

Corporate Parenting Board

Minutes - 18 January 2018

Attendance

Chair Cllr Val Gibson (Lab)

Labour

Cllr Milkinderpal Jaspal
Cllr Lynne Moran

Cllr Peter O'Neill
Cllr Rita Potter

Cllr Martin Waite

Employees

Emma Bennett
Clare Bishop
Fiona Brennan
Alison Hinds
Darren Martindale
Puja Taloy
Helen Tambini
Alice Vickers

Director of Children's Services
Family Support Worker
Designated Nurse, Looked After Children
Head of Looked After Children
Virtual School Head for Looked After Children
Participation Officer for Looked after Children
Democratic Services Officer
Corporate Parenting Officer

Emma Jane Kisby, Foster Carer attended as an adviser to the Board.

Item No. *Title*

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hodgkiss, Koussoukama, Mills and Sweet.

Apologies for absence were received from Tracy Kenny, Foster Carer and Kyron Hughes, Care Leavers Forum.

2 Declarations of interests

There were no declarations of interest made.

3 Change to the Order of Agenda Items

The Chair moved that agenda item 6, Care Leavers Forum – Reducing Care Leaver Isolation on Birthdays and item 7, Children in Care Council – Feedback from Take Over Day, be considered before item 3, Minutes of the Previous Meeting, item 4, Matters Arising and item 5, Schedule of Outstanding Matters.

Resolved:

That agenda items 6 and 7 be considered before items 3, 4 and 5.

4 Care Leavers Forum - Reducing Care Leaver Isolation on Birthdays

Members of the Care Leavers Forum (CLF) attended the meeting and presented their ideas on ways to reduce the feelings of isolation on birthdays.

They suggested that rather than having two sums of £50 for eighteenth and twenty-first birthdays, the money should be split into £25 for eighteenth, nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first birthdays. That would help to make all of those birthdays special.

They suggested a revision of the Birthday Monies Policy. All young people needed to have an up to date Pathway Plan and as part of that, to encourage positive behaviour and integration it was suggested as an incentive that any young person who did not have an updated Plan or meet with their Young Person's Advisor (YPA) would not receive their birthday money and that money could then be put into a fund for holidays and group activities for other young people who were integrating.

Members of the CLF stated that birthdays could often leave Care Leavers (CL) feeling very isolated as they would not have an opportunity to spend time with their families and appropriate support was needed, particularly to help with mental health issues. In terms of the individual support packages, it was suggested that each one should be individually assessed regarding mental health.

The Chair thanked the young people for the excellent presentation and the two proposals.

In answer to a question regarding contact with young people after the age of 21, Emma Bennett, Director of Children's Services advised that all CL should receive a birthday card delivered by their YPA up to the age of 25 and she confirmed that she would also send a birthday card. In respect of contact after the age of 25, further discussions would need to take place with the Transitions Team.

Members of the CLF invited members of the Board to attend future meetings of the Forum.

Members of the Board thanked the young people for attending, sharing their own experiences and for their comments and proposals.

Resolved:

1. That the presentation on Reducing Care Leaver Isolation on Birthdays be noted.
2. That the proposal to split birthday monies into four gifts of £25 for eighteenth, nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first birthdays be agreed.
3. That the proposal to revise the Birthday Monies Policy to encourage engagement and integration be agreed.
4. That the further comments made by the members of the CLF be noted.

5 Children in Care Council - Feedback from Take Over Day

Members of the Children in Care Council (CiCC) attended the meeting and gave a presentation on feedback from the Take Over Day.

The Chair thanked the young people for the excellent presentation which had raised many key issues which would be considered.

Members of the Care Leavers Forum (CLF) suggested a peer mentoring programme, with older Care Leavers (CL) helping younger CL who were struggling. Peer mentoring would also help to encourage those who were not engaging with their Young Person's Advisor (YPA).

Alice Vickers, Corporate Parenting Officer confirmed that officers were in the process of looking at mentoring schemes.

In answer to a question regarding what further help could be offered to foster carers, Emma Jane Kisby referred to the training courses she had attended, in particular the excellent course arranged by Joginder Shoker Kang. Receiving advice and support on nurturing, in particular attachment issues was paramount. Foster carers needed support in understanding children.

Alison Hinds, Head of Looked After Children confirmed that the training programme for foster carers was being reviewed. Issues raised at the Take Over Day would be taken into consideration.

In answer to questions regarding Total Respect training, Emma Bennett, Director of Children's Services stated that she would check if that training was mandatory for foster carers. She advised that each Fostering Agency had a version of Total Respect training as part of their assessments.

Alice Vickers advised that she had visited three of the top 10 independent Fostering Agencies used by the City of Wolverhampton Council and the Commissioning Team would be happy to take that forward.

Emma Bennett confirmed that this would be a priority as part of the Corporate Parenting Strategy for next year.

Resolved:

That the presentation on the Feedback from Take Over Day and the comments raised be noted.

6 Minutes of the previous meeting - 9 November 2017

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 November 2017 be confirmed as correct record and signed by the Chair.

7 Matters arising

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.

8 Schedule of outstanding matters

The Chair presented the report on current progress on matters previously considered by the Board.

Emma Bennett, Director of Children's Services confirmed that 92% of LAC were known to the local authority at least 30 days prior to becoming LAC. Only 48 had not been known before.

9 Virtual School Head Annual Report 2016-2017

Darren Martindale, Virtual School Head for Looked After Children presented the Virtual School Head Annual Report 2016-2017 and highlighted key points, including the Turnabout Programme and the Aspire2Uni (A2U) Programme.

The Chair thanked Darren Martindale for the excellent report and referred to the Turnabout Programme which was welcomed by all and highlighted the positive outcomes of working with children.

In addition to the information contained in the report and in response to questions from Board members, officers stated the following:

- Foster carers would usually attend parent evenings at school and such details would be recorded on each Personal Education Plan (PEP). The PEP had been designed to prompt discussions on those issues.
- The I Awards celebrated young people's achievements as did schools and foster carers who took an active role in celebrating achievements, both academic and non-academic.
- The I Awards invited nominations from Designated Teachers (DT) and there had been a record number from DT, both from inside and outside of the city.

- In some cases, both foster carers and family members attended parent evenings and other school events; however, that was dependent on individual circumstances.
- The Council ensured that foster carers encouraged the aspirations of the young people they were caring for and additional support was always available if foster carers wanted some extra help.
- Training was given to foster carers to support education at home and there was an additional section on the PEP which asked how a foster carer supported study in the home. Foster carers were involved in the Aspire2Uni Programme and it was hoped to further expand that. An online resource Britannica was also available and had already received over 23,000 hits. That resource was both safe and comprehensive.
- Young people received a congratulatory card from the Council for exam and degree successes.
- The importance of stability for LAC was acknowledged and every effort was made to ensure that; however, there were times when change was unavoidable, sometimes due to staff turnover and exit interviews were undertaken to identify why staff were leaving. The workforce was also being consulted to identify what were the most important factors of working in the city.
- In many cases foster carers would be willing to travel long distances to prevent a child or young person having to move school.
- Sometimes to ensure stability a child or young person might remain in a lower achieving school as it would be less beneficial to move them.

Resolved:

That the Virtual School Head Annual Report 2016-2017 report be noted.

10

Performance Monitoring Report/Children Looked After Return Initial Analysis 2016-2017

Emma Bennett, Director of Children's Services presented the Performance Monitoring Report and the Children Looked After Return Initial Analysis and highlighted key points. She confirmed that the Board was receiving the standard performance report, together with additional benchmarking information providing initial analysis of Looked After Children (LAC) performance as reported in the Children Looked After (903) statutory return.

In respect of routes into care and Ofsted ratings, Emma Bennett advised that as of the end of November 2017 there were 11 Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers. Where an Ofsted inspection had taken place and a children's home had been identified as inadequate or requiring improvement, then inspections would take place immediately.

In respect of health, Emma Bennett advised that there had been a slight dip to 86% and that would require monitoring.

Fiona Brennan, Designated Nurse, Looked After Children stated that the dip was most likely caused by initial checks rather than reviews and it would be helpful to have a breakdown of those figures.

In respect of adoptions, Emma Bennett advised that additional resources had been made available until the end of March 2018 in order to ensure the Council improved performance in supporting the application of adoption orders.

In respect of the Children Looked After Return Initial Analysis 2016-2017, Emma Bennett confirmed that this was an annual report. It was known that Wolverhampton had a relatively high number of LAC at 108 per 10,000 population instead of 85; however, Wolverhampton had a slower rate of increase compared to other authorities. Wolverhampton was the 37th best performing authority in the country for statutory outcomes for Care Leavers (CL).

In answer to a question regarding a comparison with statistical neighbours in respect of care proceedings, Emma Bennett confirmed that statistics were available and an analysis could be undertaken and the data made available. There had been a considerable increase in care proceedings across the country.

Resolved:

1. That the Performance Monitoring report and the Children Looked After Return Initial Analysis 2016-2017 report be noted.
2. That a breakdown of initial health check and review figures be submitted to the next meeting of the Board.
3. That details of care proceedings and comparisons with Wolverhampton's statistical neighbours be submitted to the next meeting of the Board.

11 **Corporate Parenting Board - Proposed Amendment to Terms of Reference**

Helen Tambini, Democratic Services Officer presented the Corporate Parenting Board – Proposed Amendment to the Terms of Reference and highlighted key points.

Resolved:

That the amendment to the Terms of Reference of the Corporate Parenting Board be approved.

12 **AOB**

The Chair referred to public attendance at future meetings and advised that items relating to the Care Leavers Forum (CLF) and the Children in Care Council (CiCC) should not be held in public as young people were in attendance. Rather than waiting until the latter part of the meeting to consider exempt items, it was proposed, when such items were on the agenda, to have exempt items at the beginning.

Resolved:

That future agenda items be varied to ensure that items relating to the CLF and the CiCC be considered first and in private.

13 **Exclusion of the press and public**

Resolved:

That in accordance with Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business as they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information contained in

paragraph 2 of the Act, namely information that is likely to reveal the identity to an individual.

14 Councillor Visits to Establishments

No visits to establishments had been undertaken since the last meeting of the Board.

In answer to a question regarding Councillors visiting private establishments, Emma Bennett, Director of Children's Services advised that if there were young people placed in private establishments by the Council then Councillor visits would be welcomed and a list of those establishments would be provided.