

Attendance

Chair Cllr Beverley Momenabadi (Lab)
Vice-Chair Cllr Wendy Dalton (Con)

Labour

Cllr Qaiser Azeem
Cllr Lovinyer Daley

Cllr Barbara McGarrity QN
Cllr Rita Potter

Cllr Clare Simm

Conservative

Cllr Mak Singh

Cllr Udey Singh

In Attendance

Fiona Brennan
Hannah Finch
Rebecca Grainger
Dr Wendy Harrison-Frazer
Shelley Humphries
Sonia Mahay
Laura Powell
Jazmine Walker
Lisa Whelan

Black Country ICB
Corporate Parenting Officer
Black Country ICB
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)
Democratic Services Officer
Service Manager for Safeguarding and Exploitation
Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust
Head of Children and Young People in Care
Service Manager, Fostering Service

Corporate Parenting Board also welcomed one Foster Carer.

Item No. *Title*

1 Apologies for absence

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

Apologies were also received from Emma Bennett and Alison Hinds.

2 Declarations of interest

Councillor Barbara McGarrity QN declared an interest in so far as she is a Private Counsellor.

3 Minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2022

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2022 be confirmed as a 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

Hannah Finch, Corporate Parenting Officer presented the report on current progress on matters previously considered by the Board.

In addition to the information contained within the report, an update was provided on the range of support in place for young people in or leaving care in year 12 with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). This included support in school and college settings as well as for those not in education, employment or training (NEET). A range of support was in place for those wishing to access higher education such as the provision of extended education, health and care plans (EHCPs), assistance with UCAS applications and a recently appointed, dedicated SEND Support Officer for Vulnerable Pupils.

Resolved:

That the Schedule of Outstanding Matters be received.

6 Health Services for Children and Young People in Care Annual Report 2021 - 2022

Fiona Brennan, Black Country ICB and Laura Powell, Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust presented the Health Services for Children and Young People in Care Annual Report 2021 – 2022 and highlighted salient points. The report provided a summary of the key areas of development and outcomes achieved by local health service providers between August 2021 – July 2022.

In respect of data on children and young people being placed more than 50 miles away, it was noted that only Wolverhampton's data was available at the time the report was published, although data held by other authorities in the Black Country footprint had been requested. It was agreed that this data be shared with Councillors once it became available.

It was requested that details be provided on how many unaccompanied asylum-seeking children there were; it was noted that as at March 2022 there were 56 recorded however this had changed therefore updated figures would be provided at the next meeting.

It was clarified that entitlement to free prescriptions for care leavers had been extended up until the age of 25 years.

Adoption@heart was confirmed as the regional adoption agency which was a shared service and not a private company.

In response to a query on whether unaccompanied asylum-seeking children were fast-tracked onto immunisation programmes, it was confirmed that steps were taken to ensure vaccination schedules were followed by incorporating this into an initial health assessment and six-week follow-up with the named nurse for children and young people in care.

It was queried whether there was any expectation for the current cost of living crisis to impact the number of children and young people entering care and the planned response. It was acknowledged that poverty was often a factor that impacted family functioning although no evidence of an increase in numbers had been seen as yet. Early Help and Strengthening Families offers were in place to provide intervention as soon as possible, as well as access to the Household Support Fund to help support vulnerable families.

A query was raised around whether the rising cost of living was discouraging new foster carers coming forward. Health partners acknowledged that this was a concern and therefore a priority and reported an increase in resources placed across the health economy and wider system to offer support.

The report and associated workstreams were commended and it was acknowledged that support in place for children and young people in care and care leavers was strong.

It was requested that a further update be provided by Black Country ICB at the next meeting, particularly on the free prescriptions offer.

Thanks were extended to Fiona Brennan for all her hard work and contributions to the Board and Rebecca Grainger was welcomed as the new representative from the Black Country ICB going forward.

Resolved:

1. That current numbers of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children be shared with Councillors.

2. That data held by neighbouring authorities in the Black Country footprint on children and young people being placed more than 50 miles away be provided to Councillors.
3. That a further health update be provided by Black Country ICB at the next meeting with a focus on the free prescriptions offer.

7 Annual Fostering Report 2021 - 2022

Lisa Whelan, Service Manager, Fostering Service presented the Annual Fostering Report 2021 – 2022 and highlighted salient points. The report provided a description of the structure, aims and duties of the City of Wolverhampton Fostering Service and detailed the performance of the service over the last twelve months.

In respect of foster carer retention, a query was raised whether foster carers had been leaving the role to take on Special Guardianship Orders (SGO). It was reported that there were a few who did this, although the majority of foster carers normally only left care once they felt ready to retire completely. Exact numbers of those who had chosen to finish as a result of SGOs were requested by Councillors.

It was confirmed that there was support available upon request in terms of nursery or childcare offer to allow foster carers to attend work or undertake necessary training.

Concerns were raised in terms of foster carer retention as a result of the cost of living crisis and it was noted that this would be picked up in the next report.

Resolved:

1. That the Annual Fostering Report – 2021-2022 be approved.
2. That exact figures of those who had ceased to be a foster carer because of a Special Guardianship Order be provided to Councillors.

8 Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report 2021 - 2022

Sonia Mahay, Service Manager for Safeguarding and Exploitation presented the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report 2021 – 2022 and highlighted key points.

The report outlined the activity of the IRO service, the impact for children and recommendations for service improvement that will enhance young people's experiences. This included the numerous tailored approaches used to engage children and young people to participate actively in their review, whilst taking their wishes and feelings into account.

A brief overview of the role of an IRO and the service was provided for new members of Corporate Parenting Board.

Resolved:

- That the Annual Report of the Independent Reviewing Officer Service 2021-2022 be endorsed.

9 **Care Leavers' Week**

Hannah Finch, Corporate Parenting Officer provided a verbal update on the timetable of local events and activities planned for young people leaving care to mark National Care Leavers' Week which ran from 24 – 28 October 2022.

Board members were encouraged to attend any events where possible and spread the message to local businesses and organisations that any offers of volunteers or donations of prizes would be gratefully welcomed.

Resolved:

That the Care Leavers' Week Update be received.

10 **Performance Monitoring Information**

Jazmine Walker, Head of Service for 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 31 July 2022. It was noted that much had been covered already during the other agenda items and there were no further questions.

Resolved:

That the Performance Monitoring Information report be received.

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**

Councillor Lovinyer Daley, Councillor Claire Simm, Councillor Rita Potter and Councillor Udey Singh all expressed an interest in attending and it was agreed that Councillors would be contacted to arrange visits to establishments.

Resolved:

That Councillor Lovinyer Daley, Councillor Claire Simm, Councillor Rita Potter and Councillor Udey Singh be contacted to arrange an establishment visit.