

Attendance

Chair Cllr John Reynolds (Lab)

Labour

Cllr Paula Brookfield
Cllr Rashpal Kaur

Cllr Rita Potter
Cllr Zee Russell

Cllr Paul Sweet
Cllr Martin Waite

Conservative

Cllr Paul Appleby

Cllr Udey Singh

In attendance

Fiona Brennan
Wendy Harrison Frazer
Alison Hinds
Shelley Humphries
William Kidd
Shaquille Spence
Alice Vickers

Designated Nurse, Children and Young People in Care
Consultant Counselling Psychologist - CAMHS
Deputy Director of Children's Social Care
Democratic Services Officer
Head of Children & Young People in Care
Participation Officer
Co-production and Youth Engagement Manager

The Corporate Parenting Board also welcomed three members of the Care Leavers' Independent Collective (CLiC).

Item No. *Title*

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from 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 17 September 2020

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2020 be confirmed as 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

Alice Vickers, Co-production and Youth Engagement Manager presented the Schedule of Outstanding Matters report. The report provided a progress update on matters previously considered by the Board.

It was noted that a workshop had been held to record the pledges made by Board members to children and young people in care. It was noted that if anyone felt uncomfortable recording themselves, a written pledge could be provided.

Resolved:

1. That the Schedule of Outstanding Matters be noted.
2. That written pledges could be provided in lieu of a video recording.

6 Care Leavers' Forum

Members of the Care Leavers' Independent Collective delivered a presentation outlining the need for access to travel and PPE. The presentation supplied an overview of the benefits to care leavers and young people in care in having access to these things and the potential impact of being without.

It was acknowledged that the lack of PPE could cause young people to receive unwanted attention for not wearing a mask in public places and to feel unsafe. Having access to PPE would provide them with peace of mind that they were doing the right thing in preventing the spread of the virus as well as making them feel safe.

It was highlighted that a stock of the reusable masks produced for the Council's Relight campaign may still be available and these would be provided to the young people in the short term.

It was agreed that having to make the choice between paying for travel to access work or school and buying essentials was a hardship and that action needed to be taken on behalf of the young people.

It was noted that conversations were ongoing with travel providers as part of the REACH work with the hope that there would be something in place by the Christmas period.

One of the CLiC members asked what support would still be on offer for young people once the restrictions from COVID were lifted. The young people were assured that there were no planned changes or cutbacks and work ongoing to ascertain what post-COVID support would look like.

Social isolation as a result of the pandemic had also emerged as an issue and it was noted that the Co-production Hub drop-in centre was ready to open as soon as lockdown restrictions lifted. The Hub was a facility where young people could meet with their YPA, make something to eat, meet other young people and seek advice.

In response to a query around how the Council would address digital exclusion for young people, it was noted that digital access was a high priority and Councillor Beverley Momenabadi, in her capacity as the ICT Champion, had been exploring ways to provide data, dongles and laptops for young people to gain internet access. It was noted that there were a number of workstreams ongoing around supporting young people into employment, education and training and the opportunities presented by new use of digital platforms would also be explored.

Resolved:

1. That the Care Leavers' Forum presentation be received.
2. That Alison Hinds, Deputy Director of Social Care investigate available stock of Relight branded masks to provide to young people in care and care leavers.
3. That the ongoing work towards gaining access to travel for care leavers continue and a scheme be in place by Christmas 2020.

7 Performance Monitoring Information

Alison Hinds, Deputy Director of Social Care presented the Performance Monitoring Information Report and touched on key points.

Children in care numbers continued to reduce although the service were mindful about ensuring the right children remained in care where appropriate. It was noted that there was a high proportion of BME and older children in care – 60% were age 10 and above.

Placement stability was continually improving. There was a new electronic recording system Eclipse in use and data had now been migrated so each individual had only one record with all their information in one place. The migration had been successful however some tweaks were required to ensure accuracy in reporting.

Participation in reviews was encouragingly high and ways to engage young people were ever evolving. The use of Teams had been beneficial as it was simpler for

young people to access their review and fewer people physically in the room which made them feel more at ease.

The data showed there had been fewer adoptions throughout the pandemic, however there had been delays in hearings due to the closure of the courts. It was noted that children were being placed, there had just been delays in formalising arrangements with a final order.

Social worker caseloads had reduced allowing more time to spend with children and young people. The in-house fostering scheme and Family Values project had changed the way foster carers were trained. The work of the foster carers was commended and it was suggested that a token of appreciation be sent from Corporate Parenting Board to show recognition of this work.

Resolved:

That the Performance Monitoring Information Report be noted.

8 **The REACH Local Offer for Care Leavers Aged 16-25 Annual Review 2020**

Alice Vickers, Co-production and Youth Engagement Manager presented the REACH Local Offer for Care Leavers Aged 16 – 25 Annual Review 2020 report and highlighted salient points.

It was reported that the REACH Local Offer for Care Leavers Aged 16 - 25 had been live for the last 24 months and a comprehensive review of services had taken place every 12 months. The latest consultation with care leavers had taken place in August 2020 and the steering group held an official review in September 2020.

The review also served to ensure that the existing offer was still fit for purpose and to establish what was working well and the report provided an overview of this process, which had included care leavers and the steering group, and outcomes. The report also outlined a number of additional offers that had been proposed following the consultation, including access to travel which had been picked up by members of CLiC earlier in the meeting.

Resolved:

1. That the revisions made to the REACH Local Offer for Care Leavers Aged 16 – 25 be approved.
2. That the publishing of the revised REACH Local Offer for Care Leavers Aged 16 – 25 be approved.
3. That the process of the review be noted.

8 **The House Project Wolverhampton**

Alison Hinds, Deputy Director of Social Care presented the House Project Wolverhampton Report and highlighted salient points. The report provided Corporate Parenting Board with an overview of the progress of the House Project during its first year.

It was outlined that the House Project framework allowed young people to be supported into independence by gaining the practical skills to renovate and move into

their own home whilst connecting them with other young people taking part in the project which provided the additionality of peer support. The theory of change that underpins the project was based upon improving young people's outcomes and wellbeing, supporting positive changes to enable care leavers to live successful and healthy adult lives.

It was reported that it had been a challenging year and much for the progress had been hindered by lockdown and social distancing, however the project had adapted by moving as much as possible onto a virtual platform to build the community ethos that the project hoped to achieve. It was reported that the first cohort had progressed well and the Authority were beginning to engage with the second cohort of young people. A hub building had been kindly donated by Reconomy, a Telford-based company involved with the House Project, whose chief executive hailed from Wolverhampton and so had an interest in its community projects for young people.

The project and its accompanying support networks were commended as it was felt that the sense of community and shared experience was an excellent way to combat feelings of loneliness and isolation. It was thought that the project had exceeded all expectations and gratitude was expressed to all partners who had contributed and helped the project succeed through difficult times.

Resolved:

1. That the annual update report on the Wolverhampton House Project be received.
2. That the Corporate Parenting Board note the progress of the Wolverhampton House Project within the first twelve months.

10

Wolverhampton Children and Young People in Care Health Annual Report

Fiona Brennan, Designated Nurse for Children and Young People in Care and Wendy Harrison-Frazer, Consultant Counselling Psychologist for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) presented the Wolverhampton Children and Young People in Care Health Annual Report and highlighted salient points. The report summarised the key areas of development and outcomes achieved by local health service providers during the identified time frame and provide assurance.

In addition to the information within the report, there had been no reported changes to the offer for CAMHS however the pandemic and lockdown had changed the format of delivery. Many young people were being seen via virtual means however other cases were seen in person where appropriate.

In response to a query around how accurate video assessments were in comparison to face to face, it was noted that face to face was preferable to gain the additionality of reading body language or eye contact and a virtual conversation could not replace an examination. All appointments were triaged, RAG rated and risk assessed to determine if they needed to be seen face to face. It was agreed that in some cases, a virtual appointment was better than none.

In respect of the 3% refusal rate figures, it was acknowledged that it was sometimes unknown specifically why young people did not wish to engage. Efforts were always increased to try and reach out but sometimes it had to be accepted that it was their

choice. In terms of CAMHS appointment cancellations, it was noted that these were still high but not high as previously due to the use of virtual assessments.

It was noted that all appointments recorded as 'did not attend' or DNA were flagged with social workers to then communicate with foster carers and find out reasons why children were not being brought to appointments and resolve the issue. It was noted that the decision that CAMHS cases would be closed following three missed appointments, however this was no longer the case as it was agreed that it was not the child's doing and the carers needed to hold accountability for ensuring children had access to their appointments.

The work undertaken by health partners and the provision of extra was commended, particularly under such difficult circumstances.

Resolved:

That the Wolverhampton Children and Young People in Care Health Annual Report 2019 – 2020 be received.

11 **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.

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

Alice Vickers, Co-production and Youth Engagement Manager advised that residents from K2I and Upper Pendeford Farm had been contacted and Upper Pendeford Farm had expressed an interest in taking part in a virtual visit. It was advised that invites would be going out shortly to members of Corporate Parenting Board to take part.