

Agenda

Corporate Parenting Board

Thursday, 9 May 2024, 2.00 pm
Worcester Children First Boardroom (F2-08), County Hall, Worcester

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Corporate Parenting Board
Thursday, 9 May 2024, 2.00 pm, Worcester Children First
Boardroom (F2-08), County Hall, Worcester

Membership

Cllr Steve Mackay (Chairman)	Worcestershire County Council
Cllr Rob Adams	Wychavon District Council
Cllr David Chambers	Worcestershire County Council
Cllr Lynn Denham	Worcestershire County Council
Cllr Esther Gray	Bromsgrove District Council
Cllr Lucy Harrison	Redditch Borough Council
Cllr Matt Jenkins	Worcestershire County Council
Cllr Matthew Lamb	Worcester City Council
Cllr Fran Oborski	Wyre Forest District Council
Cllr Christine Wild	Malvern Hills District Council
Vacancy	Worcestershire County Council

Agenda

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All the above reports and supporting information can be accessed via the Council's website

Date of Issue: Monday 29 April 2024

Item No	Subject	Page No

Minutes of the Corporate Parenting Board

Worcester Children First Boardroom (F2:08), County Hall,

Worcester

Tuesday, 30 January 2024, 2.00 pm

Present:

Cllr Steve Mackay (Chairman), Cllr Rob Adams, Cllr David Chambers, Cllr Lynn Denham, Councillor Esther Gray, Cllr Lucy Harrison, Matthew Lamb, Cllr Fran Oborski and Cllr Christine Wild

Also attended:

Tom Bourne, Jenny Cox, Eloise Gauntlett-Shea, Rebecca Haywood-Tibbetts, Adam Johnston, Simon Lewis, James McDonald, Tom Mountford, Celena Rossano, Matthew Stiles and Marley Bourke.

Statement by the Chairman of the Board

The Chairman of the Board acknowledged the findings of the Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review into the death of Alfie Steele. He recognised that changes had been made to working practices and that these changes would be followed up. He undertook to strive to ensure every child in Worcestershire was kept safe.

346 Apologies (Agenda item 1)

Apologies were received from Beverley Downing, Cllr Matt Jenkins, David Lewis, and Debbie Stokes.

347 Confirmation of the Minutes - 21 November 2023 (Agenda item 2)

The minutes of the last meeting held on 21 November 2023 were accepted as a correct record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

In response to a query regarding Minute no 341, Adam Johnston confirmed that the service leads monitored the arrangements for Health Assessments carried out by other councils on behalf of Worcestershire for its out of county

children and young people to ensure that they received the same level of service as would be received by in county children.

It was queried whether any further action had been taken to look at libraries as a suitable venue for Health assessments. Adam Johnston responded that there was an ongoing exercise to find alternative venues to undertake these assessments and he would report back to the Board in due course.

348 Participation Annual Report (Agenda item 3)

The Board received the Youth Voice Review of our Year 2023-2024 presented by representatives of the Youth Voice Team.

In the ensuing debate, the following points were made:

- In response to a query, representatives of the Youth Voice Team outlined the achievements they considered to be of most importance during 2023-2024
- In response to a query, Celena Rossano indicated that members of the Board would be welcome to attend meetings of the Youth Cabinet
- It was queried what arrangements could be made to help local councillors connect with looked after children to involve them in local activities. Celena Rossano responded that opportunities for children/young people to help in the local community would be welcomed and contact details would be circulated with the Minutes of this meeting
- Celena Rossano announced that Eloise had come second in the national hero awards for her achievement in becoming the northern benchmarking champion
- In response to a query about feedback from young people to the work of the WCF complaints service, Celena Rossano commented that the IRO service had requested feedback from the Youth Voice Team. A particular concern for young people in the group was a lack of understanding of and information made available to them concerning the advocacy service
- Corporate bodies needed to aware of the appropriate use of language/terminology to engage with children and young people. Adam Johnston responded that the IRO service had identified this issue and had adjusted their approach to communication accordingly; reports following looked after reviews were now written in first person as well
- The provision of the tenancy pack should be extended to care leavers over the age of 18
- Had consideration been given to the creation of a buddying process for young people over the age of 18, who were experiencing considerable change in their lives? Adam Johnston responded that attending group meetings helped young people to feel connected. However, these meetings were not necessarily appropriate for all young people therefore consideration would be given to the other ways of engagement including a buddying system which has commenced with a few care leavers being 'buddied'

- Eloise expressed concern that the mental health service was setting children up to fail, particularly for children in a residential setting. Children were being moved to higher risk too easily and thereby in danger of being sectioned. Adam Johnston responded that work was currently in progress between different services to develop a road map for children to access the appropriate services for their health and well-being. Celena Rossano added that the Board would be provided with the findings from Eloise's research into this issue
- The Chairman commented that the voices of young people did make a difference. Board members needed to continue to listen and learn from the views of young people
- It was queried whether there should be more activities arranged that were directly aimed at young people. James MacDonald recognised that the Youth Cabinet was a very niche activity however, activities were being arranged that were aimed at different age groups and membership had increased. Adam Johnston added that work continued to try and engage with a wider group of young people.

The Board received the Youth Voice Review of our Year 2023-2024 presentation.

349 Work Programme (Agenda item 4)

Complaints

In response to a query, Adam Johnston explained that it was very difficult to provide evidence that a complaint had been remedied without receiving direct evidence from the complainant.

Where a complaint had been resolved, was there evidence that the service had learned from the process and had emerging patterns of issues been identified? The Chairman indicated that he would discuss this issue with Adam Johnston. Adam also highlighted that it was common practice for learning from complaints to be shared service wide, often at End to End meetings with all managers and IRO's to ensure learning was embedded.

It was agreed that Daniel Gray would be invited to attend the next meeting of the Board to present a quarterly report on complaints.

Housing

In response to a query, Adam Johnston indicated that he hoped that agreement would be reached between district councils and the County Council before the end of February regarding the existing contract to provide accommodation and support for 16-21 year old care leavers. Members would be provided with an update at the next meeting of the Board in May.

Arrangements for young people to meet members of the Board

Adam Johnston agreed to look into the possibility of making arrangements for members of the Board to directly meet young people outside formal Board meetings.

350 Any Other Business (Agenda item 5)

Charles English-Peach

The Board welcomed Charles English-Peach to the meeting. Charles was a care leaver from WCF, who was studying Applied Humanities at University, specifically undertaking a project focussed on obstacles to participation services.

Free prescription service for Care Leavers

Rebecca Heywood-Tibbetts indicated that the Integrated Care Board had been looking at the possibility of introducing a free prescription service for care leavers. The proposals had now been submitted to the ICB and their decision was awaited.

The meeting ended at 3.45pm.

Chairman

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

9TH May 2024

Title: Complaints from Children & Young People

1. Legislation:

Under section 26(3) of the Children Act 1989, every local authority is required to establish a procedure for considering complaints about children's services. The procedure covers complaints about:

- the council's services to children in need or in care.
- fostering and adoption services.
- services to children leaving care.

Complaints can be made by a parent, a person/ people caring for a child, or family members who are involved with the child. Children and young people are also able to make a complaint themselves.

2. Statutory Complaints Process

The Complaints Procedure for Children's Services follow a four-stage process.

Stage 1

The statutory period for completing an investigation and responding to complaints relating to Children's Social Care Services is 10 working days but can be extended to 20 working days in line with statutory guidance.

In Worcestershire our Advanced Social Work Practitioners Team undertake Stage 1 Complaint Investigations and Complaint Responses; this means they are undertaken by an individual independent of the Team undertaking the direct practice and decision making.

Stage 2

If the individual remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint response at stage 1, individuals can ask that the complaint to be reconsidered.

In order to request a stage 2 review of the complaint; individuals will raise:

- the reasons why they disagree with the Stage 1 response.
- the potential outcomes they would hope to see from escalating the complaint.

This request should be made within 20 working days of the date of the stage 1 response. Details of how to raise a stage 2 complaint will be included in the stage 1 response letter.

The statutory period for completing an investigation and responding to stage 2 complaints relating to Children's Social Care Services is 25 working days but can be extended to 65 working days in line with statutory guidance. Stage 2 Complaint Investigations are undertaken by Independent Investigating Officers commissioned by the County Council's Consumer Relations Department.

Stage 3

If an individual remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the Children's Social Care Services complaint response at stage 2, individuals may ask for the complaint to be reviewed at an Independent Review Panel.

In order to request a stage 3 review of the complaint, individuals will outline:

- the reasons why they disagree with the Stage 2 response.
- any potential outcomes you would like to see from escalating your complaint.

This request should be made within 20 working days of the date of the stage two response. Details of how to raise a stage 3 complaint will be included in the stage 2 response that you receive.

The statutory period for holding the Independent Review Panel is 30 working days from the date of your request for a stage 3 review. Panels are arranged by the Consumer Relations Department and are chaired by Independent Individuals of the Local Authority.

Stage 4

If after this, individuals are dissatisfied with the response to the complaint individuals can refer the matter to the [Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#).

3. Advocacy for Children, Young People and Care Leavers

The Adoption and Children Act 2002 (amended Children Act 1989), and The Advocacy Services and Representations Procedure (Children) (Amendment) Regulations 2004, requires Local Authorities to make arrangements for advocacy support for children and young people in receipt of social care services who wanted to express their views or make a complaint.

A *Child Advocate* can offer advice and support to a *child* or young person. The main purpose of a *child's advocate* is to enable *children* to express their wishes and feelings; the aim of *child advocacy* service is to encourage empowerment of *children*.

Worcestershire commission Independent Service 'Coram Voice' to provide Advocacy Services to children and young people who make complaints; [Worcestershire - Coram Voice](#)

4. Complaints from Children & Young People 2023/2024

In 2023/2024 we received 8 Complaints from children and young people; this is a reduction on the previous year from 9 in the previous year.

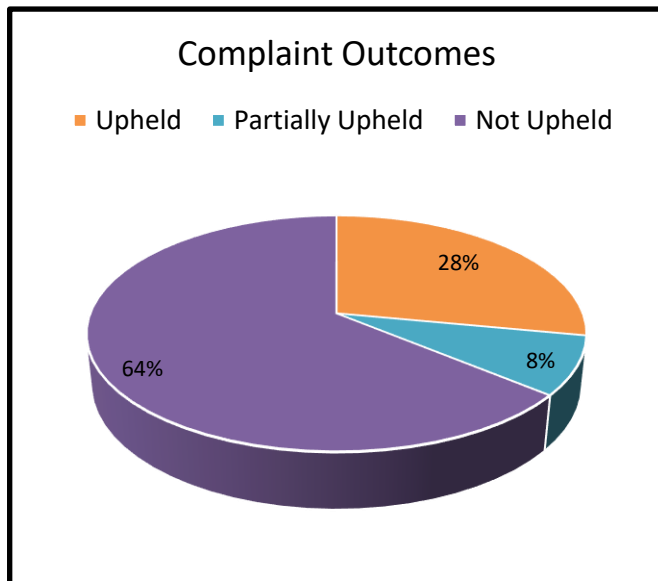
The volume of Complaints received by children is low in comparison to the number of children and families we work with, in practice we work hard to engage with children and young people to hear their views, and if worries arise, we action quickly to resolve meaning complaints do not escalate and children receive timely and effective outcomes.

All complaints received this period were from children and young people who are looked after children; and all received an offer of an Advocate.

The corresponding graph outlines the outcomes from Complaints. Although we have received 8 Complaints, many will have multiple points and each receive an outcome. Across the 8 Complaints there were 27 Complaint Points.

The majority receive a not upheld outcome at 68%.

Of the Complaints that received a Partially Upheld Outcome; these related to decisions being made for children. The finding was the decision was appropriate, however, the learning was in respect of how we communicated this.



Of the Complaints with an Upheld Outcome: the identified learning is:

- Ensure we share reports for Children Looked After Reviews before the meeting.
- If visits to children and young people need to be cancelled, we communicate this directly to children and we ensure the follow up visit is held in a timely manner.
- Ensure that when we write reports, any information from previous reports is appropriately updated.
- Following up with timely and accurate advice.

We share learning from Complaints directly with those allocated to the child; all complaints have a reflective discussion between the manager and the worker to support learning.

We share learning from Complaints with our Children's Social Care Leadership Team on a bi-annual basis to discuss themes and ensure learning is shared through the service.

5. Independent View of Complaints Practice in Worcestershire

In May 2023 Ofsted undertook an Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services; as part of this inspection, they met with the Practice Manager and reviewed Complaints made by children & young people, are investigations and responses and how we embedded individual and service learning. Ofsted reported:

"When children make complaints, they are well supported and consistently offered an advocate to represent their views".

"Senior leaders' understanding of practice is informed by audit practice undertaken both within WCF and also with partners. Audits are strengthened through the involvement of children, carers, and parents and through moderation. Learning from audits leads to improvements in practice which ensures the effective closing of the loop. A variety of methods are used to gain feedback from children, parents and carers which influences service developments, together with any learning from complaints".

This report is publically available at: [50223271 \(ofsted.gov.uk\)](https://www.ofsted.gov.uk/50223271)

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CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD 9 MAY 2024

WORK PROGRAMME

Recommendation

- 1. The Board is asked to note its future work programme and consider whether there are any matters it would wish to be incorporated.**

Work Programme

9 July 2024

CPB annual report

8 October 2024

IRO annual report

20 November 2024

VS annual report

January 2025

Contact Points

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance) there are no background papers relating to the subject matter of this report.

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