

Minutes of the Corporate Parenting Board

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

Worcester

Tuesday, 21 November 2023, 2.00 pm

Present:

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

Also attended:

Tom Bourne, Beverley Downing, Alice Gillett, Rebecca Haywood-Tibbetts, Adam Johnston, David Lewis, Simon Lewis, Laura Marshall, James McDonald, Celena Rossano, and Debbie Stokes

339 Apologies (Agenda item 1)

An apology was received from Cllr Fran Oborski.

340 Confirmation of the Minutes - 4 October (Agenda item 2)

The minutes of the last meeting held on 4 October 2023 were accepted as a correct record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

341 Health Assessments (Agenda item 3)

The Board received an update presentation on the Health Assessment (HA) process from Alice Gillett and Beverley Downing.

In the ensuing debate, the following points were made:

- Although there were delays in undertaking HAs, it was clear that children's health needs did not go unassessed which was welcomed
- In response to a query, Beverley Downing confirmed that the responsibility for providing a HA for Worcestershire's out of county placements rested with the county in which the child was now resident
- Had the increased number of unaccompanied asylum seekers (UASC) impacted on the number of out of county placements. Alice Gillett

responded that there was a general lack of placements in the county which had not kept up with demand

- Had the increased number of unaccompanied asylum seekers (UASC) impacted on the number of out of county placements. Alice Gillett responded that there was a general lack of placements in the county which had not kept up with demand
- By not carrying out HAs at home, was the service missing out on the ability to gain an understanding of the context of the home environment? Beverley Downing confirmed that only a small portion of younger children received their HA at home. There could be issues for children around discussing sensitive information in a home environment. HAs were generally held in an educational setting although there could be drawbacks with that approach. The ideal environment for conducting HAs would be in a purpose-built facility
- Were other venues such as libraries considered as possible venues for HAs? Beverley Downing responded that the HA service was provided by a central team and all venue options would be considered but finding an appropriate local venue could be a challenge especially in certain areas of the county and took careful planning
- Celena Rossano outlined the feedback received from a number of Looked After Children regarding their experiences of HAs
- Health passports could be a useful means of keeping a record of the health needs of children, had they been introduced as children entered the service? Beverley Downing explained that a health passport would only be produced for care leavers at the moment.

The Board noted the Health Assessments presentation.

342 Care Leavers Covenant (Agenda item 4)

The Board received a presentation from James McDonald on the Care Leavers Covenant.

In the ensuing debate the following points were made:

- Did Looked After Children receive similar level of support through the Covenant whilst in Further Education or University? James McDonald confirmed that the service provided a holistic approach to support children in these settings to ensure that they received the appropriate pastoral care
- There were now opportunities in high tech companies for young people of all backgrounds that did not previously exist. James McDonald responded that it was important for young people to get that first step in employment and there should not be any limit on the type of job opportunity available to them. Adam Johnston added that it was about changing the perceptions of not only care leavers but employers to open their horizons about the opportunities available to them
- In response to a request, James McDonald undertook to provide the key details of the Care Leavers Covenant to all councillors including what it entailed to sign up

- In response to a query, James McDonald explained that Spectrum was a company funded by the Department for Education to run the Covenant process on its behalf. Spectrum liaised with local employers to explain what it meant to sign up to the pledge. The Council's role was to help facilitate this process and support care leavers in gaining employment
- Had schools been involved in the Covenant process because they had an important role in sowing the seeds of young people's aspirations? James McDonald responded that this was an area being looked at, particularly through the role of the Virtual School
- It was suggested that some training should be provided for foster carers to assist them in providing guidance to young people in terms of their future aspirations
- The danger for young people was that mental barriers could be built up as a result of negative language used concerning their aspirations and potential to attain
- In response to a query, James McDonald confirmed that contact had been made with the Chamber of Commerce to use their expertise for example to help provide links to apprenticeships for care leavers
- Celena Rossano explained that each school had a designated teacher responsible for a child's health plan. The development of a child's aspirations and guidance on work experience opportunities were part of that role. It was a very positive piece of work
- Many employers understood that parents had aspirations for their children but did not have the same understanding for those children who did not have the same level of parental support. The important role of the Covenant was to assist employers to fill that gap in their understanding of care leavers.

The Board noted the presentation on the Care Leavers Covenant.

343 Quarterly Data, Q2 2023-24 (Agenda item 5)

It was queried whether the Council carried out equality impact assessments for UASC to gain a clear understanding of their equality needs, especially when considering out of county placements. Adam Johnston commented that many asylum seekers did not want to settle in Worcestershire because they did not have any connections with the county. All individual UASC are assessed to determine their individualistic needs and their culture, religion and ethnicity form a natural part of the assessment process alongside existing support frameworks. However, this was a matter that could be the focus of a future Board meeting in the context of further UASC focus within the annual agenda plan.

The Board noted the datasheet.

344 Work Programme (Agenda item 6)

The Board noted its work programme.

345 Any Other Business (Agenda item 7)

Adam Johnston informed the Board that the existing contract to provide accommodation and support for 16-21 year old care leavers had ended. A subsequent procurement exercise had failed but the Council had managed to agree an extension to the existing contract until August 2024. In the meantime, discussions were taking place with district councils to work on a joint procurement tendering exercise to ensure that this provision was not lost. He would update the Board on progress.

It was queried whether the YMCA no longer had the capacity to provide the necessary support for this service. Adam Johnston replied that the YMCA had actually increased their provision. The issue was that the value of the bids had exceeded the available budget.

The meeting ended at 3.45pm

Chairman