

Minutes of the Corporate Parenting Board

County Hall, Worcester

Thursday, 27 July 2023, 10.00 am

Present:

Cllr Lynn Denham (for Agenda items 1-4), Cllr Lucy Harrison,
Cllr Steve Mackay, Cllr Fran Oborski (for Agenda items 1-4) and
Cllr Christine Wild

Also attended:

Eloise Gauntlett-Shea, Alice Gillett, Rebecca Haywood-Tibbetts, Adam
Johnston, Dr David Lewis, Simon Lewis, Tom Mountford, Celena Rossano, and
Debbie Stokes.

Election of Chairman for the meeting

In the absence of Cllr Andy Roberts, the Chairman of the Board, nominations
were sought to Chair the meeting.

Cllr Steve Mackay was nominated by Cllr Fran Oborski and seconded by Cllr
Lynn Denham. There being no other nominations, Cllr Steve Mackay was
elected Chairman for the meeting.

Cllr Steve Mackay in the Chair.

323 Apologies (Agenda item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Rob Adams, Cllr Andy Roberts,
Cllr Matt Jenkins, Cllr Matt Lamb, Tanya Beckett, Beverley Downing, Tina
Russell, and Matthew Stiles.

324 Confirmation of the Minutes (Agenda item 2)

The minutes of the last meeting held on 31 January 2023 were accepted as a
correct record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

A Member of the Board expressed concern that the Board had only met once
in the last six months. Adam Johnston explained that the last meeting was
cancelled due to the Ofsted inspection announcement and subsequent
prioritisation.

325 Marley's poetry (Agenda item 3)

The Board listened to a couple of poems written and presented by Marley, a child in care. Marley was accompanied by another young person from his placement and his residential support staff.

Marley received a round of applause and the Chairman thanked Marley for presenting his poems to the Board.

A request was made that the poems be circulated to members of the Board.

326 Feedback on the outcome of the Ofsted Inspection (Agenda item 4)

Adam Johnston, Director, Child Protection and Through Care and Sufficiency presented a summary of the findings of the recent Ofsted Inspection of Worcestershire Local Authority Children's Services. He confirmed that the overall Ofsted judgement for the service was good.

In the ensuing debate, the following points were made:

- In response to a query, Adam Johnston explained that whenever legal proceedings associated with a possible intervention were being contemplated, legal planning meetings would be held with representatives of legal services to determine whether the legal threshold had been met. In addition, the Local Family Justice Board held regular meetings in which emerging patterns, work flows, potential issues or concerns were discussed. The aim of these meetings was always to seek early intervention rather than being reactive. Alice Gillett, Group Manager, Through Care Services added that service managers met representatives of legal services every two months, sharing themes, learning and challenges
- Eloise, a child in care explained the important role that her social worker had played in helping her to settle in her locality. The key aspect was that the social worker had taken time to build up trust which had given her the confidence to tell her story
- In response to a query, Tom Mountford indicated that there was a positive relationship between the Homeless Intervention Team (HIT) at WCF and the district councils in what was a complex, time-consuming area of work. Adam Johnston added that HIT staff played an important role in supporting young people through the complicated bureaucratic processes associated with housing. Alice Gillett indicated that work was taking place with adult services to help young people transition into the adult world
- In response to a query, Adam Johnston acknowledged the impact that Covid and the cost-of-living crisis had on families, in particular with regard to mental health. There was a real possibility that safeguarding issues could arise as result. In these circumstances, the service was there to help families to assess whether any intervention was necessary albeit the main aim was to keep families together

- Did the Board have sight of complaints made by young people and the detail of their cases? Adam Johnston indicated that the Board had not received specific reports on complaints but a summary of complaints might be worth reporting in the future
- In response to a query about the Alfie Steele case, Adam Johnston advised that Ofsted were fully aware of the case at the start of their review. It should be noted that the serious case review had been delayed until the completion of the criminal investigation
- In relation to a query about CAMHs, Adam Johnston explained that there was a lot of focussed work with health partners to look at the provision of mental health support. Eloise added that young people were concerned that if mental health issues were identified, they would be taken from their placement
- It was queried whether WCF monitored cross boundary working with other authorities. Adam Johnston advised that WCF did not have any formal monitoring arrangements. It was a very complex issue and involved many partner organisations
- A report on the challenges faced by social workers in keeping in contact with children across county boundaries would be welcomed.

The Board:

- a) Noted the feedback on the outcome of the Ofsted Inspection;**
- b) Agreed that the presentation slides be shared with Board members asking for any further questions to be submitted to Adam Johnston. The answers would then be collated and circulated to Board members;**
- c) Agreed that an overview of complaints made by looked after children be reported on a quarterly basis; and**
- d) Agreed that a report be brought to the next Board meeting on the challenges that social worker faced in keeping in contact with children across county boundaries.**

327 Children's participation (Agenda item 5)

Celena Rossano, Participation Support Worker set out an extensive list of the recent events that children had participated in.

The Chairman indicated that the Annual Fun Day had been a great success and encouraged members of the Board to attend future events.

Adam Johnston highlighted the need for the service to provide more meaningful engagement with young people. It was an area that needed improvement and something the Board needed to give consideration to.

328 Quarterly Data, Q4 2022-23 (Agenda item 6)

It was queried whether the category in the Child Protection Plan in relation to neglect could be broken down into different themes. Adam Johnston acknowledged that there were different forms of neglect but to report on this level of detail at each Board meeting would not be an efficient or necessary task to achieve. Instead, there were thematic audits undertaken by WCF and when neglect next featured, the learning and outcomes could be shared with Board members

It was pointed out that the percentage of Looked After Children with an up to date health assessment had decreased over the last year. Alice Gillett advised that the biggest challenge in terms of improving performance related to assessments of out of county placements. Certain Health Trusts had indicated that there was a 26-week waiting list at present. Work was ongoing to improve performance. Adam Johnston added that the number of out of county placements had increased which had been exacerbated by the increase in the number of UASC.

The Board noted the datasheet.

329 Information items (Agenda item 7)

Dudley Youth Awards

Celena Rossano announced that Mahamat Allamine had been recognised for his educational achievements in the contribution to school and further education category at the Dudley Youth Awards. He also had 100% attendance at college throughout the year. He was a fantastic young person and was a testament to what asylum-seeking young people could achieve. He had recently joined the Action Speak group and was keen to be involved.

The Chairman suggested that a letter of congratulation be sent to Mahamat on behalf of the Board.

330 Future Meeting Dates (Agenda item 8)

A discussion took place about the appropriate time to hold Board meetings to encourage attendance by looked after children. Adam Johnston would discuss the matter with Simon Lewis, the Clerk to the Board.

331 Any Other Business (Agenda item 9)

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 but needed to know the number of care leavers in Worcestershire. Adam Johnston undertook to provide her with a breakdown of the numbers.

The meeting ended at 12.25pm.

Chairman