

Attendance

Chair Cllr Beverley Momenabadi (Lab)

Labour

Cllr Mary Bateman
Cllr Paula Brookfield

Cllr Jasbinder Dehar
Cllr Rita Potter

Conservative

Cllr Udey Singh
Cllr Wendy Dalton

Cllr Stephanie Haynes

In attendance

Emma Bennett
Fiona Brennan
Michelle Cummings
Esther Douglas
Casey Gavin
Alison Hinds
Jazmine Walker

Director of Children's and Adult Services
Wolverhampton CCG
Corporate Parenting Officer
Social Worker and Foster Care Trainer
Trainee Systems and E-learning Assistant
Deputy Director of Social Care
Head of Children and Young People in Care

Foster Carers, members of CliC and a care leaver in an apprenticeship role also attended as guests.

Item No. *Title*

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Asha Mattu.

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 25 March 2021

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2021 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

Shelley Humphries, Democratic Services Officer presented the Schedule of Outstanding Matters report. The report outlined progress on matters previously considered by the Board. It was noted that Councillors had been provided with a list of dates for Children in Care Council meetings and a form to pre-book attendance. The deferred item from the last meeting was the Experience of an Apprentice item and had been rescheduled for item 11 of this meeting.

Resolved:

That the Schedule of Outstanding Matters report be received.

6 National Independent Review of Children's Social Care

Members of the Care Leavers' Independent Collective delivered a presentation to support the National Independent Review of Children's Social Care report. The published report had outlined that the National Independent Review of Children's Social Care had been set to take a fundamental look at the needs, experiences, and outcomes of the children it supports, and what is needed to make a real difference. As part of the review, a survey had been shared with Wolverhampton's young people in or leaving care to gain an understanding of their views on the children's social care offer. The presentation summarised the analysis of outcomes from the survey.

A concern was raised around quicker access to mental health care and counselling services however reassurances were offered that this had been noted in the outcome of the survey and would be addressed as part of the response. It was noted that the response to COVID had an impact on many services normally delivered face to face, such as mental health and counselling however virtual means were being offered where possible and a therapeutic service had been commissioned in conjunction with Barnardo's.

In terms of young people's awareness of services, it was acknowledged that young persons' advisors and social workers would be prompted to make young people aware of services available.

It was acknowledged that the percentage of young people who felt comfortable and confident raising a complaint was positive although it was queried how this could be raised to 100% as all young people needed to be confident to voice their concerns. It was noted that raising young people's awareness of their rights was key to bolstering confidence. Exploring ways of expanding the sources from which children and young people could learn their rights and how to ensure YPAs, carers and social workers reinforce the message they were safe to voice their concerns was suggested.

It was thought that the percentage who felt they received good support with physical health was disappointing and it was important to explore reasons for this. Fiona Brennan agreed to liaise with health colleagues and requested an invite for the Strategic Health Steering Group to be extended to young people to gain their feedback and insight. It was also noted that Total Respect training for health colleagues would be beneficial.

It was acknowledged that the survey had been distributed to all young people wherever they were placed which prompted a query on what the breakdown of placement type was for the children currently in the care system. It was noted figures were already provided in the Performance Monitoring Information Report however this information couldn't be broken down any further as the placements were anonymous.

Resolved:

1. That the National Independent Review of Children's Social Care be noted.
2. That young people be invited to participate and provide feedback in a meeting of the Strategic Health Steering Group.

7 Corporate Parenting Board Work Plan 2021 - 2022

Michelle Cummings, Corporate Parenting Officer presented the Corporate Parenting Board Work Plan 2021 – 2022 for approval and highlighted salient points. The Work Plan outlined the schedule of reports to be submitted to Corporate Parenting Board over the coming municipal year along with associated reporting timelines.

In response to a query regarding providing an interim fostering report in addition to the annual report it was noted that this was not a statutory requirement as it was with the adoption paper, however a briefing note update could be provided if required.

Resolved:

That the Corporate Parenting Board Work Plan 2021 – 2022 be approved.

8 Foster Carer Engagement

Esther Douglas, Social Worker and Foster Care Trainer delivered a presentation outlining the activities undertaken around Foster Carer Engagement. The presentation showcased an extensive calendar of events, forums and workshops designed to increase engagement, train, inform and bring foster carers together.

It was acknowledged that the pandemic had affected much of the activity however training and other services moved online where possible to ensure continuation of service, proving more beneficial in some instances. A Foster Carer portal had been established to allow digital access to training, shared documents and information and training had been delivered on how to use it.

It was reported that a number of social activities had taken place such as a Christmas party, carol services, a Picnic in the Park fun day as well as the ongoing Back to Eden Community Allotment Project to inspire young people to cultivate their own produce.

Black History Month had been observed with various events including the publication of the Diverse Fostering Cookbook inspired by contributors' childhood memories of favourite dishes they wanted to share and the Story Time Project with inclusive storylines and characters to also promote engaging with children by reading with them.

A number of foster carers also contributed to the presentation as guest speakers providing accounts of their experiences in fostering and working alongside social services. Guests included a same sex couple who wished to share their positive fostering journey and communicate that anyone who wanted to provide a loving home for a child could become a foster carer and potentially change a young person's life.

The presentation also provided a timetable of the proposed training, support and development for the coming year.

The work was commended by all present and Board members invited foster carers to make use of the Ettingshall and Goldthorn Hill allotments for the Allotment Project if they wished.

Resolved:

That the presentation showcasing Foster Carer Engagement be received.

9 **Performance Monitoring Information**

Alison Hinds, Deputy Director for Social Care presented the Performance Monitoring Information report and highlighted salient points.

It was noted that, following the report on improving figures for those in education, employment or training, there had been a 2% improvement seen since the last Performance Monitoring Information report.

It was moved that, in the interest of time, any further questions be forwarded to Alison Hinds via Democratic Services outside of the meeting.

Resolved:

1. That the Performance Monitoring Information be received.
2. That any further questions be forwarded to Alison Hinds, Deputy Director for Social Care via Democratic Services outside of the meeting.

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 **Experience of an Apprenticeship**

A guest speaker delivered a presentation which provided an account of their experiences in apprenticeship roles within the Council.

The presentation outlined their experience of work prior to the apprenticeship and how they learned of the opportunity to apply for the role. An account was given of the experiences working in the role and plans for what to do next to progress along a career pathway. The presentation also gave an overview of what was offered to care leavers once they began an apprenticeship within the Council, including the Grand Mentor Scheme.

During the lockdown, the remainder of the apprenticeship continued working from home and the apprentice's team developed virtual workshops to support children and young people returning to schools after reopening. They reported that the experience had been life changing and had provided them with opportunities to gain skills and build themselves as a professional.

The guest speaker's hard work was commended by all and it was acknowledged how valuable the ring-fenced apprenticeships were in supporting care experienced young people along pathways into employment opportunities.

Resolved:

That the presentation on the Experience of an Apprenticeship be received.

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

It was reported that no visits had been undertaken recently however it was planned to resume once the lifting of restrictions had become more certain.