

Attendance

Chair Cllr Chris Burden (Lab)

Labour

Cllr Ciaran Brackenridge
Cllr Jenny Cockayne
Cllr Lovinyer Daley

Cllr Sally Green
Cllr Jeszemma Howl
Cllr Barbara McGarrity QN

Cllr Iqra Tahir

Conservative

Cllr Paul Appleby

Employees

Hannah Finch
Becky Grainger
Shelley Humphries
Caterina Robinson
Jazmine Walker

Corporate Parenting Officer
Black Country ICB
Democratic Services Officer
Service Manager
Head of Service for Children and Young People in Care

Corporate Parenting Board also welcomed one Foster Parent.

Item No. *Title*

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were 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 23 March 2023

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2023 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by 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.

It was also noted that the action in relation to the dedicated care leavers' nurse remained 'in progress' until the outcome of the Staying Close bid was announced in full. In response to a Board member query, it was confirmed that it would be a Band Six post.

Resolved:

That the Schedule of Outstanding Matters be received.

6 Corporate Parenting Board Terms of Reference 2023-2024

Hannah Finch, Corporate Parenting Officer presented the refreshed Corporate Parenting Board Terms of Reference 2023-2024 and highlighted changes from last year. It had been previously agreed to review the Terms of Reference at the beginning of each municipal year to ensure the integrity and effectiveness of the Board's decisions and actions.

It was noted that no vice chair had been named yet although it was clarified by the Democratic Services Officer that a decision was awaited from Full Council. The Chair requested that nominations or expressions of interest be received from Board members to recommend to Full Council for approval. The vice chair role was thought not to have Special Responsibility Allowances attached to it although it was confirmed it involved stepping in as Chair only if the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education was unavailable.

In terms of visits to establishments, it was clarified that there was currently only one establishment run by the Authority however there were plans to introduce two more, with further details and visiting opportunities to be shared in due course.

Resolved:

1. That the updated Corporate Parenting Board Terms of Reference 2023-2024 be approved.
2. That nominations and expressions of interest in the Corporate Parenting Board Vice Chair role be received for recommendation to the next meeting of Full Council.

7 **Corporate Parenting Board Work Plan 2023-2024**

Hannah Finch, Corporate Parenting Officer presented the Corporate Parenting Board Work Plan 2023-2024 and highlighted salient points. The Work Plan set out suggested activities and clear direction for the Corporate Parenting Board for the coming municipal year.

It was suggested that an item around child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) for children and young people in care be scheduled for a future meeting and concern was raised over waiting times for accessing these services. Rebecca Grainger, Black Country ICB confirmed that the Annual Health Report (scheduled for September 2023) already included a section authored by Wendy Harrison-Frazer of Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust which was dedicated to provision of mental health services for children and young people in care. It was agreed that there would be an inclusion to provide context and the response to the challenges around waiting times.

Resolved:

That the Corporate Parenting Board Work Plan 2023-2024 be approved.

8 **Foster Carers' Engagement**

Caterina Robinson, Service Manager for Children's Services delivered the presentation which provided Corporate Parenting Board with an overview of Foster Parents' Engagement undertaken by the Authority over 2022 – 2023 and planned activities for the coming year. The presentation covered events which ranged from seminars and award ceremonies for recognition of service for foster parents to family entertainment events aimed at fostering families and children and young people in care. It also outlined the ongoing schedule of foster parent training and development courses offered, as well as additional courses introduced this past year. It touched on the outcomes of the annual foster parent survey and the newly launched fostering bulletin to communicate with foster families.

In response to a query around whether the survey feedback was broken down by demographic it was stated it had not this time however this would certainly be a consideration for future surveys.

It was enquired whether there was any change in take up following the Fostering Fortnight and it was reported that the campaign often generated an increase in interest, although data on this was delayed as enquiries often came in gradually

following the event. It was also noted that this year the campaign extended out into the Community Hubs and local libraries not just the City Centre.

In respect of the survey engagement rate, 44% was considered good although it was deliberated whether 60% was a more ambitious rate to aim for. Assurances were offered that concerted efforts had been made to encourage survey participation, including extending the deadline date. It had been considered that open questions were useful in gathering detail but often daunting to respondents, therefore a combination of closed and open questions was included.

In response to a query around how many fostering families there were in the City, it was confirmed there were 209 at the last count.

It was clarified that the four-week training courses consisted of one session per week. In respect of training in general, it was noted that the service endeavoured to deliver face-to-face training except where virtual training was more appropriate, such as to accommodate work and caring commitments or for families residing outside of the City.

The service was commended, particularly the Supervising Social Workers and Children's Social Workers who were considered invaluable in supporting foster parents as well as responding to queries in a timely manner.

It was suggested that consideration be given to supporting neurodiverse children and young people as there were often long wait times for a diagnosis of autism or ADHD for example, although support could still be offered without formal diagnosis. It was added that some of the training included recognising the early signs of illness in a child and this could be incorporated into the training.

Resolved:

That the Foster Parents' Engagement presentation be received.

9 **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.

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

For the benefit of new Board members, Hannah Finch, Corporate Parenting Officer provided an overview of the only currently registered home within the City. It was agreed that a schedule of visiting slots that were convenient for residents would be circulated following the meeting and Board members were encouraged to contact the Corporate Parenting Officer to arrange a visit.

It was announced that Board members had been invited to a Total Respect training session which was developed and delivered by care experienced young people. Members who had already participated enthused about how engaging they had

found it and encouraged new members to attend. It was queried whether there were full-day courses offered and noted that a schedule was being produced by the Participation Team which would be circulated once available.

Resolved:

1. That the Councillor Visits to Establishments - Schedule of Visits update be received.
2. That the establishment visit timetable be shared with Corporate Parenting Board following the meeting.
3. That the full Total Respect training schedule be shared with Corporate Parenting Board once available.