

Corporate Parenting Board

Minutes - 21 April 2016

Attendance

Chair Cllr Val Gibson (Lab)

Labour

Cllr Jasbinder Dehar

Cllr Peter O'Neill

Cllr Martin Waite

Conservative

Cllr Christine Mills

Cllr Richard Whitehouse

Employees

Emma Bennett

Carl Craney

Alison Hinds

Puja Taloy

Andrew Scragg

Alice Vickers

Service Director - Children and Young People

Democratic Support Officer

Head of Looked After Children

Participation Officer

Youth Service Participation Worker

Corporate Parenting Officer

Representatives of the Care Leavers' Forum

Alicia Blewit

Gareth Rafferty

Representatives of the Children in Care Council

Nathan Jones

Brandon Jones

Kyron Hughes

Paige Hughes

Ben Reynolds

Mark White

Item No. *Title*

1 Apologies for absence (if any)

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllrs Paula Brookfield, Rita Potter and Stephen Simkins together with Fiona Brennan, Designated Nurse, Looked After Children, Wolverhampton City Clinical Commissioning Group.

2 Declarations of interests (if any)

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

3 Minutes of the meeting held on 23 February 2016

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 February 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 Matters arising

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 23 February 2016.

5 Schedule of outstanding matters

Carl Craney, Democratic Support Officer, presented a report which appraised the Board of the current position with a variety of matters considered at previous meetings of the Board. The Chair, Cllr Val Gibson, commented that reports in connection with the review of Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and academic achievements of Looked After Children and support provided to poor achievers had been considered at previous meetings and could, therefore, be deleted from the schedule.

With regard to teenage pregnancy – comparison of the number of under 18 conceptions against the national average, Emma Bennett, Service Director, Children and Young People, reported that from the latest available data (December 2014) the number of under 18 conceptions in Wolverhampton had almost halved over the previous six year period but was still higher significantly than the national average. The latest data indicated that there were 28.7 conceptions / 1,000 in Wolverhampton compared to the national average of 22.1 / 1,000. In 2014 there had been 150 under 18 conceptions in Wolverhampton compared to 300 in 2007. She undertook to arrange for the circulation of a Briefing Note on this matter to the Board.

Resolved:

1. That the report be received and noted;
2. That a Briefing Note in connection with a comparison of the number of under 18 conceptions against the national average be circulated to the Board.

6 "New Belongings"

Alison Hinds, Head of Service, Looked After Children, presented a report which updated the Board on the progress being made in relation to the implementation of "New Belongings" and the impact of this on Care Leavers of the City of Wolverhampton Council. She explained that in order to meet the "New Belongings" criteria it had been necessary for the Council to:

- Sign up to the Government's Care Leavers Charter;
- Have the personal support of the Managing Director who would ensure co-operation across the Local Authority and its partners to achieve the priorities of the project;
- Have a commitment to meeting the "New Belongings" team at the mid-point of the project to review progress;
- Have the personal support of the Leader who would engage with local groups and businesses that could offer opportunities and personal support to Care Leavers;
- Have a commitment to create a Care Leaver Forum which had real voice and influence;
- Have a commitment to develop a basic plan for the project, reflecting the Care Leavers' survey and the Government's Care Leavers' strategy; this would be delivered by a designated project lead and supported by sufficient resources including the Young Persons Advisors. The project plan needed to be approved and support given to the action plan for embedding into the Transition Service. The project was time-limited for 12 months and would be reported back to the Department for Education (DfE) and the Care Leavers' Foundation.

She advised that it was anticipated that by participating the Council would be able to set the foundation for an effective relationship between the local authority and Care Leavers so that trust between the two could be developed further.

She referred to the improved communication between the Council and Care Leavers' and the introduction of "Outcome Star" where all the Transition Team had been trained on its implementation, which was the tool that would be used with young people to measure progress and the impact of the support offered to Care Leavers. She reported also on the training available for internal and external foster carers', the availability of a "training flat" which afforded young people an opportunity to try living independently and the increase in the housing offer. The project had also led to a reduction in the number of Care Leavers' not in Education, Employment or Training. She explained that the project presented an opportunity to increase the amount of work undertaken with partners to increase the offer to Care Leavers'. A further survey amongst Care Leavers' was to be commenced shortly.

The Chair reported that the Cabinet had signed up formally to the Care Leavers Charter the previous evening and this decision would be ratified by the Council in due course.

Cllr Peter O'Neill welcomed the comments now made but expressed concern with regard to the mixed response received to the weekly Education Employment Training (EET) drop-in sessions which had begun in September 2015. He also took the opportunity to commend the Youth Zone and its success in engaging with Care Leavers' from the outset. He commented that this particular initiative appeared to

have been more successful in engaging with young people than the Youth Service had previously. The Head of Service, Looked After Children explained the reasons behind the mixed response and outlined the range of services available at the sessions. The Service Director for Children and Young People reported that approximately 75% of Care Leavers' who were available for work were engaged in Education Employment or Training and undertook to circulate a breakdown of this information to the Board.

Cllr Martin Waite enquired as to whether use was made of external mentors to assist Care Leavers' to find a pathway into work and to retain a position. He also questioned whether any work was carried out with larger employers in the city with regard to the corporate responsibility to Care Leavers'. Alice Vickers, Corporate Parenting Officers explained the initiatives which had been worked on with the Council's Procurement Team to include opportunities for Care Leavers' under social responsibility grounds in all contracts let by the Council. Furthermore, through the Care Leavers' Charter work was on-going with Spellor Metcalfe, one of the Council's contractors with a view to training being provided to increase the financial responsibility of Care Leavers' in order to build confidence and obtain appropriate qualifications. This work would be used as a template for roll out to other Council contractors and large employers in the city. With regard to the use of external mentors, this was being examined but was already in place through the "Aspire to University" initiative. It was also used in the "Talent Match" initiative.

Cllr Jasbinder Dehar welcomed the introduction of the regular Care Leavers' newsletter and the increased usage of Facebook to contact Care Leavers'. The Service Director, Children and Young People explained that the Facebook contact was through a closed group, that messages were checked each day and offered an opportunity to participate in employment interviews of appropriate employee positions. It had also been used recently to recruit Care Leavers' as Counting Assistants on the forthcoming Police and Crime Commissioner election.

Cllr Peter O'Neill commented that given that the Minister of State had been involved in the launch of the "New Belongings" project he was surprised that no funding from Central Government was available. He suggested that recognition be sought in terms of a financial contribution. The Head of Service, Looked After Children advised that the Minister of State would receive feedback on the success of the project. The Service Director, Children and Young People reported that the Council enjoyed benefits wider than financial recognition through the project.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

7 To meet with representatives of the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum to consider the "New Belongings" priorities and other matters of mutual interest.

Representatives from the Children in Care Council and the Care Leavers' Forum joined the meeting. At the invitation of the Chair introductions were duly made.

The Board and representatives from the Children in Care Council and the Care Leavers' Forum conducted two scenarios and duly reported back on the results.

Nathan Jones read out a poem which had been written by a Care Leaver on life in care.

The Chair reported that the Corporate Parenting Strategy had been approved formally in December 2015 and that the Care Leavers' Strategy had been approved by the Cabinet on 20 April 2016 and would be presented to the Council in due course. The Service Director, Children and Young People advised that the Care Leavers' Charter was a national document and that it was intended to produce a local charter which would be published and publicised in due course.

The Corporate Parenting Officer reported that a leaflet on the Corporate Parenting Strategy was now available and that meetings of the Children in Care Council and the Care Leavers' Forum had been scheduled in such a way as to enable all reports to be considered by the Corporate Parenting Board to be considered first by those Groups.

Resolved:

1. That the feedback from the two scenarios be written up and presented to the Children in Care Council, Care Leavers' Forum and the Board for checking and follow up as appropriate;
2. That the poem be displayed on the Corporate Website;
3. That the updates be received and noted;
4. That the thanks of the Board be extended to the representatives of the Children in Care Council and the Care Leavers' Forum for attending and participating in the meeting.

The representatives from the Children in Care Council and the Care Leavers' Forum left the meeting.

8 **Performance Monitoring Data**

The Service Director, Children and Young People, presented the Performance Report for March 2016 (data as at February 2016) and updated certain elements of the contents.

Cllr Peter O'Neill referred to the attendance of representatives from the Children in Care Council and the Care Leavers' Forum earlier in the meeting and reported that the sibling of one of those in attendance who was also in care, was being "fast tracked" into university and that another in attendance aspired to attend university as his sibling was currently attending.

The Chair enquired as to the reasons why 4% of assessments and reviews were not up to date. The Service Director, Children and Young People gave examples of the type of reasons for assessments and reviews not being up to date including the illness of the child or the foster carer, the Social Worker or the Independent Reviewing Officer.

Resolved:

1. That the report be received and noted;

2. That the thanks of the Board be extended to the Officers responsible for the production of the report and the efforts made to improve the data contained therein.

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

Part 2 items not open to the public and press

10 **Councillors visits to establishments**

No visits to establishments had been undertaken since the last meeting of the Board.

Resolved:

That the Corporate Parenting Officer liaise with Cllrs Peter O'Neill and Stephen Simkins with a view to a visit being undertaken to the Merridale Street West establishment.

11 **Cllrs Jasbinder Dehar and Richard Whitehouse and Carl Craney**

The Chair reported that this would be the last meeting of the Board to be attended by Cllr Jasbinder Dehar, who was not standing at the forthcoming Municipal Elections, Cllr Richard Whitehouse, who was retiring from the Council and Carl Craney, Democratic Support Officer, who was transferring to the West Midlands Combined Authority. She thanked the Councillors and the Officer for their contributions to the work of the Board.

Cllr Jasbinder Dehar offered her thanks to the Chair, fellow Councillors and the Officers.

12 **Thanks to the Chair**

Resolved:

That the best thanks of the Board be extended to the Chair, Cllr Val Gibson for the able and courteous manner in which she had conducted the proceedings of the Board during the 2015/16 Municipal Year.