

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

2 September, 2019 at 6.00pm at the Council House, Walsall

Committee Members Present

Councillor Wilson (Chair)
Councillor Ferguson
Councillor Jeavons
Councillor M. Nazir
Councillor Neville
Councillor M. Statham
Councillor Robertson (Substitute)

Officers Present

Steve Liddicott	Interim Assistant Director – Social Care and Safeguarding
Jivan Sembi	Group Manager – Corporate Parenting
Michelle Cummings	Children and Young Persons Champion (Participation and Engagement)
Alison Jones	Designated Nurse Children Looked After - CCG
Elizabeth Gosling	Interim Group Manager - Provider Services

Representing Young People

Jamie
Lee

72/19 Apologies

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor Jukes.

73/19 Substitutions

Councillor Robertson substituted for Councillor Jukes.

74/19 Minutes

A copy of the minutes of the meetings held on 1st July, 2019, were submitted:-

(see annexed)

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 1st July, 2019, a copy having previously been circulated to each Member of the Board, be approved and signed by the chairman as a correct record.

75/19 Substitution

There were no substitutions.

76/19 Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

There were no declarations of interest or party whips.

77/19 Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)

There were no items to consider in private session.

78/19 Young People Engagement

The Board considered the report of the Children and Young Persons Champion (Participation and Engagement).

(Annexed)

The Children and Young Persons Champion (Participation and Engagement) presented the report and highlighted the salient points therein. She confirmed that children and young people in residential settings were represented on the CiCC and that there would be a football match on the 21st October to which the Board would be invited.

Lee and Jamie agreed that the Children in Care Council (CiCC) provided a good way to become involved. In addressing the Board, Lee highlighted that it was important for professionals to find the time to say goodbye if they would no longer be working with young people and to introduce the new worker wherever possible. The Chair asked if this was existing practice to which officers advised that it was not but it was something young people would like. The Interim Assistant Director (Social Care and Safeguarding) explained that it was important for social workers to do simple things well such as introductions and goodbyes, wherever possible. The Chair endorsed this view stating that transitions and continuity were important.

The Chair then referred to the 6-month action plan agreed for the service and asked whether the Board could receive a copy. Officers agreed to circulate the action plan to members.

A member of the Board asked what promotion took place to encourage young people to join Children in Care Council. Officers advised that a lot of information was provided via the Respect Group. However, the introduction of social media was being considered to help send information to and engage with young people. The Chair asked young people which social media channel they preferred to which

they confirmed 'Whatsapp'. The Chair stated that use of social media should be fast-tracked to which officers advised that there had been issues with GDPR restrictions. The Chair requested that this issue be discussed at the next meeting and that Officers from information governance/ICT be invited to attend to explain the challenges.

In closing, the Chair highlighted the importance of including young people in the interview process of senior staff noting that feedback from candidates had been positive. He thanked the young people present for their involvement.

Resolved

That:-

1. The Children and Young Persons Champion (Participation and Engagement) circulates the 6-month action plan to members of the Board;
2. An update on introducing Social Media be presented to the Board on the 11th November 2019.

79/19 Review of FLASH

The Board received a verbal update from the Interim Assistant Director – Social Care and Safeguarding.

Members were advised that a review was being undertaken which should be completed by the end of September 2019. The review would examine how the service meets existing needs and how it could be improved in future. It would also include focus groups and follow-ups with children that have accessed the service.

The Interim Group Manager - Provider Services explained that an effective FLASH service would help stability in schools and with allocated social workers.

Further to a question from the Chair, the Designated Nurse Children Looked After – CCG advised that the FLASH service was a gold standard approach which was not replicated elsewhere.

Resolved

That the outcome of the FLASH review be reported to the Board at its meeting in November, 2019.

80/19 Permanency (Including the Hub at Fallings Heath)

The Board considered the report of the Interim Assistant Director (Social Care and Safeguarding).

(Annexed)

The Board were advised that following extensive consultation, a transformation programme was due to be implemented. This included two key strands:-

- help and protection and
- looked after children.

The permanency hub formed part of the looked after children strand and would contain the following services:-

- Hub Social Work Teams
- Special Guardianship Assessment and Support
- The Family Time Service
- Links to the Drug and Alcohol Court (FDAC) and to Adoption Heart (the regional adoption agency).

It was noted that expressions of interest would close over the coming weeks and that the hubs would then be developed.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

81/19 Annual Fostering Report 2018 -19

The Board considered the report of the Interim Group Manager - Provider Services.

(Annexed)

Members were informed that progress had been slower than expected in respect of ensuring the quality and timeliness of support to existing fostering households, recruitment of mainstream carers and the transition of family and friends carers to Special Guardianship Orders.

In respect of recruitment, there had been a slowdown in respect of both enquiries and conversions. To address this the council had purchased a Customer Relations Management (CRM) tool to improve the customer journey from enquiry to assessment. This was yielding results and a recent 'skills to foster' training course had over 25 people in attendance.

The Chair commented that the figure within the annual report relating to foster care recruitment was concerning but it was reassuring that measures had been put in place to address the shortfall in foster care recruitment. He then requested an update on the CRM tool. The Interim Group Manager - Provider Services advised that 'Accura' had been purchased which was fit for purpose and allowed for the manipulation of data.

The Chair asked why private Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA's) were more successful in terms of recruitment. The Interim Group Manager - Provider Services explained that, historically, IFA's were small and offered bespoke support and better allowances. However, that position had changed as IFA's were mostly now owned by 1 of 3 big IFA's. As a result, the bespoke offer and support was less prevalent which meant the council had become more competitive. The Chair

commented that he was aware of individuals that had returned to foster for the local authority after fostering for an IFA. The Interim Group Manager - Provider Services advised that the introduction of Mockingbird and improved use of social media was helping to attract foster carers but acknowledged more work was required.

The Chair asked why enquiries were declining despite holding 35 events a year to promote foster caring in Walsall. The Interim Group Manager - Provider Services advised that the decline was a concern and advised that some initial enquiries hadn't been registered. However, there had been an improvement more recently following the appointment and work of the marketing officer and the introduction of the CRM.

In relation to the timescales for the recruitment process from receiving the prospective applicants offer to panel date, the Committee noted that it took 190 days and enquired as to whether this was in line national targets. The Interim Group Manager - Provider Services advised that closer to 180 days would be ideal. However, the Interim Assistant Director – Social Care and Safeguarding emphasised that it was important that the process allowed sufficient time to provide prospective foster carers with sufficient skills and prepared them for fostering. As such, 6 months was about the right length of time. The Chair enquired whether there was sufficient staff and resources to meet the timeframes in future. The Interim Group Manager - Provider Services advised that the proposed redesign would focus more on front door recruitment of mainstream carers.

Resolved

That the Board receives performance data when the Fostering is next considered setting out the:-

- Time from initial contact to conversion of an enquiry;
- Number of face to face meetings held within 5 days; and
- Number of phone calls to potential foster carers made within 24 hours of initial contact.

82/19 Performance Monitoring

The Board considered the report of the Head of Performance Improvement and Quality.

(Annexed)

The Interim Assistant Director – Social Care and Safeguarding presented the report noting that the number of looked after children was 638 which was higher than the national average. He stated that 74% of looked after children were in fostering arrangements.

In considering the report, the chair asked why 10% of children were not having reviews. Officers advised that reviews where the child attends could be improved and confirmed that efforts were being made to increase engagement.

The Children and Young Persons Champion (Participation and Engagement) advised that they were trying to unpick barriers and actively looking at other authority's to identify areas of best practice. Officer agreed to investigate this further and provide an update to the next meeting of the Board.

In terms of Education, Health and Care Plans, the Designated Nurse Children Looked After – CCG advised that there were some challenges in the way in which the local authority and health service collated the information. She sought the Boards agreement to bring a paper from the CCG on the matter to the next meeting. This was duly agreed by the Board.

Resolved

1. That the reasons for children and young people not having reviews together with what could be done to improve the situation, be reported to the next meeting;
2. That a report from the CCG be considered at the next meeting of the Board.

83/19 **Work Programme**

Members considered the work programme.

Resolved

That the work programme be noted.

84/19 **Date of next meeting**

The date of the next meeting to be held on 11th November, 2019.

There being no further business, the meeting terminated at 7.50 p.m.

Signed:

Date: