

Contact Officer: Jodie Harris

## **KIRKLEES COUNCIL**

### **CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**

**Tuesday 12th July 2022**

Present: Councillor Viv Kendrick (Chair)  
Councillor Elizabeth Reynolds  
Councillor Richard Smith  
Councillor John Lawson  
Councillor Karen Allison

Co-optees

In attendance:

Observers:

Apologies: Councillor Carole Pattison  
Barry Lockwood  
Elaine McShane  
Sara Miles  
Christine Carmichael  
Keely Lucas  
Farrah Munir

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

Apologies were received from Councillor Carole Pattison, Elaine McShane, Service Director - Family Support and Child Protection, Sara Miles, Head of Service – Resources, Improvement and Partnership, Christine Carmichael- Kirklees Fostering Network, Barry Lockwood - Kirklees Fostering Network, Keely Lucas – Care leaver Representative and Farah Munir – Care leaver Representative.

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

The Board considered the minutes of the last meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> March 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.

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### 5 Deputations/Petitions

No deputations or petitions were received.

### 6 Public Question Time

No public questions were received

### 7 Children's Performance Highlight Report

The Board considered the latest reports giving key highlights on Performance Monitoring data for Children's Services.

Ophelia Rix, Head of Service for Children in Care, Care Leavers and Looked After Children presented the key highlights in relation to Children Entering Care, Children in Care and Placement Stability. It was explained that:

- There was a decreasing trend in the number and rate of children in care from 650 children in June 2021 to 604 children in May 2022.
- Between January and May 2022, 73 children became looked after, and 87 children were no longer looked after during the same period.
- It was important to look at the reasons for the decreasing trend to understand the data.
- Children were still becoming looked after, but work had been undertaken to ensure that children returned home where it was safe and appropriate to do so.
- Special Guardianship Orders had been secured for 23 children, and 5 Children had been returned home after being looked after for a significant period.
- 16 Children also had remained with carers under the refreshed Staying Put policy.

The Board noted the update and explanation for the decreasing trend expressing that the breakdown of the data was reassuring and positive. The connection to family was key for children and young people and the Board highlighted that this work should carry on wherever it was safe to do so.

In response to a question from the Board in relation to Children Looked After Reviews, Visits and Missing the Board highlighted the number of missing episodes and questioned how young people had been reported missing. The Board also questioned if the postponed meeting with the police had taken place and what the outcomes of this discussion was. Ophelia Rix responded to suggest that a focused report around children missing, and the context of the work undertaken around this be provided to a future meeting of the Board. The Board welcomed the suggestion and further expressed concerns that when a young person was missing it left them potentially open to exploitation.

Janet Tolley, Head Teacher of the Virtual School provided an update in relation to Children Looked After Educational Outcomes and explained that:

- The nationally published data for Children Looked After attainment showed outstanding performance at Key Stage 4 (KS4) in 2021.

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- For all attainment and progress indicators at KS4 Kirklees Council Virtual School was in Band A and one of the highest ranking nationally.
- Performance in terms of overall attendance and exclusions was also strong with Kirklees Council Virtual School being placed in Quartile Band A.
- In relation to Personal Education Plans, 100% of PEPs were completed within the Spring Term in-line with the termly processes.
- 97% of initial PEPs were completed within 10 school days of a child coming into care since 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021.
- 3 PEP's were not completed within the 10 days, but there were exceptional circumstances involved and these PEP's took place on day 11.
- 91% of school moves since the start of the academic year had been carefully planned to ensure a smooth transition with no break in provision.
- Addressing issues arising from the Covid-19 pandemic continued to be a key priority following the return to school for all pupils.
- Covid-19 continued to impact on the number of PA pupils, even though many of these young people were not attendance concerns.
- Persistent Absence (PA) and Unauthorised Absence remained a high priority for all pupils with attendance less than 90%.
- It was important to be mindful of the emotional issues for young people following the pandemic and respond creatively where there were concerns.
- The Virtual School continued to have a strong focus on pupils not in full-time education provision.
- Work was also ongoing across services to reduce the number of school moves and any breaks in provision whenever possible.

The Board noted the update and asked if there were any opportunities to learn more about the model used for the Virtual School. It was agreed that any Board members interested in learning more about the virtual school be invited to a separate briefing for this purpose.

Gill Addy, Designated Nurse for Looked After Children provided an update in relation to Children Looked After Health and highlighted that:

- Initial Health Assessments (IHA):
  - Kirklees Local Authority rolling 12-month data showed that 79.3% of IHA's were completed within the statutory 20 working day timescale.
  - Locala monthly data for May showed that 75% were completed in timescales.
  - This equated to 3 breaches which were due to late notification and placement of child outside the locality.
  - A breakdown of the 12 month rolling data identified that there were only 4 children whose IHA was completed late within the last year.
  - It was important to note that small numbers had a large impact on the percentages.
  - A hybrid model was still used to carry out IHA's due to the remaining Covid-19 restrictions in clinics.
- Review Health Assessments (RHA):

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- Kirklees rolling 12-month data showed that 91.5% of the 'Developmental' assessments (under 5yrs old) and 94% of 'Annual' assessments (over 5 yrs. old) were completed in the statutory timescales.
- Locala monthly data for May showed that 78% of under 5-year-olds and 82% of over 5-year-olds RHA's were completed in timescales.
- There were 11 in-house breaches related to arrangements with carers, capacity, and placement moves.
- The decreasing trend had continued into June due to various factors.
- There was now increased access to information (through system 1), which led to more in depth investigation during RHA's.
- There had also been an increase in the number of children with complex needs.
- It was important to note that similar challenges were also being reported by statistical neighbours.
- Communications with the Commissioner and the relevant Cabinet Member had begun to address the new challenges.
- Dental Checks/Registrations within last 12 months:
  - The data for June 2022 showed a positive increasing trend in terms of dental checks.
  - 91% of children under 5, and 97% over 5, were seen by a dentist in the last 6 months.
  - The Flexible Commissioning Project was still in operation and being promoted to ensure Looked After Children had opportunity to be registered at a Dentist.
- Substance misuse:
  - 6 young people had admitted or were known to use substances that had a significant impact on their daily life when asked at their last RHA.
  - It was noted that this figure was low compared with the national average and may change at their next RHA.

The Board expressed admiration for ambitions for continual improvement in relation to Children Looked After Health. The recent challenges outlined were also acknowledged, and it was agreed that a meeting be held with the Chair and Cabinet member for Children and young people to discuss how the increased pressure on health services may be alleviated.

The Board noted a continually improving picture in relation to Children Looked After Convictions and that a further update be presented at a future meeting of the Board.

Ophelia Rix presented the data in respect of Care leavers, and highlighted that:

- Personal Advisors (PA's) were now allocated to young people from age 17+.
- The data showed an increase in the performance indicator from 91.7% in April 2022 to 97.4% in May 2022 which was positive.
- Building early relationships with PA's was a key priority and the ambition was to begin allocation of PA's to young people from 16.5 years old.

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- It was also important to note that all young people either had an allocated PA or a Social Worker.
- There has been an increase in relation to the number of Care Leavers that PA's contacted from 90.2% in April 2022 to 91.0% in May 2022.
- It was important to view this data in the context of this group being aged 18 plus and, in some situations, chose not to keep in contact with their PA.
- Work was being undertaken to collect data to understand the rationale behind a Care leavers decision to decline to keep contact with PA's.
- In May 2022 there was a decrease to 87.2% from 88.0% in April 2022 in relation to the number of young people in suitable accommodation.
- It was important to note that where a young person was in custody that this would be classed as unsuitable accommodation.
- Work was to be undertaken to provide a specific breakdown of the number of young people in custody and other types of non-suitable accommodation.
- This data would then be provided to the Corporate Parenting Board for better understanding and context.
- There had been an increase in the numbers of young people who had an up-to-date Pathway Plan.
- Work continued with PA's to ensure Pathway Plans were completed in a timely manner to meet targets with a focus on the improvement of the quality of plans.
- A key concern and priority area for improvement was to increase the number of young people with access to further Education, Employment or Training.
- A Panel of representatives from across the Council and external partners were reviewing what could be improved, and what opportunities were available.
- The approach to improvement would also combine increasing work with the Virtual School Post 18, alongside early intervention work with young people.
- It was planned that a report setting out the measures undertaken to address concerns around Education, Employment and Training be presented at a future meeting of the Board.

The Board noted the value in providing stability to Care leavers in relation to better education, employment, and training. Ophelia Rix responded to agree highlighting the the value of family communities and the positive link to a young person's further prospects. Ophelia added that other key areas of work would include reviewing the experiences of Care leavers with a particularly focus of what intervention or opportunity could have been provided earlier to lead to better outcomes as well as forecasting the future needs of young people. This information would be important to help identify what was required from the Council as a Corporate Parent.

Ophelia also requested that members of the Council be asked what can be done in their capacity as elected members to identify opportunities for care leavers. The Board noted the request and suggested part of the approach may involve identifying some young people who may act as mentors on options post 16. The Board also questioned how to communicate the ask and challenge to wider member of the Council.

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The Board wanted to know if there was any correlation between children in further education, employment or training with those in staying put arrangements. Ophelia Rix responded to agree to undertake investigative work alongside foster carers to understand what the key factors were that made young people more able to be engaged in education, employment, or training.

Responding to a question from the Board about improving Pathway Plans, Ophelia Rix responded to advise work was to be undertaken to change the language in relation to Pathway Plans, to reflect what the child's ambitions are and what can the Council do to support this. The Board commented that intervention could not come early enough and welcomed the ambition to start working with young people from age 16 plus.

Tom Brailsford, Service Director (Resources, Improvement and Partnerships) presented the data in relation to fostering and it was highlighted that:

- The number of children placed with Kirklees foster carers decreased to 171 at the end of May 2022, this is below the 12-month average of 207.
- From March to May 2022 there were 12 new foster carer approvals and 11 resignations of which 7 were now Connected Carers which was positive.
- The number of family and friend's placements at the end of May 2022 was 110, this was higher than the 12-month average of 104.
- The May figure of 182 Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements for IFA placements was above the 12-month average of 177.
- The Fostering service continued the modernisation agenda, including a media campaign, new redesigned website and improvements to Liquid Logic.
- Recruitment and retention of foster carers continued to be a priority, and it was important to ensure that robust systems and processes were in place.
- This included having a strong online presence to continue the campaign to recruit high quality foster carers for children and young people.
- Extra resources were being created, including the appointment of a new Head of Service to focus of the recommendations of the Care Review.
- Work had continued to increase the number of Kirklees foster placements.
- There were 11 assessments in process at stage 1 and 2, 16 enquires and 14 expressions of interest in June.
- There had also been a net gain of 4 fostering placements and the total number of foster carers was 173.

Responding to a question from the Board about the impact of the recent media campaign, Tom Brailsford agreed that it was important to monitor the effectiveness of promotions and to present this data to a future meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board. In relation to raising awareness of Kirklees's Fostering offer the Board was also interested to investigate how to target specific parts of the local community and welcomed ideas on how best to approach this from members and officers.

The Board raised concerns about increased pressure on foster carers due to a 30 percent decrease in capacity, the changes being made to the Placement Support Service and new financial challenges arising from the cost-of-living crisis. The Board

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asked what measures Kirklees may take to support Foster Carers highlighting that that some local authorities were providing cost-of-living crisis payments as a means of additional support, noting that this would be effective in improving the retention of foster carers also. It was also raised that skill level payments had not been increased.

Tom Brailsford responded to advise that the Placement Support Service (which supports Foster Carers) was in the process of being reviewed and modernised to make sure that the service was more flexible and was there to support foster carers as soon as possible. In respect of support during the cost-of-living crisis, Tom further reassured the Board that discussions were ongoing with the Director for Children's Services to address the new challenges. In terms of Skills Level Payment there was an ongoing piece of work centred around benchmarking Kirklees against other regional local authorities in West Yorkshire and equalising payments to make sure they were comparable regionally. Tom further highlighted, that one of the key recommendations of the recent Care Review was to take a more regional approach to all work in relation to children's residential care and foster carer recruitment and as a part of this it was important to ensure parity in both the approach to the cost-of-living crisis and skills level payment.

The Board noted the response and suggested that in revising and improving the Placement Support Service that foster carers be engaged with throughout the process. The Board also asked if there were any new timescales in respect of the work around skill level payments.

In response, Tom Brailsford agreed to provide revised estimated timescales in respect of the work being undertaken around skill level payments to the Board. He also reassured the Board that engagement with foster carers was part of the ongoing co-production of the modernisation of the Placement Support Service and agreed to discuss support to foster carers in more detail at the next regular meeting with the Kirklees Fostering Network.

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

1. A focused report around children missing, and the context of the work undertaken around this be provided to a future meeting of the Board.
2. A meeting be held with Gill Addy, Designated Nurse and the Cabinet member for Children and Young People to discuss how the increased pressure on health services may be alleviated.
3. A report showing a breakdown of the number of young people in custody and other types of non-suitable accommodation be provided to a future meeting of the Board.
4. A report setting out the measures undertaken to address concerns around Education, Employment or Training be presented at a future meeting of the Board.
5. Investigative work be undertaken to understand what the key factors are in increasing the number of young people engaged in further Education, Employment or Training are, and for the findings to be reported back to the Board.

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6. A message is sent to members of the Council requesting support in respect of Education, Employment or Training for care leavers.
7. The impact of the recent fostering campaign's be monitored and the findings to be reported to the Corporate Parenting Board.
8. Support for foster carer be discussed during the next regular meeting with the Kirklees Foster Network
9. That engagement continues to be held with the Kirklees Fostering Network in respect of modernisation of the placement support service.

### 8 Virtual School Governing Body Update

Janet Tolley, Head Teacher of the Virtual School presented a verbal update in relation to the last meeting of the Virtual School Governing Body which was held on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2022. It was highlighted that:

- The Governing Body firstly received a staffing update, which advised that a SEND Lead was recently appointed to the Virtual School.
- There were also changes to the Senior Leadership Team as a result of the new duty placed on the Virtual School which included supporting all young children with a social worker.
- Since the introduction of the new duty, the virtual school had adopted a new SLT model on a temporary basis.
- This was decided as the best approach to take forward and since the governing body meeting a permanent Virtual School Headteacher had been recruited to work alongside the Executive Virtual School Headteacher.
- The specific role of the Executive Headteacher was to work strategically across services and the education provision.
- So far work had included raising awareness of the new duty, and the roles that providers and services play in terms of safeguarding and supporting attainment.
- Wider work involved the development of a 'Vulnerable Children's Dashboard,
- The Head Teacher update was considered by the Governing Body.
- Whilst nationally attendance performance data was strong, there were still attendance concerns particularly post pandemic in relation to Persistent Absence (PA) and unauthorised absence.
- Arising from the discussion, the Governing Body requested that interrogation of the data for PA, exclusions and suspension breakdowns be undertaken and compared with other local authorities.
- A Finance Overview and Update was presented to the Governing Body.
- It was noted that investment was being used to commission services that schools could not commission alone and for targeted individual support.
- Presentations were considered in respect of Post 16 and 17 work.
- It was also noted that the virtual school's was now working with young people from 2 -18 years old and providing support from nursery onwards.

The Board commented that the work undertaken to explore how to work strategically across services to implement the new duty was encouraging. The Board asked if there was any national longitudinal work ongoing in respect of understanding the



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impact on attainment outcomes for the cohort of students impacted by the disruption to education arising from the covid-19 pandemic.

Janet Tolley responded to advise that there was no specific work yet but agreed it was interesting to consider how this cohort of students was tracked across all areas. Jo-Anne Sanders, Service Director for Learning and Early Support further advised that Kirklees's Outcomes Report would be presented to Cabinet towards the end of this month and would provide a good baseline source of information in respect of specific groups of children. It was noted that it was important to start to track longitudinal information going forwards and agreed this was to be discussed at a future meeting of the governing body.

The Board welcomed the work being undertaken by the Virtual School in response to the new duty and agreed this information was relevant to this Board requesting that the Executive Virtual School Headteacher be invited to provide regular updates and appropriate times throughout the municipal year.

**RESOLVED:** The Board noted the Virtual School Governing Body update and agreed that:

1. Board members be invited to a briefing about the work of the Virtual School and a meeting of the Governing Body.
2. It was important to track longitudinal information in respect of the cohort of students impacted by the covid-19 pandemic and for this to be discussed at a future meeting of the Governing Body.
3. The Executive Virtual School Headteacher be invited to the Board to provide updates at appropriate times during the municipal year.

### 9 **Children's Ambition Board Update**

The Board considered an update on the Children's Ambition Board presented by Jo-Anne Sanders, Service Director for Learning and Early Support.

It was explained that the focus of the last meeting of the Board, was on understanding data in relation to various key areas such as suspensions and early support. The Board also received updates new partnerships and on progress made in family hubs and early support.

The Board noted that the development of MST and the impact on children and young people had been useful and positive.

**RESOLVED:** The Board noted the update on the Children's Ambitions Board.

### 10 **Updates from Board Members on interaction with services**

The Board shared that member of the Children's Scrutiny Panel had attended various visits including the social work team in Batley and to the MST teams and it was useful to hear their feedback.

The Chair of the Board and Cllr Pattison – Cabinet Member for Learning and Aspiration had also attended the Brambles School Opening celebration. It was

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highlighted that the school was fantastic in terms of the new design and that it was inspiring to see the enthusiasm of the staff and children.

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

### 11 Corporate Parenting Board Agenda Plan 2022/23

The Board were informed that the next meeting of the Board may be cancelled due to the date of the meeting taking place at a time when a significant number of members could not attend. It was agreed that a decision would be taken in due course and members informed as soon as possible.

The Board highlighted some of the agenda items to be considered in the next municipal year 2022/23, which included:

- The Annual Health Report
- The One Adoption West Yorkshire Annual Report

It was also noted that several focused reports had been agreed arising from the discussion during the meeting and that these should be factored into the work programme at an appropriate time.

**RESOLVED:** The Board noted the agenda plan 2022/23