

Corporate Parenting Board

Thursday, 7 June 2018, County Hall, Worcester - 2.00 pm

Minutes

Present:

Mr A C Roberts (Chairman), Dr C Hotham,
Cllr Mike Johnson, Mrs F M Oborski, Mrs J A Potter,
Cllr Margaret Sherrey and Cllr Juliet Smith

Also attended:

Kate Bailey, Adam Benkalai, Alison Brill, Judy Chadwick,
Catherine Driscoll, Gwen Fennell, Kate Griffiths, Ryan
Hepworth, Vicki Hylan, Jeremy Newell, Selina Rawicz
and Tina Russell.

134 Apologies

Apologies had been received from Sally Branchflower,
Ellen Footman, Pattie Hill and Gareth Prosser. Jeremy
Newell attended for Ellen Footman.

The Chairman welcomed two new members to the
Board. Mike Johnson who would be representing
Worcester City Council and Juliet Smith, representing
Wyre Forest District Council.

135 Confirmation of the Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 22 March
2018 were agreed to be a correct record of the meeting
and were signed by the Chairman.

136 Review of Previous Action Points

Minute 131: Planning for April's Keep in touch visits -
Some visits had gone ahead but as they had been
organised before the local elections some Councillors
had not been available to take part. It was hoped that
further visits would be organised in future.

137 Not in Education, Employment and Training Update

Judy Chadwick from Babcock Prime, as the Strategic
Lead for young people Not in Education, Employment or
Training (NEET) explained that all Local Authorities have
statutory obligations to ensure there were suitable
education and training places for young people over
compulsory school age but under 19 and for those up to
25 with a Learning Disability Assessment or Education,
Health Care Plan.

Local Authorities must identify those covered by the duty,
ensure there was a sufficiency of places and promote
participation. Local Authorities also had to provide
strategic leadership by ensuring services worked
together with partners such as Local Enterprise
Partnerships, Jobcentre Plus, employers, health services

and police. Work was also done with neighbouring authorities.

Following significant work between 2013 and 2016, the number of NEETs in Worcestershire was at the low rate of 2.8% identified as true NEETs and 1.30% as unknown. This combined figure of 4.1% was low compared to 6.7% across England and 7.7% across the West Midlands. The number of Looked After Children who were presently NEET in Worcestershire Care Services was 23.

In the past year Babcock had been looking at barriers to inclusion and highlighted that the most vulnerable children could not access the services as they were not structured to support them. Since December 2017 Babcock's post 16 services had been re-structured and in future one of the NEET case workers would focus on Looked After Children.

The County Council offered a number of programmes to support Looked After Children which included study programmes, careers advice, on-line information, work experience and apprenticeships. Business mentoring was planned to start in the autumn when 10 young people would be matched with mentors from business and a bid had been put into the European Social Fund to help NEETs in North Worcestershire. It was felt that great strides had been made in joined up working.

During the discussion the following points were made:

- Board members were concerned that there had been a number of redundancies in the Post 16 team at Babcock but it was explained that the new structure meant that Babcock was not just offering a careers service which Looked After Children may find difficult to access. The new structure would be more accessible with a Seek and Reach programme and a mentoring service,
- Although the figure for NEETs at less than 3% could be seen as good news it was still too high. The Careers Service was not good for some young people and the County Council as Corporate Parent needed to do more to find placements for Looked After Children within the 'family firm',
- It was agreed that a target should be considered that so many apprenticeships should be filled by Looked After Children,
- Members wondered why current vacancies could not be matched to Looked After Children. An

example was given of someone looking for a Mechanics apprenticeship which may be difficult to find within the County Council. Members felt however that partner organisations such as the Fire or Ambulance Service should be able to help,

- The Chairman suggested that Looked After Children could receive help with their CVs and they could then be presented to those recruiting to positions at the Council. This suggestion was amended to have the list of vacancies shown to the young people so they had more control over applying for the vacancies which they felt were suitable for them,
- It was felt that all contractors within Districts should be asked to commit to supporting work placements for Looked After Children,
- Health Services should also be involved to help prepare vulnerable young people for work. It was clarified that that was the role of the Health and Care Trust and would probably already be part of the package of mental health support and in the first instance GPs would need to refer young people for such programmes,
- As the referral system to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) often took a long time it was felt that some additional recommendations were needed
- It was clarified that some of the figures looked different because some were recorded when the September guarantee of places for young people had been in place, but then later on not all places were taken up,
- Colleges had recognised that there was an issue with some youngsters not having the required qualifications in order to access college courses and more bridging courses were now in place,
- Take Over days were mentioned when young people were able to experience work placements but it was felt that more could be done to offer work experience.

ACTIONS:

- a) Judy Chadwick to consider if a target could be set for the numbers of apprenticeships given by the Council which were filled by Looked After Children,**
- b) Selina Rawicz and Judy Chadwick to consider the procedure to enable the list of Council Vacancies to be shown to all Looked After Children Who were looking for work. For**

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Asylum Seeking
Children**

appropriate positions they would be interviewed first,

- c) The County Council, Districts and Partners of the Board to consider how they support our looked after children and care leavers to have access to the 'Family Firm' through work experience, apprenticeships and job opportunities,**
- d) District Councils to consider how their own commissioning could ensure contracts include a 'social value added' measure to offer Looked After Children and Care Leavers work and training opportunities.**

Adam Benkalai, Team Manager for Looked After Children explained that there were 23 unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children in Worcestershire. The Children had been picked up by the police at service stations and had been handed straight over to the Looked After Children team. The Looked After Children Team worked with the Home Office on their Asylum applications.

The children often had no personal possessions and most had been trafficked and were vulnerable to exploitation. The children may have been badly treated or be experiencing mental health difficulties. It was challenging at times for social workers to help them as they often had no information about their childhood and backgrounds. Often the children did not know their birthday due to cultural differences to birthdays, so an age assessment needed to be carried out, which then needed to be agreed by the home office.

How the young people were dealt with depended on the status assigned to them by the home office so options needed to be in place while the decision on their status was awaited. Most young people would get leave to remain until they turned 18.

Of the 23 unaccompanied asylum seeking children looked after by Worcestershire most were not placed in Worcestershire. This was mainly because the young people chose to live in other areas like Birmingham, where there were established communities and their cultural needs were better met.

During the discussion the following points were clarified:

- Social Workers had to follow statutory guidelines for visits to Looked After Children which said that visits should take place at least every 6 weeks regardless of where the young person was placed,

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- Legislation meant that responsibility for Looked After Children remained with Worcestershire even when the Children were placed in different authorities,
- The children all had links to education where they were living, which helped to set up a network of support to keep the child safe, as well as the support they received from the social worker assigned to them,
- Work was being done nationally to ensure that duties to unaccompanied asylum seeking children were shared around different authorities. Worcestershire had not yet signed up to that agreement,
- A large number of the young people had been placed in Birmingham as they had more experience of dealing with different nationalities and were better able to meet their cultural needs than rural areas of Worcestershire
- There was no dedicated social worker for Asylum seeking Children but each one was placed directly with the Through Care Permanency Team. This was a positive change recently, ensuring that children don't need to have unnecessary changes of social worker. The Lead Team Managers were Adam Benkalai and James McDonald.

The Chairman thanked Adam for the update regarding Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children.

The Corporate Parenting District Events had been organised by a cross party working group set up the previous Council Chairman, Anne Hingley. The Working Group had included representatives from each District, and each County Councillor had been asked to contribute £100 from their divisional fund towards the visits.

The Working Group had been disbanded but it was hoped that the Corporate Parenting Board would support the work of the group going forward. It was suggested that District Councillors should take an active role within these events and could request £100 from their County Councillor's divisional fund. Other funding opportunities open to districts should also be explored.

It was suggested that the Corporate Parenting Board needed to suggest to the District Councils that a group should be set up to continue the work.

ACTION

The Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Board supported the continuation of the Corporate Parenting District Events and would write to District Councillors to encourage a group to be set up to organise these events.

140 Work Plan

The July meeting of the Board would be organised by Youth Voice Groups but would also include the IRO Annual Report, the Board's Annual Report and data from Quarter 4.

An additional meeting had been scheduled for **20 September** 2pm – 5pm for training for Board members.

The October meeting would then deal with:

- Virtual School update
- Social Tenancy Rents
- Quarter 1 Data
- Healthy Care Steering Group Annual Report

141 Future Meeting Dates

Meeting dates for 2018

12 July 2018

20 September 2018 (ADDITIONAL MEETING)

11 October 2018

29 November 2018

The meeting ended at 3.25pm

Chairman