

Corporate Parenting Board

Tuesday 4 April 2023 at 6.00 p.m.

Conference room 2, Walsall Council House

Board Members Present:

Councillor S. Elson (Chair)
Councillor. Jukes (Vice-Chair)
Councillor I. Hussain
Councillor Worrall

Officers Present

Colleen Male	Director, Children's Social Work
Jivan Sembi	Head of Service (Children in Care, Provider and Care Leaving Services)
Lorraine Thompson	Head of Virtual School
Michael Morris	Principle Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)
Alison Jones	Designated Nurse LAC (Walsall ICB)

22/23 Welcome

At this point in the meeting, the Chair opened the meeting by welcoming everyone present. She also noted that the meeting to the papers, which could be found on the Council's Committee Management Information system (CMIS) webpage.

23/23 Introductions and Apologies

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillor Hicken and A. Hussain

24/23 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest or party whip for the duration of the meeting.

25/23 Minutes

A copy of the minutes of the meeting held on 10 January 2023, were submitted.

(see annexed)

Resolved (Unanimous)

That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 January 2023, copies having previously been circulated to each member of the Board, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

26/23 Engagement Session with Young People action plan

The Head of Service (Children in Care, Provider and Care Leaving Services) presented the report and highlighted the salient points (annexed). The Board were reminded that on 13th February 2023, Members met with 14 young people in care who set out areas for development that they would like to see progressed. The report set out the proposed action plan, which was developed following the meeting with the children in care council, and care leaver's forum. An update on progress against the action plan would be provided to the Board in July.

Resolved

That the Engagement Session with Young People action plan was noted.

27/23 Performance monitoring (Quarter 3)

The Director (Children's Social Work) presented the report and highlighted the salient points (annexed). The Board was informed that the number of children in care was stable; it was noted that information presented on page 19 indicated that there was a deterioration in performance – in order to rectify this work would be done on placement sufficiency. It was suggested that performance in this area would improve once the new children's residential homes were operational.

The Designated Nurse stated that there was a discrepancy with the data presented to the Board and the data available to the Integrated Care Board, and that work was under way to further understand this and amend the way that data

was presented. The development of a dental pathway was described, and the positive affect that this should have.

Resolved

That the performance monitoring (Quarter 3) was noted.

28/23 Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report

The Principle Independent Reviewing Officer presented the report and highlighted the salient points (annexed). The Board was informed of the role and purpose of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO), which enabled more effective independent oversight and scrutiny of the child's case.

The primary task of the IRO was to ensure that the care plan for the child fully reflected the child's current needs, and ensured those actions in the care plan are consistent with the legal responsibilities towards the child. Members were informed that the statutory duties of the IRO were:

- Monitor the performance by the local authority of their functions in relation to the child's care journey.
- Participate in any review of the child.
- Ensure that any ascertained wishes and feelings of the child are given due consideration.
- Perform any other function which is prescribed in regulations.

The Board was assured that in 2022, 91% of child in care reviews were held in timescale with the majority of other delays due to sickness of the social worker or IRO, which created slight delay in the meeting being held. It was expected that an improvement in this performance would be seen in 2022/23 as work had been done with the IRO in terms of recording reviews to ensure that they reflected timeliness. Priorities for 2022/23 were described and would be reported on in the next annual report.

In response to questions from Members, the Principle IRO informed Members that children were encouraged to participate in their care plan – operating virtually had allowed some children to participate where otherwise they may not have.

Resolved

That the Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report was noted.

29/23 Independent Visiting Service Annual Report

The Principle IRO presented the report and highlighted the salient points (annexed). Members were informed that an Independent Visitor was a trained volunteer who was there to “befriend and support children and young people in

care". An Independent Visitor could be a significant person in a child's life where there may be few constant or stable relationships, or Independent Visitors may be important and significant for a child at a particular point in their lives. As of March 2023 there were 14 children matched to an Independent Visitor with a further 11 referred and awaiting allocation, which would achieve the current proposed target of 20 children in care with an Independent Visitor.

Resolved

That the Independent Visiting Service Annual Report was noted.

30/23 CPB Annual Report

The Board considered the draft Corporate Parenting Board Report.

Resolved

That the Corporate Parenting Board be approved for submission to Council.

31/23 Future of Corporate Parenting Board

The Director (Children's Social Work) presented the report and highlighted the salient points (annexed) and stated that the report sought to review the future governance arrangements of Corporate Parenting Board. The history of the Board was described and the reasons for the proposal, which included a 'good' Ofsted judgement, the development of the Board with children at its heart, difficulties when meeting in the public domain, and to allow openness with sensitive matters. As such, members were asked:

- To support proposals to de-establish Corporate Parenting Board as a Council Committee Meeting.
- To support a report going to Annual Council Meeting on 22.05.2023 requesting permission to de-establish Corporate Parenting Board as a Council Committee Meeting.
- That if agreed a full report with revised Corporate Parenting Board terms of reference to be presented to the first meeting of Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the new municipal year.
- That the future overview and scrutiny of services to be delivered to children in care and outcomes to be achieved to be the responsibility of Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

There then followed a series of questions from Members, the Director (Children's Social Work) confirmed that private information could be provided to the disestablished Board. A Member asked for careful consideration in relation to clarity of function between the proposed Corporate Parenting Board and the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee. Additional challenge was provided in relation to membership and the allocation of political seats.

The Director (Children's Social Work) stated that a working group would be established to further consider such issues and Members would be invited to be part of this group.

Resolved

- The proposal to de-establish Corporate Parenting Board as a Council Committee Meeting was supported.
- The submission of a report going to Annual Council Meeting on 22 May 2023 requesting permission to de-establish Corporate Parenting Board as a Council Committee Meeting was supported.
- That if agreed a full report with revised Corporate Parenting Board terms of reference to be presented to the first meeting of Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the new municipal year.
- That the future overview and scrutiny of services to be delivered to children in care and outcomes to be achieved to be the responsibility of Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

There being no further business the meeting terminated at 7.05 p.m.

Signed

Date