Kwamin (Carer Representative), Dr Julia Simpson
(CLA Designated Health Professional) and Charity Kanotangudza (CLA
Designated Health Professional)

PART A

44/24 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 October 2024 were agreed as an
accurate record.

45/24 Disclosures of interest

There were none.

46/24 Urgent Business (if any)

There was none.

47/24 Update from Children's Participation Team & Children in Care Council

The Corporate Parenting Board received a verbal update from the Children's Participation Team. The Children in Care Council (CICC) Coordinator provided the following highlights:

- Ambassadors met with the inspectors from the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) to provide their perspectives on the Council services and discuss their educational journey. Several Ambassadors had created a video to coincide with the release of the Ofsted report. Further information about the Ofsted inspection would be discussed at the next meeting.
- A group of Ambassadors attended a youth summit hosted by Councillor Shahul-Hammed at the House of Lords. The summit focused on youth mental health and a care experienced young person represented Croydon on a youth panel.
- CICC Ambassador T received an award for the best public speaker in the Participation Network Session of the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum in November.
- CICC had been working with the strategic partner IMPOWER to make sure that perspectives from young people had been captured in the work being undertaken by IMPOWER. Notify.gov was utilised to circulate surveys. Two information/consultation sessions with the young people were hosted.
- Five more young people became Ambassadors since the previous meeting.
- CICC had hosted monthly sessions which focused on primary age young people. The third session would be in December.
- In partnership with the Staying Close Team, CICC would recruit a new team member to contact the 'harder to reach' young people with the purpose of re-engaging with the participation opportunities offered by the Council. The 'harder to reach' young people would include those who lived out of borough, in residential care, in custody and in supported accommodation.
- CICC would launch the first annual Ambassador Awards Celebration event on 11 December 2024 to celebrate the accomplishments of the ambassadors.

The Participation and Collaboration Officer also updated the Board that the team had started working with the Metropolitan Police regarding the Philomena Protocol. The team had been engaging with their Engagement Team to develop a joint working approach to support care experienced young people in custody and in residential care.

The Chair thanked the officers and Ambassadors for what they had been doing, and for their help with the Ofsted inspection.

48/24 Croydon Cares App

The Corporate Parenting Board received a presentation on the Croydon Cares App (the care leavers' app for Croydon) (Appendix 1), which was introduced by the Project and Improvement Manager.

The Project and Improvement Manager updated the Board that the Croydon Cares App had been in development for a few months, and that the app was now close to being launched for the care experienced young people. The Board heard that the app would increase the accessibility for young people to understand the Local Offer and the Education, Employment and Training (EET) opportunities available.

In relation to the development journey of the app, S (Care Experienced Young Person) spoke about the involvement of the young people in the design process, including the name, background colour and the logo. The Project and Improvement Manager added that the young people were involved in multiple meetings to co-design the app with the designers as well as to review the draft. The Board heard that the logo of the app was designed fully by the young people – the doorway in the logo represented new opportunities for them through the information in the app.

The Board also heard that the team held a training session with the administrators in Young People's 16+ service in November.

The Project and Improvement Manager invited the Board Members to test the app, and demonstrated its features on the app management website, including the pages on the Local Offer, Education and Training, General Information (including the Pathway Plan), and the entitlements for different categories of care experienced young people (i.e. former relevant child, relevant child, qualifying care leaver and eligible child).

In relation to a question from MC (Care Experienced Young Person) about the information on the support offered for the young people to study at university, the Project and Improvement Manager explained that the relevant information had already been included in the Education and Training page. The team would investigate the feedback from the young people and improve the layout. The Participation and Collaboration Officer also suggested that a youth panel could be set up to further discuss with the young people.

The Board heard that further actions would be needed before the app could be officially launched and shared with foster carers and young people. This included adding further information in the app and organising internal training with social workers and personal advisors, as it would also be utilised as a platform for young people to directly communicate with them. A Community Area would be available for the young people to register and link up with their

allocated social workers and personal advisors. There would be a formal launch event provisionally scheduled for the end of January 2025.

The Board thanked the Project and Improvement Manager and the team for their work and hoped the app would build a closer relationship between young people and their social workers/personal advisors.

49/24 Performance Report

The Corporate Parenting Board received the Performance report for October 2024, which was available in the Replacement for the Supplementary Agenda. The Director of Children's Social Care introduced the item, noting the red indicators and the relevant commentaries in the October dashboard.

The Board heard that the performance of CLA13 indicator (Percentage of CLA at SSA (Statutory School Age) with a Personal Education Plan (PEP) reviewed & completed in the last 6 months) was due to the PEP meetings typically being scheduled on a quarterly basis within a school term. The indicator should be measured every three months instead.

Regarding CLA17a and 18 indicators (Percentage of initial health assessments requested for health service within 5 working days of date child become looked after and Percentage of initial health assessments delivered within 20 working days of date child became looked after), the Director of Children's Social Care recognised the consistent issue of the health team not being notified with the initial health assessments (IHAs) within 5 working days, which had a consequential impact for the IHAs to be completed within the required timeframe (20 working days).

In response to a question about the accuracy of the figures, the Board heard that the data for previous months could be processed and retrospectively updated if the care status of a child was backdated and the change of status was missed, which could cause the figures to be changed.

The Chair and the Board Members were concerned about the performance of the CLA indicators. The Director of Children's Social Care agreed to provide a further update and arrange a training session on Data Learning.

In relation to a question about why the allocated social worker could not notify health team straight after the child had become looked after by the Council, the Director of Children's Social Care explained that the social workers had a large amount of caseload and multiple statutory procedures to handle. This could lead to some actions being missed. The team were currently working to streamline the administrative process for the frontline workers.

ACTION – For the Board to receive further update on CLA Health indicators at the next meeting and for a Data Learning session to be arranged for Members.

The Director of Children's Social Care and the Head of Service Children in Care & Care Experienced Young People also responded to the action below arising from the previous meeting:

- For the Board to receive further update on Pathway Plan and staff sickness of Personal Advisors as a deep dive

The Board heard that a deep dive would be included at the next meeting. The Head of Service updated the Board that a new format of pathway plan had been completed. Training for the social workers about the expectations for the pathway plans would be carried out, and that the young people would be involved in the process.

MC and J (Care Experienced Young People) asked about how to engage with the young people who were not interested in pathway plans to complete one. The Participation and Collaboration Officer advised that there had been engagement sessions with the young people about pathway plans, and the team would be happy to arrange another session. The Head of Service added that the team would continue to involve young people, but that young people could also decide whether to take part in the pathway plans.

Responding to a question from the Board about how to measure performance against other local authorities, the Director of Children's Social Care explained that local authorities might measure performance differently. Some of the indicators in the dashboard had been published with the statistical neighbour average, London and national figures. Local authorities could also learn with each other and get feedback from the National Care Leavers Benchmarking Forum.

50/24 Homes for Children & Young People - Croydon Children Looked After & Care Experienced Adults Sufficiency Strategy 2024-27

The Corporate Parenting Board received a presentation on the Croydon Children Looked After & Care Experienced Adults Sufficiency Strategy 2024-27, which was introduced by the Strategic Commissioning Lead for Sufficiency and Children in Care.

The Board heard that Sufficiency Strategy had to be published by local authorities to outline their policy approach in providing sufficient accommodation for the Children Looked After (CLA). There had been nationwide challenges, however the team recognised the necessity of providing good quality, stable accommodation to the Children Looked After.

The Strategic Sufficiency Lead hosted a discussion session which included the following questions:

1. What makes a home a home?
The Board agreed that the most important factors were a feeling of security and of being loved.

2. What can I do to make sure there are enough good homes for children and young people in Croydon?

The Board agreed that they would be the advocates for Croydon's children and young people.

The Board heard that the overarching goals of the Strategy would be:

- To support children to thrive with their families wherever possible.
- To provide stable, high-quality homes for children when care is necessary, prioritising local placements; and
- To develop comprehensive support for care-experienced adults transitioning to independence.

The Strategic Sufficiency Lead also informed the Board that the Strategy would last for three years, and the team would change its priorities to deliver a better service. For instance, the team would think in a systematic way to prevent more children entering the care system in the first place. The Board also heard that the Government published a policy document in November 2024 to support families in keeping children safely at home wherever possible.

For children entering the care system, the Strategic Sufficiency Lead suggested that the Council would promote family and friends care through early intervention and better support for guardians. This would be crucial to retaining the child's identity and familial bonds whilst being supported by the Council.

The Board heard that the declining number of foster carers in the last few years and the complexity of older children entering the care system had been recognised as challenges to the fostering service. The Strategic Sufficiency Lead highlighted that the Sufficiency Strategy would support the children to feel stable in their allocated accommodations, and that would include mental health support.

In relation to commissioning homes for children, the Strategic Sufficiency Lead explained that there had been existing arrangements with independent fostering providers in the borough, however, the high number of out-of-borough children placed into Croydon directly impacted the in-borough children's ability to live closely to their family and friends. The team would work with the independent providers to improve the provision of local placements in the borough.

The Board also heard that the Council was currently in the process of creating a children's home in Sanderstead which would be run by a commissioned provider. In relation to a question about how the Council would work with the commissioned provider to provide a suitable accommodation for CLA, the Strategic Sufficiency Lead explained that the tendering process would include specific questions to make sure that the provider would be satisfactory for the children and young people.

The Board heard that the Implementation Plan would be available annually, and that for Year 1 had already been attached to the Sufficiency Strategy document. The annual Implementation Plan would enable the service to set up measurable outcomes with key performance indicators (KPIs) and adjust if necessary.

The Chair thanked officers, and the care experienced young people for their contributions to the project and invited the Strategic Sufficiency Lead to come back to a future meeting.

The meeting ended at 7.06 pm

Signed:

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Date:

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CROYDON CARE LEAVERS APP

Corporate Parenting Board Update
27.11.2024

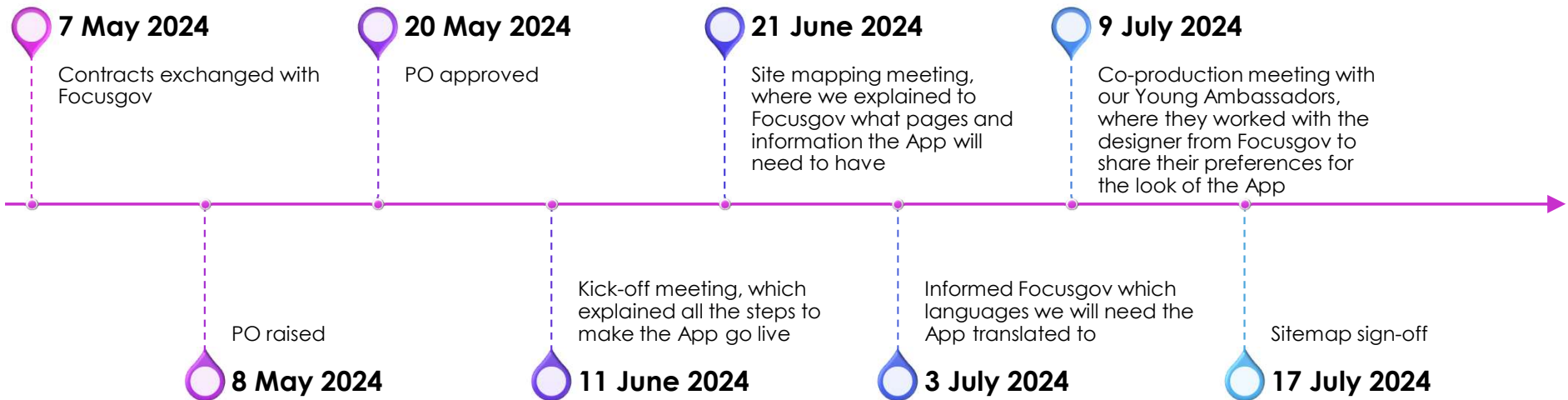
WHAT IS THE CARE LEAVERS APP?

The Care Leavers App helps local authorities support young people leaving care, as it publishes a digital Local Offer including information and advice, events and services, and creates and publishes digital surveys.

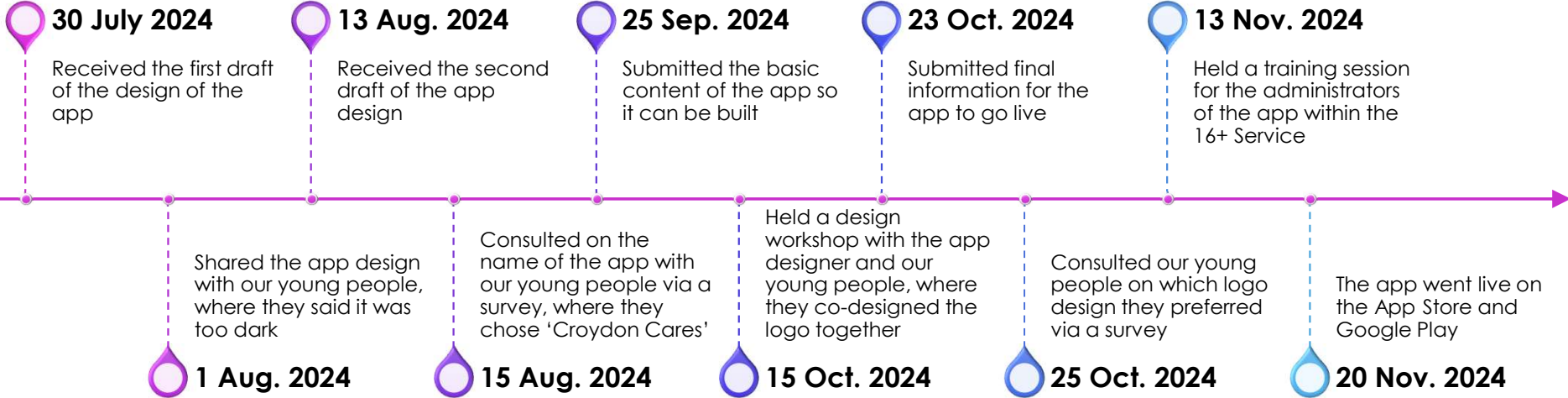
The most attractive feature is that it will allow us to promote the different Education, Employment and Training opportunities that are available, including which apprenticeships are on offer and how to apply for them.

OUR JOURNEY

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OUR JOURNEY



DEMONSTRATION

<https://go.focusgov.co.uk/go/P4dmY>





NEXT STEPS

Updating the
app with the
full content.

Further training
for SWs and
PAs.

Internal launch
events at
Service
Meetings.

Formal Launch



Q & A

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