

Corporate Parenting Board

Minutes - 21 July 2016

Attendance

Chair Cllr Val Gibson (Lab)

Labour

Cllr Julie Hodgkiss
Cllr Hazel Malcolm

Cllr Lynne Moran
Cllr Peter O'Neill

Cllr Rita Potter
Cllr Zee Russell

Conservative

Cllr Christine Mills

Employees

Darren Martindale

Alice Vickers
Emma Bennett
Fiona Brennan
Alison Hinds

COPE Team Manager/Virtual School Head, Community
Directorate
Corporate Parenting Officer
Service Director, Children and Young People
Wolverhampton CCG
Head Of Looked After Children Community

Item No. *Title*

1 Apologies for absence (if any)

Apologies were received from the following members of the Corporate Parenting Board

Cllr Paula Brookfield
Cllr Martin Waite

2 Declarations of interests (if any)

There were no declarations of interest made relative to the items under considerations at the meeting.

3 Minutes of the meeting held on 26 May 2016

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 26 May 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 Matters arising

Agenda Item 8

Emma Bennett, Service Director, Children and Young People, advised the Board that the Total Respect training will be delivered in October 2016.

Agenda Item 9

Emma Bennett, Service Director, Children and Young People, advised the Board on progress of work being done to create the Regional Adoption Agency. Reference was made to the delay in funding for phase two of the 'Adoption at Heart' project and that most projects were due to go live in 2017. The Council is waiting for confirmation from Department of Education about the release of funding for the project – discussions are planned for August 2016. The Board agreed to add the issue to the summary of outstanding minutes.

Agenda Item 11

The panel queried if Merridale Street West (a 4 bedded placement for young people with complex needs) was no longer a local authority run establishment and also the need for members of the Board to visit. The Board were advised that Board still has a responsibility to inspect the home. The home was last visited by the Board in early 2014.

5 Schedule of outstanding matters

Earl Piggott-Smith, Scrutiny Officer, presented the report on current progress on matters previously considered by the Board.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted

6 **Schools Engagement with Looked after Children**

Darren Martindale, Virtual School Head for Looked After Children (LAC), gave a briefing on the engagement and working arrangements over the 2015/16 academic year. The Virtual School Head (VSH) outlined the success to date and future plans aimed at ensuring the authority meets its responsibility to promote the education of looked after children.

The VSH detailed the work done to build and strengthen the partnership between schools, the members of the Corporate Parenting Education team and other stakeholders. The VSH commented on the work being done to find a balance between providing schools with strong support and where necessary challenging headteachers and members of the Designated Teachers Forum to make changes needed to improve educational outcomes.

The VSH outlined the range of training and support given to various groups during the year. The VSH gave an example of the change in approach such as emotion coaching workshops aimed at encouraging teachers to adopt a positive approach towards the education of LAC. The feedback from designated teachers was very positive.

However, the VSH commented the level of school engagement has been mixed and is dependent on past experiences of working with the service. The VSH commented that the approach to training and supporting designated teachers was changing to be replaced by a coach and mentoring approach. The work is part of efforts to support teachers to embed the new approach into their practice.

The VSH commented on the discussion at the Designated Teachers Forum. The meeting was attended by 30 representatives. The last session of the forum discussed the extension of the current remit of the VSH to include young offenders. The aim is to provide schools with a single point of contact that would include children in the youth justice system and also strengthen the partnership between the service and the youth offending team. The VSH commented on new statutory guidance from Department for Education to help keep children in education. The guidance sets out the responsibilities for designated teachers and safeguarding leads. A programme of training for designated teachers is being developed.

The VSH briefed the Board on the results of a survey involving all schools to asking questions about how the funds from the pupil premium were being used in the last academic year to support LAC. The response rate was 70 per cent (30 – 40 Wolverhampton schools). The VSH commented that schools reported that the funding has had a positive impact, but concluded that more work was needed to fully assess the impact of the funding. There is a plan to appoint a specific role to look at how the extra funding was being used to improve pupil performance and will hopefully reflect key stage results. The use of pupil premium funding will be reviewed in the next academic year. The work is being supported by educational psychologists.

The VSH commented that the relationship with schools is improving and praised the contribution of other local authority teams in getting looked after children a school place.

The Board discussed the role of Designated School Governors and national statutory guidance. The Board queried if there model school that could be used to support the improvements elsewhere. The VSH commented that meetings are held annually with DST and the findings are reported.

The Board queried the implications of the service providing support to pupils in the youth justice system and confusion this might cause to the public. Emma Bennett, Service Director, Children and Young People, explained that the role of the VSH is being extended to include LAC children who fall within the youth offending team. The issue was discussed at a leadership team meeting about the need to careful in how the widening of the role of the LAC was presented. The policy recognises the evidence that vulnerable young offenders either are in care or have been previously been in care and therefore it appropriate to have a joint policy. The policy is intended to close the educational achievement gap and to support young offenders to desist from crime.

The Board while welcoming the report about the positive use of pupil premium to support LAC were disappointed by failure to get schools to respond to past requests to show how the money was being used and also to find examples of good practice.

The Board were advised schools are required by Government to provide details about how funding from pupil premium is being used to support LAC. Furthermore, schools have to complete a personal education plans for each child which details how the pupil premium is being used and share this information with the local authority. There is no similar requirement for schools to provide this information on other pupils. The VSH explained that work is on-going to build a productive relationship with schools and collect details of case studies.

The Board requested that the report on the use of pupil premium is presented to a future meeting of Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel for consideration.

The Board discussed the level of engagement by schools in supporting LAC children. The VSH explained that there is a statutory framework to support work to build and improve relationships with schools. The VSH explained that the service is focusing on those schools that have not provided information on the funding from pupil premium is being used.

Resolved:

1. The report is received and note
2. The VSH present a report on the use and impact of pupil premium funding to a future meeting of the Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel.

7 **Children and Young People's Participation Strategy**

Alice Vickers, Corporate Parenting Officer, presented a draft of the Children and Young People's Participation Strategy for approval. The Corporate Parenting Officer (CPO) explained that the need for children and young people to be involved in decisions about services that affect them. The CPO commented that the strategy was informed and developed during workshop sessions attended by members of the Children in Care Council and the Youth Council in 2015/16. The sessions were aimed at looking at ways of improving services.

The CPO commented on the communication strategy and the aim to inform young people and also to get their voice heard. The CPO outlined the standards of participation detailed in the strategy.

The Board queried what the young people had said they wanted to get from the participation. The CPO explained that the strategy document had been sent to Youth Council and the Children in Care Council for sign-off.

The Board commented on the importance of the language used in the communication strategy and how it will reach young people who were not involved in the workshop sessions. The CPO explained that members of the Youth Council and Children in Care Council have been encouraged to talk about the plans in school and get feedback on the strategy. In addition, social media sites and newsletters will be used to reach young people and get them involved. The Board discussed how ideas and contributions of young people will be considered in a meaningful way. The CPO explained that that performance rating will be used to look at what things are working well in engaging children and young people and areas that need to be improved. In addition, assessments about the impact of the strategy would be based on a rainbow scale rating.

The Board queried how the strategy will ensure that the Council is getting a broad range of views and that the voice of other young people is being heard. The CPO explained that the schools are being asked to elect a youth council representative to contribute to the process, but accepted that some schools may not want to get involved. The pupil voice feedback is not as strong as it should be and work is being done with the Youth Council to talk about how this could be improved. Andrew Scragg commented that the involvement of young people is an issue that will be discussed at the residential event for Children and Care Council and Youth Council and the Be-Safe Team. All three groups will be talking at the event about building links between the different groups and other young people.

Resolved:

1. The Board approved the draft of the Children and Young People's Participation Strategy.
2. The Board wanted to formally record its appreciation for the contribution of young people in developing the strategy.

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

Emma Bennett, Service Director - Children and Young People, briefed the Board on the key points and findings of the looked after children performance report.

The Service Director commented that overall the report shows a positive picture of progress. 62 children were adopted in 2015/16, this compares to 51 children in 2014/15. The Service Director commented on the progress made in increasing the number of care leavers available for work.

The Board discussed the issue of supporting LAC children who are asylum seekers. The Service Director commented that Wolverhampton had responded to the request from Kent County Council for other local authorities for help with unaccompanied asylum seekers. The Service Director reported that three asylum seekers had been placed in The Royal Wolverhampton School and described the support provided. The feedback from the school has been positive and the young people have all settled well.

The Board discussed the education results at KS2 for LAC children. The VSH agreed to share more detailed report with the Board.

The Board queried about the checks done on LAC children who have been placed back with their parents or carers. The Service Director confirmed that children will continue to be monitored. The Board discussed the importance of good communication when dealing with asylum seekers families moving from London to the local area. The Service Director commented on the discussion with the Leader about the promotion of Wolverhampton City of Sanctuary. The City of Sanctuary is a national public initiative which shows a commitment to an area becoming a place of welcome and safety to help and support asylum seekers and refugees.

Resolved:

The Board agreed to receive the report and note the progress.

9 **Children in Care Council/Care Leavers Forum Workshop - Participation - what works well?**

The Board took part in a workshop exercise led by members of the Children in Care Council to share their experiences of participation and how it can be improved when looking to involve children.

The Board thanked Andrew and Selina for their efforts in supporting the Children in Care Council.

10 **Exclusion of the public and press**

11 **Councillor Visits to Children's Homes**

Resolved:

The Board noted the previous discussion about visiting Children's Homes.