

Attendance

Chair Cllr John Reynolds (Lab)

Labour

Cllr Paul Sweet
Cllr Paula Brookfield

Cllr Rashpal Kaur
Cllr Rita Potter

Cllr Zee Russell

Conservative

Cllr Udey Singh

In attendance

Fiona Brennan
Alison Hinds
Shelley Humphries
Alice Vickers
Robert Hart

Designated Nurse, Children and Young People in Care
Deputy Director of Social Care
Democratic Services Officer
Co-production and Youth Engagement Manager
Head of Service - Inclusion and Empowerment

Item No. *Title*

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from member of the Corporate Parenting Board, Councillor Paul Appleby.

Apologies were also received from Emma Bennett and Nicola Hale.

2 Declarations of interests

There were no declarations of interest made relative to the items under consideration at the meeting.

3 Minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2020

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2020 be confirmed as correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 Matters arising

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

5 Schedule of Outstanding Matters

Alice Vickers, Co-production and Youth Engagement Manager presented the Schedule of Outstanding Matters which provided progress on matters previously considered by the Board.

It was reported that there had been a meeting set up to assist Board members with recording their pledges but this had been postponed due to social distancing restrictions. It was agreed that virtual sessions be held to provide technical support to Board members.

Resolved:

That officers virtually support Board members with recording their pledges.

6 Corporate Parenting Board Work Plan 2020- 2021

Alice Vickers, Co-production and Youth Engagement Manager presented the Corporate Parenting Board Work Plan 2020 - 2021 report to the Board.

The report outlined that meetings of the Board would continue to be held virtually until it was safe to resume face-to-face meetings. The meetings would also be live streamed on the Council website to make the meetings accessible to the public.

The attached Corporate Parenting Board Work Plan 2020 - 2021 identified the Board's priorities for the current municipal year and it was highlighted that young people from the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers' Forum would be invited to actively participate in virtual meetings.

Resolved:

1. That the Corporate Parenting Board approve the proposed Corporate Parenting Board Work Plan 2020 – 2021 outlining the Corporate Parenting Board's activities for the next 12 months.
2. That the Corporate Parenting Board agree to continue the Corporate Parenting Board's activities for next 12 months using Microsoft Teams until face-to-face meetings are safe to resume.

7 **Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report 2019 - 2020**

Alison Hinds, Deputy Director of Social Care presented the Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report 2019 – 2020 and highlighted key points. The report outlined that the Independent Reviewing Officer Service was duty bound to provide the Corporate Parenting Board with an annual report that outlines the activity of the service, the impact for children and recommendations for service improvement that will enhance young people's experiences.

It was highlighted that many improvements had been made over the year, particularly in terms of engagement with young people and participation in reviews. Extensive work had gone into exploring creative ways to engage with children and young people during their reviews to ensure their voices could be heard. The incorporation of technology, which had been introduced to increase parent participation, had been also proved useful during the pandemic situation. Caseloads had become more manageable, enabling more time to be spent building relationships with and listening to the views of the child.

A concern was raised in respect of the deficit in software resources to include pictorials in the consultation leaflet to make them accessible to children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). It was noted that this was being continually explored and Councillor Paula Brookfield added she would be happy to support the procurement of this software.

It was queried whether any challenges had been experienced with children or young people in care not observing regulations to prevent the spread of coronavirus. Reassurances were offered that all children and young people in care had been encouraged to observe the rules relating to wearing masks and social distancing in all settings and no issues had been reported.

The work of the service and the report was commended by the Board and it was noted that the case studies had been a useful tool to bring additionality to the information in the report.

Resolved:

That the Corporate Parenting Board endorse the Annual Report of the Independent Reviewing Officer Service 2019 – 2020.

8 **Consultation on the Draft Wolverhampton Strategy for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities 2020 - 2023**

Robert Hart, Head of Service Inclusion and Empowerment presented the Consultation on the Draft Wolverhampton Strategy for Children and Young People

with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities 2020 – 2023 report and highlighted salient points.

This report detailed the undertaking of the consultation on the Draft Wolverhampton Strategy for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) 2020 – 2023 and the draft of the Strategy had been submitted to the Corporate Parenting Board to receive feedback and input in their role as corporate parents.

The work that had gone into the co-production of the Strategy was commended and it was noted that the key message was for children and young people with SEND be empowered to have control over their own lives, make their own decisions, have quality of life and be prepared for adulthood.

The Tell it Once initiative was commended as it prevented the requirement for children and their families to repeat the same information to different professionals, which was thought to be frustrating or even distressing for the child.

It was queried how the culture of Tell it Once would be accurately achieved as agencies had differing methods of recording information. It was stated that successful examples of good practice had been seen in the Early Years Service using the Team Around the Child methodology, with a single Key Worker assigned to co-ordinate key information received from professionals, the child and their family. This work was also linked to education settings, teachers and Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) ensuring each service involved with a child received the information they need to know.

In response to a query around whether the consultation had received positive feedback to date, it was confirmed that engagement had been extremely positive. In addition, it was noted that ownership of the draft Strategy did not belong to the Council alone; it had been co-produced with the SEND Partnership therefore had already included contributions from parent and carer focus groups, Wolverhampton Clinical Commissioning Group, SENCOs, healthcare providers, members of the voluntary sector and teachers as well as Council services.

It was clarified that the consultation period had opened in July 2020 and closed on 21 September 2020.

It was noted that Tell it Once was a useful initiative as the health service was aware of gaps in information when a placement move occurred, particularly out of the area. It was acknowledged that Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) were also useful for keeping information in one place.

It was noted that the Tell it Once system was in use in Sandwell via multiagency meetings around the child.

Resolved:

1. That the draft Wolverhampton Strategy for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities 2020 – 2023 at Appendix 1 be received.
2. That Corporate Parenting Board provide feedback through the consultation portal by 21 September 2020.

3. That the next steps for publication of the Wolverhampton Strategy for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities 2020 – 2023 be noted.

9 **Performance Monitoring Information**

Alison Hinds, Deputy Director of Social Care presented the Performance Monitoring Report and highlighted salient points.

Numbers of children in care were close to that of Wolverhampton's statistical neighbours.

Placement stability had improved to 91% from 86% shown last year and this was attributed to the support provided by the Family Values Project. It was acknowledged that a supportive team of Foster Carers had been in place during the lockdown period and there had been no placement breakdowns reported over this time.

Up-to-date assessments had improved to 89.5% from 41% which was very positive as the information collected at the assessments allowed the service to understand the needs of children and young people in care and plan appropriately.

A rise in up-to-date case reviews was also reported along with improved participation and engagement in reviews.

The average social worker caseload had reduced to 17 which placed them in a better position to build and maintain relationships with the children and young people.

School attainment data was slightly outdated, however the annual report available at the next meeting would provide the most current summary of information.

Dental checks and managed assessments had been down as a result of social distancing restrictions.

There had been delays in care applications while the Courts had been out of operation due to COVID-19 but it was expected to level out once Courts were back in session. There had been three adoptions since April 2020

In response to a query regarding a gap emerging between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 Maths and Literacy, it was noted that the gap had been acknowledged and the service had been accessing pupil premium and working with schools on targeted interventions.

Reassurances were also offered that some children and young people in care had continued to attend school throughout lockdown as they were in the vulnerable category and there had been a maintained focus on all personal education plans (PEPs). The DfE had provided access to a specific fund to support children whose education may have been affected by COVID-19.

It was acknowledged that the service had continued to provide parents and vulnerable children and young people in care with stability, regard and assurance during a particularly challenging time and the work of the service and that of foster carers was commended.

Resolved:

That the Performance Monitoring Information report be received

10 **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 item of business as it involved 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.

11 **Councillor Visits to Establishments - Schedule of Visits**

It was reported that there had been no face-to-face visits to establishments due to the current pandemic situation and the Board agreed that this should continue to be the case until it was safe to resume. It was agreed that the possibility of virtual visits via Microsoft Teams should be explored if the children and young people in residence were happy for this to take place.

Resolved:

1. That there would be no face-to-face Councillor visits to Establishments until it was safe to resume.
2. That the service explore virtual establishment visits for Councillors using Microsoft Teams, following consultation with the children and young people in residence.