

Attendance

Vice Chair, in the Chair Cllr Wendy Dalton (Con)

Labour

Cllr Lovinyer Daley

Cllr Jasbinder Dehar

Cllr Barbara McGarrity QN

Conservative

Cllr Mak Singh

Cllr Udey Singh

In Attendance

Hannah Finch
Rebecca Grainger
Samantha Grainger
Shelley Humphries
Andrew Scragg
Jazmine Walker
Helen Woodvine

Corporate Parenting Officer
Designated Nurse for CYPIC, Black Country ICB
Team Manager
Democratic Services Officer
Participation Officer
Head of Service for Children and Young People in Care
EET Co-ordinator

Corporate Parenting Board also welcomed members of Children in Care Council and Care Leavers' Independent Collective as well as one Foster Carer.

Item No. *Title*

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from members of the Corporate Parenting Board Councillor Beverley Momenabadi, Councillor Rita Potter and Councillor Qaiser Azeem.

Apologies were also received from Emma Bennett and Alison Hinds.

2 Declarations of interest

Councillor Barbara McGarrity QN declared a non-pecuniary interest as she is a Private Counsellor.

3 Minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2023

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2023 be confirmed as correct record and signed by the Vice Chair in the Chair.

4 Matters arising

There were no other matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.

5 Schedule of outstanding matters

Hannah Finch, Corporate Parenting Officer presented the report on current progress on matters previously considered by the Board.

In addition to the information provided within the report, Rebecca Grainger, Designated Nurse for Children and Young People in Care (CYPiC) provided an update on the free prescriptions for care leavers up to the age of 25 reporting that this scheme had been approved and would go live across the Black Country from 1 April 2023.

Members commended the Total Respect sessions that had taken place and it was reported that further sessions would be available on 19 June 2023. It was confirmed that this would be ongoing and continually refreshed.

Resolved:

That the Schedule of Outstanding Matters be received.

6 Children in Care Council (CiCC) Presentation

Members of the Children in Care Council (CiCC) present delivered the presentation supported by Participation Officers, Anton Wright and Andrew Scragg.

The presentation provided an overview of the survey undertaken to gather feedback from children and young people in care in respect of the services available to them, as well as the priorities identified by the CiCC for the coming year.

It was noted that there had been fewer survey responses than hoped for and therefore not such a wide representation of the views of children and young people in care across the City, which led to discussions around how to ensure better engagement in future surveys.

Assurances were offered that a wide range of methods had been employed to reach children and young people to take part, including using social media platforms, however it was deliberated whether feelings of overwhelm when faced with a series of questions may have discouraged participation.

In response to a suggestion of using the CiCC it was noted that whilst the CiCC provided an additional platform for the voice of children and young people in care, it was made up of a small number of volunteers and was not representative of all children and young people in care across the City.

It was voiced by the young people that they felt more support was needed from teachers therefore it was requested that the survey results be shared with designated teachers with outcomes reported back to Corporate Parenting Board.

In response to suggestions for using school-based focus groups, it was acknowledged that not all children and young people felt comfortable enough to speak candidly in front of groups. It was noted however that recent Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) participation reports evidenced that 98% of children and young people were fully engaged during their reviews, which had been achieved through improved methodology and allowed them to voice their concerns or wishes in a safe space.

Resolved:

1. That the Children in Care Council (CiCC) Presentation be received.
2. That the survey be shared with designated teachers and outcomes reported back to Corporate Parenting Board.

7 Care Leavers' Independent Collective (CLiC) Presentation

The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Care Leavers' Independent Collective (CLiC) co-presented the presentation which celebrated achievements and successes over the year as well as highlighting key goals and priorities for the coming year.

Key concerns highlighted included challenges accessing affordable transport and internet connectivity which were both crucial, particularly when seeking employment. A plea was extended for Councillors to lobby on behalf of care leavers and exercise influence at a regional level for possible solutions. It was noted that flats occupied by care leavers had been included in the 5G mapping, however rolling out of the new technology was taking time and access was needed in the meantime.

It was noted that care leavers had no designated nurse therefore this was also requested. It was reported that a bid, which included provision of a designated care leavers' nurse within the proposals, had been submitted to the DfE by the Authority under the Staying Close funding model. Jazmine Walker, Head of Service for Children and Young People in Care agreed to liaise with Rebecca Grainger, Designated Nurse for CYPiC to explore another means to fund this role if the bid was unsuccessful.

It was also reported that whilst being a child or young person in care was legally recognised as a protected characteristic, this did not extend to care leavers or care experienced young people and it was expressed that a key ambition was to change this, at least at a local level.

Resolved:

1. That the Care Leavers' Independent Collective (CLiC) Presentation be received.
2. That Councillors lobby on behalf of care leavers wherever possible to support them in achieving the set priorities.
3. That Jazmine Walker, Head of Service for Children and Young People in Care and Rebecca Grainger, Designated Nurse for CYPiC explore another means to fund a designated care leavers' nurse if the Staying Close bid was unsuccessful.

8 **Care Leavers' Survey Outcomes**

Samantha Grainger, Team Manager delivered a presentation which outlined the results from the 2022 – 2023 Care Leavers' Survey and highlighted areas for improvement and action that had been identified as a result.

It was noted that the survey had been completed by young people who access the REACH care leaver service aged 16 – 25 years. It was outlined that the survey is undertaken annually to evaluate the quality and impact of current provision to inform future priorities.

In addition to the outcomes reported in the survey, it was noted that the numbers that had completed the survey had increased since last year despite many reporting survey fatigue. It was noted that the survey took 15 minutes on average to complete however there were plans to condense it further. The survey had been completed both on paper and online, although online was the preferred option.

Resolved:

That the Care Leavers' Survey Outcomes presentation be received.

9 **Education, Employment and Training (EET) Update**

Helen Woodvine, EET Coordinator presented the Education, Employment and Training (EET) Update report and highlighted key points. The report outlined the current performance and key developments to the support on offer to Children and Young People in Care (CYPiC), Care Leavers (CL) and vulnerable young people around Education, Employment and Training (EET) by the City of Wolverhampton Council.

Highlights included increasing apprenticeship opportunities both within the Council and with external partners, increased numbers of young people positively engaged in EET as well as an increase in those continuing into higher education (with the exception of a small dip in intake numbers in 2020 – 2021 during lockdown periods).

In response to a query, it was confirmed that the Ask Jan app was a digital platform managed by the Rees Foundation that provided care leavers at university with round the clock access to wellbeing support and advice.

Board members commended the work undertaken, especially noting the inclusion of support for young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Resolved:

That the Education, Employment and Training (EET) Update report be received.

10 **Performance Monitoring Information**

Jazmine Walker, Head of Service for Children and Young People in Care presented the Performance Monitoring Information report and highlighted salient points. The report provided analytics on service performance in a number of areas relating to children and young people in care.

It was highlighted that the data and narrative for missing incidents for children and young people in care had now been included as requested at the previous meeting. It was noted that numbers for October – November 2022 had been high but had now dropped back to previous levels.

In response to a concern raised by the Chair around the timeliness of initial health assessments, which was now at 13%, it was reported that this had also been flagged internally at the Council and the service was striving to make improvements, although it had proved challenging.

It was deliberated that many factors could impact this, one of which could be timeliness of reporting which in turn could be affected by awaiting quality assurance checks to be completed prior to reporting or longer appointments being offered to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) or others with language barriers for example.

It was also suggested that non-attendance was another factor however training offered to social workers now included highlighting the importance of health checks. Assurances were also offered from health partners that solutions were being explored during monthly Health Operational meetings and the issue was being monitored on the Royal Wolverhampton NHS Foundation Trust and Integrated Care Board risk registers.

Resolved:

That the Performance Monitoring Information report be received.

11 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

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 falling within paragraph 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

12

Councillor Visits to Establishments - Schedule of Visits

Hannah Finch, Corporate Parenting Officer provided a verbal update on visits that had taken place with Councillor Lovinyer Daley and Councillor Barbara McGarrity QN. Councillor McGarrity QN reported to have found the accommodation and facilities very good and in a lovely setting.

It was reported that dates for future visiting opportunities would be circulated in the new municipal year.

Resolved:

That the Councillor Visits to Establishments - Schedule of Visits update be noted and that further dates be shared in the new municipal year.