

**Minutes of the Children's Corporate Parenting Board
Tuesday, 30th March 2021 at 4.00 pm
On Microsoft Teams**

Present:

Councillor S Ridney (Vice - Chair) (In the Chair)
Councillors N Barlow, P Bradley, A Millward, P Miller, C Perks, E Taylor and D Vickers.

Officers

C Driscoll – Director of Children's Services, M McFadden – Corporate Parenting Board Co-ordinator, A Wright – Matrix Head of Virtual School (All Directorate of Children's Services), K Buckle – Democratic Services Officer (Directorate of Finance and Legal).

8. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors R Buttery, B Gentle and G Partridge.

9. **Declarations of Interest**

No Member made a declaration of interest in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct in respect of any matter to be considered at the meeting.

10. **Minutes**

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 16th July 2020, be approved as a correct record and signed.

11. **Annual Overview of Children's Corporate Parenting Board 2020/21**

Members considered the Annual Overview of the Children's Corporate Parenting Board 2020/21.



The report detailed the Impact on the Children in Care, Care Leavers and Resource Services during the pandemic. The Chair had previously commented positively on the creative and innovative work in the services referred to above, ensuring that children, young people and care leavers were supported during the pandemic.

Members considered a power-point presentation that outlined the reports considered by the Children's Corporate Parenting Board Working Group and the outcomes arising from those deliberations at the Working Groups.

It was noted that the complaint response times within statutory timeframes continued to improve.

The Virtual School had issued a 'Love to Learn Emotional Health and Wellbeing' pack which had been provided to children in care and foster carers.

In order to deal with social anxiety for children who had returned to school, additional staff had been available to support those children.

It was reported that should a foster carer refuse an appointment for an initial health care assessment, that carer would be contacted and the importance for the assessment would be stressed to the carer.

Members had received assurances from the Independent Reviewing Service Manager, that the recruitment of Independent Visitors to the service in order to ensure that quality services were being provided to children and young people, was a priority.

The Board had been impressed and appreciated the initiative and energy of the Children in Care Council, which had grown during the pandemic.

Congratulations were echoed in relation to the Children in Care Awards Ceremony, and Members commented positively on the arrangement skills of the Children in Care Council.

Members were also impressed with the work conducted in the garden at the Lighthouse Links site.

It was reported that Bounceback Boxes had been well received by 300 children in care and had been distributed in order to manage emotional wellbeing.

The establishment of Working Groups to complete asks or actions identified by the Board were referred to.

The four Working Groups would focus on the following: -

- Care experienced young people aged 16 to 25, addressing issues pertinent to care leavers.
- A focus on the quality of the care for children and young people, the stability of placements and the speed at which they receive permanency.
- Emotional health and wellbeing for children in care and care experienced young people, with a focus on education and leisure entitlements and support services.
- A Skills Working Group which would gather a register of interested tradesmen to equip care leavers with practical skills to allow them to achieve independence.

Arising from the consideration of the outcomes of the Ofsted inspections, the Regulation Independent Visitor Inspections and Regulation 45 quality of care reviews in respect of the Children Home (England) Regulations, 2015 Members acknowledged that the children in Dudley's three residential children's homes were receiving quality of care.

Members also expressed the wish to reinstate visits to the homes, and in order to maintain the homes as children's places of safety, their homes and their privacy it was suggested that visits were offered on invitation.

Arising from further consideration of this item, it was suggested that no more than two Members should visit a home at any one time.

Members considered proposals for four apprenticeships for care leavers in the Children in Care and Placement Resources Services.

It was noted that each apprentice would receive the minimum wage, with that being funded by the proposal that each Directorate would contribute equally towards funding the apprenticeships.

Members welcomed the initiative, and also supported the proposition that external Council providers should enter into a scheme whereby they offer apprenticeships to care leavers.

A brief overview of the current jointly commissioned Dudley Lighthouse Links, Emotional Wellbeing Service to Children in Care was considered, and the Director of Children's Services confirmed that meetings with Senior Staff within the National Health Service continued in order to ensure that a comprehensive review of the Service was carried out, and there was a full commissioning process in place.

It was reported that Young Person's Advisors had been hard hit by the pandemic, however the Care Leavers report had evidenced the quality of continuing support for care leavers.

The Board praised the extensive support that the Dudley Virtual School provided to children in care and their carer's and noted the improvements made to the Service following the previous Ofsted Visit.



In relation to Unregulated Provision in Dudley, the Director of Children's Services reported that the law would shortly change stipulating that it would not be legal for a child under the age of 16 to be placed in unregulated provision. The Board were assured that Dudley did not use the above provision for children in care under the age of 16 in any event.

Arising from the presentation of the report submitted, Members thanked Officers for their continued work in relation to children in care and care leavers.

Arising from a concern regarding the proposals in relation to apprenticeships not being offered to care leavers, the Director of Children's Services confirmed that the issue had been considered by the Strategic Executive Board, and there was a recommendation that the initiative be referred to the Cabinet.

The Chair echoed her thanks for the work conducted over a very difficult year.

Arising from a request that Members promote the need for further diverse representation on Fostering Panels, the Chair suggested that the issue be raised at the first meeting of the Board following the municipal Elections.

The Director of Children's Services confirmed that Corporate Parenting training would be reinvigorated for Members at the beginning of the next Municipal Year.

Resolved

- (1) That the Annual Overview of the Children's Corporate Parenting Board report 2020/21 be noted.
- (2) That the following items be rolled forward for inclusion in the draft Annual Children's Corporate Parenting Board Programme for 2021/22.
 - Children in Care Council Annual report 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021
 - Verbal Updates Reports from the Corporate Parenting Board Working Groups
 - Children's Services Complaints, Comments and Compliments Annual Report 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021.
 - Dudley's Virtual School Annual Report 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021.
 - Report on care leavers Not in Education Employment or Training
 - Fostering and Permanency Service Annual Report 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021
 - Report from regional adoption agency Adoption at Heart
 - Review Report of Dudley Lighthouse Link Service
 - Dudley Clinical Commissioning Group (DCCG) Annual Children in Care Report 1st April 2020 to 31st March 21021.



- Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021
 - Report on the outcomes of the Ofsted inspections, the Regulation Independent Visitor inspections and Regulation 45 quality of care reviews in respect of the Children Home (England) Regulations 2015
 - Care leavers Update Report
- (3) That the Service Manager, Quality Assurance and Safeguarding be requested to submit a report on the recruitment of Independent Visitors to a future meeting of the Board.
 - (4) That Members endorse the primary change to the functioning of the Children's Corporate Parenting Board to include the establishment of Working Groups with the remit to complete tasks or actions identified by the Board and Officers, based on the needs and analysis of the service.
 - (5) That the proposal for a full review on the functions of Dudley Lighthouse Links, endorsements of a best practice delivery model and contributing to the strategic functioning through Members of the Strategic Emotional Health and Wellbeing Working Group, be endorsed.
 - (6) That the Board authorise the Director of Children's Services to appoint the Chair of the Emotional Health and Wellbeing Working Group to Chair the Strategic Leadership meeting of the Dudley Lighthouse Links to provide independent challenge and accountability.
 - (7) That the further commissioning process to evaluate best practice across the Country before the service delivery model of the Dudley Lighthouse Links was agreed be supported.
 - (8) That the Head of Children in Care, Care Experienced Young People and Children's Resources be requested to provide a progress report on the Dudley Lighthouse Links Service to the next meeting of the Board.
 - (9) That the Board Members to be requested to liaise with the Head of Children in Care, Care Experienced Young People and Children's Resources in relation to any visits they wish to make to Dudley's residential Children's Homes.
 - (10) That the proposed initiative within the Children in Care and Placement Resources Service to provide an opportunity for four care leavers to undertake a two- year apprenticeship, be supported.

- (11) That the Cabinet be recommended that the Board endorsed the proposal to increase the number of care leavers apprenticeships within the Council.
- (12) That the Children's Corporate Parenting Board Action Tracker include the proposal to request the Council's external procurement providers to the Council to enter-into a scheme whereby they offered Apprenticeships to Care Leavers.

The meeting ended at 4.43 pm

CHAIR