

## **Attendance**

**Chair** Cllr Paul Sweet (Lab)

### **Labour**

Cllr Obaida Ahmed  
Cllr Celia Hibbert

Cllr Peter O'Neill  
Cllr Caroline Siarkiewicz

Cllr Clare Simm  
Cllr Martin Waite

### **Conservative**

Cllr Udey Singh

### **Employees**

Emma Bennett  
Alison Hinds  
Shelley Humphries  
Rachel King  
Darren Martindale  
Alice Vickers

Director of Children's Services  
Head of Children and Young People in Care  
Democratic Services Officer  
Head of Service Specialist Support  
Service Manager: Vulnerable Learners and Virtual School Head  
Corporate Parenting Officer

*Item No.*    *Title*

**1        Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Jasbinder Dehar, Fiona Brennan and Emma-Jane Kisby.

**2        Declarations of interests**

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

**3        Minutes of the previous meeting - 22 November 2018**

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 November 2018 be confirmed as correct record and signed by the Chair.

**4        Matters arising**

Minute 4

In respect of Councillor visits to establishments, it was noted that Alice Vickers, Corporate Parenting Officer had made numerous attempts to contact the private residential establishments but none had responded. It was noted that 43 children were placed in these establishments but only a small number of these were under Wolverhampton's scope. Emma Bennett, Director of Children's Services agreed to circulate further details outside of the meeting.

It was agreed that Alison Hinds, Head of Children and Young People in Care would escalate the issue and encourage residential home managers to respond.

Resolved:

That Alison Hinds, Head of Children and Young People in Care encourage residential home managers to respond to Councillor visit requests.

**5        Schedule of outstanding matters**

Emma Bennett, Director for Children's Services advised that the median figure for timeliness of adoption timescales had now been added to the Performance Monitoring Report.

Resolved:

That the Schedule of Outstanding Matters report be received.

**6        Children in Care Council and Care Leavers' Forum Workshops including Total Respect**

There were round table introductions and a member of the Children in Care Council (CiCC) opened the workshop with an ice breaker question.

The first exercise comprised of the Board being split into teams. Members of the CiCC provided various scenarios of life events for a young person in care and the

teams were asked to list the adults who they thought would be involved with the young person at each stage. When counted, numbers ranged from 32 – 36 professionals potentially becoming involved with a child or young person in care.

The aim of the exercise was for Board members to gain an understanding of the number of adults involved with a child or young person in care and how overwhelming this was for them. It was noted that the high numbers of professionals involved highlighted the importance of early intervention which could prevent more serious issues escalating. It was suggested that this could prevent causing distress for the young person and a financial impact for the Authority.

It was also noted that the more professionals a young person encountered, the more instances they had to repeat the particulars of their situation, which may cause distress in some cases.

It was also suggested that the more a child was moved around, each carer they were placed with had to start again to learn about the new child in their care. It was noted that this could pose difficulties in guiding them through difficult times. It was added that empathy for a child that was not their own could be hard to achieve in such a short space of time.

One of the young people highlighted that they had felt different parenting styles often had different effects for a child in care. They felt that a relaxed approach had helped them realise that they were not yet ready for independence.

The next exercise took the form of a quiz during which a number of questions were asked of Board members. The correct answers were then read out and various points were raised for each.

#### Milestone Birthdays:

It was outlined that milestone birthdays for children and young people in care were acknowledged in the following ways:

- 13<sup>th</sup> Birthday - £150.00 to spend on gifts
- 16<sup>th</sup> Birthday - £180.00 to spend on gifts
- 18<sup>th</sup> Birthday through to 21<sup>st</sup> Birthday – a birthday card from Emma Bennett, Director of Children's Services and £25.00

It was noted that the figures had been arrived at by consulting with the young people who had preferred to have the money split rather than receive a lump sum on their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Informing foster carers and residential care workers about the rights of children in care:

It was noted that both the Children and Young People in Care guide and Care Leaver Offer booklet contained information in relation to this. Further information was also incorporated into the Total Respect training.

How educational achievements of children and young people were celebrated:

It was highlighted that the Aspire to Uni programme was a way of encouraging achievements and this would be covered in more detail at item 7 on the agenda.

It was also noted that the I Awards was the most prominent way of recognising achievement and the next event would take place on 5 April 2019, hosted at the Molineux. Children and young people, carers, independent reviewing officers usually attended and members of Corporate Parenting Board were invited to attend this year's event. It was highlighted that internal Communications usually delivered a press release to the local news and the event was heavily publicised internally.

Alice Vickers, Corporate Parenting Officer advised that Mark Taylor, Deputy Managing Director had been encouraging partners such as West Midlands Police, members of the voluntary sector and various local businesses to contribute to the event. Attempts were being made to secure football mascots Wendy and Wolfie to appear.

The I Awards event was commended by Councillors and it was agreed that there was much to be celebrated. There was a renewed commitment to improving the lives of children and young people in care and it was requested that any ideas, suggestions and useful contact details be forwarded to Emma Bennett, Director of Children's Services or Alice Vickers, Corporate Parenting Officer.

The cost of buying necessary items:

The Board were asked to estimate the cost of certain necessary items for a 16-year-old. This was to demonstrate how much financial support was required for a young person.

Written policy for the frequency and purpose of social worker visits:

It was explained that, as part of the current care package for a child entering care or being placed with a new carer, initial weekly visits were normally held and then the frequency fell to every six weeks.

After one year, the frequency was dependant on the personal plan. If the child was with their carer until the age of 18, the visits were every three months. If the child was due to leave a placement before the age of 18, visits were every six weeks.

In response to being asked how many of the young people present had a direct contact number for their social worker, the young people stated that not all of them did.

In response to being asked if they were able to have a 1:1 visit with their social worker, it was stated that they could either meet their social worker in a safe public place or have their carer exit the room when being visited by their social worker.

Following this exercise, the young people from CiCC and Care Leaver's Forum provided an update on activities and events they had participated in from July 2018 to the present.

The CiCC reported that:

- They had participated in the Make your Mark Campaign, Youth Council meetings and the BSafe Team Activity Weekend, including rock climbing, abseiling and other outdoor pursuits;
- BSafe Team Meetings and the last one included a focus on youth knife crime and its effects;

- They had participated in the Youth Parliament and the young people had also met Tim Johnson, Managing Director on a Youth Council Engagement event;
- The young people had been consulted on the use of term 'looked after children.' They had taken part in suggesting new terminology and voted on the use of the term 'children and young people in care';
- The young people had interviewed social worker staff in an exercise to restructure the role;
- They had visited the Key to Inspiration residential home and taken part in interviewing applicants for staff positions;
- The young people had been consulted as part of the Mental Health Review to ascertain how being in care affected mental health;
- They had participated in Takeover Day, during which the young people took part in engagement activities at the Civic Centre;
- A Christmas party had been held for children and young people in care.

The Care Leavers' Forum reported that:

- Total Respect training had been delivered by the young people to prisons, the University of Wolverhampton, Job Centres and schools throughout Wolverhampton;
- They had been consulted as part of the Department for Work and Pensions' (DWP) work developing the Protocol;
- They had been involved with the launch of the Covenant and Care Leavers' Offer;
- They had organised and participated in a baking competition, similar to Great British Bake Off;
- In September 2018, the free WVActive passes had included allowing a 'plus one.'

The issue was raised regarding safeguarding care leavers' savings should they need to claim benefits in the event of them being unable to find work. It was clarified that this was being explored and the previous Chair of Corporate Parenting Board had written a letter of support to the Department for Work and Pensions. A presentation had been prepared by members of the Care Leavers' Forum to deliver to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) leads in respect of the regional protocol.

Resolved:

That the CiCC and Care Leavers' Forum Workshops including Total Respect exercises be noted.

## 7 **Virtual School Head Annual Report 2018**

Darren Martindale, Service Manager: Vulnerable Learners and Virtual School Head presented the Virtual School Head Annual Report 2018. The report outlined the concept of the Virtual School as being a model by which all children and young people in care were viewed as if they attended the same school with the Virtual School Head as the head teacher. It was noted that the report followed on from an update presented at the last Corporate Parenting Board meeting and provided a fuller picture of the attainments achieved by Wolverhampton's children and young

people in care and how the Wolverhampton Virtual School had supported their progress.

It was clarified that the statutory guidance stated that children and young people in care should attend schools that were rated good or outstanding by Ofsted. It was noted, however that when schools converted to academies, they were not Ofsted rated until another visit following conversion had taken place; this sometimes affected the data.

In respect of the Turnabout programme, it was reported that there had been learning intervention to encourage improved reading and writing skills, self-confidence and positive behaviour. Progress was reviewed before and after the intervention and positive feedback had been received, examples of which appeared in the report.

In respect of a KS4 group that had taken part in the exercise, it was noted that they were not interested initially but became fully engaged as the exercise progressed. By the end of the day, each had delivered a speech in front of the group.

In relation to the Aspire2Uni (A2U) Programme, it was outlined that undergraduates had been employed to act as mentors to children and young people on an ongoing basis to focus on educational progress. Regular university visit days were held that focused on specific subjects such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), art, theatre, etc. 20 children had graduated from Children's University, for which there had been a graduation ceremony with caps and gowns.

Attention was drawn to the statistics in paragraph 5.4 which showed that 72% of children and young people in care were at the expected standard in both English and maths which was agreed to be an exceptional outcome.

Attendance was reported to be high with the number of exclusions being stable compared to last year's figures. 10% of children and young people in care were reported as consistently not attending, with one permanent exclusion. It was noted that great care was taken to avoid permanent exclusion where possible.

The attainment of the early years and foundation stage cohort was found to be excellent. It was noted that the Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 were achieving figures above national average. The out of City cohort were lower in many areas, but it was anticipated that this discrepancy would even out. It was reported that 18% of Key Stage 4 pupils were achieving grade 4 in mathematics and English (which was equivalent to a C grade under the old grading system) which was above the national average of 16.2% and 12 Care Leavers had begun studying for an undergraduate degree.

The Youth Offender Team (YOT) had been focusing on education engagement and 76% were reported as fully engaged.

It was noted that overall, there were many positive areas and it was felt that there was a sound understanding of areas of improvement.

In response to query on advocacy for the prevention of school exclusions for children and young people in care, it was noted that the Service Manager: Vulnerable Learners and Virtual School Head held the responsibility, working in conjunction with

the Principal Educational Psychologist. It was noted that schools had a statutory responsibility to support children and people in care. If a cared for child was excluded, it was noted that the service was able to liaise with the headteacher to get the decision rescinded if appropriate. Training was being to schools and governors to challenge exclusions and gain an improved appreciation of social and emotional mental health issues and understand the behaviours driving exclusions.

A concern was raised in relation to personal education plan (PEP) figures being so low. It was thought that the introduction of a new application form system may be affecting figures as the process transitioned over from the paper applications. It was anticipated that, once the electronic PEPs were fully embedded, figures would improve. It was reported that training sessions were being rolled out and user guides circulated to assist service users. A monthly social worker 'clinic' had been established for this purpose.

Resolved:

That the Virtual School Head Annual Report 2018 be noted.

## 8 **OFSTED Inspection at Upper Pendeford Farm Short Break Centre December 2018**

Rachel King, Head of Service – Specialist Support delivered a presentation on the Ofsted Inspection of Upper Pendeford Farm Short Break Centre in December 2018.

It was explained that the centre received unannounced, annual inspections and was last inspected between 19 – 10 December 2018. Inspectors focus on three main criteria:

1. Overall experiences and progress of children and young people
2. How well children and young people are helped and protected
3. The effectiveness of leaders and managers

It was reported that the manager, employees, young people, parents, carers and other relevant professionals were interviewed as part of the process.

It was highlighted that the centre was rated as good in the first two areas and required improvement in the effectiveness of leaders and managers, the overall rating being reported as good.

Areas of strength were identified as providing fantastic support to the young people, working directly with young people to build independence and address issues and providing a safe place where the views of the young people were taken into consideration.

Risk management was undertaken to ensure children sharing spaces were well-matched and any child showing signs of being unsettled was dealt with sensitively. The offer also included days out, which were kept low-key to ensure a realistic outlook, and the attendance of a sexual health nurse to provide advice to young people.

A training matrix was to be introduced to ensure an accurate and current record of staff training was kept and could be easily referred to.

Other areas for improvement were also outlined, with particular attention being drawn to the length of a short break stay which had exceeded the stipulated 17 days in the same setting without notifying Ofsted. This was highlighted as being the result of decision which had been made in the best interests of the child from a safeguarding aspect. It was noted that the child's original placement had broken down and a satisfactory placement had not been found within the 17 days. It had been agreed that it was better for the child to remain in a place where they felt comfortable and settled until a suitable placement could be found. A contact had been established at Ofsted for future reporting and the state of purpose for the establishment had been updated to include a section on children at risk of placement breakdown.

In response to a query about the 17-day limit, it was clarified that this was the length of a short break as defined in the Children Act 1989 and was the same as for children with special educational needs and disabilities.

Resolved:

That the findings from the Ofsted Inspection at Upper Pendeford Farm Short Break Centre December 2018 be received.

## 9 **Performance Monitoring Information Report**

Emma Bennett, Director of Children's Services presented the Performance Monitoring Information report and highlighted salient points. The dashboard had been updated with data as at 30 November 2018 however it was noted that the number of children in care had fallen from 643 to 639 since the information had been captured.

It was highlighted that use of internal foster carers had continued to rise and the service was working hard to recruit more foster carers to reduce the need for external placements.

Up to date assessments and reviews and review participation figures were all reported to be positive with an increase in outturn from 2016 – 2017 to 2017 – 2018. This was to be included in a review on progress in all aspects of the lives of children and young people in care. Young people were being consulted on this and it was requested to add an item on the review to the Forward Plan for a future meeting.

It was highlighted that dental checks had improved and were now at 90%.

It was reported that a median figure had been included in the adoption figures which offered a more positive outlook and the service had performed strongly in identifying suitable accommodation.

Resolved:

That the Performance Monitoring Information Report for Children and Young People in Care be noted.

10 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

Resolved:

That in accordance with Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business as it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information contained in paragraph 2 of the Act, namely information that is likely to reveal the identity to an individual.

11 **Councillor Visits to Establishments**

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