

## **Minutes of the Corporate Parenting Board**

### **County Hall, Worcester**

**Wednesday, 5 October 2022, 2.00 pm**

---

#### **Present:**

Cllr Andy Roberts (Chairman), Cllr Lynn Denham, Cllr Matt Jenkins, Matthew Lamb, Cllr Steve Mackay and Cllr Caroline Baldwin

#### **Also attended:**

Thomas Bourne, Rebecca Haywood-Tibbetts, Adam Johnston, Dr David Lewis, Tom Mountford, Celena Rossano, Tina Russell and Debbie Stokes.

#### **298 Apologies**

Apologies had been received from Cllr Rob Adams, Cllr Nyear Nazir, Cllr Fran Oborski, Cllr Margaret Sherrey and Beverley Downing.

#### **299 Confirmation of the Minutes**

The minutes were agreed to be a correct record of the last meeting and were signed by the chairman.

#### **300 Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report**

Adam Johnston gave an overview of the Annual Report, explaining that the report and the associated films were available in the agenda. The annual report had been produced after considering the pledges to looked after children and care leavers and it was hoped that it could be used as a tool to promote champion leads and CPB aspirations for young people in the various arenas and environments CPB members attend.

Some points which were emphasised included;

- it was WCF's aim that all in children in care received a family caring experience and secure a kinship care placement where possible, as they were generally more stable
- Permanency was always the aim and the figure of 31% permanency achieved within 12 months compared well to the national average and previous years' performance

- Worcestershire Children First Fostering, after receiving a 'requires improvement' rating in September 2021 were making good progress with their improvement plan
- Contact with care leavers was good and the Local Offer was considered comprehensive
- Areas for further focus included retaining and recruiting foster carers, and the rising number of young people in residential care
- There needed to be clearer information available about what mental health services were available to looked after children and care leavers and the ability to access such support in a timely manner. The Connect scheme was being developed to combat social isolation.

In the following discussion various questions were answered:

In response to a query about whether the quality of information which moved with a child could be responsible for placement breakdowns, it was explained that the stability figures which gave the numbers of placements included moves which were planned. It was only when the numbers of placements were higher than 3 there was some concern. Each looked after child would have a pen picture which gave details about the child and this needed to be positive but as accurate as possible. Consolidation meetings which worked to help keep placements successful and reduce the need for new placements were 66% successful. A crisis placement was also being developed, using Department for Education funding, to be used rather than having to place children in unregulated placements.

When asked how WCF could be confident that kinship placements did not allow children to have contact with unsuitable people the Board were reassured that there were checks made on kinship carers and as a child social worker and kinship fostering social worker would be involved in each case there were two people making checks. Checks were also made by speaking directly to the child. If a potential kinship carer did not fully appreciate the risks from the unsuitable person, the placement would not go ahead.

Each social work assessment looked at pressures caused by cost of living pressures as part of the normal assessments which looked at financial issues. The Supporting Family First team employed money mentors as it was understood that financial pressures can increase pressures in other areas of family life. Assessments looked at helping people to look for work opportunities and apply for benefits and there was some funding available to help families with particular financial issues.

## **301 2022-23 Q1 Datasheet**

Data on care leavers and looked after children, by district, was presented in the annual report.

## **302 District Updates / Reports**

There were no updates from District Members.

## 303 General Updates

### Crisis Placement

A unit was being developed to provide a single young person at any one time with a regulated placement in an emergency when no other placement could be identified, or where the only alternative was to use an unregulated placement.

A Board Member mentioned a recent news story about WCF using unregulated placements. It was clarified that although there were a few children in unregulated children's homes they were only used when there was absolutely no alternative and most other Authorities were in the same situation. This is due to a lack of external provision at short notice and the need remaining for children's services to ensure any applicable child was provided with immediate accommodation. Commonly children placed in such arrangements had challenging behaviour and complex needs. Ofsted were always notified directly of any such arrangement. WCF carefully track any such arrangement and report directly to lead members, WCC Chief Executive and Ofsted.

### Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

At a previous CPB meeting when UASC were discussed, the numbers had been at around 30; they were now 60, with a further 69 now becoming care leavers. It was clarified that Worcestershire had agreed to take UASC up to a level of 0.7% of the normal population. The current figures were at 0.5% of the population.

A group of 'assessed' adult asylum seekers had been placed at Fownes Hotel in Worcester and it had subsequently been found that 22 of them were actually children. The Board were assured that WCF had gone back to the Home Office to question the quality of age assessments which were taking place by the Border Authority. Praise was given to the Through Care Team who worked well with other agencies to resolve the situation quickly and ensured that the 22 identified children were appropriately placed in foster care or supported living arrangements dependent on their age.

### Celebrating Foster Carers

At the FosterTalk Awards, Janice Finnie of Worcestershire Children First Fostering was awarded Foster Carer of the Year 2022.

The Chairman had attended the Foster Care Conference on 3 October

### Complex Health needs National Review

Doncaster had carried out a rapid learning review after serious safeguarding concerns were found in three care homes owned by the same provider, regarding the care of children with complex disabilities. The concerns were raised nationally and WCF were currently identifying any applicable children with complex disabilities to comprehensively check on their quality of care and triangulate with all involved agencies.

It was agreed a summary of findings would be presented at the next meeting.

Future Agenda Items

A Board member requested that two issues be considered at future meetings:

1. the experiences of LGBTQ+ children in social care, and:
2. the contact that looked after children have with their families; either being forced to make contact when they did not want to or being blocked from seeing someone they did wish to see.

**304 Future Meeting Dates**

The next meeting would be held on 29 November 2022, at 2pm.

The meeting ended at 3.30pm

Chairman .....