

# Corporate Parenting Board

Minutes - 22 March 2018

## Attendance

**Chair** Cllr Val Gibson (Lab)

## Labour

Cllr Welcome Koussoukama  
Cllr Lynne Moran

Cllr Peter O'Neill  
Cllr Rita Potter

Cllr Paul Sweet

## Conservative

Cllr Christine Mills

## Employees

Emma Bennett  
Fiona Brennan  
Dawn Deans  
Sarah Smith  
Helen Tambini  
Alice Vickers  
Laura Wood

Director of Children's Services  
Designated Nurse, Looked After Children  
Senior Social Work Manager - Adoptions  
Head of Strategic Commissioning  
Democratic Services Officer  
Corporate Parenting Officer  
Senior Social Work Manager

Emma Jane Kisby, Foster Carer attended as an adviser to the Board.

The Chair welcomed Debbie Carter, Assistant Director, Children's Social Care and Safeguarding and Neil Picken, Democratic Services Officer at Walsall Council who were attending the meeting as observers.

*Item No.*    *Title*

**1        Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Martin Waite and from Councillor Jasbir Jaspal in her capacity as Chair of the Health Scrutiny Panel.

Apologies for absence were received from Tracy Kenny, Foster Carer and from Kyron Hughes, Care Leavers Forum.

**2        Declarations of interests**

There were no declarations of interest made.

**3        Minutes of the previous meeting - 18 January 2018**

Resolved:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 18 January 2018 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**4        Matters arising**

In respect of minute 10, Performance Monitoring Report/Children Looked After Return Initial Analysis 2016-2017, Fiona Brennan, Designated Nurse, Looked After Children (LAC) advised that the comments made regarding a dip to 86% in respect of health should refer to LAC Health Assessments.

**5        Schedule of Outstanding Matters**

Helen Tambini, Democratic Services Officer presented the report on current progress on matters previously considered by the Board.

Emma Bennett, Director of Children's Services confirmed that the Council did use some private residential establishments and details of those establishments would be forwarded to the Board.

Resolved:

1. That the report be noted.
2. That details of the private residential establishments used by the Council be circulated to the Board.

**6        Quality Assurance and Compliance Update**

Sarah Smith, Head of Strategic Commissioning presented the Quality Assurance and Compliance Update and highlighted key points.

In addition to the information contained in the report and in response to questions from Board members, officers stated the following:

- None of the Council's in-house residential children's homes had been identified as inadequate by Ofsted. Of the private residential homes used by the Council, some had been given an Ofsted rating 'Requires Improvement'.

- The Council would never place a child into a home which was rated inadequate, the Council always tried to seek good providers. A robust procedure was in place and following an inspection, if an establishment was deemed inadequate, then the Council would make an assessment and decide if any children placed there should be moved. In some cases, it was considered better for a child to remain as further changes could be more detrimental and the situation would continue to be monitored to ensure their welfare.
- Officers were aware of the issues raised by Ofsted and areas requiring improvements as they were given copies of the Ofsted reports.
- Officers from the Social Work and Commissioning teams worked together to ensure that children were not at risk and any concerns raised by Ofsted were addressed by providers.
- Officers were working with the Independent Fostering Agency which had received an inadequate rating.

Resolved:

1. That the update on the Council's arrangements for monitoring the quality of registered care services in the city be noted.
2. That the Board continue to support the work of the Quality Assurance and Compliance Team, hosted by Wolverhampton within Social Care Commissioning.
3. That the continued improvement in the quality of registered care and support services in Wolverhampton be noted.
4. That the continued commitment of the Council to work with the provider market to improve the quality of care provided for the direct benefit to the users of these services, their relatives and carers be noted.
5. That the excellent working relationship with the statutory regulator of care provision - Care Quality Commission (CQC) and the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and other partners that has also been established be noted.

## **7 Care Leavers up to the age of 18 that are pregnant or teenage parents**

Laura Wood, Senior Social Work Manager presented the report on Care Leavers up to the age of 18 that are pregnant or teenage parents and highlighted key points.

In addition to the information contained in the report and in response to questions from Board members, officers stated the following:

- It was difficult to compare statistics between the general population and Looked After Children (LAC) and Care Leavers (CL) as there was no national reporting framework to cover that. There was also always a lag in reporting as the figures were linked to public health.
- Many events were held to celebrate the successes of LAC and CL and extensive press and public promotion of those events took place. Social media was also widely used to share messages and achievements.
- The Council had very high aspirations for its LAC and CL. The number of LAC and CL achieving improved exam success and attending university was increasing. Considerable work was taking place with children in Years 6 and 7 to encourage those aspirations and at the last Children in Care Council (CiCC) meeting, the high aspirations of that group were identified in a piece of work undertaken by Alice Vickers, Corporate Parenting Officer.

- Further celebratory events were being held, with multi-agency partners attending. Nominations have been made to the Prince's Trust awards and for the Express and Star awards, with any opportunities to raise awareness being taken.
- The I Awards on 20 April 2018 was an annual event which recognised the achievements of young people. Gareth Rafferty, who won the Young Citizen Award would be making a speech.
- Lack of self-esteem among young people and in particular women was a concern and self-esteem workshops were offered to provide support, with counselling sessions for older children.

Resolved:

That the report on Care Leavers up to the age of 18 that are pregnant or teenage parents be noted.

## 8 **Adoption Agency Interim report**

Dawn Deans, Senior Social Work Manager – Adoptions presented the Adoption Agency Interim report and highlighted key points.

In addition to the information contained in the report and in response to questions from Board members, officers stated the following:

- In respect of interagency placements, the cost was £27,000 for one child and £43,000 for a sibling group of two. The figure was set through the Department for Education and was based on a methodology in respect of the costs of recruiting and supporting adopters. Through the Regional Adoption Agency, it was hoped to reduce the Council's need as it would have a larger 'pool' to choose from. It has also been identified as an area of budget pressure and has therefore seen growth funding, which has helped to address that pressure.
- The social worker responsible for a child would usually be the person who initially considered if an open adoption would be suitable. As part of the Care Plan for that child all relevant issues would be considered, together with extensive work with the potential adopters. If it worked, open adoption was the best way forward; however, it was dependent on individual circumstances and would not be suitable in some cases. Early assessments were made and if an open adoption was not deemed to be suitable it would not be considered.
- A child being allowed to keep a connection with their birth parent(s) and or family might be difficult for foster carers and adopters and they would need additional support.
- There was always a risk that any child could try and contact their birth family through social media without being monitored which could lead to problems. The open adoption system provided support and protection and could be monitored.
- It was essential that before an open adoption took place, external agencies that provided support were well prepared as there had been previous cases when that had not occurred.
- It was hoped that over time, through open adoptions regular interaction would take place between the extended families, with acceptance and empathy being key elements. There had already been several positive stories from open adoptions.

- Open adoption did not equate to sharing parental responsibility, that responsibility remained with the adoptive parents.

Resolved:

That the Adoption Agency Interim report be noted.

## 9 **Children and Social Work Act 2017**

Emma Bennett, Director of Children's Services presented the Children and Social Work Act 2017 report and highlighted key points.

She advised that on 21 March 2018, officers had met with Mark Riddell MBE, the National Implementation Advisor, who for the next two years would be supporting local authorities regarding the Care Leaver Offer. Although the City of Wolverhampton Council was already rated as Good, Mark Riddell MBE was invited to share his ideas and challenge the Council, with the aspiration of the Council moving forward to be rated Outstanding.

The challenge for the Council was to consider if what was offered to Care Leavers (CL) would be acceptable for their own children. Several ideas were linked to Corporate Parenting and tied in with the changes that he had made at Trafford Council.

In addition to the information contained in the report and in response to questions from Board members, officers stated the following:

- When CL reached the age of 25 support would still be available, if appropriate, through Adults Services, including any disability concerns which would be addressed.
- The Council had been notified today in respect of the amount of 'Burden' money it would be entitled to and as expected it would not meet the costs of the additional responsibilities for the Council. The money would be available for the next four years. A thorough exercise would be undertaken to try and anticipate the number of CL who would require support. It was hoped that if young people received a good offer initially, it might mitigate the numbers who required support up to the age of 25. The Young Persons Advisors (YPA) were highly regarded by young people and the level of support could simply equate to a text message from a YPA once a week.
- It should be noted that the additional accreditation and assessments required to be undertaken by social workers would have resource implications and that would require monitoring.
- The key to supporting CL after the age of 25 was that everyone had at least one person who would be in touch with them and stay in their life.
- In respect of mental health issues, the statutory CL Health Summary would hopefully identify the needs of young people and smooth the transition into Adult mental health and if a young person did not meet the criteria, they would be signposted to other services. That would be embedded in the Care Leaver Offer.

Resolved:

That the Children and Social Work Act 2017 report be noted.

## 10 **Corporate Parenting Strategy Update**

Alice Vickers, Corporate Parenting Officer presented the Corporate Parenting Strategy Update and highlighted key points.

In addition to the information contained in the report and in response to questions from Board members, officers stated the following:

- It was acknowledged that significant numbers of young people at HM Prison Brinsford had been Looked After Children (LAC) and further support and dialogue could be offered to prisons including Brinsford. As part of the Action Plan, there would be a change to the national framework so that each Care Leaver (CL) would receive an element of offender management. It was hoped that the E-Learning package would support the practice of individuals who were responsible for CL. A mentor at Drake Hall had been very positive and supportive to other young people. Two young women who were CL leads were nearing release and they would be monitored as an example of good practice.
- Once the draft Action Plan was completed it would be submitted to the Board.

Resolved:

1. That the Corporate Strategy Update be noted.
2. That once completed, a copy of the draft Action Plan be submitted to the Board.

## 11 **Performance Monitoring Information**

Emma Bennett, Director of Children's Services presented the Performance Monitoring Information report and highlighted key points. She confirmed that as of today there were 649 Looked After Children (LAC). Two further Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers had arrived last week.

She advised that in respect of the recording of the proportion of eligible LAC with an up to date Personal Education Plan (PEP), the 77% figure was low; however, that was due to a recording issue and would be addressed through the new E-PEP system launched in November 2017.

Resolved:

That the Performance Monitoring Information report be noted.

## 12 **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.

## 13 **Councillor visits to establishments**

No visits to establishments had been undertaken since the last meeting of the Board.

14 **AOB**

On behalf of the Board, Councillors Christine Mills thanked the Chair for her hard work and dedicated service over the years and for the huge impact she had made.

Councillor Gibson thanked Board members and confirmed that she would be standing down from her role as Cabinet Lead Member for Children and Young People in May 2018. She stated that she had enjoyed working with the Board and was proud of the achievements that had been made.