

# Minutes of Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board

**Monday, 3 July 2023 at 6.00 pm  
at Council Chamber, The Council House, Oldbury, B69 3DB**

**Present:** Councillor Hinchliff (Chair)  
Councillors Allcock, Fitzgerald, Mayo, Pall and Uddin.  
Barrie Scott Co-opted Member - Church of England dioceses  
of Birmingham and Lichfield Representative

**Officers:** Michael Jarrett (Director of Children and Education);  
Connor Robinson (Democratic Services Officer).

## **19/23 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ashraf, Chambers, Choudhry, W Gill, Weston and Carmel Hinton Co-opted Member - Roman Catholic archdiocese of Birmingham Representative.

## **20/23 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **21/23 Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the meeting held on 20 March 2023 are approved as a correct record.



## **22/23 Urgent Additional Items of Business**

There were no urgent additional items of business to consider.

## **23/23 Corporate Parenting Week**

From the 12 to the 16 June 2023 the Council had facilitated a corporate parenting week which had sought to raise awareness around corporate parenting and the responsibilities that were shared across the Council and its partners.

The event, which would take place annually in future, brought together partners from across the Council, Sandwell Children's Trust (SCT), the Black Country NHS Foundation and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). The purpose of the weeklong event had been to:

- raise the profile of corporate parenting across partnerships;
- ensure a clear understanding of what it meant to be a corporate parent;
- develop the confidence of individuals to become good corporate parents.

The week had opened with a one-hour virtual live event which had brought together senior leaders from across children's services. The virtual event had been well received by staff from across the Council, with over 600 employees from the Council and SCT colleagues in attendance. The session had been led by a young person who had experienced life in care, who shared the story of their journey.

Throughout the week a range of sessions were delivered, which included:

- a webinar from SCT to help colleagues understand the journey of the children in care and care leavers;
- a trauma-informed webinar on supporting children and young people who had experienced trauma;
- three sessions across the week delivered by the LGA which included: Face to face corporate parenting training to the Council's leadership team and assistant directors, a virtual training session for newly elected members and a workshop for Corporate Parent Board which focussed on developing a new corporate parenting strategy.

- a one-hour webinar by CAMHS and the Council on Understanding the Emotional wellbeing and mental health of Sandwell children in care and care leavers.
- a stand outside the reception area near the children's outpatients at Sandwell Hospital.
- a face-to-face networking workshop from the Employment and Skills Team demonstrating what and how support could be offered to ensure that young people accessed employment and apprenticeships.
- question and answer session delivered by key members of the Corporate Parenting Board.

Throughout the week, feedback had been positive and there had been clear learning across the Council, SCT and partners.

Key actions had been identified which would be a focus over the next 12 months:

- redraft of the Corporate Parent strategy;
- the creation of a new vision;
- to understand that success looked like in terms of the new 5 pledges and 25 promises;
- create an Assistant Director's group to which identified gaps in services for children in care and care leavers;
- work as a multiagency partnership to ensure Sandwell children in care and care leavers became a protective characteristic;
- ensure further corporate parenting training was provided to business partners;
- ensure all Elected Members and colleagues received corporate parenting training in the next 12 months.

Following comments and questions from members of the Board, the following responses were provided and issues highlighted:-

- the number of looked after children that returned to their parents varied, depending on the circumstances a large proportion of children did return to their families, however, not all were able to return;

- children leaving care had a personal advisor who supported the transition from childhood into adulthood which included support around their future destinations;
- there were numerous success stories of young people leaving care and going onto higher education and a career, however, there were also some not so successful stories which often stemmed from their disadvantaged position;
- tracking was in place to monitor the destinations of young people leaving care, some care leavers wished to move on while others continued to access support;
- there were reciprocal arrangements in place across local authorities to maintain support for care leavers, modern technology also allowed support to take place in a virtual setting;
- the Cabinet was keen to pursue a policy change to ensure the support for care leavers;
- there were GDPR considerations when considering engagement with ward members, any change in approach would be considered by the Forum for Independent Young Adults;
- there was an ambition to produce an offer to demonstrate all the available pathways available to care leavers;
- the Council wanted to ensure opportunities were available within the Council as well as with Council partners;
- the young people on the Corporate Parenting Board fed back regularly on the support offered to care leavers, the Council was committed to working collaboratively with young people on co-production and co-design of support offered;
- the Cabinet report template had been amended to include an implication on corporate parenting requiring each item to consider its wider corporate parent implications;
- corporate parenting training had included members and training would continue to be provided.

## **24/23 Scrutiny Action Tracker**

The Board noted progress on actions and recommendations from previous meetings.

## **25/23 Cabinet Forward Plan**

The Board noted the Cabinet Forward Plan as it related to Children, Young People and Education.

Meeting ended at 6.35pm

Contact: [democratic\\_services@sandwell.gov.uk](mailto:democratic_services@sandwell.gov.uk)