

Corporate Parenting Board

Thursday, 12 July 2018, County Hall, Worcester - 2.00 pm

Minutes

Present:

Mr A C Roberts (Chairman), Ms P A Hill,
Mrs L C Hodgson, Dr C Hotham, Cllr Mike Johnson,
Mrs F M Oborski, Mrs J A Potter, Cllr Gareth Prosser,
Cllr Margaret Sherrey, Cllr Juliet Smith and
Cllr David Watkins

Also attended:

Derek Allen, Sally Branchflower, Alison Brill, Sally
Clewes, Catherine Driscoll, Gwen Fennell, Ellen
Footman, Kate Griffiths, Selina Rawicz, Celena rossano,
Tina Russell and Tom B, Tia, Ollie, Tiff, Charlie and
Tom W.

142 Apologies

Apologies had been received from Jake Shaw.

143 Confirmation of the Minutes

The minutes were agreed to be a correct record of the meeting on 7 June 2018 subject to the amendment of an inaccuracy at minute 137 – Judy Chadwick did not work for Babcock Prime. The minutes were signed by the Chairman.

144 Review of Previous Action Points

The Chairman noted the action points which were all in progress. Updates would be brought back to a future meeting.

Meeting Take Over - Youth Voice Groups

Tiff became Chairman for the meeting and Ollie Vice Chairman.

They were joined by Tom B, Tom W, Tia and Charlie.

145 Work of Youth Voice Groups

Young People from Who Cares We Care, the Children in Care Council and Speak Out, the Care Leavers Council, gave a presentation about some of things they had been up to.

They highlighted that:

- Their representatives attended the Corporate Parenting Board to share their views and opinions
- The West Midlands Regional Event took place in February 2018. A brilliant day was organised and attended by 14 Local Authorities, children in care and Care Leavers Councils
- In March they were visited by social workers from Russia and they learnt a lot about each other

- They took part in the Care Crisis Review in Sheffield in March
- In May an early years fun event was held at Bishop's Wood
- The Independent Reviewing Officers organised a fun event on 29 May. Some Who Cares We Care and Speak Out members helped out and some just went along to join in
- A representative was invited to the premier of a video about fostering teenagers
- They attended the All Party Parliamentary Group to talk about the importance of Looked After Children having the right education
- Charlie gave information about the Mind Of My Own app. MOMO was a way for young people to voice their opinions – there were 3 versions – One – which allowed young people to enter information about how they felt and send it directly to their social worker or whoever they chose; Express - for younger children or those with additional needs and Service - for the worker. Charlie attended an event in Birmingham on 16 May to speak to other authorities who used MOMO. Charlie suggested that Speak Out should promote MOMO to young people
- Charlie attended the residents meeting for Equality in Redditch Council chamber
- They helped with the Virtual School Awards in July at the West Midlands Safari Park

146 Future Work and Support Required

Future events included a Fun Day on 15 July and the planning of the 10 year anniversary of having a Children in Care Council.

A conference was being planned by Who Cares We Care, Speak Out and Tom Baker Price, to allow Worcestershire Corporate Parents and other participants to have a better understanding of the lives of Looked After Children.

During Care Leavers week (24-31 October) people would be invited to take up the challenge of surviving on the same amount of money that Care Leavers in receipt of benefits received.

Who Cares We Care would be working with the Virtual School to help them to create a new website. They would also be working with housing to improve the use of terminology to ensure care leavers were not labelled as homeless.

Reflections on what it is like to be in Care.

The young people present shared their own experiences of being in care with the board.

Headline points:

- Comments were made about the database, framework. They did not like the fact that their full history was available to everyone who had access to the database, especially as sometimes they wished to forget about their past
- Some of the young people had had a poor experience with their social workers
- They said being in care made you feel detached and institutionalised. It felt as though decisions about you were made at meetings and the young people were not clear what influence their carers had in decisions about them
- There was an issue for the young people when their social worker or Personal Assistant was off and what back up arrangements there were and who they should contact

Following the thoughts from the young people Board members made some comments:

- A Board Member who was a District and County Councillor wished to assure the young people that Councillors were available as corporate parents and would do their best to help. A Councillor from outside the Board asked if all Looked After Children and Care Leavers were given the name of their local Councillors. It was clarified that they were not given out as a matter of course but the District events helped to advertise the role of Councillors and identify them to the young people. It was also suggested that Councillors could add details of their corporate parenting responsibilities to their leaflets
- Tina Russell, the Assistant Director, Children's Social Care said she would take back and consider how it must feel to know your entire life was on file and how Social Workers needed to consider this in how they worked with young people
- A Board member said he was moved and disappointed that the Looked After Children

and Care Leavers were not having a better time. He felt that Councillors had been told how much things were improving but it appeared that the young people were not seeing those improvements – he asked when that would happen

- Tina Russell replied that things had improved but she couldn't give a date for when everyone would see the full improvement. Hearing the comments at the meeting added to their knowledge which would help them to continue making improvements
- Sally Clewes felt that the staff in Children's Services wanted to serve the young people of Worcestershire. She knew the Council was working hard to improve and staff and Councillors needed to work together with Young People to achieve that
- The Director said she had valued the experiences shared that day and was committed to continuing the improvement for all Children and Young People. She had heard from other young people who had had good social workers and the Board had previously heard good news stories. She wanted to reassure the Young People and the Board that the bad experiences shared at the meeting would be heard.

Andy Roberts thanked the representatives of Who Cares, We Care and Speak Out for presenting a clearer picture to the Board of what it felt like to be a looked after child or care leaver. He hoped that Councillors could be of help to young people but did point out that they may change every 4 years depending on the results of elections. He felt the Board was making progress with their learning.

147 Quarter 4 Data

Tina Russell explained that the data showed the numbers of looked after children in the districts and how many foster carers there were. There were not enough carers who were able to deal with the complex needs within Worcestershire which was why out of county carers were used.

In the following discussion various points were clarified:

- Worcestershire did take some children from other Local Authorities but they remained the responsibility of their home authority. The data on the numbers of these children was being validated as part of a work programme
- The KPIs showed the headline figures of those

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children who had had more than 3 placements. These were the ones that they would be concentrating on to try to avoid placement breakdowns

- The numbers of Young People in care who were going missing was reducing but remained a priority
- A board member suggested that it would be useful to look at the schools the young people had attended before they became NEETs. It was asked if the numbers of NEETS who were care leavers compared to the numbers from the whole population. Those figures would be included on the next data report
- It was confirmed that there was a national definition for 'unsuitable accommodation' such as young people being in bed and breakfasts or prison – a definition would be included in future reports as a reminder along with the breakdown
- One of the new Board Members queried what the data was able to show, commenting that it did not tell a story. It was explained that the data set had been through a number of versions and the Board had decided to receive this version and for verbal comments to be presented at the meeting. Data would also show quantitative changes over time.

Sally Branchflower presented the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report.

Various comments were made:

- One of the young people commented that her meetings with the IRO were good, just not those with the social worker
- There was concern that although the caseload had reduced it was still higher than the recommended amount of 50-70. It was pointed out that none of the member authorities of the regional network had workloads between 50 and 70 and that the IROs were pleased that the workload was better than previously
- The numbers of disputes seemed quite high when compared to the total number of young people in care. It was acknowledged that the dispute resolution process had not been working well. The Team Manager was identifying and dealing with more informal issues which should lead to less formal disputes being registered
- The IROs would be moving to the new company along with the rest of Children's social care

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- The fact that 5 out of 17 young people who had returned a feedback form in May felt that the professionals did not do what they agreed to do was seen as a concern. Officers had hoped that MOMO would help with communication and the mid-term reviews would be useful in identifying any potential problems.

Tina Russell explained that the annual report for the last year was in a new format being pictorial and less wordy and was produced as a poster as well as a leaflet in order to raise the profile of Corporate Parenting in different forums. All Members of the Board were invited to take away posters to display in their divisions.

150 Work Programme

The work programme was noted.

151 Future Meeting Dates

A session had been organised for **20 September** for Corporate Parenting training.

The next Board meetings would be on **11 October** and **29 November 2019**.

The meeting ended at 4.00 pm

Chairman