

Attendance

In the Chair Cllr Wendy Dalton

Labour

Cllr Jasbinder Dehar

Cllr Asha Mattu

Cllr Rita Potter

Conservative

Cllr Stephanie Haynes

Cllr Udey Singh

In Attendance

Shelley Humphries
Shaquille Spence
Jazmine Walker

Democratic Services Officer
Participation Officer
Head of Service, Children and Young People in Care

Member of the Care Leavers' Independent Collective were welcomed as guest presenters.

Item No. *Title*

1 Election of Vice Chair

Apologies were received from the Chair and members of Corporate Parenting Board were invited to elect a Vice Chair to take the Chair for the meeting.

Following nominations and elections, it was agreed that Councillor Wendy Dalton act as Vice Chair for the remainder of the meeting. It was noted that since the papers were published, it had been proposed that a Vice Chair for the remainder of the municipal year would be appointed by Full Council.

Resolved:

1. That Councillor Wendy Dalton take the Chair as acting Vice Chair for the meeting of 25 November 2021.
2. That a Vice Chair for the remainder of the municipal year would be appointed by Full Council.

2 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from the following members of the Corporate Parenting Board: Councillor Beverley Momenabadi.

Apologies were also received from Alison Hinds, Emma Bennett, Michelle Cummings, Alice Vickers and Fiona Brennan.

3 Declaration of interests

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

4 Minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2021

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2021 be confirmed as correct record.

5 Matters arising

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

6 Schedule of outstanding matters

Jazmine Walker, Head of Children and Young People in Care presented the Schedule of outstanding matters report. In respect of the action that young people be invited to the Health Steering Group, it was noted that the Corporate Parenting Officer had been leading on that action and this was still in progress.

In respect of the action regarding the Special Guardianship Order (SGO) statistics, a slide was shared at the meeting showing a breakdown of SGOs where the child was previously in the Authority's care and private SGOs over the last three years. It was

clarified that the figures for 2021 – 2022 showed the figure so far as five cases were still pending outcome. It was then expected that there would be 13 SGOs before the end of the financial year. It was also expected that this level may rise higher as SGOs where court proceedings had been delayed from last year would be granted.

A query was raised around whether services were running normally or if COVID-19 was still having an impact on service delivery. It was reported that there had been pressure from a slight increase on previous years as there had been a backlog caused by face-to-face hearings being placed on hold in the early days of the pandemic.

Resolved:

That the Schedule of outstanding matters report be received.

7 Refreshed Terms of Reference

Jazmine Walker, Head of Children and Young People in Care presented the Refreshed Terms of Reference and highlighted salient points. The report outlined that the Terms of Reference had been reviewed and updated to ensure the information remained current and the Board was effective.

A slight amendment was added to section 3.3 of Appendix 1 to read:

The Vice Chair will be appointed from the membership and agreed at the Annual General Meeting of the Council.

In respect of paragraph 2.13, it was asked whether many care leavers kept in touch with the authority or if contact was lost once leaving the system. It was noted that the service made an effort to engage with care leavers post-18 especially since the care leaver local offer was extended to young people up to the age of 25. It was reported that many were happy to keep in touch with their Young Person's Advisor.

A query was raised around paragraph 2.11 and who collated information on corporate parenting in other authorities. It was noted that the Corporate Parenting Officer normally kept in touch with their counterparts in other authorities and attended a forum to share best practice.

A query was raised around the number of independent fostering residential homes across the City and if these figures could be provided. Upper Pendeford Farm was the only Authority managed residential home however there were privately owned homes in Wolverhampton as well. It was confirmed that numbers of Wolverhampton children placed in independent residential homes were included as part of the Performance Monitoring Information Report.

In response to a query around how many young people were in apprenticeships, it was noted that five apprentice positions had been filled by young people in care or leaving care within the Authority. It was noted that the sub-group of Corporate Parenting Board, Corporate Parenting Partnership Board, also collaborated to identify opportunities, including apprenticeships in external organisations. Information on apprenticeships for young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) would be collated and provided at the next meeting of Corporate Parenting Board.

Resolved:

1. That the Refreshed Terms of Reference be approved subject to the verbal addendum.
2. That information on apprenticeships for young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) would be collated and provided at the next meeting of Corporate Parenting Board.
3. That the number of independent fostering residential homes across the City be provided.

8

Health Assessments

Jazmine Walker, Head of Children and Young People in Care presented the Health Assessments report and highlighted salient points. The report sought to update the Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) on the challenges and actions identified in March 2021 and the improvements in the performance reporting and the completion and timeliness of initial and review health assessment for all children and young people in care.

A query was raised around access to the COVID-19 vaccine for children and young people in care and if there had been any challenges around this. For children subject to care orders who were eligible for the vaccine, the Authority was able to consent for them to receive it.

It was noted that children were always supported in making an informed decision, however in the event of children saying they did not want the vaccine, legal advice was sought by applying to the Court for oversight to determine if they could have it. For those subject to Section 20 where parents still had an active role in decisions for their child, the parents would be consulted and legal advice taken where consent was not given.

Assurances were offered that there had been an encouraging uptake of the vaccine in children and young people in care.

It was acknowledged that quality of assessments and timeliness had improved and a query was raised around the potential barriers that may affect timeliness. It was noted that there had been time issues relating to accuracy of paperwork sent to health colleagues by social worker teams and delays were caused by incomplete assessment paperwork being returned. To address this, a quality assurance system had been put in place where administration staff checked paperwork before passing to health colleagues. Other delays may have been caused by paperwork not being returned on time following assessment.

Another barrier identified was foster carers not taking children to appointments and the exploration of ways to address this had become a priority. It was noted that sometimes non-attendance was due to appointment times occurring during the school day, but more analysis was needed therefore monitoring of reasons given for non-attendance was underway.

It was confirmed that appointment times were sent via letter although there was no follow up. As foster carers were considered to be professionals, there was an expectation that they would either attend with the child or rearrange the appointment

as appropriate. Members acknowledged the professional status of the foster carers but suggested exploring a method of following up on appointments in case of human error.

It was confirmed that Eclipse was working more efficiently and there was increased confidence in the information in the Power BI reporting output results.

Members requested that the development of a secondary follow up system to support health assessments be undertaken. It was agreed that it would be beneficial for the Authority to reinforce this extra step to support vulnerable children. It was also agreed that this would be raised with the fostering service and an update would be provided for the next meeting of the Board as part of the Schedule of Outstanding Matters.

Resolved:

1. That the update on health assessment performance be received.
2. That Corporate Parent Board note the improvements in the performance reporting and the completion and timeliness of initial and review health assessment for all children and young people in care.
3. That a health assessment appointment reminder system be explored and an update provided at the next meeting of Corporate Parenting Board.

9 Care Leavers' Independent Collective (CLiC) Presentation

Members of CLiC supported by Shaquille Spence, Participation Officer delivered the CLiC Presentation. The presentation provided an outline of the CLiC Action Plan. The Action Plan covered six priorities which had been identified by the young people, ideas around what needed to be in place, plans on how to implement these ideas and progress made to date. The work undertaken by the young people and the presentation was commended.

A query was raised around barriers in securing support for assisted travel. It was noted there had been ongoing discussions with the West Midlands Combined Authority to acquire funding however there had been no commitment as of yet. It was noted that any suggestions for seeking support would be welcomed.

Resolved:

That Care Leavers' Independent Collective (CLiC) Presentation be received.

10 Independent Reviewing Service Annual Report

Jazmine Walker, Head of Children and Young People in Care introduced the Independent Reviewing Service Annual Report covering the period 2020 – 2021 and requested that the item be deferred however invited any pressing questions.

The report outlined that the Wolverhampton Safeguarding Service had statutory responsibility for overseeing and ratifying the care plans for Children and Young People in Care via the activity of the Independent Reviewing Officers.

The report sought to provide the Corporate Parenting Board with an overview of the activity of the service, the impact for children and recommendations for service improvement that will enhance young people's experiences.

In response to a query on whether many reviews with children and young people were virtual, it was confirmed that COVID had prompted the majority to be held this way. It was reported that face to face reviews were thought to be more beneficial by some young people whilst others engaged better during virtual meetings. With this feedback in mind, a hybrid model had been developed with children and young people's preferences being promoted.

In response to a query, it was confirmed that the two young people on remand were still permitted face to face visits with their IRO.

Resolved:

That Corporate Parenting Board endorse the Annual Report of the Independent Reviewing Officer Service 2020-2021.

11 Corporate Parenting Strategy 2022-2025

The Chair introduced the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2022-2025 report. The report outlined that the strategy set out the City of Wolverhampton Council's vision and commitment to be an effective and trustworthy corporate parent. It was outlined that the strategy had been developed and co-produced with the Children in Care Council (CiCC) and Care Leavers Independent Collective (CliC) and the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board.

It was highlighted that each of the seven corporate parenting principles had been evaluated analysing the strengths, challenges and what needed to happen. Feedback from this engagement would form the basis of the Corporate Parenting Action plan and be reviewed annually.

Resolved:

That Corporate Parenting Board approve the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2022-2025.

12 Performance Monitoring Information

Jazmine Walker, Head of Children and Young People in Care presented the Performance Monitoring Information Report and highlighted salient points. The report provided an update on service performance as at 30 September 2021 and questions were invited.

A query was raised around the information on page 70 of the reports pack relating to the status of care leavers in education, employment and training (EET) and how the statistics could be improved upon. Assurances were offered that, since the report was published, the percentage had risen to 60% which if maintained would mean the outturn was higher than in 2019 - 2020.

It was reported that care leaver engagement in EET had shown some improvement since the end of 2020 and Wolverhampton had one of the lowest youth unemployment rates in the country. EET was considered a priority and there had been extensive work embedding support into the Council's care leaver offer including appointing dedicated staff to advise and offer support to care leavers.

Resolved:

That the Performance Monitoring Information Report be received.

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 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.

14 Councillor Visits to Establishments - Schedule of Visits

No visits had been undertaken since the last meeting of the Board however members were asked to email Jazmine Walker, Head of Children and Young People in Care to register interest.