



Corporate Parenting Board

Minutes - 23 October 2014

Attendance

Chair Cllr Val Gibson (Lab)

Labour

Cllr Paula Brookfield
Cllr Susan Constable

Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre
Cllr Julie Hodgkiss

Cllr Rita Potter
Cllr Martin Waite

Conservative

Employees

Daphne Atkinson
Emma Bennett
Carl Craney
Alison Hinds
Darren Martindale

Senior Consultant Social Worker, Community Directorate
Assistant Director - Children, Young People and Families
Democratic Support Officer
Head of Looked After Children
COPE Team Manager/Virtual School Head, Community Directorate

Item No. Title

1 Apologies for absence (if any)

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllrs Mrs Christine Mills and Mrs Patricia Patten.

2 Declarations of interests (if any)

Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre declared personal interests in any matters pertaining to Woodthorne School [Chair of Governors], Central Learning Partnership (Heath Park, Moseley Park and Woden Primary Schools) [Director], Catch 22 [Director], City of Wolverhampton College [Governor] and Graiseley Primary School [Governor].

3 Minutes of the previous meeting (11 September 2014)

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2014 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair subject to the following amendment:

Minute No. 6 – sixth paragraph of the preamble – delete “mean rather than median” and substitute “median rather than mean”.

4 Matters arising

With reference to Minute No. 4 insofar as it referred to the circulation of a Briefing Note being circulated to Members of the Board regarding arrangements for Health Checks for Looked After Children, the Chair, Cllr Val Gibson queried as to whether the Briefing Note had yet been circulated. Emma Bennett acknowledged that the Briefing Note had not yet been circulated but that the arrangements for the service were currently being reviewed by the Wolverhampton City Clinical Commissioning Group with the Royal Wolverhampton Hospitals NHS Trust. It was therefore agreed that the Briefing Note was no longer required. Cllr Paula Brookfield questioned the timeliness of health and dental checks for Looked After Children especially those residing out of the City. The Chair, Cllr Val Gibson reminded the Board that this information was included within the Performance Data report to be considered later in the meeting.

With reference to Minute No. 7 Cllr Martin Waite referred to the comment he had made with regard to anecdotal evidence of a Social Worker encouraging a care leaver to spend the accrued savings to prevent prejudicial treatment in respect of receipt of benefits. He advised that he did not feel that summed up accurately his comments which he believed had been made in stronger terms. In any event he suggested that consideration be given to lobbying the Local Government Association and the Department for Work and Pensions for the accrued savings of care leavers to be disregarded for the purpose of the calculation of entitlements to benefits.

Resolved:

That consideration be given to lobbying the Local Government Association and the Department for Work and Pensions for the accrued savings of care leavers to be disregarded for the purpose of the calculation of entitlements to benefits.

5 **Performance Monitoring - Looked After Children (LAC)**

Emma Bennett presented Performance Monitoring Information as at the end of September 2014.

Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre drew to the attention of the Board that the report had only been circulated to Members of the Board that day and, accordingly, he had not had sufficient time to consider the contents or for strategic oversight to be given to the contents. He requested that, in future, such information be circulated with the Agenda and supporting papers for the meeting seven days in advance in accordance with the Council's Constitution and statutory requirements. Emma Bennett explained the unavoidable reasons for the delay in circulation of the information and undertook to ensure that, in future, the information would be included with the supporting papers and circulated in advance of the meeting.

With reference to the information in connection with "Up to date reviews", Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre commented that the 95% performance appeared to be good but questioned the national position. Emma Bennett advised that she understood that the performance compared favourably with both similar Council's and the national position but undertook to check the position. She also undertook to ensure that comparative information was included in future reports. Cllr Paula Brookfield requested an assurance that the same children were not missing reviews on a repeat basis. Emma Bennett assured the Board that this was not the case and explained reasons behind reviews being missed. In response to a further question from Cllr Paula Brookfield in connection with the timeliness of health and dental checks for Looked After Children, especially those in Out of City placements, she reminded the Board of the arrangements for conducting such reviews. She reminded the Board that the Performance Monitoring Information was largely quantitative data but that qualitative data was included within the relevant Annual Reports, in this case that presented by the Independent Review Officers.

Cllr Rita Potter enquired as to whether Looked After Children were encouraged to take responsibility for their personal health and were informed of the problems which could occur later in life resulting from missing dental check appointments. Emma Bennett advised that in her opinion 86% take up was a good performance and was likely to surpass that of the non LAC population. Cllr Martin Waite suggested that the Council's performance with LAC should be benchmarked against that of the local population.

With reference to the information in connection with "PEP's up to Date", Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre queried as to whether these were now in place for Looked After Children up to the age of 18 years old. Darren Martindale explained the new statutory guidance and confirmed that education providers had been requested to make the necessary arrangements for PEP's to be in place for 16 to 18 year olds. Emma

Bennett commented that it might be that the newly included year groups were not yet included within the data in the report.

With reference to the information in connection with "School Attendance", Cllr Julie Hodgkiss enquired as to the reason for performance data not being included within the report. Darren Martindale commented that the information was collected but he was unsure why it had not been included within the report. Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre reported on the practice of the Department for Education in calculating attendance based on the position as at the summer half term and re-aggregating this figure over the school year. He enquired as to whether it would be possible for the Council to use a similar method of calculation. Emma Bennett reported that the Council analysed attendance data on a half termly basis thus enabling steps to be taken to address any issues at the earliest opportunity. She undertook to investigate the reasons behind the information not being included in the report.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted and the thanks of the Board be extended to the relevant Officers for the improvements in performance.

6 **Fostering Service Annual Report**

Daphne Atkinson presented the Fostering Service Annual Report for the period from April 2013 to March 2014. The report was to assist the Board in having a clear understanding of the work undertaken by the Fostering Service. The Chair, Cllr Val Gibson together with Cllrs Dr Michael Hardacre and Rita Potter suggested some minor amendments to the report which make it more comprehensible to lay readers.

Cllr Rita Potter referred to paragraph 12.4 of the report insofar as it referred to the de-registration of three foster carers due to safeguarding issues and enquired as to why the potential unsuitability of these carers had not been identified at the point of recruitment. Daphne Atkinson outlined the robust screening procedures used at the point of recruitment but advised that it was not always possible to identify or predict how potential foster carers would respond once registered.

Cllr Rita Potter enquired as to the timescales from initial point of contact to registration as a foster carer. Alison Hinds advised that the timescale varied on an individual basis but that there was a target of 640 days.

In response to a question from Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre, Daphne Atkinson reported on the rigorous checks made in respect of potential "Family and Friends Carers (Connected Persons)" which were no different from the checks undertaken for mainstream foster carers.

Cllr Rita Potter enquired as to the responsibility for undertaking necessary and appropriate checks on those foster carers employed through Independent Fostering agencies. Alison Hinds reported that the checks were undertaken by the employing Fostering Agency and reminded the Board that regular Ofsted inspections were also undertaken.

Resolved:

1. That the report be received and noted;

2. That the thanks of the Board be extended to all those involved with the Fostering Service with particular thanks to those Social Workers involved in the recruitment campaign.

7 To meet representatives of Foster Carers'

The Chair, Cllr Val Gibson, welcomed to the meeting Craig Veasey, Elaine Homer and Samantha Cook. The representatives of the Foster Carers' responded to various questions from Members of the Board on topics including:

- Positive and negative aspects of fostering;
- Length of time as a foster carer and the number of children fostered;
- Whether fostering as a profession had been recommended to acquaintances/ friends/relatives;
- Whether a transition from fostering to adopting had been contemplated;
- Contact arrangements following cessation of fostering;
- Suggestions for recruitment initiatives;
- Criticisms of the existing arrangements;
- Level of contact and support from the Council;
- Experience with the education system;
- Differentials between mainstream and family and friends;
- Communication with the Council;
- Training requirements.

The representatives of the Foster Carers' advised that the invitation to attend this meeting had been publicised in the Fostering Newsletter and that no matters of concern had been raised to be drawn to the attention of the Board.

Resolved:

1. That the thanks of the Board be extended to Craig Veasey, Elaine Homer and Samantha Cook for attending the meeting and the contributions made;
2. That an appropriate article be placed in the next edition of the Fostering Newsletter providing feedback on the outcome of the discussions held.

8 Exclusion of the public and press

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 contained in paragraph 1 of the Act, namely information relating to any individual.

Part 2 – items not open to the press and public

9 Councillors visits to establishments

Emma Bennett reported that she did not believe that any Councillor visits to establishments had been undertaken since the last meeting. Carl Craney advised the Board that Cllr Mrs Christine Mills had submitted an apology for absence for this meeting as she was recovering from an operation following the displacement of her retina but that she had been due to visit Brooklands on 19 September 2014.

[NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED]