

Minutes of the Corporate Parenting Board

County Hall, Worcester

Tuesday, 5 October 2021, 2.00 pm

Present:

Cllr Andy Roberts (Chairman), Cllr Rob Adams, Cllr Lynn Denham, Cllr Matt Jenkins, Cllr Mike Johnson, Cllr Steve Mackay, Cllr Fran Oborski, Cllr Margaret Sherrey and Cllr Tom Wells

Also attended:

Dan Adams, Thomas Bourne, Alison Brill, Sarah Dempsey, Beverley Downing, Adam Johnston, Celena Rossano, Tina Russell, Jane Stanley and Maria White.

261 Apologies

Apologies were received from Nyear Nazir, Kate Bailey, David Lewis and Nina Warrington.

262 Confirmation of the Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed to be an accurate record and were signed by the Chairman.

263 Serious Case Review 'Sarah'

Maria White, Assistant Director for Safeguarding Services gave a brief overview of the Serious Case Review (SCR) 'Sarah'. Dan Adams, Principal Social Worker & Group Manager for Safeguarding Quality Assurance described the 10 recommendations which had been made following the Serious Case Review (SCR). Details provided in the attached presentation.

Following the presentations various queries from Board Members were clarified:

- Following the SCR there were no prosecutions and the findings did not suggest that a particular action would have prevented the death from happening,

- Worcestershire Children First had already implemented various improvements before the recommendations were received. The learning would continue to be embedded and shared over the next few months,
- Serious case reviews were not about being able to prevent deaths but ensuring everything that could be done to prevent them was being done,
- The SCR did not set out the detailed care plans which were in place to support Sarah, but set out how organisations can improve their practice. It was pointed out that WCF had been critically evaluating their services since Sarah died. A Board Member felt Sarah’s voice had not been heard in the SCR but that would be difficult to achieve as it was a report written after her death,
- It was clarified that it could be difficult for WCF to assess how parents would respond to contact from Children’s Services after the death of a young person. If there were siblings, involvement would continue but previously it was felt that contact would take place through the SCR author. It was now known that it was better to write and offer support directly,
- When asked about the transition between Children’s and adults’ services and whether enough support had been offered; it was explained that it was unlikely that Sarah would have met the threshold for adult care services but at age 17 Sarah had moved into semi-supported living which was the right decision for Sarah at the time. Going forward, to ensure that transition was as smooth as possible a protocol with health partners was currently being signed off,
- The Chairman felt that it was important for the Corporate Parenting Board to receive details of the SCRs so that they could carry out their role as corporate parents. They needed to be aware of what had happened and receive any learning that could be important going forward.

264 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

Adam Johnston gave a brief introduction to unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

In response to questions it was clarified that the children arrived in different ways in the County and that usually relatives did not ever appear to support the children, although sometimes the young people would find support from other people they had forged a link with. The young people often moved on to other areas, such as Birmingham because cities were seen as having more opportunities and resources available, as well as links to their own community and culture but Worcestershire retained responsibility for them.

265 Corporate Parenting Board Pledges

Board Members had before them the pledges from 2017-20 and were asked to consider how they should be updated. The pledges had originally come from young people, which was positive. It was recognised that there needed to be activity, undertaken by Board members, going on behind the pledges.

The Chairman mentioned that he had been able to use the pledges to ask young people 'how could we do better' and the answer had been to 'hang around' by which they had meant more consistency in their social worker. In the past it was known there had been an issue with lots of changes in staff but although the situation had improved it would not be realistic to offer young people something which could not be guaranteed.

Other comments made during the discussion included:

- That the pledges could include that each Looked After Child should be provided with a laptop of their own and that celebrating progress and achievements should be expanded,
- It was suggested that the pledges should be about what the Corporate Parenting Board could do, rather than the services provided by Worcestershire Children First. For example, finding work experience or training placements in different organisations,
- It was requested that feedback be sought from young people. As an initial comment the participation team noted that it was appreciated that the pledges were simple accessible and brightly coloured,
- It was pointed out that the pledges should not just be about celebrating the 'good stuff' because the role of a parent should also be to reprimand a young person when necessary. It was suggested that there should be something about support and challenge to parents as well as the young people,
- It was felt that some of the existing pledges were aspirational and some of the Board Members were uncomfortable with frequent use of the word 'ensure' throughout the pledges when some of the points could not always be guaranteed.
- It was agreed that the District Councils should also be asked to sign up to the pledges and a suggestion that there should be a pledge to work with anyone who could offer help or support, whether they be parents, health services or district councils
- It was felt that it would be a good start if all the District Councils could agree on the same level of service for Looked After Children and suggested that the issue should be discussed at the Worcestershire Leaders' Board.

266 Future Meeting Dates

Dates 2021

- Tuesday 23 November 2021

Dates 2022

- Tuesday 1 February 2022
- Wednesday 4 May 2022
- Tuesday 12 July 2022
- Wednesday 5 October 2022
- Tuesday 29 November 2022

The meeting ended at 4.00pm

Chairman