

Attendance

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

Labour

Cllr Qaiser Azeem
Cllr Lovinyer Daley

Cllr Jasbinder Dehar
Cllr Barbara McGarrity QN

Cllr Rita Potter
Cllr Clare Simm

Conservative

Cllr Mak Singh

In Attendance

Emma Bennett Executive Director of Families
Hannah Finch Corporate Parenting Officer
Becky Grainger Designated Nurse for CYPIC, Black Country ICB
Alison Hinds Deputy Director of Social Care
Shelley Humphries Democratic Services Officer
Dr Stephanie Simon Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust
Jazmine Walker Head of Service Children and Young People in Care

The Board also welcomed one Foster Carer and members of the Care Leavers' Independent Collective.

Item No. *Title*

1 Apologies for absence

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

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 22 September 2022

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2022 be confirmed as a correct record.

4 Matters arising

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

5 Schedule of outstanding matters

Jazmine Walker, Head of Service Children and Young People in Care presented the report on current progress on matters previously considered by the Board.

An update was provided for the numbers of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who were also care leavers supported by City of Wolverhampton Council during 2022. An update was also provided for foster carers with special guardianship orders as requested at the last meeting of Corporate Parenting Board.

Rebecca Grainger, Black Country ICB provided figures from neighbouring authorities on children in care being placed more than 50 miles away from home which had not been available at the last meeting. It was noted that Walsall recorded those placed over 20 miles from home whilst all other authorities recorded 50 plus. The percentages were as follows:

- 6.9% - Wolverhampton
- 16.8 % - Walsall (20 miles plus)
- 4.7% - Sandwell
- 5.1% - Dudley

It was also reported that the decision to support free NHS prescriptions for care leavers up to the age of 25 years had been declined by the Black Country ICB Health Inequalities Board citing challenges faced with commissioning. The matter had been escalated and was due to be presented to Executive Management Board for further consideration. Advice was also being sought from colleagues at Greater Manchester ICB, where a similar scheme had already been successfully implemented.

It was queried whether participation of care leaver representatives in the upcoming Black Country ICB meetings may lend weight to the proposals as young people could advocate for themselves and outline what exemption from prescription charges would mean for them. This suggestion would be taken away to consider and an update would be provided once more information was available.

Hannah Finch, Corporate Parenting Officer shared that Councillors had been contacted with upcoming dates for establishment visits.

Resolved:

1. That the Schedule of Outstanding Matters be received.
2. That a further update be provided from Black Country ICB on free prescriptions for care leavers up to the age of 25 years once this became available.

6 **Missing Children and Young People in Care**

Laura Wood, Service Manager for Children and Young People in Care and Leaving Care presented the Missing Children and Young People in Care report and highlighted salient points. The report sought to update Corporate Parenting Board on the challenges and actions identified when reducing the number of missing episodes for all children and young people in care and progress made to disrupt recurring missing episodes.

It was acknowledged that the figures may appear alarming however a missing episode was wide-ranging in definition and typically referred to any period (however short) that a child or young person was away from their placement or care setting without their carer's knowledge and/or permission.

In response to a query around the format of social work visits following a missing episode, it was noted that these took place in person wherever possible to establish trust with the young person and gain the advantage of reading any body language which would be missed on a video or audio call. Virtual sessions only took place where face to face was not possible.

The Multi-Agency Child Exploitation panel process was commended as successful and it was agreed to share details of the methodology used to achieve these outcomes with Councillors.

Following an observation that missing episodes had increased after COVID, it was noted that the lifting of lockdown restrictions had presented more opportunities to leave. Episodes had dipped during lockdown as most young people were observing government guidelines.

In response to a query around timeliness of risk assessments, it was acknowledged that these were consistently taking place however there could sometimes be a delay uploading case details to the system.

Following a request for the bi-monthly update on the management oversight of missing episodes to be shared with Councillors, it was noted that this would be managed by the Insight and Performance Team and data could be embedded into the Performance Monitoring Information dashboard presented at each Corporate Parenting Board meeting.

A query was raised around what the response would be to any young person not wishing to co-operate at all with meetings related to missing episodes. It was noted that there may be many factors causing this, but it would be considered that the young person may be victim to exploitation. Officers would then approach the young person's network of trusted people to gain an understanding of the full circumstances and inform the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and other relevant parties accordingly. It was acknowledged again that establishing trust was key and persistence in demonstrating to the young person that the Council would not give up on offering their support as their safety and wellbeing was paramount.

An example was provided of one young person who, despite insistence that they were happy in their placement, would abscond to be with someone deemed inappropriate. After working with the young person, an agreement was reached with a semi-independent living arrangement with wraparound support.

Resolved:

1. That the Missing Children and Young People in Care report be received.
2. That analytics on management of missing children and young people in care be included in the Performance Monitoring Information Report rather than a six-monthly review.
3. That the challenges and actions identified to decrease missing episodes for all children and young people in care be noted.
4. That details of the Multi-Agency Child Exploitation panel process be shared with Councillors.

7 Children with Complex Needs and Disabilities Children's Homes Review

Courtney Abbott, Quality and Improvement Advanced Practitioner presented the Children with Complex Needs and Disabilities Children's Homes Review report and highlighted key points. The purpose of the report was to provide assurance to Corporate Parenting Board that Quality and Safety Reviews had been completed and that children and young people with Complex Needs and Disabilities were provided with safe and good quality Children's Homes.

It was reported that the Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) Panel was currently undertaking a national review into safeguarding children with disabilities and complex health needs in Children's Homes. It was identified that 12 children and young people with disabilities and/or complex needs were currently residing in Children's Homes; these homes were not included among the 48 identified by Ofsted therefore a nil return was submitted to CSPR Panel, however City of Wolverhampton Council undertook to complete a review of them as an additional oversight.

In respect of the young person receiving tuition, it was queried what tuition they were receiving. It was noted that the young person's exact circumstances were not known personally to officers in attendance at the meeting, however Maths and English were typically taught to a high standard with methodology aimed at the ability level of each young person.

In respect of the young person described at paragraph 3.7 section d., it was queried what skills were being taught in place of education provision and whether they were meaningful. Assurances were offered that, whilst this particular young person's

situation was not known personally, the skills taught could range from life skills to a vocation, such as car repair or hair styling. The skills taught were again bespoke to each young person's needs and abilities.

Resolved:

That Corporate Parenting Board endorse the Children with Complex Needs and Disabilities Children's Homes Review report.

8 **The Reach Leaving Care Offer Review 2022**

Samantha Grainger, Team Manager – REACH Leaving Care and Hannah Finch, Corporate Parenting Officer and Hannah Finch, Corporate Parenting Officer co-presented the Reach Leaving Care Offer Review 2022 and highlighted key points. The report provided an overview of the Care Leaver Offer and the outcomes of the annual review. It was reported that since the previous Local Offer Review in 2021, the City of Wolverhampton has continued to regularly update and increase its Local Offer in line with the needs and requests of the care experienced young people it supports.

In terms of the engagement sessions with young people, it was queried whether there had been any concerns around them feeling too shy or uncomfortable to share their views in a group setting and if this would hinder the feedback. It was noted that an interactive digital platform had been used for some activities where users could anonymously provide instant feedback to a question or vote for a number of options using an electronic device. It was highlighted that this worked well for some exercises however, following feedback from the young people participating in last year's review, other face to face activities had also been incorporated to gather views.

It was queried how well publicised the Offer was and how young people were reached to make them aware of what they could access. It was noted that the Offer was advertised on the website and information on what was available was passed on to care leavers via a range of professionals that they were likely to encounter, such as Young Person's Advisors (YPAs) mentors. Ways of finding out how well the young people knew the Offer had been built into the engagement exercises to better understand which areas needed promoting wider. Young people present voiced that they felt some aspects of the Offer could be explained more thoroughly by YPAs.

The offer was commended and members stated they felt reassured that care leavers' views were being listened to and used to shape the offer. Young people present added that they felt proud to have contributed their feedback and suggestions for improvements, as well as the positive impact made possible by the Offer.

Resolved:

1. That the update on the review process undertaken of the Care Leaver Local Offer be received.
2. That the findings within the Reach Leaving Care Offer Review 2022 report as outlined at 3.0 be noted.

9 **Virtual School Head Annual Report 2022**

Darren Martindale, Virtual School Head presented the Virtual School Head Annual Report 2022 and highlighted salient points. The report sought to highlight the

educational outcomes of Wolverhampton's children and young people in care and care leavers from September 2021-July 2022, and how these have been supported by the Council, schools and other key partners. It also highlights notable successes as well as future priorities and areas for development. The report also offered Members an understanding in a number of areas pertinent to the achievement of children and young people in care.

The Virtual School Head Annual Report 2022 and work undertaken to support children and young people in care in their education was highly commended.

A query was raised in terms of recent GSCE results and how they compared with 2020. It was confirmed that, whilst results were still encouraging with 19% gaining a Grade 4 or above in both maths and English in 2022, results had been slightly better during 2020 and 2021. Results had been determined using teacher assessments during this period due to COVID and it was thought this supported the theory that examinations were not universally suitable for every student and some young people were capable of achieving better results through assessments.

It was highlighted that Wolverhampton had been regarded as 'good' by Ofsted however a query was raised around the impact of work undertaken to tackle school absences. It was noted that it had been recognised as an area in need of improvement and work was continually ongoing in this area. It was reported that there had been a reduction in persistent absences which had been small but reassuring.

Resolved:

That the Virtual School Head Annual Report 2022 be received.

10 **Performance Monitoring Information**

Alison Hinds, Deputy Director for Social Care presented the Performance Monitoring Information report and highlighted salient points. The report provided analytics on performance in a number of areas relating to children and young people in care.

The higher proportion of males to females outlined at agenda pack page 66 was queried and it was confirmed that it was currently being investigated to understand why this was.

In response to a query around timeliness of initial health assessments being quite low compared with previous years, it was noted that these should be carried out within 20 working days of entering care, which, whilst not impossible, was often a tight timescale to achieve. Assurance was offered that both the Authority and health colleagues were working to gain an understanding of why targets were not being met in individual cases to continually improve.

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**

It was reported that two bookings had been confirmed for Councillors to visit Upper Pendeford Farm and extra dates were being scheduled in.

The Chair reminded all Corporate Parenting Board members who had not done so to book in a Total Respect training session which were to be held in February 2023. These workshop sessions were designed to provide Councillors with valuable insight on challenges faced by children and young people in care to ensure Councillors understood and discharged their duty as Corporate Parents effectively.

Resolved:

1. That Councillors interested in visiting Upper Pendeford Farm contact Hannah Finch, Corporate Parenting Officer.
2. That all Corporate Parenting Board members book a Total Respect training session for February 2023.