

Contact Officer: Jodie Harris

## **KIRKLEES COUNCIL**

### **CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**

**Tuesday 23rd November 2021**

Present: Councillor Viv Kendrick (Chair)  
Councillor Richard Smith  
Councillor John Lawson  
Councillor Elizabeth Reynolds  
Councillor Carole Pattison  
Gill Addy - Designated Nurse for Looked After Children  
Tom Brailsford - Service Director (Resources, Improvement and Partnerships)  
Colleen Kenworthy - Kirklees Fostering Network  
Elaine McShane - Service Director, Family Support and Child Protection  
Sara Miles - Head of Service, Resources, Improvement and Partnerships  
Ophelia Rix - Head of Service for Children in Care, Care Leavers and Looked After Children  
Janet Tolley - Virtual School Headteacher  
Keely Lucas – Care Leaver Representative

Co-optees Dale O’Niell

In attendance: Ian Mottershaw, Head of Service, Contextual Safeguarding and Y.E.S, Family Support and Child Protection  
Louise Hallas, Virtual School Team Manager  
Sara Hions, Virtual School Team Manager

Observers:

Apologies: Councillor Karen Allison  
Keith Fielding  
Stewart Horn  
Barry Lockwood  
Mel Meggs  
Jo-Anne Sanders  
Christine Carmichael

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### 1 **Membership of the Board/Apologies**

Apologies had been received from Councillor Karen Allison, Christine Carmichael - Kirklees Fostering Network, Barry Lockwood - Kirklees Fostering Network, Stewart Horn - Head of Joint Commissioning – Children and Families and Jo-Anne Sanders - Service Director – Learning and Early Support.

The Board welcomed Keely Lucas, Care Leaver Representative to the Boards Membership.

### 2 **Minutes of previous meeting**

The Board considered the minutes of the last meeting held on the 5<sup>th</sup> October 2021.

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as a correct record.

### 3 **Interests**

No interests were declared.

### 4 **Admission of the Public**

It was agreed that all agenda items would be held in public session.

### 5 **Deputations/Petitions**

No deputations or petitions were received.

### 6 **Public Question Time**

No questions from the public were received.

### 7 **Children's Performance Highlights Report**

The Board considered the latest reports giving key highlights on Performance Monitoring data for Children's Services up to the end of August 2021.

Ophelia Rix, Head of Service for Children in Care, Care Leavers and Looked After Children presented the data relating to 'children entering care, children in care and placement stability'. It was noted that:

- There was a decreasing trend in the number and rate of children in care from 68.7 (688 children) in November 2020 to 62.6 (627 children) in October 2021.
- The decrease was attributed to successes in ensuring that children remained at home with parents or with connected carers.
- 6 Care Orders (enabling children to stay with parents/families) had been successfully discharged.
- Social workers continued to see children in a timely manner and build positive relationships with them.
- There had been an increase in the number of Pathway Plans (which support young people with educational needs, independent living, and suitable accommodation).

The Board commented that it was positive that the average number in changes of social workers had reduced but wanted to know under what circumstances it was deemed important or beneficial to change the social worker.

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In response, Ophelia Rix advised that once children become Looked After that there was a natural transition as the child moved from one service to another. Maternity leave could also lead to changes in social workers. To manage transitions, joint work was undertaken between service and old and new social workers to ensure that positive relationships were built with new social workers prior to the change.

The Board noted that transitions where appropriate were being carefully managed. In response, Ophelia Rix further suggested that a report was provided to a future meeting of the Board in respect of the reduction in the number of Care Leavers been seen within an 8-week period and this was agreed by the Board.

Gill Addy, Designated Nurse for Looked After Children gave an overview of the data relating to Children Looked After Health for October. It was noted that:

- Initial health assessments (IHA's): In October 86% of Children who came into care were seen by the paediatrician within the statutory 20 working day timescale.
- Review health assessments (RHA): In October 95% of RHA's for under 5-year-olds, and 86% of RHA's for over 5 years old, were completed in statutory timescales.
- Dental Checks: Kirklees rolling 12-month data showed that 58% of children when asked at their health assessment had attended the dentist. This figure seemed low but consideration should be made to the period of time when dental surgeries were shut during the national Covid-19 lockdown.
- Dental Checks showed an improving picture. During October, 100% of 18 months to 5-year-olds, and 97% of 5- to 18-year-olds were registered at a dentist and had attended a dental at the point of their RHA.
- Substance misuse: A gap had been identified in collecting this data, as it was captured at the RHA. The team were now following up any declined assessments.
- Young people who refused support, were discussed with the local Substance Misuse Service, to offer an alternative response e.g.- group work or access through other agencies.

The Board welcomed the positive work undertaken in relation to dental checks and the Flexible Commissioning project but queried the issue of Care leavers in relation to registrations. In response, Gill Addy explained that Care leavers did face some challenges in this area, such as commonly being required to re-register at a Dentist after a change of address. There were also concerns that care leavers were not covered under the support to access to Dentists through the Flexible Commissioning Project.

In response, Ophelia Rix suggested that the support of Personal Advisors (PA's) would help improve access to Dentists for Care leavers and it was agreed that a meeting would be held to discuss the approach.

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**RESOLVED:** The Board noted the Children's Performance Highlights Report and it was agreed that:

1. A report be provided to a future meeting of the Board in respect of the reduction in the number of Care Leavers within an 8-week period.
2. It was agreed that a meeting would be held to discuss the approach to improving Care leavers access to Dentists with the support of PA's.

### 8 Youth Justice Service Update

The Board considered a verbal update on the work of the Youth Justice Service (YJS) and the outcomes of the Youth Justice Inspection presented by Ian Mottershaw, Head of Service –Contextual Safeguarding and Y.E.S, Family Support and Child Protection. It was noted that:

- There was a very small cohort (9 %) of Looked After Children within the youth justice system.
- The YJS were inspected (HMPI Youth Offending Inspection) in the summer of 2021, but the inspection focused predominantly on cases during the Autumn and Winter of 2020.
- Those cases coincided with the transition process and the Covid-19 lockdown restrictions which remained in Kirklees for an elongated period of time.
- Following the examination, the HMIP provided the rating of 'needed improvement'.
- This concurred with the Kirklees assessment of the status of the YJS at that same time.
- It was evident in the decisions made following the assessment that significant changes to structure were to be made.
- The HMIP recognised that a restructure had taken place and were reassured that Kirklees's plans and ambitions were the platform for those positive changes to be made.
- The HMIP went on to express confidence in Kirklees's strategies stating that, 'Implementation, delivery and reviewing of work to address desistance was outstanding' resonating with how Kirklees 'place the child at heart at what we do'.

The Board noted that it would be helpful to understand the different types of Looked After placement types included in the cohort of Looked After Children within the YJS. In response, Ian Mottershaw advised that the current data did not include this breakdown and agreed for this information to be provided to the Board.

Responding to a question about the trend in the data Ian Mottershaw confirmed that there had been no significant rise or fall in the number of Looked After Children within the YJS.

The Board noted that some children within the YJS cohort had become Looked After by nature of their offence and it was agreed that these details be provided to the Board in a private meeting.

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**RESOLVED:** The Board noted the verbal Youth Justice Service update and it was agreed that:

1. A breakdown of the different placement types included in the cohort of Looked After Children within the YJS be provided to the Board.
2. The details of when a child within the YJS cohort had become Looked After by nature of their offence be provided to the Board in a private meeting.

### 9 **Thriving Kirklees and CAMH's update**

The Board considered a report setting out the Thriving Kirklees and CAMHS Update presented by Tom Brailsford, Service Director (Resources, Improvement and Partnerships) who explained that:

- Children's Emotional Health and Wellbeing activity in Kirklees was provided through the Thriving Kirklees contract.
- The lead contractor for Thriving Kirklees was Locala, in partnership with South West Yorkshire Foundation Trust (SWYFT), Northorpe Hall, Yorkshire Children's Centre and Homestart.
- An independent review of the service had been commissioned to evaluate how the partnership and integration had progressed.
- Following the review, an action plan has been created to implement the recommendations to be implemented by commissioners and partners.
- This included an update of the service specifications, which were being reviewed with stakeholders to reflect changing needs and to drive improvements during the second five years of the contract.
- The Children's Emotional Wellbeing Service (CHEWS) was provided by Northorpe Hall Child and Family Trust. The Children's Emotional Wellbeing Service (CHEWS) was provided by Northorpe Hall Child and Family Trust.
- The Covid 19 pandemic impacted the service in two ways – demand for the service had increased and the capacity to deliver the service had been reduced.
- This was either through restricted face to face contact or staff sickness/isolation.
- This resulted in the increase in expected waiting times from under 12 weeks in October 2020 to 24 weeks in July 2021.
- Work was being undertaken with Thriving Kirklees to find ways to reduce 24 week waiting time.
- This included improvements to the Single Point of Access, such as better clinical triage and closer working with Early Support services.
- In line with national and regional trends demand for autism and ADHD assessment in Kirklees had increased in recent years
- The assessment service was significantly impacted by the Covid 19 pandemic. Assessment clinics were halted as face to face contact was not possible and clinicians were redeployed to carry out other tasks.
- Waiting times rose to 92.4 weeks in September 2021, with 789 children and young people on the waiting list.

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- An action plan had been created to reduce waiting times and improve support to children and families waiting for assessment. This included short term funding for extra assessments and additional long term funding to increase the number of assessments carried out to match demand.
- The aim was to reduce the longest waiting times to under 12 months within a year.
- The waiting list for autism diagnosis was now down to around 6 months.
- Demand for support with eating disorders had risen sharply throughout the pandemic with the caseload rising from 39 in September 2020 to 81 in August 2021.
- Eating disorder referrals were on a downward trajectory with a 100% response time targets achieved in September 2021.
- Additional funding has been made available to support and develop an increased community eating disorder provision, with an emphasis on early intervention and hospital admission avoidance.
- Waiting times for Emotional Wellbeing clinics were 5 to 6 weeks, against a target of 28 days. This was a result of difficulties with recruitment and retention of staff.
- A new holistic service model for the Placement Support team (known as One Placement Support) was currently being developed which will include dedicated clinicians, including psychologists, to work with children and staff teams.
- The Board were asked to agree to receive future updates in relation to the Emotional Health and Wellbeing provision for Looked After Children as the One Placement Support was developed and implemented.

The Board commended the work done to drive improvement under very challenging circumstances and it was noted that the rise in demand had overtaken planned investment to increase capacity.

Tom Brailsford acknowledged the need to invest in the model which offered support at the earliest opportunity and added that a place-based approach would be taken in partnership with schools. The Board commented that involvement with stakeholders, schools and the local community was reassuring and that investment to enable efficient early interventions could prevent children becoming Looked After.

The Board noted that waiting times were long especially from a child's point of view and a discussion was held in relation to the challenges in the recruitment and retention of staff.

Responding to a question about the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on resignations, Tom Brailsford advised there was the need to invest in long term career progression, taking a proactive approach in making sure that Kirklees was seen as an attractive place to work. Work was also being undertaken to formulate a 'work-force' strategy for the next 2-5 years.

The Board highlighted developing local talent, such as university students, was important. Tom Brailsford agreed and added that this could be achieved through establishing a route into early careers with the local authority, and by providing work experience opportunities.

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**RESOLVED:** The Board noted the contents of the Thriving Kirklees and CAMHS Update and agreed to receive future updates in relation to the Emotional Health and Wellbeing provision for Looked After Children as the One Placement Support was developed and implemented.

### 10 Annual Fostering Report

Sara Miles, Head of Service (Resources, Improvement and Partnerships) and Tom Brailsford, Service Director (Resources, Improvement and Partnerships) presented an overview of the Annual Fostering Report and highlighted that:

- The purpose of the report, as set out in regulations, was to inform the Board of the work undertaken by the fostering service between April 2020 and September 2021.
- In Kirklees the number of children who were Looked After had decreased over the past 18 months.
- There had been a change in the ages of children looked after in including a significant reduction in children aged under 1 and a significant rise in young people aged over 16.
- This presented difficulties in recruiting foster carers with the necessary skills to care for older children.
- In total 489 children were placed with approved foster carers, either through Kirklees fostering or through an Independent Fostering Agency (IFA).
- Of these, Kirklees fostering provided 308 children with a foster placement and 181 children were Looked After by an IFA carer.
- 54% of all Kirklees children living in foster care were placed within the Kirklees area.

The Corporate Parenting Board were asked to support specific recommendations and areas for improvement which were to:

- Increase the number of current foster care placements available to children and young people cared for by Kirklees and to reduce the use of external residential and Independent Fostering Agency placements for children.
- Conduct exit interviews when foster carers leave the service and use this information to inform future service developments.
- Develop the offer of additional activities and support for fostering families.
- Increase the diversity of foster carers to match that of the communities served.
- Increase the services ability to meet a wide range of complex needs by developing a broader service offer and an enhanced training programme.
- Continue work to improve and enhance the offer for Foster Carers agreeing to Special Guardianship Orders (SGO's).

Tom Brailsford highlighted in relation to the retention and recruitment that there had been a net increase of 11 fostering households in the last year. Sara Miles added that improving the conversion rate was a key area for improvement.

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Responding to a question about the conversion rate, Sara Miles explained in relation to the 'return of essential information' (i.e.- medical checks etc...) that this was a complex process and that there was a period of time between receipt of the information and Approval Panel. Sara Miles added that work was to be undertaken with the recruitment team around understanding why potential foster carers do not complete the process. The Board requested that an update including outline figures were provided to the Board when this piece of work had progressed.

The Board welcomed the recommendations to improve and enhance the offer for Foster Carers agreeing to SGO's, commenting that the new financial arrangements for SGO's allowed children to stay with families and connected carers which was a better outcome for young people.

Responding to a question about allowances for where children were originally Looked After, Elaine McShane, Service Director - Family Support and Child Protection advised regional work had been undertaken which involved looking at individuals' circumstances to ensure they were not disadvantaged financially. It was agreed that the issue of second allowances/part-time work and SGO's would be explored further in discussion with the Chair of the Board and that the outcomes would be presented to a future meeting of the Board.

Responding to a question around whether it was financially more attractive to Foster a Child rather than adopt one. Elaine McShane advised that adoption was a very different type of permanency placement. The financial package for adoption was considered taking into account a range of different circumstances (i.e.- SEN, sibling groups etc...). It was agreed that the decision-making process in relation to financial support for adoption be explored in an informal meeting.

**RESOLVED:** The Board noted the Annual Fostering Report and it was agreed that:

1. An update on understanding why potential foster carers do not complete the recruitment process, along with outline figures be provided to the Board.
2. The issue of second allowances/part-time work and SGO's would be explored further in informal discussion with the Chair of the Board and that the outcomes would be presented to a future meeting of the Board.
3. It was agreed that the decision-making process in relation to financial support for adoption be explored in an informal meeting.

### 11 **Kirklees Looked After Children Annual Health Report**

The Board considered the Kirklees Looked After Children Annual Health Report 2020-21 presented by Gill Addy, Designated Nurse for Looked After Children who highlighted that:

- The main body of the report was based on the local activity, during the time frame 1st April 2020 – 31st March 2021.
- The report outlined the work that had taken place in the Looked After Children's Health Team and provided assurance that the Clinical Commissioning Groups were fulfilling their statutory responsibilities.
- The report commenced at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the impact of which altered the provision and practice usually delivered.



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- The key performance indicators were difficult to achieve due to practice changes, but the Initial Health Assessments (IHA's) remained excellent at an average 98% in timescales.
- Due to clinic closures, IHA's were completed virtually by telephone throughout the year, with face-to-face appointments taking place if they were necessary, in a hospital setting.
- An Audit (to identify the communication pathways, health needs and potential impact on services for looked after children originating from other authorities who are accommodated in Kirklees) had taken place.
- Results of the key lines of enquiry were that there was a statutory process in place to share information from local authorities to health agencies, but limited information from the originating area delayed the process.
- The Health Outcome Audit was undertaken, to identify the health needs of children as they entered care at their IHA and then a comparison was made of their health status at their first review health assessment (RHA).
- The timeframe used was February 2019 to July 2020 and the aim was to provide an opportunity to illustrate positive health outcomes for children, who enter the care of the local authority and to develop a tool to support the general assessment process.
- Key statics in relation to the health needs of the 325 children entering care which included 65 children who required a catch up of one or more immunisations, 143 children who had no dental registration and 29 had a registration but had not been taken, 52 children had chronic health conditions and 65 children had recognised emotional wellbeing issues but were not receiving intervention.
- Once the child came into care, they would be set on a journey to have any health needs identified addressed.
- At the RHA, the tool was used to identify what difference had been made since the IHA.
- There was a maximum cohort of 86 children, who had stayed in care until 1st RHA.
- Of this cohort, 8 of the 10 children with outstanding immunisations when they entered care had caught up and 1 child was on a reduced schedule.
- All children engaged or re-engaged with dental services and there was a 100% improvement for those over 5 years old.
- All 8 children identified at IHA with a growth issue had improved, 20 saw their physical health improve and 6 children with development and learning issues were referred to services and 8 were re-referred.
- 20 children had been referred to services following non-engagement with emotional wellbeing support, or they were referred from the IHA.
- The outcome showed that the tool could be used to provide key data about the health needs of children entering care and comparative data to show what difference was made by the time of their RHA.
- The use of the tool was now embedded into practice going forwards and could be used to provide such data at any opportunity.

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In response the Board expressed thanks to health care staff for their commitment to their work throughout the pandemic, commenting that the work carried out was positive and reassuring. The Board also highlighted that exceptional effort had been made to undertake review and audit work alongside the additional challenges posed throughout the pandemic.

Gill Addy noted the Boards comments but further highlighted the importance of protecting staff and specialist staff wellbeing during difficult times.

**RESOLVED:** The Board noted the Kirklees Looked After Children Annual Health Report 2020-21

### 12 Virtual School Headteacher Report 2020-21

The Board considered the Virtual School Headteacher Report for the academic year 2020-21 presented by Louis Hallas, Virtual School Team Manager, Sara Hions, Virtual School Team Manager and Janet Tolley, Virtual School Headteacher. The following key points and challenges were highlighted:

- The Covid-19 pandemic had placed increased pressure on the Virtual School to respond to the additional needs of young people as their education had been disrupted.
- The Virtual School had continued to ensure that resources were in place to minimise the impact to young people and had continued to deliver a full educational service throughout 2020-21, to meet the needs of young people as well as fulfilling statutory duties.
- Working virtually had enabled the Virtual School to increase involvement in coordinating and leading all PEPs (Personal Education Plans) for all young people.
- This had increased the quality of these discussions as well as achieving 100% PEP completion in all terms.
- PEP meetings involved looking at the individual education of each child.
- Each young person should have at least 1 PEP meeting per term, or more if their individual needs require it.
- The pandemic had increased the need for more PEP meetings, all of which were attended by virtual school staff.
- Key strengths of the virtual school included:
  - An experienced and effective team.
  - Strong partnership work and the improvement of relationships with key partners throughout the year.
  - Raising the profile of PEPs across the service, and the completion of all PEP's and initial PEPs within the statutory timescales,
  - Strong and robust processes enabled the virtual school to know the young people they support and to obtain accurate data to help inform key priorities for improvement.
  - Outcomes for young people were in line with national outcomes for children and young people in care (2019 validated data).
  - There were no permanent exclusions and low numbers of fixed term exclusions because the Virtual School worked proactively with educational providers.

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- Progression post 16 remained positive and the monitoring of attendance by the virtual school remained strong.
- Any unavoidable school moves were effectively supported in partnership with social care colleagues, schools, and educational providers.
- There was clear evidence that Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) funding was used efficiently.
- An established Governing Body, with a cross section of representation, continued to meet regularly to hold the Virtual School to account through support and challenge meetings.
- Key challenges and opportunities going forward included:
  - To continue to support young people in the recovery from the pandemic.
  - There was an increasing number of boys in the school cohort, and it was important to ensure that steps were taken to have the greatest impact on attainment.
  - It was important to continue to decrease the number of young people not accessing education on full time basis.
  - Continuing to support stability and transitions where a school move was unavoidable.
  - Being proactive to extend the age range of children working with the virtual school to include Year 13 and Care leavers.
  - Historically, the outcomes for Kirklees Children Looked After (CLA) at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6) were poorer than for all CLA nationally, for both key outcomes: attainment and progress.
  - Improving outcomes for KS2 included the need to understand key contributors to this data to make improvements. To address this, included undertaking work at a strategic, cohort and individual level.

The Board noted that transitions between schools was a challenging issue and asked what steps were in place to manage school moves.

In response, Sara Hions explained that at the last PEP, procedure included inviting the Secondary School Headteacher to the discussion to help manage the transition and ensure a strong handover. Where there was a requirement for enhanced support the Virtual School would advocate for work to start early to ensure transitions were as smooth as possible. The young person would then continue to be monitored into year 7. The Board commented that this was good practice.

The Board welcomed news that there were no permanent exclusions and requested to know how the challenge of the KS2 outcomes was being addressed. The Board highlighted those transitions had been managed well but asked for reflection on the number of schools moves an individual young person has had.

**RESOLVED:** The Board noted the Virtual School Headteacher Report and it was agreed that:

1. A report showing how the challenge of KS2 outcomes were being addressed be provided to the Board.

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2. That work be undertaken to reflect and consider where an individual young person has had a number of school moves.

### 13 Virtual School Governing Body Update

The Board noted that there had not been a meeting of the Virtual School Governing Body and there was no update to be given at this time.

The next meeting was to be held on the 15<sup>th</sup> of December 2021 where the Virtual School Headteacher Report would be considered, and the Corporate Parenting Board would receive an update at its next meeting to be held on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2022.

**RESOLVED:** That the next Virtual School Governing Body update be presented to the Corporate Parenting Board at its meeting to be held 11<sup>th</sup> January 2022.

### 14 Update on Ofsted Report

Elaine McShane, Service Director - Family Support and Child Protection presented a verbal update on the most recent Ofsted Report giving an overview of the mainly positive feedback and key findings. It was highlighted that despite the challenges of pandemic, senior leaders had continued to prioritize improvements to services, underpinned by strong corporate and political support. It was noted that the positive feedback given was testament to social workers commitment and dedication to children and young people in Kirklees.

There was one area for improvement identified which was the quality and frequency of social care supervision. Elaine McShane confirmed that a meeting was to be held with service managers to address the matter consistently. It was noted that the recording of different types of conversations with social workers was important, and it was agreed for the Corporate Parenting Board to be updated on the process once it had been developed.

The Board welcomed the positive comments expressed thanks to Children's Services staff for their commitment to their work, and to the members of the Children's Scrutiny Panel in helping to drive service improvement.

**RESOLVED:** The Board noted the verbal Ofsted Report Update and it was agreed that the Board would be updated on progress in relation to the quality and frequency of social care supervision and the recording of different types of conversations with social workers as this area of work progressed.

### 15 Children's Ambition Board Update

Elaine McShane, Service Director - Family Support and Child Protection advised that the Ambition Board had not had a recent meeting and there was no update to be given at this time.

**RESOLVED:** It was agreed that an update would be provided at the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board to be held 11<sup>th</sup> January 2022.

### 16 Updates from Board Members on Interaction with Services

Board members shared updates following key interactions with services. It was noted that:

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- Cllr Lawson and Cllr Marchington had attended a meeting in respect of the budget for Children's Services and received an overarching picture of the pressures and challenges. There would be further detail provided in respect of the budget for Children's services in the coming weeks.
- The Chair reported attendance at several events including the Children Looked After and Care Leavers achievement evening, the Mockingbird launch, the Foster Carer Celebration, the Kinship Carers Halloween Party, and the Samantha Sykes Foundation Charity Ball (who provide funding and support for Care leavers).
- An update was planned for a future meeting of the Full Council on children's services. This was originally scheduled for 17<sup>th</sup> November but was deferred.

### **17 Corporate Parenting Board Agenda Plan 2021/22**

The Board considered the Work Programme and Agenda Plan for 2020/21.

#### **RESOLVED –**

1. The Board noted the forward work programme for the 2021/22 municipal year.
2. It was agreed that the Samantha Sykes Foundation Trust be invited to a meeting of the Board to provide an update on their work.