

CITY OF
WOLVERHAMPTON
COUNCIL

Corporate Parenting Board

16 March 2017

Time	5.30 pm	Public Meeting?	YES	Type of meeting	Oversight
Venue	Committee Room 4 - Civic Centre				

Membership

Chair Cllr Val Gibson (Lab)
Vice-chair

Labour	Conservative	Liberal Democrat
Cllr Paula Brookfield	Cllr Christine Mills	
Cllr Julie Hodgkiss		
Cllr Lynne Moran		
Cllr Peter O'Neill		
Cllr Rita Potter		
Cllr Stephen Simkins		
Cllr Martin Waite		

Quorum for this meeting is three Councillors.

Information for the Public

If you have any queries about this meeting, please contact the democratic support team:

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Some items are discussed in private because of their confidential or commercial nature. These reports are not available to the public.

Agenda

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

- | <i>Item No.</i> | <i>Title</i> |
|-----------------|--|
| 1 | Apologies for absence |
| 2 | Declarations of interests |
| 3 | Minutes of the previous meeting - 26 January 2017 (Pages 3 - 8)
[To approve the minutes of the previous meeting as a correct record] |
| 4 | Matters arising
[To consider any matters arising] |
| 5 | Adoption Services Interim Report (Pages 9 - 18)
[Dawn Deans, Senior Social Work Manager – Adoption, to present report] |
| 6 | Corporate Parenting Strategy Update (Pages 19 - 24)
[Alice Vickers, Corporate Parenting Officer, to present report] |
| 7 | Performance Monitoring Information
[Emma Bennett, Service Director – Children and Young People, to present report]
[TO FOLLOW] |

Corporate Parenting Board

Agenda Item No: 3

Minutes - 26 January 2017

Attendance

Chair Cllr Val Gibson (Lab) (*for part of meeting*)

Labour

Cllr Julie Hodgkiss	Cllr Lynne Moran	Cllr Zee Russell
Cllr Hazel Malcolm	Cllr Peter O'Neill	Cllr Martin Waite

Conservative

Cllr Christine Mills

Employees

Emma Bennett	Service Director for Children and Young People
Alison Hinds	Head of Looked After Children
Darren Martindale	Virtual School Head for Looked After Children
Alice Vickers	Corporate Parenting Officer
Andrew Scragg	Participation Officer
Puja Taloy	Participation Officer
Mike Hooper	Democratic Services Officer

Item No. *Title*

1 Election of Chair for the Meeting

The Chair, Councillor Gibson, had provided notice that she would be delayed. In her absence, the Democratic Services Officer invited the Board to nominate a Chair for the meeting.

Resolved: That Councillor O'Neill take the Chair.

2 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Brookfield and Potter.

3 Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Minutes of the Meeting Held on 24 November 2016

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2016 be confirmed as correct record and signed by the Chair.

5 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

6 Children in Care Council Workshop

Puja Taloy and Andrew Scragg, Participation Officers, and members of the Children in Care Council joined the meeting.

P. Taloy led a workshop in which everyone present undertook a questionnaire entitled 'So You Think You Know LAC?' before discussing the answers.

Resolved:

1. That the 'So You Think You Know LAC?' questionnaire be circulated to Board members;
2. That P. Taloy, A. Scragg and the Children in Care Council be thanked for the workshop.

7 Care Leavers Forum Annual Report

Neither of the current co-Chairs of the Care Leavers Forum had been able to attend. In their absence, Casey Gavin, a previous Chair, presented the Care Leavers Forum Annual Report for 2016.

In response to questions from the Board, C. Gavin stated the following:

- Training flats enabled care leavers to recognise if they were ready for independence or if they would be better placed to remain in the system for the time being;
- Free WV Active gym memberships provided care leavers with new possibilities to form bonds;
- The ideal accommodation for a care leaver would be dependent on the character of the individual but a blank canvas on which they could express their personality would provide them with an opportunity they may not have had before;
- A peer mentor programme could be very beneficial as it could show care leavers that they had life opportunities and that they did not have to conform to stereotypes. A. Vickers added that she had spoken to Headstart about the potential for such a scheme.

Alice Vickers undertook to share online blogs from Care Leavers Week with Board members.

Councillor Hodgkiss suggested that the Forum could lobby for free travel for care leavers.

Resolved:

1. That C. Gavin be thanked for presenting and that the Care Leavers Annual Report for 2016 be noted;
2. That links to online blogs from Care Leavers Week be circulated to Board members.

8

Virtual School Head Annual Report 2015/16

Darren Martindale, Virtual School Head for Looked After Children (LAC), presented the Virtual School Head Annual Report for 2015/16.

In response to questions from the Board, D. Martindale stated the following:

- With regard to the impact that Pupil Premium had on the attainment of LAC pupils, the negative impact of 1.47% reflected the occasions when a young person may not be ready for intervention or one to one support. It was not a funding issue;
- The differentials between schools outside of and inside Wolverhampton were recognised and an officer had been appointed to focus upon out of city LAC. In addition, D. Martindale and his Teacher Advisor had placed additional focus on those young people and how the Pupil Premium was being used. Work was also underway to improve datasets to enable earlier intervention;
- The 'Aspire to Uni' project aimed to address the drop-off in attainment levels between KS2 and the taking of GCSEs through allowing access to university at KS3.
- It was important to track attainment levels and identify issues during teenage years as the data obtained could be quite blunt due to the varied issues affecting young people of that age. Many teenagers entering care already had entrenched educational issues but it should be recognised that many achieved beyond expectations and some GCSEs results had been excellent;

- Evidence indicated that children that weren't school-ready with regard to literacy skills continued to experience problems at KS1. For that reason, D. Martindale's team had been reconfigured to have officers focussed upon Early Years. Those officers would also look at the whether or not children born in the summer were particularly affected. E. Bennett, Service Director for Children and Young People, added that there was a fine balance to be had with regard to preparing children for school as bonding with carers could be considered as important as attending nursery;
- 22 LACs had gone on to attend university. Councillor Malcolm added that it was important to obtain data and feedback on the educational attainment of children placed less than 20 miles from Wolverhampton with a view to helping them achieve a university place.

Resolved: That the Virtual School Head Annual Report for 2015/16 be noted.

Councillor V. Gibson, who had joined the meeting during consideration of the previous item, took the Chair.

9

Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers

Alison Hinds, Head of Looked After Children, circulated to Board members a case study of a 15 year old unaccompanied asylum seeker and gave a presentation on unaccompanied asylum seeking children which detailed the following:

- The definition of an unaccompanied asylum seeking child;
- Why unaccompanied children and young people seek asylum;
- How unaccompanied asylum seeking children arrived in Wolverhampton;
- How Wolverhampton had supported 6 children through NTS or voluntary support to other authorities;
- The total numbers of unaccompanied asylum seeking children in the care of the City of Wolverhampton Council;
- The academic, sporting and social achievement of Wolverhampton placements.

Resolved: That the case study and presentation be noted.

10

Mind of My Own Application

Alice Vickers, Corporate Parenting Officer, presented a report which contained a Briefing Note detailing the progress of the implementation of the Mind Of My Own application to support participation for children and young people.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

11

Performance Monitoring Data

E. Bennett, Service Director for Children and Young People, tabled the Corporate Parenting Board Performance Report for January 2017 (data as at November 2016).

A. Hinds, Head of Looked After Children, acknowledged the high rate of care leavers that were mothers or pregnant. Contraception advice was already provided, there was a LAC nurse and young mothers were supported but it was hoped that further

services could be rolled out which would include a nurse that would be allocated specifically to the Care Leaving Service. E. Bennett undertook to feed back to the next meeting of the Board the number of care leavers up to the age of 18 that were pregnant or already mothers and how that those figures compared to overall figures.

Resolved:

1. That the report be noted;
2. That the number of care leavers up to the age of 18 that were pregnant or already mothers and how that those figures compared to overall figures be reported to the next meeting of the Board.

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Agenda Item No: 5



Corporate Parenting Board

16 March 2017

Report title	Adoption Service Interim Report		
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Val Gibson Children and Families		
Wards affected	All		
Accountable director	Emma Bennett, Service Director, Children and Young People		
Originating service	Children and Young People		
Accountable employee(s)	Dawn Deans	Senior Social Work Manager - Adoption	
	Tel	01902 550842	
	Email	Dawn.Deans@wolverhampton.gov.uk	
Report to be/has been considered by	The report has not been considered at any other meetings.		

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Corporate Parenting Board is recommended to:

1. Consider the report and provide feedback on the Wolverhampton City Council Adoption Service Interim Report.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide updated information in relation to adoption locally.
- 1.2 This report details the work of the City of Wolverhampton Adoption Service in the year April 2016 to January 2017.

2.0 Background

2.1 Adoption Reform Agenda

- 2.1.1 The Adoption Reform Agenda has been on-going since the latter part of 2011, at that time, the number of children waiting to be adopted exceeded the number of approved adopters, children waited far too long to be adopted, and too many adopted families were struggling without support. As well as the introduction of new legislation, four papers have been released.
- 2.1.2 An Action Plan for Adoption: Tackling Delay, March 2012; Further Action on Adoption: Finding More Loving Homes, January 2013 and Regionalising Adoption, June 2015, Adoption; A Vision for Change.
- 2.1.3 The Adoption Leadership Board was launched in April 2014:
- 2.1.4 The Adoption Leadership Board (ALB) is a new national board with a remit to drive significant improvements in the performance of the adoption system in England.
- 2.1.5 Regionalising Adoption, June 2015:
- 2.1.6 Regionalising Adoption, Department for Education (DfE) paper outlines the Government's plans to reduce the number of adoption agencies across England. It is argued that fewer adoption agencies would achieve more economies of scale and would allow quicker matching for children. It is anticipated that local authorities will have a wider pool of adopters who could potentially meet the needs of a child for whom they were considering for adoption and adoption support would be easily accessible, additionally the Government aspires to develop a system with a spirit of innovation and excellence at its heart.
- 2.1.7 Adoption: A Vision for Change; policy paper identifies how the Government wants to invest in the workforce with plans to equip the workforce with the professional skills and knowledge to navigate complex assessment, analysis and decision making and enable adoptive families to access the right support; reduce the time children wait to be adopted by speeding up matching by regionalising adoption services, developing a dynamic national system, free of bureaucratic barriers, which finds homes for those children who cannot be placed immediately within their region and provide high quality adoption

support to ensure every adoptive family has on going access to effective, multi-agency support.

- 2.1.8 Wolverhampton, Dudley, Walsall, Sandwell, Telford and Wrekin, Shropshire Local Authorities and Adoption Focus (a voluntary adoption agency) submitted a regionalisation proposal to access funds with the purpose of developing a single sub-regional adoption service. The group have been successful in securing funding from the Department of Education (DfE) to scope the best possible means of delivering a single adoption service in line with the regionalising adoption agenda.
- 2.1.9 As a result of the scoping exercise Adoption@Heart has been developed.
- 2.1.10 Having considered Adoption@Heart design principles, feedback from stakeholder engagement workshops, it is planned that the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) will deliver services from function focused teams which will enable staff to focus on a specific area of work; Adopter Recruitment (adopter journey), Family Finding (child's journey) and Adoption and SGO support service.
- 2.1.11 The region covers a large geographic area, to maintain a locally accessible service presence it is envisaged a hub and spoke model will be planned. This model will include a hub centrally for the delivery of core services and various spoke locations across the region which will offer workspaces; they could be co-located within children's services. A proposal of a LA Hosted operating model is yet to be determined by each of the Local Authorities.

2.2 Panel Business

- 2.2.1 Below are the number of adopters approved and the number of children matched with prospective adopters between April 2016 and January 2017.

Approval of Prospective adopters	Matches of children with prospective adopters
23	32

2.3 Adopter Approval

- 2.3.1 There have been 23 approvals of prospective adopters in the current financial year. It is expected that a further eight adopters will be approved by March 2017. This represents an increase in the approval of prospective adopters and surpasses the sufficiency target for the year set at 25 approvals.
- 2.3.2 Adoption in the Black Country and Adoption Focus (ABC and AF) consortium current referral trends are down by 12% compared to last year. This is due in part to two information evenings being cancelled recently. An extra event has been arranged to rectify this. Furthermore there has been a significant fall in the marketing budget that is held against Adoption in the Black Country from £79,000 last year to £38,500 this year.

However, the returns on Investment are stronger this year even though overall numbers are down.

- 2.3.3 There are currently ten families waiting to be linked. Of the ten families two links are being progressed with external children and eight families will be considered for either children from Wolverhampton who have plans of adoption or external children.
- 2.3.4 Last year we reported that we had six Asian families waiting for a link. Three families have subsequently been linked with children from Wolverhampton who had a plan of adoption, one set of adopters withdrew, consequently we have two Asian adopters currently waiting. One set of adopters have recently undergone Fostering for Adoption training and they are considering an older external child. We have four Asian children with a plan of adoption so we envisage further placements will be made.
- 2.3.5 Fostering for Adoption is perhaps the newest initiative subject to the Children and Families Bill (2013). Initiatives to support early permanence are already showing positive results in limiting delay and securing better outcomes for children. Wolverhampton Adoption Team have continued to improve on early permanency placements, there have been three early permanence placements via Foster for Adoption/concurrency made from April 2016 to date, we have another placement identified therefore this will equal the number of placements we made last year.

2.4 Links of children with prospective adopters

- 2.4.1 There have been 32 links during this reporting period.
- 2.4.2 Five of the 32 children linked at panel were part of a sibling group.
- 2.4.3 When considering the ethnicity of the children matched, eleven of the 32 children were of black and minority ethnic (BME) background. This equates to 14% of children matched. This remains above the national average of 5%.
- 2.4.4 Of the 32 children matched, ten were over the age of five. This equates to 7%, this is slightly lower compared to the national average of 8%.
- 2.4.5 The A2 indicator measures the average time between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family. The current target is four months.
- 2.4.6 17 out of the 32 children were placed within four months of a placement order which equates to 53%. Another three children were placed a week later. Six children who have a placement order have not been linked within four months and they include one child aged six who has experienced an adoption disruption, a sibling group of three and a sibling group of two who are subject to an application by their foster carers to adopt where the foster carers have experienced extended health issues, resulting in a delay in assessing their suitability. Additionally 12 children remain within timescales of 121 days.

- 2.4.7 There has been two adoption disruptions pre order in this reporting period involving a sibling group of two children who were aged five and six years old and a single female child aged three years old.
- 2.4.8 Julia Selwyn undertook research called Beyond the Adoption Order and identified factors that are associated with disruptions. These include child related factors such as older age at placement and behaviour difficulties, birth family factors such as child maltreatment and domestic violence, and system related factors such as delay and lack of support to adoptive families. Some studies have identified multiple previous placements. All the above were features of the sibling group's background and experience. Although adoption support was engaged throughout the placement the adoptive parents were unable to maintain the placement and the children were subsequently removed and placed in foster care where they are flourishing. The single female child was placed with City of Wolverhampton adopters and they sought to end the placement in the first week due to her level of distress and their lack of understanding regarding loss and grief, she too has settled remarkably well with a newly recruited foster carer.
- 2.4.9 16 children matched were placed with adopters approved by Wolverhampton; this includes three children who were adopted by their foster carers and involved two children with disabilities. The remainder were placed with adopters approved by other local authorities or voluntary agencies.
- 2.4.10 In August 2015 the Government made a grant available to local authorities in England for the purposes of reimbursing eligible expenditure under the Adoption Inter-Agency Fee Grant, for hard to place children whose plan is adoption. Eligibility criteria included; children who have been waiting for 18 months or more since coming into care at the time of placement, who are aged five or over at the time of placement, who are in a sibling group of two or more and placed as siblings at the time of placement, children who are from a BME background and children who are disabled. The grant continued until November 2016 when the criteria changed to include children who have been waiting for 18 months or more since coming into care by 1 November 2016.
- 2.4.11 The City of Wolverhampton Adoption team has placed over 50% of children through inter agency placements for several years. The fund however, has allowed the City of Wolverhampton Council to continue to make these placements in financially challenging times. Since April 2016 the City of Wolverhampton Adoption team has claimed £415,000 from the interagency fee grant. It is not clear at this stage if the interagency grant will continue past March 2017.

2.5 Children's Decisions

- 2.5.1 There has been 52 "Should be Placed for Adoption" (SBPFA) decisions made during this reporting period.

- 2.5.2 During this period five SBPFA decisions were rescinded, four comprised a sibling group of four where the court did not grant placement orders and another child whose care plan was changed to long term fostering due to significant health needs.
- 2.5.3 Of the 52 children, 35 children were White British; four were Black British Caribbean; eight were dual heritage; White British/ Black Caribbean. One is dual heritage, White/British Asian and three Asian and one White European child.
- 2.5.4 Of the 52 children, 34 were male and 18 were female.
- 2.5.5 26 children were aged nought to two, and 16 children were aged three to five.
- 2.5.6 The number of children aged over six that became subject to a SBPFA decision was ten with the oldest child aged 13.
- 2.5.7 45 placement orders have been made in this reporting period. There are 23 children with SBPFA that could convert into Placement Orders.
- 2.5.8 30 Adoption Orders have been granted during this reporting period, this is a decrease on previous years. The delay is in part due to an increased number of birth parents contesting the Adoption Order, which results in extending court timescales. Additionally, some adoptive parents are reluctant to lodge their application at ten weeks due to difficulties in placement, for example challenging behaviour. However, the growth in adoption support is leading some adopters with older children to lodge in a timely manner.

3.0 Adoption Support

- 3.1.1 Prior to an adoptive family being identified, Family Support Workers begin working with harder to place children including older children, sibling groups, and children with complex histories preparing them for a move to an adoptive placement.
- 3.1.2 The work considers the child's relationship with their biological parents, helps them to understand they are not in foster care because they were bad as well as helping the child understand the difference between foster care and adoption. In addition to this, the work explores different types of families and takes into consideration the wishes of the child and the type of family they want. The work has proven to be very successful. The feedback from Independent Reviewing Officer's and external agencies has been very positive with a request by one agency for a copy of the programme that has been devised.
- 3.1.3 During 2016-2017 moving on work has been undertaken with 12 single children and three sibling groups.
- 3.1.4 Adoption Support consultations are undertaken with prospective adopters where children meet a range of indicators including those that are aged three and over, those that have complex needs and sibling groups. Consultations include exploring a child's past

experiences, consider how they communicate anxiety and distress, and explore the adopters understanding of attachment based parenting. This has also contributed to a significant number of older children being placed in adoptive placements that remain intact.

- 3.1.5 During 2016-2017 13 Adoption support consultations with seven single children and five sibling groups took place.
- 3.1.6. In total the City of Wolverhampton Adoption team is providing adoption support to 56 looked after children (LAC)/ adopted children and 77 adopters and three birth children.
- 3.1.7 22 Assessment of need assessments have been undertaken since April 2016. 21 adoption support fund applications have been made with total value of £82,000 claimed. Adoption support fund applications have funded the following provision; Therapeutic Life Story work, Occupational Therapy, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), Sustain+specialist assessment and therapy, Creative play therapy, Filial therapy, Family therapy, Psychotherapy, Circle of Security Parenting programme, Safebase parenting programme, and Dyadic Development Psychotherapy (DDP).
- 3.1.8 In October 2016 the Government introduced The Fair Access Limit (FAL), which requires local authorities to share the costs of therapeutic support above £5,000, through a match-funding approach. This measure was introduced because demand for support is more than double the level forecast.
- 3.1.9 In line with good practice the City of Wolverhampton Adoption team does not operate an adoption support waiting list, with phone enquires requesting adoption support responded to and a home visit arranged and an assessment of need completed within 15 days of the visit. Additionally, we are invited to attend Wolverhampton CAMHS professional meetings for children who are adopted and reside or have a General Practitioner (GP) in Wolverhampton.
- 3.1.10 The City of Wolverhampton Adoption team is currently able to offer a therapeutic parenting programme; The Circle of Security and Theraplay as well as Non-violent resistance therapeutic support (NVR offers a child-focused approach that rebuilds the relationship through de-escalation, acceptance, and reconciliation, allowing the child's needs to be met through the love and care of unconditional positive regard).
- 3.1.11 Six social workers have attended a four day DDP (Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy) it is an integrative method of psychotherapy developed for the treatment of children and young people who manifest serious psychological problems associated with complex trauma and serious failure to establish secure patterns of attachment. The training enables social workers in the three adoption units to provide consistent messages when exploring children's behaviour, making meaning of it and guiding intervention.

- 3.1.12 The post adoption contact (PAC) co-ordinator manages in excess of 389 letter box exchange arrangements and provides support to birth families in writing and by reading letters to provide good written contact for children.
- 3.1.13 Maintaining contact with siblings is reported by children to be one of their highest priorities. Sibling contact can help a child maintain their identity and promote self-esteem. With that in mind the PAC co-ordinator is developing setting up contact between siblings adopted by different adoptive parents.
- 3.1.14 The City of Wolverhampton Adoption team have recently experienced the first 'open' contact adoption where we organised therapeutic support to the adoptive parents and birth parents prior to the initial meeting and the therapist will coordinate and facilitate the first three contact sessions followed by an annual review.
- 3.1.15 The City of Wolverhampton Adoption team has provided an annual newsletter informing adopters about pupil premium, access to consortium training, the adoption support fund and the Governments plans for Regional Adoption Agencies.
- 3.1.16 City of Wolverhampton Adoption team continues to work in partnership with the other Black Country Local Authorities incorporating Walsall, Sandwell and Dudley to purchase adoption support packages from Adoption U.K. and After Adoption enabling us to work in partnership with these organisations. These support packages provide services to adopters, adopted children, adopted adults and birth family members.
- 3.1.17 In relation to Adoption U.K. the partnership agreement has been reviewed within this period to ensure we are purchasing an effective support package which meets the needs of approved adopters and prospective adopters. All Wolverhampton approved adopters continue to receive 12 months free membership to Adoption UK, unless they choose to opt out of this, additionally local adopters who access adoption support are also provided with 12 months membership. Adopters are invited to attend the Adoption Support Group run by Adoption UK on a bi-monthly basis, access training and a lending library.
- 3.1.18 Complementary to the support offered through Adoption UK, the City of Wolverhampton Adoption team run an adoption support group, this is a group made up of adopters who have attended the Circle of Security parenting programme that we run annually. This keeps adopters linked to the City of Wolverhampton Adoption team and we can offer additional support in a timely manner as the group meets monthly.
- 3.1.19 ABC and AF also deliver a post approval training programme consisting of four to five workshops each year. The workshops are available to approved adopters who are waiting for a placement, those who have had a child placed, or those who have adopted. The workshops include an education workshop for adopters and sensory integration, a telling workshop and a training session incorporating attachment issues.

4.0 Strategic issues and forward plans

- 4.1.1 The City of Wolverhampton Adoption team has always been ambitious about adoption, the use of a three-year average for the scorecard indicator presents a challenge for the authority, and Wolverhampton constantly balances the need for swift placement with not giving up on finding families for older children and children with complex needs. There are occasions where timescales have been sacrificed in the interest of placing older children, sibling groups and children with complex needs.
- 4.1.2 The service has welcomed the Government's challenge around timeliness for children who have a plan of adoption, it is well accepted that age at placement is one predictor impacting on positive outcomes for children who are placed for adoption. The City of Wolverhampton Adoption team is therefore committed to continuing to improve timeliness for children.
- 4.1.3 A key feature of the Adoption Service's improvement plan is to increase the recruitment of adopters who can consider offering early permanence options to children either through concurrent planning or foster to adopt. This has been echoed by the Government who have set a soft target of doubling such placement 2016-2017.
- 4.1.4 The Adoption Service has demonstrated the ability to embrace new ways of working to improve outcomes for children. It is expected that closer working within the region as described above will lend itself to ensuring that children are matched without delay with adopters who are able to meet their long term needs.
- 4.1.5 The Government has committed to funding essential therapeutic support to adoptive placements until 2020; the challenge for Adoption@Heart will be to provide further opportunities to increase the skill of the workforce so the previously undisclosed level of demand will be met in the future.
- 4.1.6 As the regionalising agenda is progressed it will be important to ensure that the team continues to build on previous success. This will include further improving timeliness, recruiting more adopters who will consider concurrency and foster to adopt and remaining ambitious for harder to place children to ensure they are offered the opportunities they deserve and adoption support is provided to families when needed.

5.0 Financial implications

- 5.1 The approved budget for 2016-17 for the City of Wolverhampton Adoption Service is £2.4 million.
- 5.2 The Government made funds available that would allow the local authority to claim the inter-agency fee when placements are made for harder to place children (sibling groups, children of BME background and children over the age of five), however the criteria has now changed so relates to fewer children we can claim the interagency fee. Furthermore, we remain unclear how long this grant will continue. It is projected that City

of Wolverhampton Council will receive £318,000 for 2016-17 for inter-agency grant claims.

- 5.3 The Adoption Support Fund became available in 2015. Funding is continued until 2020. To date we have received £97,000 from the Adoption Support Fund. Consequently, with the introduction of the Fair Access Fund of £5,000 this could result in the City of Wolverhampton Council having to contribute to the cost of funding essential therapeutic support. Any costs associated with this will be found from within existing budgets within the Adoption Service.

[NM/02032017/Q]

6.0 Legal implications

- 6.1 There have been no legislative changes in this reporting period. The relevant legislation is contained within the body of the report.

TC/02032017/E

7.0 Equalities implications

- 7.1 The City of Wolverhampton Adoption Team seeks to recruit and purchase adopters who are able to meet the needs of a diverse range of children. This includes children of different black and minority ethnic groups, both young and older children, male and female children. This is reflected within the recruitment strategy and all new policies have been subject to an equalities analysis.

8.0 Environmental implications

- 8.1 There are no environmental implications.

9.0 Human resources implications

- 9.1 Regionalisation will have human resources implications but the extent of these is not known at present. Human resources will be considered as part of the scoping exercise.

10.0 Corporate landlord implications

- 10.1 There are no corporate landlord implications.

11.0 Schedule of background papers

- 11.1 There are no background papers attached.

Agenda Item No: 6



Corporate Parenting Board

16 March 2017

Report title	Corporate Parenting Strategy Update		
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Val Gibson Children and Young People		
Wards affected	All		
Accountable director	Emma Bennett, Service Director, Children and Young People		
Originating service	Children and Young People		
Accountable employee(s)	Alice Vickers	Corporate Parenting Officer	
	Tel	01902 553010	
	Email	Alice.Vickers@wolverhampton.gov.uk	
Report to be/has been considered by			

Recommendations for action or decision:

The Corporate Parenting Board is recommended to:

1. Consider and comment on the developments of the Corporate Parenting Strategy since March 2016 and the progress of the action plan.

1.0 Purpose

1.1 That the Corporate Parenting Board considers the developments over the past year of Corporate Parenting Strategy and action plan.

2.0 Background

2.1 The City of Wolverhampton Council approved a new two-year strategy in December 2015. An action plan to look at four areas of focus, which are the main commitments laid down in the strategy, has been developed and implemented throughout the year.

2.2 The aim of this report is to feedback on progress.

3.0 Progress, options, discussion, etc.

3.1 The Strategy was approved and endorsed by The City of Wolverhampton Council's Cabinet in December 2015.

3.2 The City of Wolverhampton Council's (CWC) pledge to Looked after Children (LAC) and Care Leavers (CL) focuses on four areas; these are Education Employment and Training, Health, Social Skills and Corporate Responsibilities. The Senior Officers Group, which consists of Heads of Service from CWC and lead officers from partner agencies monitor the progress of the Action Plan and Strategy. A fifth area was added by the group; prevention of criminalisation for LAC and Care Leavers. This report will focus on each area in turn and highlight key progress and discuss any areas of challenge.

3.3 Education, Employment and Training

The key requirements in this area of focus are:

- Help young people to feel able to challenge and share their views in the Personal Education Plan (PEP).
- Raise Aspirations of LAC and CL and professionals supporting them.
- Maximise access to work experience and apprenticeship opportunities for LAC and Care Leavers.

With the partnership of the Senior Officers Group and the Employment, Education and Training (EET) Action Group the key requirements for EET have been delivered and the following achievements have been actioned:

- An electronic PEP has been designed to ensure the voice of the child in being captured.
- Mind of My Own (MOMO) application has been procured and implemented for LAC and CL with a specific statement for young people to share their thoughts on their PEPs.
- A designated workshop has been planned with the Children in Care Council (CiCC) and Virtual Head, this will be to design a leaflet for young people on the online PEP

form and e learning module, this has been slightly delayed due to the role out of e pep still at pilot stage.

- The needs of CL and LAC feature in the WV skills model of delivery for Council Work experiences, apprenticeships, traineeships, and internships. The WV Skills module includes the use of the Growth Pledge for employers and the Workbox (the online platform for work based opportunities). A package of support for employers, educators, and trainers has now being developed ratified by the end of the March - April 2017.
- Care Leavers Forum (CLF) annual report has been written and will be launched on 26 January to raise the profile further following the success of CLF.
- Work experience, Apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities are being monitored on the types of opportunity and the number of those accessing these opportunities.
- Develop foster carer training on accessing education, training and employment opportunities.
- Trowers and Hamilin Solicitors are putting on Aspirational workshops for young people on 5 May 2017.

3.4 Health

The key requirements in this area of focus are:

- Develop health passports for LAC and CL.
- Develop partnership between health and education to offer cohesive and knowledgeable support for LAC especially in relation to health appointments and recorded absence.

The Corporate Parenting Officer regularly attends the LAC Health Steering group which is a partnership group between the LA (Local Authority), CCG (Clinical Commissioning Group), RWT (Royal Wolverhampton Trust) and BCPFT (Black Country Partnership Foundation Trust).

Sharing information and support about sexual health is now part of the LAC Health Steering group agenda and information on contact details for the LAC nurse are also now on the webpage www.wolverhamptonlac.co.uk. Monitoring the numbers of LAC/CL accessing sexual health services will be explored for next year's plan as the service is now using a marker to show whether service users are LAC or CL.

Drop in sessions for CL are now arranged to take place at The Way on Friday afternoons with the LAC nurse in attendance.

Total Respect (TR) training has been delivered to the CCG designated Dr and Nurse and an awareness raising session has also been delivered to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) to raise the profile of the needs of LAC/CL.

A CCG business case has been approved, The Royal Wolverhampton Trust (RWT) is now recruiting for the position.

Work is being explored by the CCG and Public Health in understanding health needs of our LAC/CL and is now set as an agenda item on the LAC Health Steering group to inform service delivery and commissioning of services.

The CCG, BCFPT and RWT are committed to providing out of hours' appointments for LAC health reviews and CAMHS appointments. They are currently looking at the Gem Centre's governance protocols and liabilities to extend opening hours.

The Corporate Parenting Officer has met with the Designated Teacher forum who has agreed to mark LAC absence for health related appointments as educated off site when it is not possible for these to be arranged outside of school hours. This has been included into the Model School Policy. This policy will be signed up to by most of the schools in Wolverhampton.

3.5 Social Skills and Development

The key requirements in this area of focus are:

- A guide for foster carers such as what age to have a mobile phone, and what age to catch a bus by yourself.
- Keep siblings together and encourage more contact between siblings.
- Strengthen Care Leavers' preparation for independence, teaching independence skills from an earlier age and increasing access to life story work, with a focus on budgeting and money matters.
- Make placement changes more positive, by preparing young people about what the foster family or residential home and the local community might be able to offer.

A Foster Care Handbook has been developed which includes guidance for foster carers on the issues raised by CiCC and is out for consultation.

A pilot of Independence training for CL has been devised and is delivered by the Way, three young people to date have completed the course, these participants will support the new cohort attending the next round of training 12 months of dates have now been set for 2017.

Raising the profile of the webpage which has information for young people living out of borough, information has been sent to all out LAC aged 10 to 18 years old in the post. Attendance at the Foster Carer Conference to promote the webpage and Facebook promotion has also been completed.

The requirement to look at keeping siblings together and encouraging more contact between siblings requires further work and will be included on the action plan for 2017-18.

3.6 Corporate Responsibilities

The key requirements in this area of focus are:

- Ensure that Young People's savings are protected and do not effect benefits.

- Ensure services understand LAC better.
- Strengthen the social work workforce to ensure that they are skilled and knowledgeable to meet the needs of our LAC population.
- Focus on the positive things LAC do.

The Corporate Parenting ELearning that was developed by the CiCC is mandatory for all CoWC employees and a paper copy has also been produced for partner agencies. To date 1,296 colleagues have completed this training and we have been approached by Walsall council to use this training with their staff.

The CoWC has exempt CL from council tax. This was ratified in November 2016, but back dated to April 2016.

11 Councillors attended a special Total Respect training session. It is now part of the induction for new councillors joining the Cabinet. The Corporate Parenting Board will be having a bespoke session on 26 April 2017.

The Councillors' guide has been updated and an induction presentation for new Councillors completed. This is disseminated to those accessing Councillor induction

3.7 Prevention of Criminalisation of LAC and CL

The key requirements in this area of focus are:

- To raise the understanding of frontline officers on the experiences of LAC and CL's and understand Corporate Parenting.
- To ensure those leaving custody are aware of the support and their entitlements.
- To ensure that the police are viewed more positively with our LAC and CL.
- To ensure that there is strategic support for CL and LAC with the Police and that they feel supported.

This is a new area of focus being implemented since December 2016 and therefore work on this has only just begun.

Total respect information has been sent to the police and a plan for frontline officers to complete the training has been agreed.

Meetings have taken place with Her Majesty's Prison Service (HMPS) Brinsford to look at the knowledge of CL and there is a plan in place to develop a document to prepare CL's leaving custody to equip them with the knowledge of the level of support they are entitled to from CoWC.

To enable LAC and CL to have a more positive rapport with the Police and not just see them as a negative presence, Chief Inspector Beth Bridges from Wolverhampton Neighbourhood Policing Unit will be presenting an award at the I awards on 3 March 2017.

To ensure a joint approach and shared understanding for the benefit of LAC and CL both the Head of Service for Youth Offending, Chief Inspector of Wolverhampton Neighbourhood Policing Unit and HMPS Brinsford will be attending future senior office Group meetings for Corporate Parenting.

4.0 Financial implications

- 4.1 There are no financial implications as a result of this report.
- 4.2 Any costs associated with developing the strategy and implementing the action plan will be found from existing budgets within the Children and Young People's Service.

[NM/07032017/C]

5.0 Legal implications

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

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6.0 Equalities implications

- 6.1 An initial equalities screening has been completed on this strategy and action plan, this has highlighted that equality implications have been addressed.

7.0 Environmental implications

- 7.1 There are no specific environmental implications.

8.0 Human resources implications

- 8.1 There are no specific implications on Human Resources.

9.0 Schedule of background papers

- 9.1 Corporate Parenting Strategy 2015-2017.