

Attendance

Chair Cllr John Reynolds (Lab)

Labour

Cllr Paul Sweet

Cllr Paula Brookfield

Cllr Rashpal Kaur

Conservative

Cllr Udey Singh

Employees

Fiona Brennan

Shelley Humphries

Alison Hinds

Alice Vickers

Shaquille Spence

Designated Nurse, Children and Young People in Care

Democratic Services Officer

Head of Children and Young People in Care

Corporate Parenting Officer

Participation Officer

Members of the Care Leavers' Independent Collective (CLiC) also attended as guests.

Item No. *Title*

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Paul Appleby and Emma Bennett.

2 Declarations of interests

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

3 Minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2019

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2019 be confirmed as correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 Matters arising

There were no matters arising in relation to the minutes of the previous meeting.

5 Schedule of outstanding matters

It was reported that invitations had been extended to visit a residential establishment to take place on 21 November 2019. Councillor Rashpal Kaur and Councillor Udey Singh requested to attend.

It was noted that the discrepancy with the dental checks would be addressed in the Performance Monitoring Information report.

Resolved:

That the Schedule of Outstanding Matters be received.

6 The REACH Local Offer for Care Leavers Aged 16-25 Annual Review 2019

Alice Vickers, Corporate Parenting Officer presented the REACH Local Offer for Care Leavers Aged 16 – 25 Annual Review report. The report outlined that The Local Offer for Care Leavers had been live for 12 months and a comprehensive review of the benefits and services accessible by care leavers had been undertaken in August and September 2019. This has been contributed to by care leavers themselves as well as a steering group set up to support the services provided as part of the Offer.

The report outlined the feedback received from a consultation event which had taken place on 10 August 2019 at Aldersley Leisure Village and provided an analysis of that feedback by the steering group. A number of recommendations based on the developments and additions discussed during the consultation were made.

The Corporate Parenting Board agreed the developments and additions that had been made to the Offer and approved the publication of the revised REACH Local Offer for Care Leavers Aged 16 – 25.

Resolved:

1. That the developments and additions made to the REACH Local Offer for Care Leavers Aged 16 – 25 be agreed.
2. That the publication of the revised REACH Local Offer for Care Leavers Aged 16 – 25 be approved.

7 **Care Leavers' Forum Workshop**

Members of the Care Leavers' Forum known as the Care Leavers Independent Collective (CLiC) delivered a presentation and provided an in-depth verbal update on the findings from the Care Leaver Offer review consultation.

It was reported that 13 care leavers attended the workshops held on 10 August 2019 out of the 280 care leavers that resided in Wolverhampton. 11 of the 13 reported that they were aware of the Care Leaver Offer. A concern was raised by the young people as it was felt this was not enough engagement. The Board and officers present acknowledged the request from the young people that Young People Advisors (YPAs) could promote opportunities and events more effectively in future.

It was noted that care leavers had requested face to face counselling on matters such as domestic violence and child sexual exploitation (CSE). It was felt that, as vulnerable young people living independently for the first time, they would need to be aware of how to avoid these situations or know what to do if they already felt at risk.

It was highlighted that the training flat had been found to be beneficial and had been well utilised by young people who felt ready to try living independently.

The combination of the WVLiving passes with free Swift travel cards had been welcomed by the young people as the included free travel had proved essential for young people to get to work and interviews. It had also enabled them to visit friends, which had a huge positive impact on social connectivity and wellbeing. Care leavers had also requested access to bikes as this was often the preferred mode of transport for shorter journeys.

It was clarified that the Swift travel cards were valid on West Midlands buses, trains and trams. It was noted that the scheme had been vital and was hoped that it would become permanent. The young people planned to write to the West Midlands Mayor in January to seek support from the Regional Care Leavers' Forum to continue the scheme or a similar one. It was reported that the Prince's Trust had become involved with young people in Greater Manchester to set up a similar scheme and a member of the CLiC had been tasked with liaising with them to support this in Wolverhampton.

It was reported that of the 13 young people attending the workshops, only one stated they held a Health Passport. It was clarified that this was a document issued to care leavers which provided valuable health information such as NHS number, blood type, any allergies, etc. It was clarified that this scheme had been operating for 18 months and Health Passports were normally issued to new entrants into care or their carer when attending their first health assessment. It was thought that young people who had been in care some time prior to the launch of this initiative may not have been issued one. It was clarified that the document could be requested retrospectively by a child or young person's social worker or Young Person's Advisor by contacting the

Gem Centre. It was agreed that this information be disseminated so everyone was aware of how to obtain one.

It was reported that a successful bid had been made for Wolverhampton to take part in the House Project and a video showing the pitch was screened. The video had been produced in collaboration with members of the Care Leavers' Forum and provided an outline of the benefits of the House Project to Wolverhampton Care Leavers and how they looked forward to being involved. The project involved young people being supported to renovate a property with the intention of living there once complete.

The young people in the video who had already taken part in other areas described how they had learned valuable skills from decorating to budget management as well gaining a feeling of independence and social connection. They also felt a sense of pride from maintaining their own property which all contributed to their mental health and wellbeing.

The young people present at the meeting anticipated that the life skills that would be developed would help to build confidence in self-sufficiency and would enable care leavers to support each other with the skills they had gained. It was noted that a steering group had been established with officers and members of the Care Leavers' Forum to support the House Project. It was requested that an update on the progress of the House Project be provided by the young people at a future meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board.

It was highlighted that in addition to this, a Co-chair of the Care Leavers' Forum, Emma Bennett, Director of Children's Services and Spectra First had teamed up with Barclay's bank to produce finance workshops as part of the Care Leaver Covenant. It was noted that many young people were not always aware of money management and financial matters when the time came to live independently. It was thought that care leavers would be at a disadvantage if they had not received this guidance at home and the workshops had been designed to furnish them with the skills to manage their finances themselves.

It was noted that a Grandmentor Scheme had been established to match young people with an older person who would provide non-judgemental guidance and support them into independence. It was reported that the Scheme was now underway and one of the young people present had signed up and participated in their initial meeting. They reported that the meeting had felt positive and it was felt that their mentor was a good match. The young person recommended the scheme to others.

It was reported that officers had been working with the Rees Foundation Charity who had offered support to pay for driving tuition. A scheme had been devised in which the young person would pay for every fourth lesson and the Rees Foundation would provide the remainder. This would continue up until a successful driving test pass or up to the value of £750, whichever came sooner, on the proviso was that the driving theory test had been passed first. The steering group was exploring supporting young people in applying for their provisional licence and passing their theory test. It was clarified that the young person could use a company of their choosing and the charity would be invoiced. It was suggested that sourcing driving schools providing the option of female-only tutors would be beneficial if this made young women feel more comfortable.

It was noted that the high cost of insurance could sometimes be a barrier to young people owning a car and it was agreed that ways to support young people in this matter would be explored. It was suggested that Alice Vickers, Corporate Parenting Officer would explore possible options for obtaining either discounted insurance rates or compile a guide to choosing the best value policy to add to the offer.

Other positives included the new support software to replace the Mind of my Own (MOMO) app. It was reported that the new software would be web-based which meant it could be accessed from desktop computers anywhere. This was important as the use of phones or other hand-held devices often incurred data charges. It was clarified that the use of cross-platform chat groups had been considered, however issues with GPDR and verifying user identities in these groups, as well as the data charges had been barriers to this.

It had been planned to introduce discounted rent for working care leavers looking to take up tenancy with Wolverhampton Homes. It was clarified that a discount of 50% would be applied in the first year of tenancy and 25% discount in the second. Tenants would then be expected to pay 100% of their rent in the third year. This staggered approach had been designed to ease young people in gently until they were able to manage their living costs independently. It was noted that, even when working, young people may be on low incomes and would struggle initially.

To further support this, it had been planned to remove Universal Credit sanctions for care leavers. It was outlined that missed Job Centre appointments resulted in reductions to benefits, which had meant young people who didn't have the means to travel to the appointments had been unfairly penalised. It was reported that, in some cases, young people had needed to access food banks to make ends meet and it was hoped that the removal of these sanctions would prevent this.

It was noted that protected savings was also on the list to explore. The Wolverhampton City Credit Union was suggested with the Council acting as guarantor for loans.

It was reported that members of CLiC had been looking into discounted optical care and prescriptions. Discounted prescription forms for care leavers were being explored and the Beacon Centre for the Blind had been approached in respect of optical care as there had once been an in-house optometrist operating with the charity. It had been found that this was no longer the case, however a list of care leaver friendly opticians was being compiled in partnership with the charity.

In respect of health and wellbeing, CLiC members had been exploring the offer of discounted or free beauty treatments at local salons, such as hair styling or manicures. It was noted that the benefits of this included feeling confident and cared for as well as feeling presentable and prepared for job interviews. One high street chain had offered free cuts at one of its branches, however a miscommunication had meant clarification was needed on which branch this was.

The final request was that work be undertaken to ensure a smooth transition from child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) to adult mental health services so no-one was left without support during the transition period. It was noted that the Mental Health Trusts were combining, therefore it was advisable to await the completion of this before undertaking further work.

The young people were commended and thanked by Board members for their contribution.

Resolved:

1. That the process for obtaining a Health Passport be promoted to Young People Advisors, Social Workers and Young People.
2. It was requested that an update on the progress of the House Project be provided by the young people at a future meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board.
3. That Alice Vickers, Corporate Parenting Officer explore possible options for discounts or advice on car insurance policies.
4. That clarification on the salons offering free appointments be sought.

8 **Assurance About the Use of Unregistered Placements in Wolverhampton**

Alison Hinds, Head of Children and Young People in Care presented the Assurance About the Use of Unregistered Placement in Wolverhampton report and highlighted salient points. The report provided reassurances to Board members regarding how the safety and wellbeing of young people aged 16-18 placed in unregulated supported accommodation was being promoted. It was clarified that unregulated accommodation was a placement in accommodation that was not Ofsted inspected.

It was noted that in March 2019, Nadhim Zahawi MP, the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families had written to Directors of Children's Services and Chairs of Local Safeguarding Boards in all authorities highlighting the challenges face by many authorities in relation to these unregulated services and a report was presented to Children's Leadership Team to offer reassurances for how placements were made and monitored from a quality assurance perspective.

It was reported that since then, a number of improvements to placement processes had been devised as listed at paragraph 3.8 and the progress of these improvements monitored as outlined in paragraph 3.9 of the report.

It was noted that all young people in unregulated supported accommodation would continue to receive support with their health and wellbeing as detailed in the Local Offer for Care Leavers.

Resolved:

1. That the Assurance About the Use of Unregistered Placement in Wolverhampton report be received.

9 **Performance Monitoring Information**

Alison Hinds, Head of Children and Young People in Care presented the Performance Monitoring Information report and highlighted salient points.

It was highlighted that Wolverhampton was one of the only three local authorities that had been reducing the number of children and young people in care.

It was noted that there was more to the statistics than just the figures therefore it was requested that additional narrative be provided as an explanation to the figures represented in the dashboard.

The discrepancy with the dental checks had been resolved.

It was requested that Board members be provided with further information on the 24% of young people who were not available for education, employment or training for clarification.

It was noted that Wolverhampton were performing favourably when compared with statistical neighbours and engaging in good partnership working to achieve good results.

Resolved:

1. That the Performance Monitoring Report be received.
2. That additional narrative be provided as an explanation to the figures represented in the dashboard.
3. That Board members be provided with further information on the 24% of young people who were not available for education, employment or training for clarification.

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 - Schedule of Visits**

There had been no visits undertaken since the last meeting, however it was agreed that a report would be provided at the next meeting of Corporate Parenting Board for the visit on 21 November 2019.

12 **Assurance About the Use of Unregistered Placements in Wolverhampton**

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It was reported that, since then a number of improvements to placement processes had been devised as listed at paragraph 3.8 and the progress of these improvements monitored as outlined in paragraph 3.9 of the report.

It was noted that all young people in unregulated supported accommodation would continue to receive support with their health and wellbeing as detailed in the Local Offer for Care Leavers.

Resolved:

That the Assurance About the Use of Unregistered Placement in Wolverhampton report be received.