

Contact Officer: Jodie Harris

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

Tuesday 23rd January 2024

Present: Councillor Viv Kendrick (Chair)
Councillor Elizabeth Reynolds, Cabinet Member - Learning and Aspiration
Councillor John Lawson, Liberal Democrat - Group Leader
Gill Addy, Designated Nurse for Looked after Children/Care Leavers
Kieran Lord, Interim Service Director: Resources, Improvements & Partnerships
Louise Hallas, Virtual School Headteacher - Children & Young People
Vicky Metheringham, Service Director - Child Protection & Family Support

Co-optees

In attendance: Benjamin Newsome, Contextual Safeguarding Service Manager
Tom Clift, Service Manager - Child Protection and Review Unit
Anna Gledhill, Head of Homes for Children

Observers:

Apologies: Councillor Richard Smith, Conservative - Group Business Manager
Councillor Karen Allison, Green Group - Group Business Manager
Councillor Andrew Cooper, Green Group - Group Leader
Stewart Horn, Head of Children's Integrated Commissioning
Sara Miles, Head of Safeguarding & Quality Assurance
Jo-Anne Sanders, Service Director - Learning & Early Support

1 Membership of the Board/Apologies
Apologies were received from Councillor Richard Smith, Councillor Karen Allison, Councillor Andrew Cooper (ex-officio), Sara Miles, Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance, Stewart Horn, Head of Children's Integrated Commissioning and Jo-Anne Sanders, Service Director Learning and Early Support.

2 Minutes of previous meeting
The Board considered the Minutes of the meeting held on 5th December 2023.

Gill Addy reported back to the Board in response to (i) that further information around time scales for an ICB decision on prescriptions, dental and optician support

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be provided to the Board, and it was noted that the response would be shared with Board members in writing.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 5th December 2023 be approved as a correct record.

3 Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

4 Admission of the Public

All Items were held in public session.

5 Deputations/Petitions

There were no deputations or petitions received.

6 Public Question Time

There were no questions received from members of the public.

7 Head Of Service Update

The Board considered a verbal update presented by Joel Hanna, Head of Service, Corporate Parenting and Children's Residential Services. During the update Joel Hanna gave a presentation which set out progress in respect of 3 key areas:

- The Review of the Corporate Parenting Strategy, Governance and Delivery, which in relation to the Corporate Parenting Board would include refreshed Terms of Reference, the expansion of its membership and to agree the current priorities and strategy.
- The Service Planning for the Care Leavers Service, there had been a 2-day review of the service requested by the council and provided by Mark Riddell MBE to inform the services 'Continuous Service Improvement Plan'.
- The Service planning for the Children Looked After Service including the establishing better links between the CICC/CLF and the Head of Service for Corporate Parenting the revised service plan to establish the continuous service improvement plan following a full-service engagement event and work around establishing more stability for children in relation to the number of social worker changes.

In the discussion to follow, questions and comments were invited from Board Members, with the following issues being covered:

- The Board welcomed news of the launch of a new parents and babies care leavers group and very early plans to expand the offer to nurseries noting the importance of a provision which safeguarded and supported parents whilst providing networking opportunities.
- The Board noted the proposals for a 'dashboard' infographic, and it was advised that the purpose of this was to provide key headline information to corporate parents and would be a useful tool for all elected members.

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- The Board were advised that a 'draft' dashboard would be provided to the Board for comment prior to deciding where it would be shared.
- The Board highlighted the importance of ensuring elected members engaged with the dashboard information, highlighting how communication via email may be missed, and it was suggested that this could be sent to Group Business Managers to share during group meetings as well as asking members directly at those meetings how best they would like to receive the information going forwards.
- The Board welcomed the engagement with the CiCC/CLF to develop and roll out Corporate Parenting training and expressed interest in the development of this work.
- In respect of the Corporate Parent training the Board suggested this be delivered in 2 parts focusing on: (i) covering the experience of children who are looked after taking a trauma informed approach, and (ii) practical actions.
- The Board welcomed work undertaken to develop a brand and that the Care leavers Christmas dinner had been provided.

RESOLVED: The Board noted the Head of Service Update, and it was agreed that:

- 1) A 'draft' version of the Dashboard infographic be shared with the Board.
- 2) The Dashboard be shared with Group Business Managers to circulate at group meetings.
- 3) Engagement be held with elected members at Group Business Meetings in respect of communicating the dashboard.
- 4) Consideration be given to delivering corporate parenting training in 2 parts, focusing on: (i) covering the experience of children who are looked after and, (ii) practical actions.

8 Children's Performance Report

The Board considered the latest Children's Performance Highlights Report setting out the performance monitoring data for Children's Services which was presented by; Joel Hanna, Head of Service, Corporate Parenting and Children's Residential Services, Louise Hallas- Virtual School Headteacher, Tom Clift – Service Manager, Child Protection and Review Unit, Vicky Metheringham, Service Director - Family Support, Anna Gledhill, Head of Sufficiency and Child Protection and Benjamin Newsome, Contextual Safeguarding Service Manager. The following key points were highlighted:

- To improve the performance indicator for stability there was a focus on early recruitment as well as a recruitment campaign to attract more stability into the team.
- Kirklees were aiming to address the number of homes that a young person was moved to, through several different routes and shortly a new home was due to open to increase internal capacity.
- In relation to Looked after Reviews, Visits and Missing, there had been a decline in the number of recorded missing incidents alongside a decrease in timely completion of independent return interviews.
- Lower numbers did have a greater impact on the percentages, but the decrease in timely returns was predominantly a result of the approach to ensure that return interviews were delivered at the right time, by the right person and in the right way for the young person.

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- In relation to Looked After Review Meetings, it was noted that 12 requests for Initial Review forms were received by the Child Protection and Review Unit (CPRU) for children to become Looked After in November 2023, relating to 19 children in total. 97.5% were achieved within the required timescales.
- Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO's) closely monitored Child Looked After Review timescales to ensure that the high percentage was maintained whilst a clear rationale was recorded on a child's file if there were circumstances which resulted in a child's review meeting not being held within statutory timescales.
- IRO's robustly reviewed children's care plans and from June 2023 for children New into Care and undertake New into Care case audits. Findings were shared with the area social work Service Manager for oversight, and social work Team Managers.
- In relation to Children Looked After Education Outcomes, the Virtual School maintained 100% PEPs completion. Improving attendance and the number of children not in full time education were the key areas of focus.
- In relation to Children Looked After Health Outcomes, challenges in relation to the completion of Initial Health Assessments were replicated across regional neighbours and was highlighted on the West Yorkshire risk register.
- There was a significant anticipated upturn in IHA completion and work was being undertaken to improve this. The Business Case to consider additional nurse/doctor resource/alternative CLA Health model, which would support the whole team remained under commissioner consideration.
- It was also advised that older children coming into care commonly had additional support needs and work was being undertaken to explore if more specialist services may be better placed to take on the IHA for this cohort.
- In relation to Children Looked After Convictions, it was noted that the number of Young People who have been looked after continually for 12 months or more aged 10 to 17 who received a substantive outcome had fallen in comparison to previous year, and it was noted that the cohort of young people with convictions was very low.
- The Disposal Panel continued work to understand the circumstances surrounding the young person and their support needs to prevent them reoffending and becoming criminalised.
- In relation to Care leavers, Kirklees had partnered with North Yorkshire as part of the Sector Led Improvement Partnership and had agreed a focus on the quality of Pathway plans.
- The strategy was to increase contact through different range of communication methods including a text system to maximise engagement in activities.
- Work had also been undertaken with partners to develop an events calendar with the aim of producing more attractive events and opportunities.
- In relation to Children in Care and Personal Advisors, work continued with social work teams to ensure young people were allocated Personal Advisor support at 17 and 4 months.
- In relation to Fostering, in November 2023 there were 6 foster carer approvals, 5 were kinship foster carers and 1 was a mainstream (unconnected) approval.

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- Though the priority was to increase the number of carers, the number of children placed in fostering was high in Kirklees, split between agency and internal carers.

In the discussion to follow, questions and comments were invited from Board Members, with the following issues being covered:

- The Board welcomed the explanation of the data, noting that the details presented helped to clarify Kirklees's position.
- In relation to the data around persistent absence it was noted the main cause of persistent absences (PA) were unauthorised absences due to emotionally based school avoidance and lates which contributed to the figures presented. In response it was recommended that a breakdown of the PA data alongside comparison with national data be provided to the Board.
- The Board welcomed the idea of a text system to enable higher levels of engagement in events from young people.

RESOLVED: The Board noted the Childrens' Performance Highlights Report, and it was agreed that a breakdown of the PA data alongside comparison with national data be provided to be Board.

9 **The Voice of Children and Young People and Care Experience Young People**

The Board considered a verbal update in respect of the Voice of Children and Young People and Care Experience Young People presented by Joel Hanna, Head of Service for Children Looked After and Care Leavers. Joel Hanna gave a presentation which outlined the pledge for Corporate Parents and set out the plans for achieving greater representation for the inclusion of the voice of children and young people at the Board. This work included:

- Weekly attendance at the Children in Care Council (CCiC) and Care Leavers Forum (CLF) alternately had been established as an opportunity for the Head of Service to listen to the experience, voice and views of young people with the intention of taking a 'you said we did' approach to issues raised.
- Working with the CCiC and the CLF there were plans to develop and co-deliver Corporate Parenting training for Members and Officers (using the LGA resource pack) as well as working together to inform the current review and revision of the Corporate Parenting Strategy.
- Planning work had been undertaken to identify future opportunities to increase the voice of children and young people in the work of the Corporate Parenting Board (i.e.- takeover board events, attendance/representation at Board meetings and review and feedback from Webcast meetings etc.)
- Work had also begun to increase membership of both groups.
- Discussions with the CiCC and the CLF had highlighted:
 - Examples of inequality in finance polices (i.e.-allowances and financial support) and it had been agreed to add the review of these to the work plan for both the Children in Care and Care Leavers services.
 - Issues with delays in decision making due to 'tiers of approval' had led to a review of approval levels for holiday risk assessments and permissions.

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- The use and the power of language, especially the implications and associations of using words such as 'lack' when referring to children in care and in response discussions had been held around how to change culture around language.

In the discussion to follow, questions and comments were invited from Board Members, with the following issues being covered:

- The Board agreed it was important to reflect on the power of language going forwards, ensuring that words like 'lack' and acronyms were avoided, and that age-appropriate language was used to ensure young people understand the decisions been made around them.
- The Board welcomed work undertaken to improve the timeliness of decisions around holiday permissions and risk assessments.
- The Board highlighted the importance of promoting and integrating the Corporate Parenting Pledge and suggested that consideration be given to printing the pledge on Council on ID cards.

RESOLVED: The Board noted the update 'The Voice of Children and Young People and Care Experience Young People' and it was agreed that:

- 1) Reflection be given to the type and power of the language used when referring to and communicating with children in care and care leavers.
- 2) Consideration be given to the promotion of the Corporate Parenting Pledge including the possibility of this being printed on officer and member ID cards.

10 Sufficiency Update

The Board considered a report providing an update on the progress against the priorities identified in the Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2025 presented by Anna Gledhill, Head of Homes for Children. It was noted that:

- Priorities were delivered through 'Continuous Service Improvement Plans' for Fostering, Residential and Placements services.
- A key priority was to ensure that were possible children live in family homes and 46 Special Guardianship Orders and 5 Child Arrangement Orders were made between April 2023- January 2024.
- The team had been re-structured to ensured that kinship foster carers received consistent support through a supervising social worker.
- To expand the Fostering Service (to deliver more fostering homes) several policies and procedures had been implemented to expand the service including improving relationships with regional colleagues to share best practice.
- Work also continued with Kirklees Fostering Network through regular meetings to support learning.
- To uplift Kirklees's fostering offer, competitive fostering rates were ensured, and the fostering recruitment strategy was being updated as part of a fostering diagnostic delivered by the DfE.

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- To ensure that Residential Children's Homes delivered outstanding care, there had been investment in the residential estate including the full refurbishment of one home in 2023.
- The process to finalise the registration of a new home was ongoing and it was anticipated that the home would open early 2024.
- To ensure that children and young people had access to a spectrum of placement options to best meet their individual needs, work had been undertaken to develop the relationship with the independent sector and the commissioning team,
- As a part of this, 2 residential children's homes provider events took place in 2023, and a White Rose regional provider event was planned for spring 2024.
- Visits by the Commissioning Team and the Placement Team staff to all children's home providers in Kirklees were also taking place.
- All new children's home planning applications in Kirklees were being monitored by the Commissioning Team
- A new 16+ Supported Accommodation Electronic Market Place (approved list of providers) was out to tender, which was in line with the new Ofsted 16+ Supported Accommodation regulations and categories

The Board noted the update and welcomed news of the Fostering Diagnostic visit noting the value and challenges in increasing the number of foster carers.

RESOLVED: The Board noted the Sufficiency Update.

11 **Fostering Report October 2022 to March 2023**

The Board considered the Fostering Report October 2022 to March 2023, which was presented by Anna Gledhill, Head of Homes for Children. It was highlighted that:

- The Fostering Report October 2022 to March 2023 covered a six-month period to realign the reporting period and enable the service to provide comparative data from national and regional service reporting in future reports.
- The Mockingbird Model, which consisted of support networks known as constellations, had been expanded.
- This included a Hub Home Carer, who developed positive relationships with the carers in the constellation and provided support to carers through daily/weekly telephone calls, messages and/or visits.
- Kirklees implemented the first Mockingbird constellation in October 2021.
- A further two Hub Home Carers were appointed in December 2022, with work underway to form the constellations within this reporting period.

The Board noted the update and expressed pride at the number of Special Guardians and Connected Carers. The Board also requested that a further update be provided to the Board in June 2024.

RESOLVED: The Board noted the Fostering Report October 2022 to March 2023, and it was agreed that the next report be provided to the Board in June 2024.

12 **Virtual School Governing Body Update**

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Louise Hallas, Virtual School Headteacher advised that there had not been a meeting of the Virtual School Governing Body

RESOLVED: The Board noted that an update in respect of the Virtual School Governing Body would be provided at the next meeting of the Board.

13 Children's Ambition Board Update

The Board considered a verbal update in relation to the last meeting of the Children's Ambition Board presented by Vicky Metheringham, Service Director, Child Protection and Family Support and Kieran Lord, Interim Service Director - Resources, Improvements and Partnerships. It was noted that at the last meeting of the Children's Ambition Board there had been a focus on the SEND and recent engagement with national bodies related to this.

RESOLVED: The Board noted the Children's Ambition Board Update.

14 Updates from Board Members on Interaction with Services

The Board considered verbal updates from Board Members in relation to progress and key issues following interaction with Services and partners to challenge the role of the Corporate Parent.

The Chair noted attendance at:

- 11th December 2023 - Meeting of the Children's Ambition Board
- 6th December 2023- Chaired the Yorkshire and Humber Children's Improvement Board
- 12th December 2023- Chaired the Yorkshire and Humber Lead Member Network
- The North Yorkshire Peer review set up meeting and an Operational practice progress at Dewsbury Town Hall
- 24th December 2023 – the setup of the Care leavers Christmas lunch
- 5th January 2024 – Attended the Starting Well Board.
- 9th January 2024 - Briefing on short breaks consultation.
- 22nd January 2024 –A Stay and Play Group where parents finding supportive networks through the group.

Councillor Elizabeth Reynolds reported an invite to the new Mockingbird Constellation launch and attendance volunteering at the Care Leavers Christmas dinner highlighting the work of those who made quilts for care leavers (who attended the event), and the presents gifted by partners.

RESOLVED: The Board noted the Updates from Board Members on Interaction with Services.

15 Corporate Parenting Board Agenda Plan

The Board considered the agenda plan for 2023/24.

RESOLVED: The Board noted the agenda plan for 2023/24 and it was agreed that:

- 1) A report in relation to assurance of children placed outside of Kirklees be added to the agenda plan.

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- 2) The pen pictures of 3 young people most at risk status and action taken be provided to the Board.
- 3) Work be undertaken to review the sequencing of annual reports.