



Corporate Parenting Board

Minutes - 11 March 2015

Attendance

Chair Cllr Val Gibson (Lab)

Labour

Cllr Paula Brookfield
Cllr Jasbinder Dehar

Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre
Cllr Julie Hodgkiss

Cllr Rita Potter
Cllr Martin Waite

Conservative

Cllr Christine Mills

Cllr Patricia Patten

Employees

Carl Craney
Emma Bennett
Jane O'Daly
Alison Hinds
Mandy Lee
Lorraine Millard

Democratic Support Officer
Service Director, Children and Young People
Head of Safeguarding, Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust
Head of Looked After Children
Children's Safeguarding Manager
Designated Senior Nurse Safeguarding Children, Wolverhampton
City Clinical Commissioning Group

Item No. Title

1 Apologies for absence (if any)

No apologies for absence had been received.

2 Declarations of interests (if any)

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

3 Minutes of the previous meeting (21 January 2015)

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2015 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 Matters arising

With reference to Minute No 7 (Performance Monitoring – Looked after Children (LAC)) and insofar as it related to waiting times for LAC having access to the children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), Emma Bennett, Service Director, Children and Young People reported that a request had been submitted to the Black Country Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, the provider of this service, with a view to a report being submitted to a future meeting on this matter

With reference to the request for other reports made at the meeting, the Service Director for Children and Young People undertook to ensure that these were included within the Work Programme for 2015/16.

Resolved:

That the reports be noted.

5 Safeguarding Service Annual Report 2013/14

Mandy Lee, Children's Safeguarding Manager, presented the Safeguarding Service Annual Report for 2013/14. She explained that the Safeguarding Service had statutory responsibility for oversight and ratification of the care plans for Looked After Children (LAC) via the activities of the Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO's). The service was duty bound to provide this Board with an Annual Report which outlined the activity of the service, the impact for children and recommendations for service improvement which would enhance young people's experiences. She drew particular attention to the good performance of LAC participating in reviews but commented that the overall performance of the service was affected by the high number of children in the care system. This in turn had not allowed the service to fulfil all of its functions as outlined in the IRO handbook.

Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre enquired as to whether the "Agresso" system would provide "real time information" which would overcome the difficulties the Board experienced by receiving an Annual Report almost twelve months out of date. The Service

Director, Children and Young People, reported that while the “Agresso” system would assist, other factors had led to the delay in this report being presented and that, in any event, it was the “Care First” system which provided the “real time” information which was used to populate the Performance Monitoring Report which was considered at each meeting.

Cllr Paula Brookfield referred Sections 3 and 4 of the Annual Report insofar as they related to quantitative and qualitative information about the service and asked if further such information could be included within the regular Performance Monitoring Reports. The Children’s Safeguarding Manager advised that she was working closely with the Business Intelligence Team to achieve that aim.

Cllr Martin Waite referred to anecdotal evidence of the national shortage of Social Workers and enquired whether the high level of caseloads was a concern. The Service Director, Children and Young People advised that the workload of IRO’s included attendance at Child Protection case conferences in addition to duties on safeguarding and that the high caseload level was a matter of concern. She reported on the initiatives taken to recruit additional Social Workers. Cllr Rita Potter reminded the Board that since March 2012 the number of children in care had increased significantly and enquired with the progress on the campaign to recruit Specialist Foster Carers’. Alison Hinds, Head of Looked After Children reported that recruitment to these posts had commenced but reminded the Board that even when fostered the children remained in the care of the local authority.

Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre commented that he understood that the LAC population had stabilised or even dropped slightly and enquired whether this would enable the Safeguarding Service to get closer to fulfilling the functions outlined in the IRO handbook. The Children’s Safeguarding Manager confirmed that this would assist but that the caseload was substantially above that recommended nationally and was also affected by the increase in the number of child protection cases. Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre queried whether there was a danger of the local authority not fulfilling its statutory responsibilities. The Service Director, Children and Young People reported that this was not the position.

Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre referred to Section 4.10 of the report insofar as it referred to children participating in reviews and reminded the Board of the views expressed previously by the Children in Care Council (CCC) that it was preferable if reviews were not conducted during school time. The Service Director, Children and Young People advised that reviews were not normally conducted during school time and that the comments made by CCC had related to Personal Education Plans (PEP’s). The matter of PEP’s being undertaken in school time was being addressed by Darren Martindale, COPE Team Manager/Virtual School Head.

Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre questioned whether the data provided by the Business Intelligence Team was provided in a sufficient timely manner. The Service Director, Children and Young People advised that the information and manner of presentation of the Performance Monitoring Report had improved considerably and that further work was on-going to improve the contents further. The Chair, Cllr Val Gibson, reminded the Group that many advancements had been made in both the content and style of presentation of the Performance Monitoring report but that this had often resulted in requests for more and/or additional information.

Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre referred to Section 8.1 of the report and “some issues arising with the return of timely responses on Red and Amber RAG’s by the social work managers and high turnover of staff in that area had lead to some confusion about the expectations” and enquired whether this position had improved. The Children’s Safeguarding Manager advised that there had been some difficulties encountered due to the high turnover of staff but that a review of the system was now being undertaken. The Service Director, Children and Young People explained that under the current system the system required a formal response to each RAG rating and whilst Red ratings were followed up those ratings with Amber and Green status were not always pursued. In any event the RAG rating system was quantitative rather than qualitative and did not have regard to quality of care.

Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre referred to Section 9.1 of the report and enquired as to whether the Council was yet in a position to comply fully with the IRO handbook. The Children’s Safeguarding Manager confirmed that this was not the case due to the continuing high caseloads albeit that the majority of the contents were now being followed. Cllr Dr Hardacre enquired as to the implications for the Council at an Ofsted inspection of non-compliance. The Service Director, Children and Young People, advised that the position with regard to caseloads was likely to be noted only by Ofsted given that the Council was not in a failing position.

Cllr Martin Waite enquired as to the reporting line for the Head of Safeguarding. The Service Director, Children and Young People, advised that the Head of Safeguarding reported to Ros Jervis, Service Director for Public Health and Wellbeing: the division of responsibilities being intentional to retain independence between the two areas of responsibility. Cllr Paula Brookfield questioned as to which Service Director held responsibility for setting priorities. The Service Director, Children and Young People advised that priorities were determined jointly by her and the Service Director, Public Health and Wellbeing.

Cllr Paula Brookfield commented on the absence of any information and/or reference to any reference to Children Sexually Exploited (CSE). The Service Director, Children and Young People reported that this particular topic was much wider than LAC, that considerable work was being undertaken on the issue and that the Council’s model had been adopted by the Home Office as an exemplar and that further work was proposed in respect of LAC who were missing from home or care.

Resolved:

1. That the Annual Report of the Safeguarding Service 2013/14 be received and noted;
2. That the thanks of the Board be conveyed to the Safeguarding Service for the work undertaken and for the Annual Report;
3. That details pertaining to LAC potentially at risk of CSE be submitted to a future meeting.

The Service Director, Children and Young People, presented the Performance Monitoring Report as at March 2015. She drew to the attention of the Board an error in the gender figures in the report submitted to the meeting held on 21 January 2015.

Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre referred to the Section pertaining to Education, the discrepancies in some of the information and that Ofsted now considered the best eight results rather than 5+ A* - C inc. English and Maths. He suggested that this matter be drawn to the attention of the Director of Education. The Service Director, Children and Young People acknowledged the points made and informed the Board of the work currently being undertaken by the COPE Team Manager/Virtual School Head in conjunction with the Business Intelligence Team and the Education Directorate on certain elements of the report.

With regard to LAC Health, Lorraine Millard, Designated Senior Nurse Safeguarding Children, Wolverhampton City Clinical Commissioning Group and Jane O'Daly, Safeguarding Manager, Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust reported on the pro-active steps being taken to ensure that all Wolverhampton LAC received a timely health check. They explained that the different commissioning arrangements of local authorities compounded the position and that the funding for reciprocal health check arrangements had been lost at the time of the last NHS re-organisation. The Designated Senior Nurse Safeguarding Children informed the Board on the arrangements which were in hand for an appointment to the post of Statutory Designated Nurse for LAC by the Wolverhampton City Clinical Commissioning Group and that an interim appointment could be made in the short term. The Safeguarding Manager reported that the Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust was currently investigating the possibility of co-location with both the Clinical Commissioning Group and the City Council.

Cllr Paula Brookfield referred to the data in connection children awaiting adoption and enquired at which point those children with a Placement Plan would have their status changed. The Head of Looked After Children advised that this decision was made on an individual basis in respect of each child and that the pre-adoption preparation was conducted sensitively.

Resolved:

1. That the report be received and noted;
2. That the continued enhancement of the format be welcomed;
3. That future reports include data relevant to the average caseload of Social Workers dealing with Child Protection and LAC issues.

7 Exclusion of the public and press

Resolved:

That in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business as they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information contained in paragraph 1 of the Act, namely information relating to any individual.

Part 2 – items not open to the public and press

8 Councillors visits to establishments

No visits to establishments had been undertaken by Councillors since the last meeting of the Board. In response to questions from Cllr Martin Waite and Cllr Rita Potter the Service Director, Children and Young People explained the ownership and management arrangements at the Merridale Street West, Wolverhampton Residential Home and the involvement of the Council with private residential children's homes where no Wolverhampton LAC were resident.

Resolved:

1. That the report be received and noted;
2. That any establishments which had not been the subject of a visit by a member of the Board be highlighted, that the Chair be informed accordingly and that the Chair endeavour to seek volunteers from the Panel to undertake such a visit.

9 LGIU and CCLA Councillor Achievement Award - Cllr Val Gibson

Cllr Julie Hodgkiss informed the Board that Cllr Val Gibson had recently won a prestigious award from the LGIU and CCLA for her work to drive forward improvements for children and families in Wolverhampton.

Resolved:

1. That the congratulations of the Board be offered to the Chair, Cllr Val Gibson on her recent award from the LGIU and CCLA;
2. That the slides presented recently to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel in relation to the Families r First programme be circulated to the Board.

10 Thanks to the Chair

Resolved:

That the best thanks of the Board be extended to the Chair, Cllr Val Gibson, for the able and courteous manner in which she had conducted the proceedings during the current Municipal Year.