

Contact Officer: Jodie Harris

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

Tuesday 27th September 2022

Present: Councillor Viv Kendrick (Chair)
Councillor Elizabeth Reynolds
Councillor Karen Allison
Tom Brailsford
Keith Fielding
Colleen Kenworthy
Sara Miles
Jo-Anne Sanders

Co-optees

In attendance:

Observers:

Apologies: Councillor Carole Pattison
Gill Addy
Barry Lockwood
Elaine McShane
Ophelia Rix
Janet Tolley
Christine Carmichael
Keely Lucas
Farrah Munir

1 Membership of the Board/Apologies

Louise Hallas was welcomed to the Board as the new Virtual School Headteacher.

Apologies were received from Councillor Carole Pattison, Councillor Richard Smith, Elaine McShane, Service Director - Family Support and Child Protection, Ophelia Rix, Head of Service for Children in Care, Care Leavers and Looked After Children, Gill Addy, Designated Nurse for Looked After Children, Janet Tolley, Executive Headteacher of the Virtual School, 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 12th July 2022.

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In relation to the Minutes, the Chair of the Board highlighted that it was agreed for Board members to be invited to a meeting in respect of understanding the work of the virtual school. The Board had also put forward a challenge to members of the Council in respect of creating opportunities for care leavers.

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 public questions were received

7 Role of the Corporate Parent

The Board noted that this item was to be deferred until the next meeting due to unexpected circumstances.

8 Children's Performance Highlight Report

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

Rahila Habib, Service Manager – Family Support and Child Protection 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 62.4 (624 children) in September 2021 to 60.7 (607 children) in August 2022.
- When considering the decrease, it was important note the ongoing work of children being returned home, and an increase in special guardianship orders.
- From 1st January 2021 to August 2022 there were 75 special guardianship orders made.
- There was also an increase in unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people through the national transfer scheme.

The Board noted the update and the explanation for the decreasing trend of rate of children in care as positive and reassuring but highlighted that it was important to maintain oversight of the decrease. The Board were also interested in the increasing numbers of children who were placed outside 20 miles of Kirklees asking if this was due to lack of sufficiency or specific individual requirements.

Rahila Habib responded to advise that there were some challenges in sufficiency alongside a number of young people who needed to be placed outside of the area to

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meet specific individual needs. Where this was the case reviews were ongoing to ensure that the placement continued to meet their needs. Tom Brailsford, Service Director (Resources, Improvement and Partnerships) added that a key driver of increase in out of area placements was the Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements for private fostering, whereas out of area residential placements continued to reduce. The Board were advised that there were focused plans to address the increase such as ensuring that strategies to support and recruit more foster carers were in place. In respect of wider sufficiency issues, work was ongoing to influence regional and national policy alongside taking local measures.

The Board noted a key objective in the report was to recruit more foster carers and to provide more local placement options. In response, Tom Brailsford agreed to provide a report in respect of promoting and recruiting foster carers locally to a future meeting of the Board.

The Board highlighted the decrease in the number of children missing as positive. In respect of the number social worker changes the Board noted that this may be a result of the national recruitment and retention issues but requested reassurance around the processes in place to keep children safe when there was a change in social worker.

Rahila Habib, responded to advise the Board that all children had an allocated social worker. Changes were avoided wherever possible however, some changes were necessary for various reasons including challenges in recruitment and retention, as well as requests for a change from the young people. Rahila further reassured the Board that where there was a change in social worker that oversight was maintained, and risk levels continued to be monitored at the same level as prior to the change of social worker.

The Board welcomed the response and commented that as Corporate Parents, Board members needed to encourage the wider community to consider entering this area of work and to support children and young people wherever possible.

The Board were pleased to note the number of children and young people who were taking part in health reviews was positive and highlighted the 100% completion rate of Personal Education Plans (PEP's) term on term and congratulated the officers involved.

In respect of Care leavers accommodation and suitable accommodation, the Board asked if there were any other pressures on suitable accommodation arising from the cost-of-living crisis; what has been done to gather and interrogate this data, and was a strategy to be developed to support care leavers?

Beverley McClure, Service Manager for Care Leavers advised that Personal Advisors (PA's) supported all Care leavers with budgeting. PA's had access to the financial policy and work had been undertaken to ensure that every young person and staff member was aware of what support was available. This included funding for PA's and care leavers to access if a young person had any financial difficulties and needed support. Strong relationships with Providers and Housing Solutions enabled conversations around measures to support care leavers if necessary (i.e.-

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such as developing payment plans). The Personal Advisors were also very proactive in sign posting care leavers to the support that was available in the community. The Board noted that the ongoing work to support care leavers was very encouraging, highlighting that it was important to keep pace with upcoming changes over the next few months to continue this level of support for young people.

The Board noted that new PA's had been recruited and congratulated the team for the outcomes achieved. The Chair of Board requested an invite to a PA team meeting, which was seconded by a KFN representative.

In respect of foster carer approvals, the Board requested for the number of approved foster carers to be provided to the Board. Tom Brailsford responded to advise that a dashboard including this data was being developed and agreed for this information to be included in the Performance Highlights Report presented to subsequent meetings of the Board.

The Board raised concerns about the number of days between a child coming into care and being placed for adoption and it was agreed that an update on work undertaken to address the delay be presented to a future meeting of the Board.

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

1. A report in respect of promoting Foster Care in Kirklees and recruiting Foster Cares be provided to a future meeting of the Board.
2. The Chair of the Board and a Kirklees Foster Network representative be invited to a Personal Advisor Team meeting.
3. The number of approved foster carers to be included in the Performance Highlights Reports.
4. An update on work undertaken to address the time taken for a child coming into care to be placed for adoption be presented to a future meeting of the Board

9 Children's Rights Team Annual Report 2021/2022

The Board considered the Children's Rights Team Annual Report which was presented by Krissy Podgorski, Team Manager – Children Looked After Independent Service.

Krissy Podgorski explained that the three main functions of the CRT were Children Looked After Advocacy (Child Protection Advocacy), the Children in Care Council and the Independent Visitors Scheme. The purpose of the report was to inform the Board of the services delivered by the CRT during the period of 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022 and it was highlighted that:

- 133 young people were supported by the CRT within the reporting period and 492 separate pieces of advocacy were undertaken.
- During the reporting period there had been an increase in requests to support unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who were required to have an age assessment.

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- The most common reasons for requests for support included assistance with Children Looked After Reviews and other meetings, supporting care leavers who had children going through Care Proceedings, support at Pre-Birth Assessments and supporting young people with their Personal Education Plan Meetings.
- There was a higher volume of advocacy provided to Children Looked After (374) as opposed to Care Leavers (118).
- Whilst the CRT supported children and young people living within the local authority area, those who live outside of the area were also able to access the service.
- There were 89 advocacy issues raised which were resolved informally, with restorative work with other services/professionals being facilitated by the advocate. In the reporting period, there were 9 formal complaints initiated.
- Following the easing of Covid-19 restrictions, regular face to face meetings of the Children in Care Council and the Care Leavers Forum had resumed and the membership had increased in both groups.
- The Independent Visitors Scheme, also known as Care2Listen, was established in its current format nine years ago; and was coordinated by an Independent Service Officer.
- A recruitment campaign was undertaken in October 2021 which resulted in 10 volunteers completing training in February 2022.
- As of 1st August 2022, there were 32 trained independent visitors and 29 children matched.
- Rolling recruitment exercises were planned to increase the number of volunteers, and there was a particular requirement to recruit more males into the role.
- The CRT were working to continually improve services to young people and there was currently a modernisation of the service taking place.
- The review aimed to develop appropriate and enabling structures to allow young people to have a voice to shape and improve their lives.
- Work was ongoing with the Child Protection Review unit to improve the advocacy offer within the child protection process, which included the strengthening of links with strategic groups and boards.
- There had also been an independent review of children's social care and the recommendations made would have implications for the advocacy service if they were progressed.

The Board complimented the work of the CRT as positive and thanked officers involved in the delivery of these services. The Children in Care Council was also highlighted as a good experience for young people, giving them the opportunity to voice opinions and be heard in the wider community.

In the discussion to follow the Board questioned how to better ensure that the voices of young people were heard by the Board, noting that the Care leavers and Children in Care Council could submit their views on the issues considered by the board via written or verbal (video) submissions as possible options. It was also requested that Board members be invited to a future meeting of both the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum.

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The Board noted that an element of compromise was valuable life learning for children and requested to see further details and examples of where issues had been resolved through compromises and what those outcomes looked like.

The Board highlighted the value of Total Respect training (training on children's rights) and suggested that all members of the Board and the Childrens Scrutiny Panel should undertake this. The suggestion of highlighting the opportunity to all members of the Council was also put forward.

The Board suggested inviting an Independent Visitor to a future meeting of the Board to highlight the work of the service. Anna Gledhill, Service Manager Quality Assurance and Safeguarding responded to agree that an Independent Visitor would be invited to talk about their role and the value they get out of it to the Board.

In respect of recruiting more Independent Visitors (particularly more male volunteers), the Chair of the Board agreed to raise the issue during the next meeting of the Council.

The Board also highlighted that the opportunity should be advertised at pre-retirement workshops. In response, Krissy Podgorski advised that this had been actioned and would continue to be a method used to raise awareness of the Independent Visitor opportunity going forwards. The Board welcomed this update and added that it was important to consider extending the offer to schools and health partners. It was also suggested that a similar approach should be taken to recruiting foster carers.

The Board raised concerns about the number of young people requesting food parcels through advocacy and it was requested that an update be given on work taken to address this at a future meeting of the Board.

RESOLVED: The Board noted the Children's Rights Team Annual Report and it was agreed that:

1. Board Members be invited to a future meeting of both the Children in Care Council and the Care Leavers Forum.
2. Examples of where a compromised had been used to resolve an issue with young people be provided to a future meeting of the Board.
3. All members of the Corporate Parenting Board and Children's Scrutiny Panel be offered the opportunity to undertake training on children's rights training (Total Respect).
4. All members of the Council be made aware of the children's rights training (Total Respect) as an opportunity at the next meeting of the Council.
5. An Independent Visitor be invited to a future meeting of the Board.
6. Increasing awareness of opportunities in Fostering and the Independent Visitors scheme at pre-retirement workshops should be introduced and rolled out to health partners and in schools.
7. The opportunities in being an Independent Visitor and the requirement to recruit more volunteers (particularly males) be highlighted at the next meeting of the Council.

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The Board considered an update on the findings of the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) which was presented by Tom Brailsford, Service Director (Resources, Improvement and Partnerships).

The Board were advised that the JTAI inspection was an inspection of the whole partnership, and the multi-agency response to children at risk of, or experiencing, criminal exploitation. The inspection took place from 27 June 2022 to 1 July 2022 and it was highlighted that the feedback was very positive.

The headline findings were:

- Partners at a strategic level enabled a well-embedded practice which supported professionals to work well together.
- Children in Kirklees who were at risk of, or experiencing, criminal exploitation had their needs identified quickly and received multi-agency support to manage and reduce risk to them effectively
- Leaders and managers had an effective oversight of the 'front door' arrangements and worked together to reduce risk and offer support.
- The Youth Justice Service (YES) was found to be a successful resource that worked well with other agencies to reduce risks of exploitation.
- The YES in Kirklees was also put forward by the Lead Inspector as an exemplar of good practice nationally.
- The drop-ins engagement sessions (i.e.- from substance misuse teams) at Childrens Homes were also highlighted as being particularly effective.

There were also some recommendations arising from the Inspection. The Board were advised that key areas for improvement included, the recording of information in internal meetings, and taking a more targeted approach to training in an in person setting and engaging GP's around exploitation. Jo-Anne Sanders, Service Director – Learning and Early Support expressed pride in the partnership highlighting the effectiveness of capturing young people's voices and understanding their cultural needs.

RESOLVED: The Board noted the findings of the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) and welcomed the positive feedback.

11 **Virtual School Governing Body Update**

The Board noted that there had not been a meeting of the Virtual School Governing Body and there was nothing to report at this time.

RESOLVED: That an update on the work of the Virtual School Governing Body be presented to the Board after its next meeting.

12 **Children's Ambition Board Update**

The Board considered an update on the Children's Ambition Board presented by Tom Brailsford, Service Director (Resources, Improvement and Partnerships) who explained that the purpose of the Board oversees a range of strategies across Children's Services, and it was important that this information was provided to the Board.

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The Board were advised that the previous 2 meetings of the Board were cancelled due to the Joint Targeted Area Inspection, and the bank holiday. The next meeting was to take place next month, and the feedback would be presented to the next meeting of the Board.

13 **Updates from Board Members on interaction with services**

The Board noted updates from Members in respect of interactions with Services.

The Children's Scrutiny Panel continued to visit services, including a recent visit to the Parent Carers Network (PCAN). There was an upcoming Panel visit to the Dewsbury Child Protection Services with a focus on key national issues such as staffing and capacity and looking at how the Local Authority continue to manage those issues and ensure children remain safe.

The Chair visited the launch of Home Starts new premises. The Chair had also met with the Chair and Chief Officer of Home Start to discuss their staffing and looked forward to attending their AGM.

The Chair had also met with the Designated Nurse and the Chief Executive of Locala to discuss the pressures on the health service. This was followed by two further meetings with Locala Managers and the issue was also raised to the Director for Children's Services. Movement had begun to resolve the pressures on the services.

Colleen Kenworthy, Kirklees Fostering Network representative, requested that Board Members be invited to a meeting of the Kirklees Fostering Network.

RESOLVED: The Board noted the update on Interactions with Services, and it was agreed that members of the Board be invited to a future meeting of the Kirklees Fostering Network.

14 **Corporate Parenting Board Agenda Plan 2022/2023**

The Board considered its agenda plan for 2022/23.

RESOLVED: The Board noted the agenda plan for 2022/23 and it was agreed that the items highlighted during the meeting be added to the document for the Boards consideration.