

## Corporate Parenting Board

Thursday, 6 February 2020, Council Chamber, County Hall -  
2.00 pm

### Minutes

#### Present:

Mr A C Roberts (Chairman), Mr R C Adams, Mr J Grubb, Mrs L C Hodgson, Dr C Hotham, Mr M Johnson, Mrs F M Oborski, Mrs J A Potter and Mr T A L Wells

#### Also attended:

Catherine Driscoll, Sarah Dempsey, Charlie Dickens, Helen Hey, Adam Johnston, Tina Russell and Nina Warrington.

#### 210 Welcome and Apologies

The Chairman welcomed Julian Grubb (Redditch Borough Council), Helen Hey (Early Help Partnerships Manager) and Charlie Dickens (Partnership and Inclusion Manager) to their first meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board.

Apologies had been received from Helen Dyke and Margaret Sherrey.

The Chairman congratulated the Health and Care Trust on receiving an outstanding rating for their CAMBS service and mentioned that the County Council needed to ensure that they supported the service by making appropriate and timely referrals.

During Apprenticeship week it was good opportunity to mention that all Corporate Parents should do what they could to encourage and facilitate more work placements for Care Leavers.

The Chairman thanked Charlie Hotham for spending some of his Divisional Fund on Driving Lessons for Care Leavers.

#### 211 Confirmation of the Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 27 November 2019 were agreed to be a correct record of the meeting and were signed by the Chairman.

#### 212 Review of Previous Action Points

Care Leavers Accommodation: Adam Johnson reported that the first meeting of the Task and Finish Group set up at the last meeting, had met on 17 January. The focus had been on prioritising Care Leavers in adequate

accommodation. More work would be done on the data around the number of Care Leavers with challenging behaviour which affected their chances of finding suitable accommodation.

The Board was informed that there were currently 38 young people in Council Accommodation and only one or two, over periods of time, had caused problems due to their behaviour. Outreach staff offered high quality support and helped young people with getting into education and work.

**213 Serious Case Reviews**

Tina Russell reported that there was currently a Serious Case Review for a Looked After Child that had recently been commissioned. When the learning from the case had been made public, the details would be brought to the Corporate Parenting Board.

The Worcestershire Safeguarding Review Partnership was the new arrangement which was responsible for safeguarding arrangements. The sub-groups of the Partnership were the Get Safe Partnership Board, the Quality Assurance Practice and Procedures Group and the Safeguarding Practice Review Board (SPRB).

The SPRB received reports of all child deaths or a child coming to harm as set against a set of DfE criteria. The panel then decided if there should be a full case review or local review. A new National Panel provided scrutiny and decided if the right decision had been made to hold a local or full review. Additional notifications were made if the child was Looked After. The NSPCC website published serious case reviews and the Local Review Group would look at them and the reviews of the National Panel and pass on any relevant learning.

**RESOLVED that the Corporate Parenting Board noted the report and would receive the overview and learning reports of Serious Case Reviews or Case Reviews for any Looked After Children.**

**214 Placements and Sufficiency**

Tina Russell gave a presentation at the meeting as seen in the agenda report. She highlighted certain points:

Legislation was in place to ensure that each area had sufficient accommodation available to meet the needs of children and that it sought to improve outcomes for looked after children and improve their wellbeing through working with Partners. A strategy had been drafted to detail how the sufficiency duty would be met. The strategy was informed by using data on children in care,

looking at the demand for placements over the past three years and an analysis of the incoming cohort.

The numbers of children in care in Worcestershire was above that of the County's statistical neighbours due to historic practice. It was not possible to reduce numbers in care quickly as it would not be appropriate to move many of them out of care where they were stable and making good progress. Some of these young people would remain in care until they reached 18. Worcestershire was now one of the lowest authorities for placing new children in care and this continues in 2019/20. More work was also being done with those going home to ensure they were supported to stay at home.

There was a duty to place children within their family network if possible as it was known that family placements were better for the child if good support was given; if that was not possible then it became necessary to look for a different family environment and find a foster family. Worcestershire had an above average number of children in foster placements, with most foster carers wanting to take children under 10 years of age.

It was positive that the number of placements each child experienced was falling. Each time a placement broke down then the emotional impact on the child was significant and each "next placement" for that child would cost more. More support was being given to carers in order to prevent placements breaking down.

There was a duty to look at the individual needs of each child but their siblings must also be considered; sometimes that meant it was best for the siblings to stay together but in other situations the siblings may have different needs which meant they do not stay together; for example an older child with complex needs may be best in a residential home while a baby sibling would be better in foster care. Non-separation of siblings also meant that for some younger children their care plans for permanency would be in a care setting such as long-term fostering.

External residential care provision was expensive and not always good quality. The Local Authority/Worcestershire Children First have had challenges with ensuring that its own residential staff had the skills and confidence to meet the needs of young people coming into care. Worcestershire's training programme has been reviewed and it compared well to external agencies/private providers and DfE guidelines but clearly more could be

done.

New providers were visited quickly to see if Worcestershire could use them before other authorities placed their children with them. The aim was to ensure the best use of resources within the County. Worcestershire Children First Foster Care try to keep pace with retiring foster carers and recruit new ones. As part of sufficiency the “total reward” package to foster carers would be reviewed.

At 18 some young people stay with their foster carers, known as “staying put” but some needed to find their own accommodation. The allowance received by foster parents dropped by around a third per week when the child reached 18, so some foster carers could not afford to keep an 18-year-old when they would get more money for a younger child.

Members of the Board asked if it would be possible to pay more to enable young people to stay with foster carers, which in turn would help with the difficulties of finding accommodation for care leavers. It was agreed this could be looked at, but any actions would then have an impact on the amount of foster care available for younger children. It was acknowledged that it was a sensitive conversation for a social worker to ask if a young person could stay with a foster parent after their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Following queries from Board Members a number of points were clarified:

- It was explained that children who were placed in out of county placements were likely to be in secure accommodation or have significant complex issues such as violence or self-harm, where suitable provision was not available within the County
- There was a difference between unregistered care and unregulated care: unregistered care was illegal, but it was occasionally necessary to use it in a crisis when no registered placement was available. Unregistered provision had been used a few times and in those situations work was done with WCF residential and outreach staff to provide the best care possible on a very short term basis
- Unregulated provision was supported accommodation. The DfE was setting up task groups to review regulations for unregulated provision due to rising concern that it was being

used for under 16's and when used for those above 16 that the quality was poor leading to extremely poor experiences and outcomes for young people. Worcestershire Children First do not use unregulated provision for under 16's but there were many young people in need of supported accommodation so in-house resources were continuing to be developed as well as ongoing work with providers to improve the care experience

- The numbers of children in care in Worcestershire would begin to reduce when older children move on and through the Supporting Families programme (edge of care) where parents would be supported and challenged in order to enable children to remain at home. Children would not be moved out of care to make figures look good or save money. Actions would be taken if they were in the best interest of the child
- Social Workers needed manageable caseloads to be able to have time with families, as well as high-quality support from their managers, in order to be able to feel confident in managing risk. Through the WCF improvement journey good progress has been made in this area
- It was clarified that sometimes courts could make an order to place the child with their parents, but the number of such care orders were reducing or being discharged where possible.

**215 Quarterly Data Reports**

The information was noted.

**216 Work Plan**

Noted

**Any Other Business**

Helen Hey explained that as the Strategic Lead for Participation she wished to ensure that a wider range of young people were more engaged with the Corporate Parenting Board. She felt that the formal style of them attending a meeting meant that young people found it difficult to engage and felt that it wasn't accessible to them. She wanted to set up a working group made up of a small number of Board Members to discuss how to help young people get involved.

Members agreed that more young people needed to be included and although they welcomed the contributions to the meeting from a small number of young people, they worried that they were not fully representative.

It was noted that the “Keep in Touch” events were the opportunity for Corporate Parenting Board Members to interact with young people in a less formal environment, however take-up was poor last year.

**ACTION:**

**It was agreed Helen Hey would make contact with individual board members to gather views on how engagement with young people could be developed. Another keep in touch event would be planned within the meeting programme.**

**217 Future Meeting Dates**

30 April 2020  
4 June 2020  
9 July 2020  
8 October 2020 - Redditch  
10 November 2020

The meeting ended at 4.00pm

Chairman .....