

Corporate Parenting Board

Tuesday, 8 October 2019, County Hall, Worcester - 2.00 pm

Minutes

Present:

Mr A C Roberts (Chairman), Mrs J A Brunner, Charles E-P, Mrs L C Hodgson, Dr C Hotham, Mr M Johnson, Mrs F M Oborski and Mrs J A Potter

Also attended:

Sally Branchflower, Alison Brill, Celena Rossano, Selina Rawicz, Sarah Dempsey

195 Apologies and Declaration of Interests

Apologies had been received from Rob Adams, Helen Dyke, Pattie Hill and Margaret Sherrey.

Sarah Dempsey, Deputy Designated Safeguarding Nurse attended for Ellen Footman.

Juliet Brunner declared an Interest in that a member of her extended family had had contact with Children's services.

196 Confirmation of the Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting on 13 June 2019 were agreed to be an accurate record of the meeting and were signed by the Chairman.

197 Review of Previous Action Points

Keep in Touch Visits

Tina Russell explained that the Keep in Touch visits, which had been scheduled for the week of 15-19 July and had replaced one of the Board meetings, had been designed to allow Members to take part in a range of activities which would allow them to better understand the lives of Looked after Children or Care Leavers. It had been disappointing that so few members had participated in the visits.

District Councils hosting future meetings

It had been suggested that some future meetings be held in the various districts. The normal agenda items would be dealt with but meetings could have a particular focus dependent on the interests of the District Councillors or issues pertinent to the area. The November meeting would be held in Wyre Forest and would have a focus on housing.

Corporate Parenting Fair - 31 October 2019 in the Council Chamber

The event had been planned by Tom Baker-Price who

worked with the Children in Care Council and Speak Out. There would be workshops on various subjects as well as an information market place so people could drop in.

District Activity Events

Following on from events which had taken place in previous years, a task and finish group had been set up to raise the profile of the events and re-launch the idea with County Councillors. The Vice Chairman explained that he and Alison Brill had met and come up with some possible ideas for events. This list would be sent round to all Board Members.

198 The use of Bed and Breakfast Accommodation

The Chairman explained that a Housing Officer was not able to attend the meeting and consideration had been given as to whether the item on the use of bed and breakfast accommodation should be deferred, but it had been decided that the item was too important and a response could be received from the Housing Officers at the next meeting.

Selina Rawitz explained that 17 young people had been placed in bed and breakfast accommodation in the past year – although none of those were under the age of 18. There were complex reasons as to why these placements had been made but members of the Corporate Parenting Board were being asked to give their support to ensure that options were available for young people so that bed and breakfast accommodation would not be necessary.

The reasons that it can be hard to find young people more suitable accommodation could include:

- Significant offending behaviours
- Violence or sexual offending
- Anti-social or aggressive behaviour
- Substantial substance misuse
- Mental health problems or personality disorders which meant the young person did not want to engage
- Not wanting to move somewhere else to live or move away from a particular area
- Not wanting communal or joint living arrangements
- Poor money management – although workers can now offer support in this area to young people up to the age of 25
- Prior evictions with young people becoming labelled as intentionally homeless

- A narrowing of options once sequential placements had proved unsuitable

At present 2 young people were in bed and breakfast accommodation.

Rhys Davies gave an example of the sort of complex situation which could lead to a care leaver becoming homeless.

In the ensuing discussion the following points were made:

- The Countywide scheme 'prevention of eviction' was being developed by Partners
- It was queried whether not using any bed and breakfast accommodation was actually achievable, but it was argued that it was, as other local authorities had achieved it; although it was a complex issue which was only partly due to a lack of resources
- There was a concern that once young people reach 25 they do not have anyone to offer them support
- The need for investment in early intervention was recognised in order to stop difficult situations arising in the first place
- It was queried whether it was possible to build a solution and whether that solution should be one unit for the County or whether each District needed its own building
- A cultural shift was needed along with a joint focus from all partners so that all Corporate Parents could be clear that bed and breakfast accommodation was not acceptable. Existing provision also needed to be effectively utilised
- It was pointed out that Worcester City was buying property in order to help the situation
- It was suggested that other Districts needed to take action along with the Safeguarding Partnerships, housing providers and the Voluntary Sector

RESOLVED that the Corporate Parenting Board would continue to progress the discussion around the issue of housing provision for Care Leavers at its next meeting in Wyre Forest to which Housing Representatives from each District had been invited.

199 Ofsted Update

Tina Russell updated Board members about the Inspection of Children's Services. In January 2016 the Authority was found to be 'Overall Inadequate'; however,

by July 2019 the 'considerable progress in improving the quality of services' was recognised and there was a strengthened workforce and Senior Leaders and elected Members were ambitious and committed to the well-being, safety and outcomes for children in the County.

Headlines from the inspection were:

- Children were brought into care where necessary;
- Assessments were timely and comprehensive
- The majority of children were settled in placements and moved into permanency in a timely way.
- Reviews were well chaired by IROs
- Supervisors understood the needs of the children and worked well with foster carers and adoption agencies
- Personal Advisors built positive relationships with young people and encouraged them to achieve in education and employment
- Each young person had their own care plan but the needs of sibling groups were considered
- Long term stability had improved and consolidation meetings were held to provide support and challenge rather than an automatic acceptance of a placement breakdown

Tina went through the areas that inspectors had identified could be worked on to move us to a "good" service.

Tina told the Board that Inspectors noted that "in some cases, a small minority" of the plans and assessments and quality wasn't there yet for all children, all the time and getting consistency was a key area for continued service improvement.

Plans for our Edge of Care were explained and Inspectors said plans looked good but they could not make a judgement on them as they were not yet in place.

Assessments by the Homeless Intervention team needed to be more fully evidenced and although there were favourable comments regarding the consolidation meetings they were told that young people could be asked how things could be done better.

There was a commitment to continuous improvement by providing support and guidance to allow a young person to gain independence and transition to adulthood; work would continue with the Districts and housing providers to increase the availability of suitable accommodation and work was needed to engage with health services to

		<p>improve the mental health services for children in care to get them recognised as the most vulnerable and allow them to become priorities.</p> <p>The Service Business Plan was explained; it showed areas for improvement, projects and areas of innovation which all relied on the four key pillars of Senior Leaders, workforce and culture, Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership and Inspections.</p> <p>It was explained that Worcestershire would no longer have inspection visits every 12 weeks but they would have focussed inspections and there was a strong possibility that they would receive a Joint Targeted Area Inspection which would specifically look at Children's emotional health and well-being. A Task and Finish Group had been set up to prepare for a possible inspection.</p> <p>It was commented that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mental health should be a priority but it would rely on joint working with partners • it appeared that some of the targets in the KPIs were not being achieved – it was explained that progress had been made and the targets set were very high to drive best practice • The issue of Children's emotional health and well-being was also being considered by the Children's and Families Scrutiny Panel, the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Health and Well-being Board. <p>RESOLVED that the Corporate Parenting Board noted this update following the Ofsted Inspection Visit.</p>
200	Quarter 1 2019/20 Data	<p>Corporate Parenting Board Members were encouraged to take the data back to their areas. It was discussed whether it was possible to drill down into the information for individual ward areas but it was pointed out that the Board's remit was more of a strategic view of Looked After Children in the County and there was a danger that individuals could be identified if more information was provided.</p>
201	Work Plan	<p>The work plan was noted.</p>
202	Future Meeting Dates	<p>The next meeting would be held on 27 November at 2pm at Wyre Forest District Council.</p>

Dates 2020

6 February 2020

30 April 2020

4 June 2020

9 July 2020

8 October 2020

10 November 2020

The meeting ended at 3.55pm

Chairman