

Contact Officer: Jodie Harris

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

Tuesday 15th February 2022

Present: Councillor Viv Kendrick (Chair)
Councillor Richard Smith
Councillor Elizabeth Reynolds
Councillor Carole Pattison
Councillor Andrew Marchington (ex-officio)
Tom Brailsford, Service Director, Resources, Improvement and Partnerships
Jo-Anne Sanders, Service Director, Learning and Early Support
Ophelia Rix, Head of Service for Children in Care, Care Leavers and Looked After Children
Gill Addy, Designated Nurse for Looked After Children
Sara Hions, Virtual School Team Manager
Barry Lockwood, Kirklees Fostering Network

In attendance: Beverly McClure, Service Manager Care Leavers Service
Anna Gledhill, Service Manager, Quality Assurance and Safeguarding
Steve Colley, Interim Service Manager, Placements Team
Ian Mottershaw, Head of Service, Contextual Safeguarding and Y.E.S
Carol Mckenna, Chief Officer, Kirklees Clinical Commissioning Group
Dale'O'Niell, Children's Scrutiny Panel Co-

Apologies: Councillor John Lawson
Councillor Karen Allison
Stewart Horn, Head of Joint Commissioning, Children and Families
Elaine McShane, Service Director, Family Support and Child Protection
Sara Miles, Head of Service, Resources, Improvement and Partnerships
Janet Tolley, Virtual School Headteacher
Keith Fielding
Colleen Kenworthy, Kirklees Fostering Network

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1 **Membership of the Board/Apologies**

The Chair welcomed Board Members to the meeting.

Apologies had been received from Councillor Karen Allison, Councillor John Lawson, Coleen Callaghan - Kirklees Fostering Network, Keith Fielding- Kirklees Fostering Network, Elaine McShane- Service Director, Family Support and Child Protection, Janet Tolley, Virtual School Headteacher and Sara Miles Head of Service, Resources, Improvement and Partnerships.

2 **Minutes of previous meeting**

The Board considered the minutes of the last meeting held on 11th January 2022.

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 **Update on the Role of Corporate Parent**

The Board considered a verbal update on the Role of the Corporate Parent presented by Carol McKenna, Chief Officer, Kirklees Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) which highlighted the following key points:

- There was a collective responsibility across a range of organisations to safeguard and promote the life chances of Children Looked After and Care Leavers.
- There was a commitment to hear the voice of the child / young person and to meet their health needs.
- There were statutory responsibilities to meet the needs of Children Looked After and Care Leavers through commissioned services, both universal and more bespoke packages of care.
- There was a responsibility to meet the needs of Kirklees children living out of area, as well as children coming into Kirklees.
- Work was being done with the public health team to help with profiling and identifying the health needs of the Children Looked After population.
- Collaborative working with partner agencies would ensure effective support was provided to children / young people.
- Monitoring of activity would ensure statutory responsibilities were fulfilled.
- Some statutory services for Children Looked After were commissioned from local providers.

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- There was a full safeguarding team for both adults and children within the Clinical Commissioning Group.
- The Designated Nurse and Children Looked After Team were responsible for:
 - initiating and co-ordinating health assessments within 20 days of a child being received into care.
 - reviewing health assessments, 6 monthly for children under 5 and annually for children above 5.
 - providing training and support to other practitioners.
 - providing health advice and support to a range of people and services.
- There were robust governance arrangements in place within the Clinical Commissioning Group which included reporting to the Locala safeguarding committee and regular reporting to the Corporate Parenting Board.
- There was also a quality committee within the Clinical Commissioning Group where the annual report for Children Looked After was shared.
- There were a range of multi-agency arrangements in place as well as more specialist arrangements in relation to emotional and mental health, particularly for unaccompanied asylum seeker children.
- There were a range of Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) in place in relation to Children Looked After and audit work had been carried out in relation to quality and improvement.
- There were pressures on the CAMHS services. Dedicated clinicians worked within the placement support team but there had been some challenges in relation to the recruitment and retention of staff.
- An improvement plan was being developed jointly between CCG commissioners and the placement support team.
- There was a clear understanding of where further improvements were needed and how services were operating.
- Commissioned services were effective and had a positive impact, services were accessible and supported health needs to be met.

The Board acknowledged the presentation and the complexities of the information shared. The Board highlighted that the health needs of children and young people had been addressed but questioned how Care Leavers were ensured education, training or employment and what opportunities could be provided?

Carol McKenna responded and shared conversations were ongoing in relation to what more could be done to support children and young people and to provide those educational opportunities as well as growing the workforce. Gill Addy, Designated Nurse for Looked After Children further shared how the Clinical Commissioning Group and Health Teams worked together and advised that co-location with the Local Authority enabled good communication and understanding of what the services were doing and how they were working. The Board agreed this was a good model of partnership work, highlighting that it wasn't static, which made it a strong multi agency approach.

RESOLVED: The Board noted the update on the Role of the Corporate Parent and thanked Carol McKenna, Chief Officer, Kirklees Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) for attending.

8 Virtual School Governing Body Update

Councillor Pattison advised that the last Governing Body meeting was cancelled, mainly due to the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) inspection. Therefore, no update was given.

Councillor Pattison shared that a new duty had been put upon the virtual school, which expanded its responsibilities. Sara Hions, Virtual School Team Manager further added that the project was showing sustainability and was making good progress. Sara also shared that the virtual school had been involved in the evaluation from the Department for Education (DfE) which was positive in terms of highlighting good practise and how to move forward as a Local Authority.

RESOLVED: The Board agreed that a verbal update on the virtual school governing body be given at the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board.

9 Children's Performance Highlights Report

The Board considered the latest reports giving key highlights on Performance Monitoring Data for Children in Care.

Ophelia Rix, Head of Service for Children in Care, Care Leavers and Looked After Children provided data relating to children in care. It was noted that:

- The overall number of Children Looked After as of December 2021 was 617 which was a decline on previous months. However, the figure had since increased to 626 and continued to increase.
- A breakdown of the overall numbers identified that 148 Looked After Children were males aged between 10 to 15 years and 113 were females aged between 10 and 15 years, the highest number of children were within that age bracket.
- In terms of ethnicity, 71.5% were White British and there had been an increase in the number of children becoming Looked After who were of Asian ethnicity. In December 2020 the figure was 7.5% and in December 2021 it had increased to 9.1%.
- Further work needed to be undertaken to understand and interrogate the data and it was suggested that a full report be presented to the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board.
- Social work visits had continued but there had been a decline in December 2021 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and children and foster carers testing positive. Children were still contacted but not seen face to face and all children had been visited since.

In relation to Children Looked After Educational Outcomes, Sara Hions, Virtual School Team Manager highlighted that:

- 100% of (Personal Education Planning) PEPs had been completed within the Autumn Term and 100% of initial PEPs have been completed within 10 school days of child coming into care since 01/09/2021.
- The Virtual school lead all PEP reviews in conjunction with social care and other professionals involved which were currently taking place virtually.

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- Persistent absence (PA) remained a high priority for all pupils with attendance less than 90% and the Virtual School Continued to monitor individual attendance closely and work to support young people on an individual basis.
- Mid-Year School Moves were only actioned if necessary, and were supported to ensure no break, or a minimal break in provision.
- 97.2% of school moves since the start of the academic year were carefully planned across the service to ensure a smooth transition with no break in provision.
- A key aim was to maintain success rates across the key performance indicators.
- Emotional well-being was impacting on children / young people and there was a need to improve partnership working to offer support around this.
- The impact of Covid was still having an impact in terms of capacity and staffing.

The Board noted the information and referring to the persistent absence data highlighted that benchmarking for statistical neighbours and England was for the year 2018/19. Sara Hions responded to explain that reporting on benchmarks had stopped nationally until clearer and more robust data could be provided for comparisons.

Gill Addy, Designated Nurse for Looked After Children provided the data relating to Children Looked After Health and highlighted that:

- Initial Health Assessments: Kirklees Local Authority (LA) rolling 12-month data showed that 85.3% of Initial Health Assessments were completed in the statutory 20 working day timescales and Locala monthly data showed that 100% were completed in timescales for December.
- Review health assessments: 84.4% and 89.3% of the 'Developmental' assessments (under 5yrs old) and 'Annual' assessments (over 5 yrs. old), were completed in statutory timescales. Locala monthly data showed that there was also a reduction in the recording of assessments completed by the exact date,
- Breach reasons were largely due to team capacity and additional pressures on the team which included:
 - an increase in complexity of children's needs.
 - access to more information which informed good quality assessments.
 - Nurses becoming more accessible for advice.
 - undertaking assessments on behalf of other Local Authorities for children who had moved into Kirklees, some of whom had extreme health histories.
- Monthly dental checks showed that between 90 to 98% of children / young people had attended a dentist at the point of their review health assessment.
- This was slightly better than pre-pandemic levels and was due to the flexible commissioning services that ensured a small number of dental surgeries provided dental services for Children Looked After.
- The figure for substance misuse remained the same. 7 young people had been introduced to services to support them.

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- Any person who declined a review health check would be assessed further to check for substance misuse issues and if there were concern around substance misuse (on any level) the child/young person would be offered support.

The Board noted the positives of the Flexible Commissioning Service and requested more information on its progress and who the providers were. Gill Addy responded to advise that the project was ongoing and there were a small number of dentists registered within Kirklees.

Ian Mottershaw, Head of Service, Contextual Safeguarding and Y.E.S shared the data in relation to Looked After Children Convictions and highlighted that:

- The number of Children Looked After with convictions was significantly low.
- 0.5% of Children Looked After had received a conviction in the last quarter which was lower than the national average and compared with statistical neighbours.
- The Youth Justice Service worked with 103 young people in 2021, 15% of which were Children Looked After. The previous year's figure was 12% which was slightly lower.
- The largest proportion of young people who were involved in the Youth Justice System were from a residential care setting.
- The largest proportion of interventions and orders that were placed on young people fell into out of court disposal, such as community resolutions, cautions, referral orders etc.

In relation to adoption, the Board highlighted their concerns regarding the average timescale for a child coming into care and being placed with an adopter. Ophelia Rix responded and advised that she was proposing to bring a detailed report to the Board in relation to Looked After Children and within the report would include a section on adoption, which would highlight the key issues and proposals to address key issues.

Anna Gledhill, Service Manager, Quality Assurance and Safeguarding provided an update on Fostering, and highlighted that:

- In December 2021 there were 6 carer approvals, 3 of which were in house. This was a decrease from the previous month but there was an overall net gain of 14 foster families over the last 12 months.
- Recruitment and retention of foster carers was a priority within the fostering service.
- There was a need to increase the number of foster cares within Kirklees so that Kirklees children could be placed with Kirklees carers and remain within the area.
- There were 173 placements with independent fostering agencies which was positive and showed the number had continued to decrease.
- There had been one in house fostering de-registration and a review of resignations was taking place to identify key learning points.

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- There had been 17 recorded resignations of foster carers in 2021, which had been looked into further and provided some assurances in that:
 - 11 were connected carers whose resignations related to a change of legal order or a change of care plan.
 - 6 resigned were for various reasons including changes in personal circumstances, bereavement, retirement, moving out of area, health reasons etc.
- 200 children / young people were placed with Kirklees foster carers and the figure had changed very little over the last quarter.
- 106 children / young people were in connected placements and the figure had remained stable.
- A modernisation plan would be implemented to support the improvement of line management, performance management and work with placement support services.
- Foster carers and the children / young people placed with them would receive the right level of support in terms of induction, training, and the review process.
- There was a new website for foster carers which was live.
- The mockingbird hub and 1 hub were up and running and conversations were ongoing in terms of developing the next hub, taking into account lessons already learnt.

The Board noted the update and suggested the findings of the review of the mockingbird hub be provided to the Board.

The Board asked for more information in relation to the new website and wanted to know whether this was a part of the Kirklees website, and if it was promoted on social media. Anna Gledhill responded to advise that the website was designed to attract prospective foster carers to Kirklees and in a way in which the key information more accessible than previously. The website was standalone, and that there was a marketing officer within the fostering service who planned to work on promoting Kirklees's offer and targeting foster carers.

Tom Brailsford, Service Director, Resources, Improvement and Partnerships highlighted that there was a good marketing strategy in place as well as a strong offer to perspective foster carers in terms of pay, paid annual leave, skill support and placement support, but also acknowledged the need to continue to build on what could be offered to foster carers.

In relation to feedback received from Kirklees Fostering Network, the Board raised concerns about further potential resignations highlighting the importance of addressing common issues before reaching that stage.

In response, Tom Brailsford advised that meetings took place with the Kirklees Fostering Network monthly to address common issues. Further to this, where a foster career was considering resigning, a conversation was offered with a head of service to provide senior oversight and understanding. This conversation would then be followed by an exit interview. Anna Gledhill added that an exit interview policy was being developed to help gain an understanding of current issues so that these could be acted upon.

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

1. Information in relation to the increase of Children Looked After who were of Asian ethnicity be presented to the Corporate Parenting Board.
2. A detailed report in relation to Looked After Children and adoption be presented to the Corporate Parenting Board.
3. The findings of the review of the mockingbird hub be provided to the Board.

10 Care Leavers Overview Report

The Board considered the Care Leavers Overview Report presented by Ophelia Rix, Head of Service for Children in Care, Care Leavers and Looked After Children who explained that:

- The report set the key objectives of the care leavers service, the role of the Personal Advisors and the categories of care in terms of eligibility, relevance and qualifying as defined in the Leaving Care Act 2000.
- All care experience young people had an allocated social worker up until the age of 18.
- At the age of 18 they were allocated a Personal Advisor whose role was to support, assist and advise young people to continue to develop their independent living skills.
- Personal Advisors were now allocated at the earlier age of 17; this helped build earlier relationships, between the young person and the Personal Advisor, and enabled Personal Advisors to work jointly with social workers to gain an earlier understanding of the young person's needs and focus on areas in relation to education, training and employment.
- 54.9% of young people were in education, employment or training which was an area of concern.
- There was ongoing work with business networks to help create opportunities for young people as a part of the pathway planning.
- Data showed that Pathway Plans were being completed but were not being recorded in a timely manner, which was a piece of work to improve on.
- 86.5% of children / young people were in suitable accommodation. 14 of which were within a custodial setting which was defined as unsuitable accommodation.
- Personal advisors were continuing to keep in touch with young people, but more work needed to be done.
- The minimum standard for seeing young people was every 8 weeks, with the view that it should happen more frequently for those who wanted it.
- In cases where the young person did not want to be seen, they would still be contacted via letter and made aware of the services they were entitled to.
- The biggest challenge was young people who were not in education, training or employment, and the importance of working together to address the issue and create opportunities for young people.

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The Board acknowledged the importance of strong partnerships with other organisations and services, and the responsibility of ensuring young people were provided with opportunities for education, training, and employment.

In response to the Board's comments, Sara Hions, Virtual School Team Manager, highlighted that the virtual school, with consent, would also remain involved in the young person's educational journey post 18. Ophelia Rix further added that a panel of key agencies was being created to look at work around adult learning in terms of identifying how to improve opportunities, including links to housing and careers. Ophelia also shared that the careers advisors, personal advisor and social worker would be invited to attend the young person's PEP review at the age of 17 to allow individual conversations to take place with the young person in relation to their needs, so that opportunities could be created for them with the aim being to enable Care Leavers to become successful adults who could live independently.

The Board raised a concern regarding suitable accommodation and the pressure on Care Leavers to accept an offer, which had resulted in some Care Leavers being placed in housing that was geographically far away for their connections and had resulted in them becoming isolated. The Board stressed the importance of this issue to be addressed.

Ophelia Rix responded to reassure the Board that the service was advocating for children and young people to remain in the area that they were familiar with. Ophelia further advised that the staying put policy had been amended and updated, making it more viable so that children / young people were not disadvantaged, given choices, and supported to develop life skills.

RESOLVED: The Board noted the Care Leavers Overview Report.

11 Statement of Purpose for Children's Homes (Annual Report)
Steve Colley, Service Manager for Placement and Residential presented the Statement of Purpose for Children's Homes (Annual Report). The Board noted that:

- The statement of purpose set out what was to be achieved in terms of the ethos of the home and what it offered.
- There were 5 children's homes within the Authority that were regulated by Ofsted.
- The report contained clear guidance in relation to what each home did, how many children / young people could be accommodated and the needs of the children / young people that could be accommodated.
- There were two mainstream children's homes and two disability children's homes, one of which offered short breaks provision.
- There was a third mainstream children's home which operated Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) and an integrated model of working with children / young people and their families to support them back into their family home.
- There was a new home due to open late spring / early summer 2022 which had a social pedagogy ethos.

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The Board noted the update, highlighting the work undertaken in relation to MST and requested that the outcomes be shared with the Board in the future. Tom Brailsford, Service Director, Resources, Improvement and Partnerships further highlighted that there had been changes in residential provision and the model of care across the homes, suggesting it would be useful to present an update to the Board to share some of the plans.

RESOLVED: The Board Members noted the Statement of Purpose for Children's Homes (Annual Report), and it was agreed that:

1. The outcomes of the Muti-Systemic Therapy approach be provided to the Corporate Parenting Board.
2. An update on the changes to residential provision and the model of care be provided to the Corporate Parenting Board.

12 **Children's Ambition Board Update**

Tom Brailsford, Service Director, Resources, Improvement and Partnerships advised that the last meeting of the Children's Ambition Board was cancelled due to the SEND inspection so there was no update. The Board noted that it would be helpful for the outcomes of the SEND inspection to be provided to the Board.

RESOLVED: The Board noted the Children's Ambition Board update and agreed that:

1. An update would be provided to the Corporate Parenting Board following the next Children's Ambition Board.
2. The outcomes of the SEND inspection be reported to the Corporate Parenting Board in the next municipal year.

13 **Updates from Board Members on Interaction with Services**

The Board shared a verbal update on the Kinship carers pantomime and Christmas party and highlighted that it was hugely successful, enjoyable and attended by many families.

RESOLVED: The Board noted the update on Interactions with Services.

14 **Corporate Parenting Board Agenda Plan 2021/22**

The Board considered the work plan for 2021/22.

RESOLVED: The Board noted the work programme for the 2021/22 municipal year.