



Corporate Parenting Board

Minutes - 1 July 2015

Attendance

Chair Cllr Val Gibson (Lab)

Labour

Cllr Paula Brookfield
Cllr Jasbinder Dehar

Cllr Julie Hodgkiss
Cllr Peter O'Neill

Cllr Rita Potter
Cllr Martin Waite

Conservative

Cllr Christine Mills

Liberal Democrat

Cllr Richard Whitehouse

Employees

Emma Bennett
Fiona Brennan

Carl Craney
Alison Hinds
Alice Vickers

Service Director - Children and Young People
Designated Nurse, Looked After Children, Wolverhampton
Clinical Commissioning Group
Democratic Support Officer
Head of Looked After Children
Corporate Parenting Officer

By Invitation

Cllr Ed Ruane

Coventry City Council

Item No. *Title*

1 Apologies for absence (if any)

An apology for absence had been received from Cllr Stephen Simkins.

2 Declarations of interest (if any)

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

3 Minutes of the previous meeting (11 March 2015)

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2015 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 Matters arising

With reference to Minute No. 4 (Matters arising) and with particular reference to access to the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), the Chair, Cllr Val Gibson, enquired as to the present position with regard to the request submitted to the Black Country Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (BCPNHST) in relation to access to the service. Emma Bennett, Service Director for Children and Young People, reported that in conjunction with the Wolverhampton City Clinical Commissioning Group a review of services in relation to Tiers 1 – 3 including CAMHS was presently being undertaken, that a contract request had been submitted to the BCPNHST and that a detailed report would be submitted to a future meeting of the Board.

Cllr Peter O'Neill commented that one of the issues faced by young people suffering from mental health problems was the parity of esteem given the disparity between mental health services for young people compared to adults. The Service Director for Children and Young People explained that the review would attempt to ensure that early intervention and assistance was available. She advised the Board on the system currently operated by Staffordshire County Council for Tier One and Two cases and of the use of an on line service commissioned from the charity, Barnardos. A Tier Two service had also been developed with schools and an IT system which provided advice and assistance on matters including counselling, creative therapy and parenting courses.

With reference to Minute No. 5 (Safeguarding Service Annual Report 2013/14) Cllr Paula Brookfield suggested that the minute be included with the next report on the Safeguarding Service to act as an aide memoire to the Board on questions asked previously.

With reference to Minute No. 6 (Performance Monitoring – Looked After Children) and with particular reference to the elements pertaining to Education, Cllr Paula Brookfield suggested that the minute be included with the next report on the Education Service to act as an aide memoire to the Board on questions asked

previously. With reference to Minute No. 6.3, the Chair, Cllr Val Gibson, enquired as to whether details of data relevant to the average caseload of Social Workers dealing with Child Protection and LAC issues was available. The Service Director, Children and Young People reported that work was underway on the collation of this information.

Resolved:

1. That an extract from the minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 11 March 2015 be included with future reports on the Safeguarding and Education Services to act as an aide memoire to the Board;
2. That a report on outstanding matters be submitted to future meetings of the Board.

5 Dates and time of meetings

Resolved:

That meetings of the Corporate Parenting Board be held on the following dates commencing at 17:30 hours in the Civic Centre, Wolverhampton:
30 September 2015;
11 November 2015;
6 January 2016 and
30 March 2016.

6 Work Programme 2015/16

The Board considered a draft Work Programme for the 2015/16 Municipal Year.

Resolved:

That the draft Work Programme be approved.

7 Corporate Parenting Strategy and Action Plan

Alice Vickers, Corporate Parenting Officer presented the Corporate Parenting Strategy and Action Plan for Looked After Children and Care Leavers for use across the Council and its partners.

Cllr Rita Potter enquired as to the support available for Care Leavers including those with learning difficulties. The Corporate Parenting Officer advised that the “New Blongings” package had just been signed off. This was a package that had been evaluated nationally by Care Leavers. The Service Director for Children and Young People undertook to provide a report on this matter to the next meeting of the Board.

Cllr Martin Waite suggested that “the public” should be added to Priority One and that with regard to Priority Eight there was a need for a measurement to be included especially in relation to sexual health and the number of Looked After Children and Care Leavers accessing services. With regard to Priority Nine he suggested that there was also a need for a measurement on making placement changes more positive including, if possible, a minimum notice period to be given in cases where a change in placement was required. Alison Hinds, Head of Looked After Children, explained that where possible notice was given but circumstances sometimes dictated the need for a move at very short notice. Cllr Martin Waite acknowledged

this point but suggested a target for notice of planned moves could be added to the Strategy. The Head of Looked After Children undertook to strengthen the information provided to Looked After Children in relation to planned moves. The Chair, Cllr Val Gibson, commented that there was a long lead in time with placement moves where possible but that the service needed to be able to fit around the needs of the individual child. Any attempts to be overly prescriptive could be counter productive. Cllr Paula Brookfield supported this view but requested that in the event of any moves undertaken at short notice the Looked After Child receive a follow up visit very quickly. The Head of Looked After Children advised that such a visit was always made within 72 hours of such a move. The Corporate Parenting Officer reported that in the case of an out of city placement a directory of services provided by the relevant local authority was also provided and work was undertaken with the Fostering Service.

With regard to Priority Nine, Cllr Peter O'Neill suggested that the idea of making placement moves more positive should be explored with the Children in Care Council.

Cllr Paula Brookfield referred to the dedicated link in housing for fostering services and enquired as to the meaning of this term. The Corporate Parenting Officer explained that prospective Foster Carers' would require larger houses and that this needed to be factored into the allocation process.

Cllr Julie Hodgkiss queried Priority Four. The corporate Parenting Officer explained that as a result of placement moves the social lives of Looked After Children were often interrupted and that there was a need for a sense of inclusion in the company of children who were not in care. The opening of the Youth Zone and work with the Youth Council could assist with the achievement of this Priority. Cllr Julie Hodgkiss referred to Priority Five and the two distinct elements and queried whether the Looked After Children required further information on why it was not always possible for contact with siblings to be maintained. The Corporate Parenting Officer reported on the absence of data on the number of siblings kept together or separated and that the intention was to make sure information on siblings was available if requested by a Looked After Child.

Resolved:

That subject to minor amendments and clarifications as now discussed the Corporate Parenting Strategy and Action Plan be approved for submission to the Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel for consideration and then to be subject to formal ratification by this Board.

8 Performance Monitoring Data

The Service Director, Children and Young People presented the Performance Report for June 2015 (data as at May 2015 and provisional 2014/15 out-turn data) and responded to a number of queries.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted and that in future the report include a commentary on the number of placements in excess of 20 miles from Wolverhampton.

9 **Exclusion of the public and press**

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

10 **Councillors visits to establishments**

The Head of Looked After Children reported that the Children's Homes had now been de-commissioned and closed with the exception of Upper Pendeford Farm and Merridale Street West. The future role of Upper Pendeford Farm was currently being reviewed.

Cllr Paula Brookfield questioned how the Council monitored the service provided to Looked After Children housed in external establishments. The Service Director, Children and Young People explained that these establishments were subject to Ofsted inspections and that the Council did not use any establishments with an inadequate rating. In the event of such a rating being given a visit to the establishment would be made and an informed decision taken on future and / or continuing use. Cllr Ed Ruane (Coventry City Council) reported on the procedures operated by Coventry City Council in relation to the use of external residential establishments.

Resolved:

1. That the Chair, Cllr Val Gibson, undertake a visit to Upper Pendeford Farm and that the Head of Looked After Children make the necessary arrangements;
2. That the location and number of Looked After Children in residential accommodation be added to future Performance Monitoring reports;
3. That the COPE Team Manager / Virtual School Head be requested to submit a report on the academic achievements of all Looked After Children including the steps taken with poor achievers to a future meeting of the Board