

Corporate Parenting Panel

Monday 28 November 2022

Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members

Councillor Jeff Morgan (Chair)
Councillor Marian Humphreys
Councillor Penny-Anne O'Donnell
Councillor Jerry Roodhouse

Officers

Chris Baird, Interim AD for Education
Helen Barnsley, Senior Democratic Services Officer
Molly Boneham, Social Care Worker Level 1b
Amy Bridgewater-Carnall, Senior Democratic Services Officer
John Coleman, Assistant Director - Children and Families
Marie Dionsi, Family Support Worker
Ian Donnachie, Apprentice (Children in Care 14-18)
Deborah Mcgarvey, Non-Social Work Operational Team Leader
Nigel Minns, Strategic Director for People
Deena Moorey, Virtual School Head
Liss Phillips, Family Support Worker
Sharon Shaw, Service Manager - Corporate Parenting Service
Jo Smith, Delivery Lead Social Work Operations Manager
Umar Teerab, Family Support Worker

Others Present

Angela Richardson, Designated Nurse – Children in Care

1. General

(1) Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Pete Gilbert and Councillor Caroline Phillips.

(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None

(3) Minutes of the previous meeting

In relation to the second paragraph of item 3 of the minutes from the 12th October 2022, the follow changes were agreed –

- In response to Councillor Caroline Philipps, Sharon Shaw said that the unaccompanied asylum seekers placed in the hotels were coming from Sudan, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq and Albania. They are placed in hotels because there is no other accommodation available. It was believed that there was an increase from children from Albania because they disappear from the hotels they are in, so more are trafficked.

In relation to item 6 of the minutes from the 12th October 2022, it was confirmed that the addition to the work programme in relation to Governance for Child in Care would be a flow chart and not a full report.

Following the above changes the minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record. There were no matters arising.

2. CiCC & Voice, Influence and Change Team Update

Ian Donnachie, Apprentice (Children in Care 14 – 18 years) updated the panel on the Apprentice Appreciation Day which was held on the 6th October. This was an event that allowed care experienced apprentices to provide feedback on their role and offer ways that it could be improved for future cohorts. The panel noted that the session had allowed apprentices to highlight that in some cases, based on their own experience, the role could be close to home. As a result, managers may benefit from additional support so that they have a better understanding of any potential triggering areas for new apprentices.

Marie Dionisi, Family Support Worker provided an update on the relaunch of the Children in Care Council (CiCC) which was held on the 13th October 2022. It was noted that 13 young people attended aged from 11 to 17 years old and that it was an opportunity for them to find out more about what being part of the CiCC involved. Young people were also given the chance to mention areas that they would like included in future agendas of the CiCC; such as more family time, time with siblings, self-harm and the chance to meet carers before they moved in with them. The panel was pleased to note that feedback had been very positive.

Following a question from the Chair, it was confirmed that the most important issues for young people was mental health. It was also confirmed that in January 2023, there will be a meeting with MIND representatives to discuss how to develop better mental health with young people, including wellbeing and self-harm.

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse asked what officers were trying to achieve; acknowledging that mental health and wellbeing is very different for everyone. Marie Dionisi agreed with Councillor Roodhouse and added that the CiCC is about creating a place for young people to come together and voice their concerns in a safe community where everyone comes together. Angela Richardson, Designated Nurse – Children in Care added that developmental trauma is something that young people in care face and that has a significant impact on them and that it is something that doesn't necessarily fit the mental health hat. The panel noted that work is

underway in relation to a strategy to address this and working with young people to develop this.

Councillor Penny-Anne O'Donnell asked how much information a child receives in relation to their foster carers; suggesting that information about the proposed length of their stay and meeting them before the placement starts could strengthen their resilience and mental health.

Nigel Minns, Strategic Director for People confirmed that the national picture in relation to concerns about young people's mental health is reflected in Warwickshire. It was noted that mental health support teams in schools are making a real difference and it was agreed that feedback will be brought to a future meeting of the panel.

Liss Phillips, Family Support Worker gave an update on the Care Leavers Forum and confirmed the plans for 2023 which include looking at rights and entitlements of young people. The forum completed a review of the last 12 months and the panel was pleased to note the positive feedback received.

Umar Teerab, Family Support Worker ended the item with an update on the football team. The panel was pleased to note that this is still very popular and that other local authorities have shown an interest in setting up their own teams. It was also noted that the police have a team that play regularly and that the fire service were also interested in setting up a team to join in.

3. Performance Data

Sharon Shaw, Service Manager - Corporate Parenting Service introduced the item and provided clarification on the data relating to short term placements. It was noted that this is a key area that officers are currently working on. Officers have recently met with colleagues from Telford and Wrekin who have been doing well in this area but who are also currently facing issues.

Following a question from Councillor Jerry Roodhouse, it was confirmed that short term placements are a national issue. Sharon Shaw confirmed that residential homes are closing and that there are no beds in secure accommodation (always a last resort for WCC). Foster carers are raising concerns that they are not being paid enough in the cost-of-living crisis so are choosing not to take any young people at the moment. John Coleman, Assistant Director - Children and Families confirmed that it is a very complex issue, adding that many young people have really complex mental health needs. It was agreed that an item focusing on the stability of placements is presented at a future panel meeting.

In relation to missing episodes, Sharon Shaw confirmed that the data for Warwickshire remains stable. Clarification was given to the panel that missing does not mean that officers do not know where a young person is. There is not a pattern of long term "missing" in Warwickshire. The example was given that if a young person stays out longer than expected, they will be recorded as missing if they are out past 12am. Another example would be if a young person has left a foster placement to go and see family members. The panel was pleased to see that since 2020, the number of missing episodes in Warwickshire has reduced.

The panel noted that in relation to young unaccompanied asylum seekers, there was no current data on how Warwickshire compares to statistical neighbours. Officers confirmed that there are working groups in place and that in the future there would be some data that could be presented to the panel.

4. Virtual School - Autumn 2022 Report

Deena Moorey, Virtual School Head presented the report to the panel confirming that the information related to the previous summer term (2022). It was confirmed that virtual school conferences have now returned to being face-to-face as well as training sessions. Attendees agree that being face-to-face makes a big difference. It was noted that the numbers attending both conferences and training sessions have increased.

It was confirmed that there will be a focus on ensuring that young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) attend their reviews. The work is proving to be very positive.

Training has been completed in order to fully understand what it is like to be a young person with a social worker. The training has been completed in all Bedworth schools and is underway in all the Nuneaton Schools which means that over 1000 staff will have received the training.

The panel noted that post-16 funding had been received and that there is a comprehensive training programme worked out. Warwickshire is working with the North Warwickshire College, South Leicestershire College and the Warwickshire College Group.

It was confirmed that there is an area of concern in relation to some young people who are struggling to return to school full time after the pandemic. The overall attendance is lower than the national figure but it is higher in primary schools.

It was confirmed that there are some staff who are still struggling to support children who have previously been in care and it was agreed that more training is needed to support staff. It was noted that this is an issue across the county and not just in one particular area. It is also a national issue.

5. SGO Policy Impact and Report

Joanna Smith, Delivery Lead Social Work Operations Manager presented the report to the panel in relation to Special Guardianship Orders (SGO).

The panel noted that there are now three full time workers in the SGO team who have full caseloads. The children and carers with SGOs in place are all benefiting and getting the care and support that they need.

There has been an increase in the number of families applying for an SGO and the service is expanding to reflect this and officers are now reaching out to families considering an SGO.

The panel noted that work to improve data collection is now underway.

The Chair asked for clarification on the difference between fostering or adoption and an SGO. It was confirmed that an SGO puts the family first and will look at ways to keep a child/young person with a family member. Adoption removes all responsibility from parents.

Following a question from the Chair, it was confirmed that, in relation to payment for the carers who have an SGO, an assessment is carried out to decide if (further) financial support is needed.

6. Development of the Work Programme for 2023/2024

The updated work programme was agreed by the Panel.

It was also agreed that from January 2023, all meetings would be held in Shire Hall rather than via teams. For those who are unable to attend the meeting in person, the option of joining via the hybrid technology would be offered.

8. Any Other Business

None

9. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on 16th January 2023 at 10am.

The meeting will be held in Committee Room 2, Shire Hall, Warwick.

The meeting rose at 10.51

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Chair