

# Corporate Parent Panel Report

## September 2021



# Corporate Parenting Panel Report 2021

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## Overview of Panel

Blackpool Children's Services hold four Corporate Parent Panels and a take over afternoon meeting each year. The Justuz Children in Care Council take over the beginning of the meeting to update the panel on their ongoing work, activities and events they have attended as well as raising any new issues and share positive experiences. These issues are decided by the young people either following a wider consultation with other children and young people in our care or issues they have decided as a group need to be improved. Justuz will also feedback on the work they are involved in for specific areas of services provided to Our children and young people including their views and co-production of possible solutions/ changes to improve outcomes for children. Justuz are actively encouraged by panel members to be open and honest about their experiences as young people cared for by Blackpool Children's Services.

The Corporate Parent Panel is chaired by Cllr Jim Hobson, Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Schools. The Director of Children Services, Vicky Gent and Assistant Director Jeanette Richards also attend along with representatives from the Justuz group, Elected Members representing all parties and all Heads of Service for children's social care.

The Corporate Parent Panel continues to work to a work plan which outlines the reports that are required for consideration by panel members to monitor progress and supports the development of children's services. At every panel meeting individuals representing children services teams and organisations are invited to present their annual reports which give detailed accounts of the work being done to deliver services to our children and young people. Justuz members are presented with the reports and invited to give their feedback prior to each panel and asked to comment, raise concerns on any progress made or ask questions. Their feedback is included in the finalised reports to ensure we capture the views and opinions of our children and young people. It is an expectation that all reports submitted to the panel will have had consultation with our children and young people and their views incorporated into the findings.

There are other set agenda items which includes monitoring the progress of the action tracker from this individuals are tasked with actions to complete and report back on at the next panel. It is imperative that tasks are completed in order to continue to improve the services delivered to our children and families.

Following the review of the Corporate Parent Panel, the membership has been extended to include representatives of partner agencies, including Housing, Health and Education. Following the review the Terms of Reference have been updated and there is further activity to implement the findings of the Our Children's survey on the Pledge.

## Our Pledge

One of the task of panel is to continue to monitor the delivery of **The Pledge** making sure at all times we are fulfilling the commitment and promises made to our children and young people. It was identified by Justuz and the Corporate Parent Panel that The Pledge needed to be reviewed, renewed and revamped, embedding our Blackpool Families Rock values.

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A survey has been developed, seeking the views of all of our children from the ages of 8 – 25 years old to check out how we are doing in keeping the promises made. Due to COVID 19 the delivery of the survey has been delayed however, we hope to have the surveys returned by the end of September with the plan that a group of children and young people will come together to review the findings and redesign The Pledge. It is hoped that the findings of the survey will also support the Corporate Parent Panel in identifying the priorities in the work plan moving forwards.

It is planned that the survey will be undertaken with Our Children on an annual basis to get the feedback on how commitments and promises made in the revised pledge are being delivered.



## Justuz

Justuz meetings are once again happening in person, the young people were delighted to be able to see each other and be able to socialise once again. In June the Justuz newsletter was sent out all our young people age 11+ to promote the Justuz group and hopefully recruit new members. Nine new young people attended the meeting in July with more to start in September as they commence high school. Justuz is committed to continually raising their profile so they can encourage as many of our young people to get involved as possible. The Newsletter will be sent out four times a year to keep our young people up to date on what Justuz is up to and the different ways they can get involved and have a say.

## Justuz 's Current Projects and Ongoing Work

### Our Children's Co-Production Group

Justuz has been part of a Co-Production Group with Independent Reviewing Officers and Social Workers to review and make change to the forms on the children's records to make them more young people friendly and give workers a more streamlined workflow. The children's and young people's Care Plan has Justuz's main focus ensuring that it includes all the relevant information they want from their plan as well as being written in a way they can understand. Making sure it is in-line with the Blackpool families Rock guiding principles of being strength based as well as using language that is accessible to all. The care plan which had been newly named **Your Plan** will allow workers to be able to print out children's and young people plan so it can easily be shared ensuring that all children and young people have a copy. The new child friendly plans are easy to understand and will clearly show their plan for the future, what needs to happened, who is going to support them and when it will be done by. It is hoped that the

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new **Your Plan** will soon be embedded in Mosaic system and start to be used and shared with children and young people. This project again raised the importance again of how we communicate with and about our children when recording their experiences whilst in our care. We hope to strengthen even more the messages our workforce about War Against words and appreciate the support given by our Corporate Parent Board.

SO the **War Against Words continues....**

Since the launch of war against words, we have slowly seen things starting to change, the workforce have been made aware of the 'banned' words and the language Our Children want us to use. All new staff to Blackpool council are briefed on this as part of their induction. This movement has resulted in a refocus of the way we speak, write and record the children's journey on their records.

Justuz and Kirsty have delivered some staff talks on the War Against Words, including to fostering team and foster carers. There is going to be a targeted campaign launched in autumn 2021 with a poster being created by Justuz to refresh and act as a constant reminder to everyone who is working with our children how important it really is that we use a language that cares.

## **Blackpool Families Rock App**

The Blackpool Families Rock app is now live and the messaging capacity is being trialled with a group of Independent Reviewing Officers and Personal Advisors with the children who they are working with. This will allow for any glitches to be addressed prior to the full launch and roll out in November 2021. The initial roll out will be for those staff working with Our children and young people.

## **Your Hired Crew**

Our Children and young people are still very much involved in helping to recruit and interview staff for Children's Services they recently took part in the recruitment and an appointment of our new Director. However during Covid it had been challenging to involve young people fully in the process as many interviews have had to take place virtually. This has been especially difficult for some young people who don't enjoy interviewing in this as this does require a certain level of confidence. Moving forward we hope to be able to once again hold young people's interview panels, group interviews with children and continue to include our young people on adult panels wherever possible. It is really important that our children and young people have a real say in who we employ to support them and we need to strength the message so this approach is fully embedded across all teams.

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## Young Inspectors

### Overview of the project

A Young Inspector is a volunteer aged 16 plus who has experienced living in supported accommodation and has been or is one of our children. Young Inspectors support the quality monitoring of accommodation by visiting semi- independent homes where our children live, speaking to young people living there and assessing how safe and how well cared for they are. They get a feel for how welcoming and supportive the homes are and use their own experiences to help them assess the quality, raising challenge if required. The young inspectors are currently supported by the Participation Team to carry out their inspections so they feel supported and can gain confidence in all aspects of the inspections. At the moment recruitment is targeted but as the programme gets better known, young people will hopefully volunteer and be excited to get involved.

Young Inspectors are trained in consultation skills, questioning skills, confidentiality and basic safeguarding. A bespoke training programme is currently being developed so it is easily accessible for new recruits. Quality Monitoring officers in the Commissioning team also support the project by providing an insight into the processes involved in their job and how services are commissioned.

### So why be a Young Inspectors?

We hope that they will...

- Improve their confidence and self-esteem.
- Learn new skills around communication, problem solving, information gathering and presentations.
- Make a positive difference for our young people living in semi- independent accommodation and raise standards.
- Have access to a bespoke training/development programme.
- Be rewarded for the work in form of vouchers
- Gain some experience of work and visit different settings with children's services
- Be able to record their involvement on their CV when job finding and education opportunities

### Activity to Date

- 4 x Young Inspectors currently 'live'
- 2 x new recruits waiting to get started
- Young Inspectors have undertaken 8 x inspections so far
- 3 x Quality Standards workshops have taken place to co – produce the new Quality Standards with our care experienced young people and other young people living in supported accommodation.

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## Future Plans for the Project

- Team Leader post – programme run by young people for young people
- National Children’s Commissioning Conference – workshop presentation by our Young Inspectors.
- Extension of activity to include residential children’s homes and inspection of Children Services internal provisions.
- Joint working with Commissioning to embed the programme in to the Quality Monitoring Processes of all accommodation based services for young people
- Young Inspectors to be involved with any tendering for accommodation in the future
- Formalise the Young Inspector Training so it can be easily accessible by new recruits ongoing
- Launch the new Quality Standards in September 2021
- On- going recruitment of Young Inspectors
- Look into the possibility of linking the role of young inspectors to a formally educational qualification such as NVQ
- New Quality Standards to be used to measure during the inspections to ensure that home is meeting up to the standards set by our young people. ( Sept onwards )
- Young Inspector to be financially rewarded for their time and expertise by becoming casual employees.

## Comments made by our young Inspectors .....

*We are starting to recognise that different homes offer different levels of support. These homes really need to match the support they offer to the individual needs of the young person they are caring for. We hope that when our quality standards are being used to inspect, it will help to raise the standards of support and care offered and have more consistency.*

*I am really excited to be young inspector for Blackpool and help launch the new scheme, we really want to make sure young people live in really good homes and get the right support that they need to live independent and do it successfully.*

*I want to be a good role model to all young people and be able to show them that it is possible to do well in life and being a young person growing up in care does not prevent you from being able to go on and achieve anything that you want.*

## Independent Inspections of Children Homes - Regulation 44

With regard to the Corporate Parenting Panel’s duties under the 1989 Children's Act and Young Person's Children's Homes Regulations 1991, six monthly reports have been provided by the Safeguarding Review Service, providing a synopsis of monthly visits to Blackpool Council's registered Children's Homes.

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## Illuminate- Stories of Change - partnership work with Blackpool's Grand Theatre

The Illuminate programme is a creative peer- led resource, informed by our children's lived experiences, to support young people in our care and to better inform Children's Services of their life challenges. Delivered through a creative pick and mix of arts workshops in the first year with artists from Blackpool's Illuminations depot, the Grand Theatre and other creative artists from different genres. In the second year with artists, they will develop their stories and will hopefully have an opportunity to tell them in their Summer Holiday Storytelling Festival.

The aim of the project was to support our children to improve their emotional language communication skills over the two years as they find new ways to express their feelings through art. This will strengthen their personal resilience and sense of self as well as building confidence in expressing how they feel and process change.

Due to COVID the delivery of the programmes was delayed. However at the end of July 2021, three successful taster days were run at the Grand Theatre attended by 50 children. The theme was rollercoasters, with the up and downs of life, how this affected them. They were encouraged to express their feelings through performance dance and drama and graffiti art. Giant Lantern sculptures were also created and these will be showcased in October in the Lightpool festival. Children from the tasters days will be invited back to support the creation of a giant Lightpool float using their sculptures. The float will travel down the promenade with the illumination trams as part of the festival. Their work will also be showcased in pop up shop front exhibition in Blackpool town centre.

There has been overwhelmingly positive feedback from the children who attended the sessions and the children became fully involved in all of the activities on offer. They are excited to return in October half term.

There is a plan that the full programme will be held over the next year during the school holidays.

## Celebrating Our Children's Achievements

Sadly The You Rock awards could not take place this year in March as usual due to covid restrictions however we are excited to announce that we have been given the go ahead to plan and arrange The You Rock Awards 2021. The awards will now go ahead on **Friday 12<sup>th</sup> November 2021** in The Empress Ballroom Blackpool Winter Gardens. We hope to make it a night to remember and involve as many of our children and young people as possible so we can celebrate their achievements after what has been a challenging time for all. We would like to extend the invitation to all Corporate Parent Panel members to come along and attend the awards and share in the celebrations. We are busy planning the evening with Justuz and they have some great ideas to make it bigger and better than ever!

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## Work for the future

### Life story co-production group

Life story work is essential to understanding our sense of identity and belonging, most of us have this internally from family as we were growing up. Children brought up in our care or who have been subject to moves between families don't always have this and stories that have been shared and developed. Therefore it is essential that these are provided through life story. A co-production group is being set up to explore we can do this better for Our children which Justuz are going to be supported in co delivering.

### Engagement Lead overview of partnership update provided to the Corporate Parenting Panel

Over the last 12 months the Corporate Parent Panel the following activity of services have been presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel , outline the ongoing work with our children, fulfilling the commitment and promises we have made within the Pledge. Justuz have been consulted on all of these reports. This has included:

- Educational Achievements and Destinations for Our Children
- Co-production of Health Assessments for Our Children
- Customer Relations Annual Report
- Independent Reviewing Officers Annual Report
- The Care Leaver's Offer
- Youth Justice Annual Report.
- Head Start Annual Report
- Regulation 44 visits including young inspectors
- Virtual School Annual Report
- Adoption Services Annual Report
- Fostering Services Annual Report
- Opportunities Update for Our children



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