

Attendance

Chair Cllr Paul Sweet (Lab)

Labour

Cllr Jasbinder Dehar
Cllr Celia Hibbert

Cllr Peter O'Neill
Cllr Caroline Siarkiewicz

Employees

Emma Bennett
Fiona Brennan
Dawn Deans
Alison Hinds
Shelley Humphries
Joginder Shoker-Kang
Dr Stephanie Simon
Alice Vickers

Director of Children's Services
Designated Nurse, Children and Young People in Care
Senior Social Work Manager - Adoption
Head of Children and Young People in Care
Democratic Services Officer
CAMHS Representative
Designated Doctor, Children and Young People in Care
Corporate Parenting Officer

Item No. *Title*

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Obaida Ahmed, Councillor Claire Simm, Councillor Udey Singh and Councillor Martin Waite.

2 Declarations of interests

There were no declarations of interest made.

3 Minutes of the meeting held on 24 January 2019

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 24 January 2019 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 Matters arising

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

5 Schedule of outstanding matters

It was agreed that the safeguarding report outlining statistics and relationships with 'at risk' children from other local authorities would be deferred to another meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board.

In response to a query regarding Councillor visits, it was reported that Councillor Martin Waite had visited a private sector residential home and a written report had been prepared. It was agreed that, as Councillor Waite had given apologies for this meeting, this would be deferred to the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board.

It was clarified that only establishments where Wolverhampton children were placed could be visited and it was agreed that a different Councillor would be invited to attend each time.

Resolved:

1. That the safeguarding report outlining statistics and relationships with 'at risk' children from other local authorities be deferred to another meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board.
2. That the report for the Councillor Visit be deferred to the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board.
3. That the Schedule of Outstanding Matters report be received.

6 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 January 2019, however it was noted that the

number of children in care had fallen from 637 to 626 since the information had been captured.

The 10 – 15-year-olds cohort had the steepest spike, whilst it was noted that the high numbers recorded for 15 – 18-year-old may be as a result of a legacy spike. It was highlighted that internal placements had exceeded set targets whilst placements with agencies had decreased.

In respect of long-term stability, it was noted that the figures may be affected by placements of children into long-term care.

Assessments, reviews and visits figures were showing as very positive and it was noted that up to date personal education plan (PEP) figures were much improved on last year. Health and dental check figures were also strong compared to last year. A slight dip in dental checks had been seen in this snapshot, however extensive work had been undertaken to improve this across the year.

A considerable number of care leavers were in education, employment and training (EET), as well as those being available for the labour market. Care leavers in suitable accommodation figures had decreased, however Wolverhampton's numbers remained strong compared to statistical neighbours.

In response to a query regarding housing provision, it was clarified that there were contracts in place for supported lodgings with the YMCA. It was not solely for care leavers, however it was available for their use if considered appropriate for their situation. It was reported that there was also some provision for families to let spare rooms to care leavers. It was clarified that close work was being undertaken with Wolverhampton Homes and 30 flats were available for the use for care leavers. Specialist provision had also been made for young mothers.

Resolved:

That the Performance Monitoring Information report be received.

7 Children and Young People in Care - Statutory Performance

Emma Bennett, Director of Children's Services presented the Children and Young People in Care – Statutory Performance briefing note. The report highlighted information on 10 key indicators covering children and young people which was provided as part of the annual Children Looked After – 903 Return and covered the previous financial year.

It was noted that Wolverhampton was an outlier in terms of numbers, however considerable work was being undertaken to reduce these numbers.

Five out of ten indicators had seen improvement, four had seen a decrease yet remained strong and one had remained the same. It was highlighted that Wolverhampton had achieved the top quartile of performance in two indicators and second quartile in three. Wolverhampton appeared in the bottom quartile for percentage of children and young people in care at 31 March 2019, however this had improved in 2018 – 2019. An outline of the indicators was provided with an analysis of the figures.

In response to a question relating to point 3.3 regarding children involved in missing incidents, it was clarified that West Midlands Police defined a missing child as a child who had not returned home and their whereabouts were unknown to their carer. If they had not returned home but their carer was aware of their whereabouts, they were classed as absent. This definition was likely to undergo a change in that a child was classed as missing if their disappearance was reported to police. It was noted that once a child had returned, a Return Interview was conducted within 72 hours to ascertain where they had been and with whom.

Resolved:

That the Children and Young People in Care Statutory Performance briefing note be received.

8 **Corporate Parenting Strategy 2018 - 2021 Update**

Alice Vickers, Corporate Parenting Officer presented the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2018 – 2021 Update report. The report outlined the developments progressed and opportunities made available to children and young people in care and care leavers since the launch of the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2018 – 2021 in April 2018.

It was noted that in May 2018, the Strategy was launched with a Corporate Parenting Workshop which identified opportunities and ideas for what was known as the Corporate Parenting Senior Officers' Group to develop. The Group had been refreshed as the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board and included external partners as well as internal officers to ensure better outcomes for children and young people.

It was reported that a Corporate Parenting Action Plan based on the seven Corporate Parenting Principles had been developed for the first time for 2018 -2019. The Action Plan was presented at each Corporate Parenting Partnership Board meeting for officers and partners to review and add to. It was noted that priority areas were highlighted in a table on the first page and actions that had been completed were outlined on subsequent pages. It was noted that all actions were complete for the 2018 – 2019 Action Plan and the plan was approved.

It was noted that the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board scheduled for Monday 1 April 2019 would be dedicated to identifying new priorities for the 2019 – 2020 Action Plan.

It was highlighted that it was important for Wolverhampton's children and young people in care to hold high aspirations and a query was raised whether care leavers who had done well could act as peer mentors or ambassadors. It was noted that HeadStart was already exploring this resource with peer-to-peer mentoring.

Resolved:

1. That the developments outlined in the Corporate Parenting Strategy Update 2018 – 2021 be received.
2. That the Corporate Parenting Action Plan 2018 – 2019 be approved.

9 **Adoption Agency Interim Report**

Dawn Deans, Senior Social Work Manager presented the Adoption Agency Interim Report and highlighted salient points. The report provided an update on the work carried out by the City of Wolverhampton Adoption Service from April – October 2018.

It was highlighted that the target of six early permanence placements had been achieved earlier than expected and the new regional adoption agency (RAA) Adoption@Heart was due to launch on 1 April 2019.

It was highlighted that there had been extensive work on embedding black, and minority ethnic (BAME) imagery and messaging in marketing activities and several bespoke targeted campaigns had been developed, which included information being translated into several different languages.

In response to queries regarding the RAA, it was clarified that it was a Black Country agency rather than West Midlands and that the budget was on track for the first year. It was also noted that the operating model for the RAA had been approved at Cabinet.

Resolved:

That the Adoption Agency Interim Report be received.

10 **Health Services for Children and Young People in Care Annual Report January 2018 - February 2019**

Fiona Brennan, Dedicated Nurse for Children and Young People presented the Health Services for Children and Young People in Care Annual Report January 2018 – February 2019 and highlighted salient points. The report outlined action being taken to deliver health outcomes for children and young people in care and advise the Corporate Parenting Board of future plans.

It was noted that there had been a focus on commissioning arrangements and that the health care provision had expanded to cover children in care placed within a 50-mile radius. This accounted for 92% of children however it was noted that the Wolverhampton Clinical Commissioning Group (WCCG) remained responsible and worked closely with the remaining 8% placed outside of this area.

It was added that the expansion of the administration team had enabled services to become more streamlined and had improved the timeliness of health assessments.

Attention was drawn to page 82 which outlined the Key Health Priorities for Wolverhampton.

In respect of immunisations, it was noted that children in care were less likely to be immunised at the age of two. It was thought that this was due to the process of being placed into care beginning around this age, causing this to be overlooked.

In respect of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), it was noted that the service had undergone a transformation and the CYPiC team had been restructured. It had been ensured that children and young people in care were recognised as having extra or specialised needs.

It was noted that waiting lists had been significantly reduced since the transformation. The longest waits had been experienced with unaccompanied asylum seeker children (UASC), who had been difficult to engage.

The reduction in waiting times was commended however concerns were expressed regarding cancellations or children not showing up for health assessments. It was noted that there were some repeat offenders which could often skew the figures. The Board was reassured that this would be reviewed and addressing non-attendance would become a key performance indicator. It was noted that persistent non-attendance would result in a safeguarding referral, and WCCG would escalate to Children's Services if necessary. Social Workers would be informed in all instances. It was clarified that CAMHS covered a 20-mile radius.

Resolved:

That the Health Services for Children and Young People in Care Annual Report January 2018 – February 2019 be received.

11

The House Project

Alison Hinds, Head of Children and Young People in Care presented the House Project report. The report outlined the proposal to implement the House Project in the City of Wolverhampton. It was highlighted that many care leavers felt moving into their own home was daunting and that many felt loneliness.

It was noted that the House Project was an initiative that was first established in Stoke-on-Trent where young care leavers would be involved in refurbishing void properties. Once the properties were refurbished, the young people could move in and remain there as long as they wished.

It was noted that the project had many positive outcomes, such as the young people gaining a feeling of ownership, independence and achievement as well as building a community of support.

It was outlined that the second phase of the project involved funding the development of the House Project in five local authorities. Once the model is assured, it is anticipated that the National House Project will disseminate the framework to other authorities.

It was proposed that the City of Wolverhampton would develop the House Project to complement the supported housing accommodation offer that already exists for care leavers. The National House Project had been contacted and would be visiting Wolverhampton to consult with employees within the Transition Team and the care leavers themselves.

It was suggested that the Authority ensure that private sector landlords did not exploit the system, however the Board was reassured that a strong working relationship had been forged with Wolverhampton Homes to secure properties for the Project and that 33 flats had been identified.

The House Project was welcomed by Board members and it was agreed it would help build confidence. The project would be progressed with a formal report being provided to Cabinet Resources Panel.

Resolved:

That the House Project report be received.

12 **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.

13 **Councillor Visits to Establishments - Schedule of Visits**

Resolved:

That this item be deferred until the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board.

14 **Any other business**

It was announced that Councillor Peter O'Neill would be retiring in May 2019. Councillor O'Neill extended thanks to the Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board and commended the work of the Corporate Parenting Board stating it had been a privilege to be a member.

The Chair took to the opportunity to wish Councillor O'Neill well on behalf of the Board and recognise his contribution as a member.