



Corporate Parenting Board Minutes – 27 November 2013

Attendance

Members

Cllr Val Gibson (Chair)
Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre
Cllr Julie Hodgkiss
Cllr Mrs Christine Mills
Cllr Mrs Patricia Patten
Cllr Paul Singh
Cllr Rita Potter
Cllr Martin Waite

Employees

Daphne Atkinson	Fostering Team Manager - Community
Steve Cox	Interim Head of Looked After Children – Community
Anne Foster	Acting LACE Team Manager
John Welsby	Assistant Director, Children and Families - Community
Dawn Williams	Head of Service, Safeguarding Children & Young People
John Wright	Democratic Support Manager

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

- 1. Apologies for absence**
Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Philip Page.
- 2. Declarations of interest**
No declarations of interest were made in relation to items under consideration at the meeting.
- 3. Minutes of the previous meeting**
Resolved:
That the minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. **Matters arising**

- Wolverhampton LAC Transitions Team Annual Report – April 2012 – March 2013

Councillor Potter reported that it had been suggested to her that a large proportion of offenders had been in residential care. She also gave details of the Wild Wood project in Shropshire which apparently had a good track record of preventing reoffending. The Board was informed that this Council had a good track record of keeping in contact with young people and worked closely with the Youth Offending team. It was noted that all young offenders who were remanded by the Courts automatically became Looked After Children.

It was felt that all members of the Board should receive information the offending rates of the City's Looked After Children so that they would be in a position to respond to questions about whether or not Looked After Children were involved in offending.

Agreed

That a briefing note be circulated to Board members giving comparative details of the offending rates of Looked After Children in the City, offending rates of young people generally and the numbers of young people who maintain contact with the Council once they had left care.

5. **Performance Monitoring – Looked After Children**

The Board received performance monitoring information on Looked After Children. There were currently 724 Looked After Children which was one of the highest numbers in the country. There had been an increase in the number of Looked After Children since the summer though it was noted that half the number of children coming in to care in September had come from two families.

The target was to reduce the numbers to within 10% of the average number of similar sized councils, which would mean a reduction to around 600. The target for the number of adoptions to match the average for councils across England.

Councillors felt that it would be useful to compare the numbers of looked after children across different councils with the rates at which Jobseeker Allowance was paid. It was anticipated that there would be a direct relationship.

The Board agreed that ensuring each child had the best possible placement was more important than meeting deadlines.

The Board requested details of the numbers of children who were returned home and asked that the information show those who the Council had returned home and those who had left care through their own choice. The

Board requested that the requested information be included in future score cards.

It was noted that, in comparison to the rest of the country, the Council had a good record of placing siblings together. Councillors requested that information on the placement of siblings be included in the annual score card.

Resolved

1. That a briefing note be circulated to the Board on the numbers of looked after children who are returned home.
2. That information on the placement of siblings be included in the annual score card

6. **The Role of Foster Carers' in the Development of Skills of the Fostering Service**

Consideration was given to a report on the details of development and training for foster carers approved by Wolverhampton City Council

It was confirmed that now that recruitment was no longer handled by an external organisation the numbers of potential foster carers was increasing. There had been 96 initial enquiries since March. However the conversion rate from inquiries to approved carers was not as high as had been hoped. The target of recruiting 25 new carers was likely to be achieved. It was recognised that there was a need to ensure that the right calibre of carers were recruited.

Work was on going to increase the number of inquiries received. The Fostering Team were running a series of drop in centres. It was recognised that working closely with the Communications Team had improved the profile of fostering within the City. A copy of the "It's a myth" leaflet was circulated and it was agreed that a copy would be sent to each member of the Board

It was noted that the information contained in the equalities section of the report was not adequate and in future should contain a breakdown of the ethnic origins and gender of foster carers and looked after children. It was felt that a full equalities analysis should be carried out.

Resolved

1. That the report be received.
2. That a copy of the Fostering recruitment leaflet be sent to each member of the Board.
3. That a full equalities analysis be carried out and in future the equalities section of the report should contain a breakdown of the ethnic origins and gender of foster carers and looked after children.

7. **Virtual School - Looked After Children Education Team Annual Report**

Consideration was given to a report on the Looked After Children Education Team Annual Report for 2012/2013. The Board noted the main achievements during the year including the appointment of a Virtual Headteacher and the production of a newsletter sent to schools, MAST Teams, LAC Teams and Locality Teams.

The report detailed the examination results for the 2012/13 academic year. The results for key Stage 2 / year 6 for English were not good. A literacy project had been started to help reading levels. It was run by Beanstalk which was a national organisation.

Councillors expressed concern at the levels of attainment of looked after children and requested that comparative information be made available on the attainment levels nationally of looked after children, local attainment of looked after children for the population as a whole. It was also felt that there was a need to consider the progress measures used by Ofsted to measure the progress made by each child.

Resolved

1. That details of how people could volunteer for the literacy project run by Beanstalk be circulated to all members of the Board
2. That comparative information be circulated to the Board on the attainment levels nationally of looked after children, local attainment of looked after children for the population as a whole

8. Annual Report Safeguarding Service Looked After Children 2012- 2013

Consideration was given to the annual report of the Safeguarding Service on Looked After Children for 2012- 2013. The report had been based on national guidance and aimed to highlight areas of good practice and areas which required improvement, identified emerging themes and trends, described areas of work which the service had prioritised during the year, and would prioritise in the forthcoming year.

The report detailed changes in personnel within the team and the role of the Safeguarding Review Managers.

It was noted that there had been a high number of care orders during the year.

Details of the timescales for the review of a child's case were considered and it was recognised that information was shared more readily than had been the case in the past. 88% of cases were reviewed within the timescale and this

was improving. It was noted that children aged 7 and over received a written invitation to their review meeting along with the consultation document inviting their contribution to the review. Each of Independent Reviewing Officers had Blackberries which ensured that they were contactable by the young people.

The Board was informed that from July 2013, more detailed quality assurance information had been collected on CareFirst. This would enable improvements to be made in the reporting and recording of information.

The Board were informed of the areas for improvement in the forthcoming year.

Resolved

That the report be noted

9. **Exclusion of the press and public**

Resolved:

That in accordance with Section 100A(4) 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 1 of the Act, namely information relating to any individual.

10. **Councillors Visits to Establishments**

Councillor Hardacre reported on a visit to Stafford Road.

Councillor Waite reported on a visit to Red Gables.