

## **Attendance**

**Chair** Cllr Beverley Momenabadi (Lab)

### **Labour**

Cllr Mary Bateman  
Cllr Jasbinder Dehar

Cllr Asha Mattu  
Cllr Rita Potter

### **Conservative**

Cllr Wendy Dalton  
Cllr Stephanie Haynes

Cllr Mak Singh  
Cllr Udey Singh

### **In Attendance**

Fiona Brennan  
Alison Hinds  
Shelley Humphries  
Darren Martindale  
Shaquille Spence  
Jazmine Walker

Black Country and West Birmingham CCG  
Deputy Director for Social Care  
Democratic Services Officer  
Virtual School Head  
Participation Officer  
Head of Service - Children and Young People in Care

A member of the Children in Care Council was also welcomed as a guest presenter.

*Item No.*    *Title*

**1        Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from member of the Corporate Parenting Board, Councillor Paula Brookfield.

Apologies were also received from Emma Bennett.

**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 25 November 2021**

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2021 be confirmed as correct record subject to the correction to minute 7:

A query was raised around the number of independent residential homes across the City and if these figures could be provided.

and its resolution:

3. That the number of independent residential homes across the City be provided.

**4        Matters arising**

In respect of minute 7, it was requested that a written response be provided to the request for the number of independent residential homes across the City.

It was raised that feedback from young people suggested previous presentations to the Corporate Parenting Board had not been met with much challenge from attendees present. Members and attendees were encouraged to engage with young people when presenting their items.

Resolved:

That a written response be provided to the request for the number of independent residential homes across the City.

**5        Schedule of outstanding matters**

Jazmine Walker, Head of Children and Young People in Care presented the Schedule of Outstanding Matters report on actions previously considered by the Board and highlighted salient points.

In addition to the information contained within the report it was noted that, in respect of the item from 10 June 2021, this action would be taken forward by Jazmine Walker in the absence of the Corporate Parenting Officer who had now left post. It was

reported that, although a date had not yet been finalised, conversations were ongoing with Fiona Brennan, Black Country and West Birmingham CCG in respect of inviting young people to the Strategic Health Steering Group.

Resolved:

That the Schedule of Outstanding Matters be received.

## 6 **Children in Care Council (CiCC) Annual Survey**

A member of the Children in Care Council delivered the presentation on the outcomes of the CiCC Annual Survey conducted for 2022. It was reported that each year, the CiCC produce a survey to gain feedback from young people on the support received which was used to highlight key issues and identify areas of improvement for the Children and Young People in Care service.

The presentation outlined a set of questions that had been developed for the survey. It was confirmed that the questions would be reviewed at the next CiCC meeting and, once agreed, the finalised surveys would be distributed to young people in a variety of formats and channels, including a digital link being made available on the Children in Care website and Foster carer portal.

It was queried whether the survey could include a question asking which type of setting the child or young person was placed in to gain an understanding of which services and settings were working most effectively. It was noted that this would be considered for inclusion.

A query was raised around how quickly the service typically responded to emerging concerns highlighted by survey feedback. It was confirmed that results were continually shared with the Head of Children and Young People in Care and the service managers team would compose an action plan to respond. It was noted that this practice was maintained as a matter of course to identify areas of development as well as a response to high level concerns.

A query was raised around how satisfied young people were with the existing services based on previous feedback. It was thought young people were generally happy from the feedback in other areas, however it was important that surveys were completed and returned to gather as much information as possible.

It was noted that the Service Manager for Children and Young People in Care would be attending the next Children in Care Council meeting to support work on the survey.

It was confirmed that the questions referencing reviews related to reviews with Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) and personal education plan (PEP) reviews undertaken by the school.

A query was raised around the number of questions and how to encourage as many young people to participate in the survey as possible. It was noted the intention was to keep the questions direct and the number edited down to maintain interest.

In response to a query on how the data was tracked, it was confirmed that the feedback from the CiCC survey would be analysed by the CiCC and Council officers.

It was added that the intention this year was to compile a set of questions that remained the same for each survey going forward so data could be tracked year on year and the final set would be co-produced jointly with the young people of CiCC and Children's Services.

The work was commended and a query raised around the questions on personal education plan (PEP) reviews. It was noted that feedback from the survey would be collated with data from PEP dip-sampling undertaken by the Virtual School Head to inform how young people wished to engage with their PEP reviews going forward.

In the chat area, Fiona Brennan, Black Country and West Birmingham CCG offered to share the survey with health colleagues to distribute to the children and young people in care they came into contact with.

Resolved:

1. That the Children in Care Council Annual Survey presentation be received.
2. That a question gathering information on types of settings would be considered for inclusion in the Children in Care Council Annual Survey.

## 7 **Virtual School Head Annual Report 2021**

Darren Martindale presented the Virtual School Head Annual Report in his capacity as Virtual School Head and highlighted salient points.

The report detailed educational progress and achievements of Wolverhampton's Children and Young People in Care and previously in care, the steps that the Authority had taken to support those achievements and priorities for future work.

It was acknowledged that two young people achieving first class degrees with honours was a huge positive and great success.

In terms of personal education plans (PEPS) for sixth formers, it was queried why completion rates were so low and if the young people had been asked why this was. It was noted that some of the factors included technical or recording issues, staff changes or challenges arranging timely meetings. It was clarified that years 12 and 13 were showing an 82% completion rate.

A concern was raised around the use of teacher assessments during the pandemic in lieu of examinations and whether previous assessment methods would return. There were fears some young people may have missed out on achieving their potential grades due to them performing better in an examination situation. It was expected there may potentially be a greater emphasis on examinations this year as any remaining restrictions lifted, although this was not confirmed as yet. It was acknowledged that whilst some young people thrived in an examination, many performed better in a summative assessment. Work was also being undertaken on supporting young people to prepare for examinations.

A query was raised around a higher number of males than females being assessed at entry level post-16. It was acknowledged that this year there had been more females assessed at higher levels, however this was monitored and no concerning trends had emerged. Assurances were offered that monitoring would continue and

any patterns that became apparent would be examined in greater detail to understand why.

It was confirmed that pupil premium was set at a national standard and was offered to authorities as a lump sum which was divided into £2,345 per pupil. It was noted that each local authority managed this differently, but in Wolverhampton, money was provided to schools in termly instalments and tracked using PEPs.

A concern was raised around the response to exclusions as a result of extreme behaviours or violence, particularly those involving a weapon or prohibited article. Members were assured that exclusion or risk of exclusion cases of this nature were worked on closely involving the young person, their parent or carer and a multi-agency team.

It was noted that no recent data was available due to delays caused by COVID however, historically, Wolverhampton was below national average in terms of fixed term exclusions and permanent exclusions were exceptionally rare. A small amount of pupil premium was reserved for fund additional support for those with additional need.

It was clarified that recorded incidents of extreme behaviours often involved spontaneous behaviour that challenged due to dysregulation or behaviour used to communicate an unmet need and every effort was made to identify the cause and appropriately support the young person.

In response to a query around pupil premium it was clarified that, in Wolverhampton, any support typically started at the same time as the child entered a setting even if there was a short delay in receiving the funding. It was confirmed that pupil premium was paid to the setting the child was primarily attending. In the rare event that a child was excluded and temporarily moved to another setting, such as a pupil referral unit (PRU) or alternative provider, it was confirmed that the money would be paid to that setting, a process made simpler by the termly instalments.

The information within the report, achievements of the children and young people and the work undertaken to support them in their education was commended. Members were thanked for their engagement and support.

Resolved:

That the Virtual School Head Annual Report 2021 be received.

8 **Children and Young People's Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy 2021 - 2024**

Resolved:

That the Children and Young People's Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy 2021 – 2024 item be deferred until the next meeting.

## 9 **Support for Care Leavers Over Christmas 2021**

Jazmine Walker, Head of Service - Children and Young People in Care presented the Support for Care Leavers Over Christmas 2021 report and highlighted salient points. The report outlined the support provided to Care Leavers during Christmas 2021 facilitated through the REACH team over the continued COVID-19 pandemic.

It was reported that the Christmas period often impacted on the vulnerabilities of Wolverhampton's young people who have left Wolverhampton's care, leaving them more isolated, struggling financially and at risk of exploitation. The report set out how the service took steps to mitigate against this, whilst maintaining current COVID-19 guidelines and protecting the health and safety of this group of young people. 80 such young people had been identified as being in this position and having no contact with anyone over the holiday period.

The support included gifts, confectionary and cards donated from various sources to ensure the young people felt valued and that they were being thought of and gifts were chosen with each individual in mind. Financial support was also provided to assist with utilities and food, as well as food delivery vouchers for the 45 young people living out of City to allow to them to benefit from ordering a takeaway meal in the cuisine of their choice.

COVID restrictions had prevented gatherings from being held over the Christmas period however the events were postponed and survival guides provided containing strategies on coping over the holiday period.

Resolved:

That the Support for Care Leavers Over Christmas 2021 report be received.

## 10 **Performance Monitoring Information**

Alison Hinds, Deputy Director of Social Care presented the Performance Monitoring Information and highlighted salient points. The report provided an update on service performance as at 31 December 2021 and questions were invited.

The number entering care had stabilised since November and there was a positive performance to report in terms of placement stability. It was confirmed that a breakdown of how many children were in each placement type was included in the Placement Analysis section of the report

It was noted that an improved performance had been seen in children receiving up to date assessments and reviews as well as a high level of young people participating in their reviews.

A high level had been seen in years 12 and 13 and Early Years PEPs completion however a slight dip had been seen in school age children which had affected the averages.

Health assessments were returning to pre-COVID levels along with improvements seen following the review of the reporting system. Dental checks were now at 80% also returning to pre-COVID levels.

Adoption orders had increased which had been expected as previously delayed cases moved through court. Improvements had also been seen in terms of timeliness.

Care leavers had performed well in education, employment and training despite the challenges presented by the pandemic. Those in suitable accommodation had also improved on last year.

It was confirmed a typographical error had been spotted in relation to the year the data referred to.

A query was raised around whether the number of adoptions was expected to rise as matches began to be made and delayed cases moved through the courts. Assurances were offered that children continued to be adopted and placed throughout the pandemic and the low figures seen last year was as a result of court delays.

A query was raised around unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) arriving within the City and if this had had an impact on children's services. It was confirmed a small number of young people arrived through the hotel in the City. It was reported that the majority of these arrived with their families via the planned National Transfer Scheme, although occasionally there were spontaneous arrivals which accounted for some of the UASC.

It was noted that families arriving together were supported as a family unit with provision of food and essential items, although safeguarding was also in place as appropriate; only those that were UASC would be involved with the care service. There had been a very small number of young people disputing their age. It was confirmed that there had been more UASC than in previous years as a result of the recent events. Close work was being undertaken in partnership with SERCO to support families.

A query was raised around how the service supported children who wait longer as there were concerns on the impact to their emotional wellbeing whilst awaiting placement. Close work was being undertaken with Adoption@Heart and it was noted that the Adoption Interim Report scheduled for the March meeting would provide much more involved detail on the support offered to this cohort.

It was confirmed that every effort was made to secure a suitable and stable placement for each child using matching processes for plans of fostering or adoptions. Figures were not immediately available however it was agreed that the number of children who wait longer would be included in the Adoption Interim Report for the next meeting.

The Chair also referenced the Children's Residential Provision Review report that was due to be considered by Scrutiny Board on 2 February 2022 that may be of interest

Resolved:

1. That the Performance Monitoring Information report be received.
2. That the number of children who wait longer would be included in the Adoption Interim Report for the next meeting.

11 **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 falling within paragraph 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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

No visits had taken place since the last meeting of Corporate Parenting Board however it was noted that a visit was planned. Councillor Mary Bateman, Councillor Wendy Dalton, Councillor Rita Potter and Councillor Gurmukh Singh all expressed an interest in attending and were advised they would be contacted to confirm details. Any other members wishing to attend were invited to contact Jazmine Walker, Head of Service – Children and Young People in Care.

Resolved:

That Councillors be contacted to confirm a visit to a residential home.