

# Corporate Parenting Board

Minutes - 14 September 2017

## Attendance

**Chair** Cllr Val Gibson (Lab)

## Labour

Cllr Milkinderpal Jaspal  
Cllr Lynne Moran

Cllr Peter O'Neill  
Cllr Rita Potter

Cllr Paul Sweet  
Cllr Martin Waite

## Conservative

Cllr Christine Mills

## Employees

Emma Bennett  
Fiona Brennan  
Dawn Deans  
Alison Hinds  
Puja Taloy  
Helen Tambini  
Alice Vickers

Director of Children's Services  
Designated Nurse, Looked After Children  
Senior Social Work Manager - Adoption  
Head of Looked After Children  
Participation Worker for Looked after Childr  
Democratic Services Officer  
Corporate Parenting Officer

*Item No.*    *Title*

**1        Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hodgkiss and Koussoukama.

**2        Declarations of interests**

There were no declarations of interest made.

**3        Change to the Order of Agenda Items**

The Chair moved that agenda item 6, Care Leavers Forum – Birthday Money, be considered before item 3 Minutes of the previous meeting, item 4 Matters arising and item 5 Schedule of outstanding matters.

Resolved:

That agenda item 6 be considered before items 3, 4 and 5.

**4        Care Leavers Forum - Birthday Money**

Members of the Care Leavers Forum (CLF) attended the meeting and took part in an activity with members of the Board to look at how care leavers felt when they moved into their own accommodation after turning 18.

In response to questions from Board Members, officers stated:

- A grant was available to care leavers to buy personal items and to make flats feel homelier and care leavers would be helped to make those decisions with their Young Person's Adviser. There were two training flats that care leavers could use to prepare for their move and they would be supported by the Starting Up Home Grant (SHUG). Children in foster care could stay in care beyond the age of 18 so the age they would move into their own accommodation would vary.
- LACs up to the age of 18 received a present at Christmas and for birthdays.

Members of the Board thanked the young people for attending and agreed to think about ways to help care leavers during that transition and consider them at the meeting in January when the issue would be discussed again.

Resolved:

1. That members of the Board consider how they could support care leavers during this transition into their own accommodation and bring suggestions to the meeting in January 2018.
2. That a report from the Care Leavers Forum detailing suggestions on support measures for care leavers during this transition into their own accommodation be submitted to the Board in January 2018.

**5        Minutes of the previous meeting - 13 July 2017**

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2017 be confirmed as correct record and signed by the Chair, subject to the inclusion of Fiona Brennan's name in the list of attendees.

**6 Matters arising**

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

**7 Schedule of outstanding matters**

The Chair presented the report on current progress on matters previously considered by the Board.

It was confirmed that the comparative figures for the general population in respect of number of babies removed from parents had been circulated to the Board.

Helen Tambini, Democratic Services Officer confirmed that under the Board's Terms of Reference it could approve membership of the Board and therefore, the Board could agree to how many foster carers it wished to join.

The Board agreed that it would ask two foster carers to become Board members.

Alice Vickers, Corporate Parenting Officer confirmed that a member of the Care Leavers Forum had asked the Board to consider if he could become a Board member.

Members of the Board agreed that it would be advantageous to have a representative of the Care Leavers Forum on the Board.

Resolved:

1. That the report be noted.
2. That two foster carers and one representative from the Care Leavers Forum be co-opted onto the Board for future meetings.

**8 Impact of New Belongings Project and Outcomes of Care Leavers Survey 2017**

Alison Hinds, Head of Looked After Children presented the report on the Impact of the New Belongings Project and the Outcomes of the Care Leavers Survey and highlighted key points.

Alison Hinds confirmed that 73 young people had completed the survey which was an increase of 10 compared to last year and the results overall had been positive. It was hoped that next year it would be an interactive survey and that would encourage more young people to engage.

In respect of health, the 14% of young people having received the new leaving care health summary was good as it had only been implemented five months ago. Of the 73 young people who had responded, some could have left care previously when the summary was not available.

Fiona Brennan, Designated Nurse for Looked After Children confirmed that the priority was now to ensure that all care leavers leaving care received the summary.

Alison Hinds referred to the areas highlighted that required improvement, in particular around participation and entitlements and work the LAC Transition Service could do better. She confirmed that a LAC Transitions Action Plan had been produced taking into consideration the survey results.

In addition to the information contained within the report and in response to questions from Board Members, officers stated the following:

- An Assistant Corporate Parenting Officer had just started work and would be working proactively to encourage more participation through Facebook and other social media, together with improvement to the Care Leavers' newsletter sent out every three months.
- Young people were encouraged to think about how they spent their savings and were offered advice and support.
- It was a concern that the percentage of young people who felt that they had a good relationship with their worker had decreased and that would be investigated.
- Care leavers were offered support and advice regarding financial matters and there were courses they could attend to help them manage their finances. In respect of savings, different options were being researched and a report would be submitted to the Board in due course.
- If a young person was finding it difficult to progress with their Young Person's Advisor, then that would be looked into.
- The questions related to health on the survey were generic and related to health in general rather than specific reference to mental health and wellbeing.
- In respect of employment and work experience, support was given through the Black Country IMPACT project. Care leavers were offered mock interviews to improve techniques. There was also a Talent Match to help over 18s get back into work.
- The results from the survey regarding support from workers could refer to different types of support workers.

Councillor Waite requested that in future surveys the questions on health be more specific to allow more individual responses.

The Chair thanked officers for the comprehensive report and requested that future reports include comparative data covering a three-year period and to allow responders the option of saying why they had put a particular response.

Resolved:

That the report and comments raised be noted.

## 9 **Annual Adoption Agency Report**

Dawn Deans, Senior Social Work Manager (Adoption) presented the Annual Adoption Agency Report and highlighted key points, with specific reference to the recent OFSTED inspection when the Adoption Service was judged as Good.

In addition to the information contained within the report and in response to questions from Board Members, officers stated the following:

- Although the A1 and A2 indicators continued to be rated 'double red' OFSTED had noted and acknowledged that because Wolverhampton continued to pursue adoptions for harder to place children that affected the indicator. A brief explanation of those factors would be included in future reports.
- A change in legislation had encouraged birth parents to inform the courts that they wished to contest Adoption Orders and more were doing so.
- All birth parents received support and counselling after a child had been removed from their care. There were several organisations that offered support, including the 'Breaking the Cycle' project and the 'Switch' project. The 'Breaking the Cycle' project had helped five parents to go onto full time education and none of them had had any more of their children taken into care. Under the 'Switch' project a specific support worker supported individuals to help them break the cycle of repeat removals. Before any child was removed considerable support was offered and warnings given. Assessments also continued once a child had been taken into care, to assess that parent's future suitability to have the child returned to them.

Resolved:

That the report and comments raised be noted.

## 10 **Performance Monitoring Report**

Emma Bennett, Director of Children's Services presented the Performance Monitoring Report for July 2017 and highlighted the key points.

Emma Bennett confirmed that the number of LACs remained static at around 630, with analysis showing that the average number coming into care had slowed; however, there was a number of children with full care orders with very complex needs who remained in care. Further work was being considered within the service area to try and prevent teenagers entering the system.

In respect of assessments and reviews, the number of children participating had increased.

In respect of education, the academic results for 2016/17 had yet to be collated and would be reported in due course.

In respect of leaving care, the key indicator for Wolverhampton compared to the West Midlands was very good.

In answer to a question regarding dental checks, it was confirmed that the data did not specify if the checks were for males or females.

Emma Bennett referred to the current report format and asked for the Board's input regarding an update to a dashboard format. It was suggested that the dashboard format would contain the same information; however, it would be easier to read.

The Chair suggested that she liaise with Emma Bennett on this issue.

In response to a question regarding pregnancy rates for care leavers, officers stated that although that was not measured, it would be possible to include details of young parents and compare that to the average in Wolverhampton.

Resolved:

1. That the report and comments raised be noted.
2. That the Chair liaise with the Director of Children's Services regarding the format of future reports.

## 11 **Councillors visits to establishments**

Councillor Potter presented an exempt report regarding her recent visit to Merridale Street West Children's Home.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.