

Contact Officer: Jodie Harris

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

Tuesday 5th December 2023

Present: Councillor Viv Kendrick (Chair)
Councillor Elizabeth Reynolds, Cabinet Member - Learning and Aspiration
Councillor Richard Smith, Conservative - Group Business Manager
Councillor John Lawson, Liberal Democrat - Group Leader
Gill Addy, Designated Nurse for Looked after Children/Care Leavers
Kieran Lord, Interim Service Director: Resources, Improvements & Partnerships
Stewart Horn, Head of Children's Integrated Commissioning
Louise Hallas, Virtual School Headteacher - Children & Young People
Vicky Metheringham, Service Director - Child Protection & Family Support
Jo-Anne Sanders, Service Director - Learning & Early Support

In attendance: Ian Mottershaw, Head of Contextual Safeguarding Service and Y.E.S – Family Support and Child Protection
Nick Libell, Service Manager – Children and Families

Apologies: Councillor Karen Allison, Green Group - Group Business Manager
Sara Miles, Head of Safeguarding & Quality Assurance

1 Membership of the Board/Apologies

The Board noted that Joel Hanna had been appointed as the Head of Service for Corporate Parenting and Children's Residential Services and that Ophelia Rix the previous Head of Service for Children Looked After and Care Leavers be thanked for her contributions and support to the work of the Board.

Apologies were received from Councillor Karen Allison and Sara Miles, Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance.

2 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Board considered the Minutes of the meeting held on 24 October 2023.

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RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 24 October 2023 be approved as a correct record.

3 **Declaration of Interests**

No interests were declared.

4 **Admission of the Public**

All Items were held in public session.

5 **Deputations/Petitions**

There were no deputations or petitions received.

6 **Public Question Time**

There were no questions received from members of the public

7 **Service Acknowledgements and Awards**

The Board received a verbal update in respect of the nomination of 3 Kirklees Social Workers for the National Social Worker of the year awards presented by Joel Hanna, Head of Service for Children Looked After and Care Leavers.

The Board noted that it was important to celebrate and recognise the work of all social workers and expressed their congratulations to the 3 nominees and the winner of the overall social worker of the year award.

RESOLVED: The Board noted the update, service acknowledgement and awards.

8 **Service Updates**

The Board received a verbal update in respect of service structure and portfolio arrangements presented by Joel Hanna, Head of Service for Children Looked After and Care Leavers.

Joel Hanna explained that his role would be undertaking responsibility for Corporate Parenting and the Social Work teams and Care leaving service along with retaining responsibility for the residential estate and the Head of Homes for Children was to assume responsibility for fostering and sufficiency.

RESOLVED: The Board noted the Service Updates.

9 **Children's Performance Highlight Report**

The Board considered the latest Children's Performance Highlights Report in respect of the performance monitoring data for Children's Services presented by: Joel Hanna, Head of Service for Children Looked After and Care Leavers, Louise Hallas Virtual School Headteacher, Gill Addy, the Designated Nurse for Looked After Children and Care Leavers, Stewart Horn, Head of Children's Integrated Commissioning, Vicky Metherringham, Service Director - Family Support and Child Protection and Ian Mottershaw, Head of Contextual Safeguarding Service and Y.E.S. The following key points were highlighted:

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- In relation to Children Entering Care, Children in Care and Placement Stability a breakdown of the 72 children were placed outside of Kirklees /more than 20 miles from their home address was to be provided to the Board to show where young people may be living with family and kinship carers.
- In relation to education outcomes, 100% of PEPs were completed within the Summer Term. Every young person was allocated to a member of the experienced Virtual School Team and their attendance, progress and attainment were reviewed enabling challenge and support in a timely manner and for all relevant interventions to be put in place.
- In relation to children looked after health data, progress being made to address the challenges faced by the Service included; bench marking across West Yorkshire, some change in working patterns including a reduction in cross-boundary working, and conversations were being held to prioritise clinicians and service delivery to increase capacity. A commitment to additional resources had been secured from the ICB and from the Local authority to enable the Looked After Health team to carry our Review Health Assessment to improve performance. Older children coming into care commonly had additional support needs and work had been done to explore if other more specialist services may be better placed to take on the IHA for this cohort.
- In relation to Children Looked After Convictions, the number of Young People who were looked after continually for 12 months or more aged 10 -17 who received a substantive outcome had fallen in comparison to previous year. The cohort was lower than the national average and statistical neighbours and this was attributed to the development of a more inclusive disposal panel which offered greater perspective in relation to the circumstances of the young people discussed. This brought forward more imaginative ways of restoration and rehabilitation to prevent reoffending.
- In relation to Care leavers, it was noted that improving Education, Employment and Training (EET) remained a priority in recognising this as a key protective factor for children in care and care leavers. Though a strong position was held nationally and in comparison, with stational neighbours, performance in relation indicators showed the need for improvement. Increasing cross-departmental and partnership working was key to improving opportunities for young people.
- In relation to Care leavers, work was being undertaken with housing providers to ensure that suitable accommodation was available for young people at the right time.

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

- It was confirmed that the figure for children in care was lower than statistical neighbours was the result of the efforts made in early help services to prevent children from coming into care. The rate was consistent and there were other neighbours who were outliers due to local preventative services at an early level.
- The Board noted that Kirklees College should be recognised for their achievement and good work around attachment and trauma.
- It was confirmed that the increase in school moves was expected in September at the start of the new school year and that most school moves

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were planned to make sure the young person had a positive start with their new school and a positive end with the previous school.

- It was positive to see the trauma informed approach being used and leading to good outcomes.
- It was advised that the restorative element in relation to convictions was about understanding a child's circumstances to take a more holistic approach and develop a bespoke package to prevent reoffending and over criminalising young people.
- In relation to understanding more about finding suitable accommodation for Care leavers the Board were advised that there were plans to increase the time that a young person can be referred prior to their 18th birthday. The extension of the offer may not be possible within the Councils current housing stock, so work was being undertaken to increase care leavers access to the private housing market. Improvements were also to be made to support those leaving care when moving into accommodation.

RESOLVED: The Board noted the Children's Performance Highlights Report, and it was agreed that a breakdown of the children placed outside of Kirklees /more than 20 miles from their home address be provided to the Board.

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Kirklees Children Looked After and Care Leavers Annual Health Report

The Board considered the Kirklees Children Looked After and Care Leavers Annual Health Report (April 2022-March 2023) presented by Gill Addy Designated Nurse. It was explained that the reporting period covered recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, and there were some challenges to services as a result. It was also highlighted that:

- There had been continuing capacity pressures on the team during the year.
- A hybrid model (telephone and face to face) remained post-pandemic for Initial Health Assessments (IHA).
- There was also the option for IHA's to be carried out via an extended face to face session for those less suited to the telephone aspect.
- There had been a significant rise in unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) coming to the area which impacted on the IHA provision, but statutory timescale completion remained very good.
- There had been increasing pressures i.e., child health complexities, numbers of UASC, etc... on the nursing team.
- This had resulted in postponing some previous preventative work and a need to prioritise some activities.
- Bank staff had been used to carry out some nursing administrative tasks to help alleviate pressure.
- Dental access had improved and had been supported by the 'Flexible Commissioning' programme.
- This enabled all Children Looked After (CLA) and care leavers in Kirklees to access dental services.
- Strength and Difficulty Questionnaires' (SDQ's) return rates used to screen the emotional wellbeing of children aged 4 to 17 years, remained low, despite efforts to improve compliance.

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- Discussions continued with the Children's Social Care Service to look at alternative methods of distribution.
- The inclusion of a trauma screening assessment for UASC by a Locala GP, added a valuable dimension to the support options.
- This pilot programme had now ceased and work had been undertaken to try to seek further funding to reintroduce this work.
- Liaison with the sexual health and substance misuse outreach workers continued reinforcing a collaborative working model.
- The data showed that:
 - 201 IHA's (including 18 requests from other authorities) were completed, compared to 146 the previous year.
 - There was a significant rise (from 19 to 30) in UASC entering care, and the increase resulted in catch-up schedules being used more widely.
 - 652 Review Health Assessment's (RHA) were completed (including 55 requests from other authorities).
 - Immunisation rates averaged at 91% across all ages, and teenage boosters remained the most common outstanding immunisations.
 - Children's emotional health benefited from the development of the LA Placement Support Service.
 - 20 UASC benefitted from a 'trauma screening and report' project, led by an experienced Locala GP.
 - 130 Care Leaver health histories were written and distributed.
- There was a long-standing, dedicated, experienced health workforce in place which was co-located and linked through technology to support collaborative working.
- The Proposed Action Plan 2023-24 included:
 - To consider the development of an UASC IHA assessment form.
 - An Audit on the demographics of young people who admitted to vaping at their RHA.
 - To raise awareness of the opportunity offered through the Integrated Care Boards to provide free prescriptions, Optician and Dental support, to care experienced young people who were working and not claiming benefits.
 - To continue to pursue the business case, to increase the capacity in the team to improve health assessment timescales, additional work related to the IHA clinic, and the timely preparation of care leaver health histories.

The Board noted the update and expressed support for the provision of free prescriptions for care experienced young people and asked when this might be implemented. In response, Stewart Horn - Head of Children's Integrated Commissioning, advised that this would be a decision for the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and agreed to provide further information around time scales to the Board.

RESOLVED: The Board noted the Kirklees Children Looked After and Care Leavers Annual Health Report and it was agreed that further information around time scales for an ICB decision on prescriptions, dental and optician support be provided to the Board.

11 Update on Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

Joel Hanna, Head of Service for Children Looked After and Care Leavers presented a report setting out an update on the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ). It was noted that:

- All Local Authorities were required to provide information on the emotional and behavioural health of looked after children.
- SDQ's were introduced in 2008 as a screening tool to assist in measuring the emotional and behavioural health of children and young people.
- The SDQ is a clinically validated brief behavioural screening questionnaire for use with 4–17-year-olds or 2-4 year olds.
- The data was collected through the SDQ and a summary figure for each child (the total difficulties score) was the outcome measure used for tracking the emotional and behavioural difficulties of children looked after at a national level.
- The Kirklees return rate was below the national average, and there had been a reduction in the total number of returned SDQ's over the past three years, with last year's being the lowest.
- There had been a slight rise in the number of 'high' SDQ scores returned by carer this year.
- This suggested that carers were reporting more concerns on fewer looked after children.
- The 'satisfactory' and 'borderline' rates remained largely consistent overall.
- The SDQ working group had been working towards the initial goal to increase the return rate from carers of children looked after to above 80% (currently 65%).

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

- It was confirmed that a standard template used nationally, and that the process that followed the completion of SDQ's and improving scores was part of the key drive for improvement. By 2024 the aim was for the process to be fully embedded, and that with increasing scores there would be better emotional support for young people and the process would be more meaningful.

RESOLVED: The Board noted the Updates on Strength & Difficulties Questionnaire.

12 Summary Annual report on Complaints and Compliments

The Board considered the Compliments and Complaints Service Annual Summary 2022-23 which was presented by Nick Libell, Service Manager – Children and Families.

Nick Libell advised that the purpose of the report was to inform the Board of compliments and complaints in relation to children looked after during the period of 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023. It was advised that:

- Under the Children's Act 1989, the provision of an annual Complaints report was a statutory requirement.
- 366 compliments and complaints were registered during this financial year.

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- 52 of these were compliments, 158 were enquiries and 85 complaints were remedied via the local resolution procedure.
- 23 complaints were responded to via the statutory Stage 1 process (an increase from 15 the previous year).
- There were four Stage 2 investigations, two Stage 3 investigations and four cases were referred to the Local Government Ombudsman.
- In relation to children looked after and care leavers, there were ten Stage 1 investigations during the 22/23 year out of a total of 23.
- The service worked hard to work in a restorative manner to resolve complaints at the earliest opportunity.
- The Compliments and Complaints Team continued to ensure that the complaints process was open and accessible to young people both directly and through an advocate from the Children's Rights Service.
- 52% of all complaints registered at Stage One, were from young people, with the support of Childrens Rights Service.
- 34.8% of all complaints registered at Stage One, were from Parents.
- Of the 23 stage 1 complaints received, 10 related to Looked After Children.
- Most of the complaints received related to an issue with service provision a delay in communication or to disagree with a particular decision.
- There had been a small increase in the number of stage 1 complaints, but the overall position was that complaints were being resolved at the earliest possible stage.
- There was a focus on learning lessons from complaints and integrating this with broader quality assurance work across the directorate to improve outcomes for young people.
- This work included:
 - At all stages, any lessons and findings identified from complaints were expected to be followed up by managers with staff to inform individual learning and development.
 - Themes and patterns for learning identified from complaints were to be shared with the Learning and Development Service.
 - To strengthen embedding learning across the service, the Complaints team and Learning and Development team had strengthened pathways to review complaints and compliments to ensure that key messages influence practice.

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

- Failure to communicate was present in all complaints and the Board wanted to understand how this had been translated to action to improve outcomes.
- It was important to highlight the compliments to share where there had been good practice and it was requested that this information be provided to the Board at a future meeting.
- When prioritizing workload, the Board highlighted that consideration should be given to what was most important to young people noting that this was a key element in maintaining strong relationships.
- That the outcomes of the 4 complaints which were considered by the Local Government Ombudsman for children and young people be shared with the Board.

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In relation to improving outcomes Nick Libell advised that when a complaint was formally received the local resolution part of the complaint was referred to the responding manager to contact the young person or parent by phone or in person with the aim of intervening as early as possible. It was also noted that expectation management in terms of social worker workload was also a key element of this learning.

In relation to the prioritisation of workload Nick Libell advised that there was a pathway to fast track and prioritise complaints from young people. Where complaints come directly from a young person, or their advocate, these were responded to on an accelerated timescale with the ambition of attaining local resolution through quick action and response.

RESOLVED: The Board noted the Compliments and Complaints Service Annual Summary 2022-23, and it was agreed that:

1. Details of the Compliments received, and examples of good practice be provided to the Board at a future meeting.
2. The outcomes of the 4 complaints considered by the Local Government Ombudsman for Children and Young People be shared with the Board.

13 Virtual School Governing Body Update

The Board considered a verbal update in respect of the Virtual School Governing Body.

Councillor Elizabeth Reynolds the Chair of the Governing Body introduced the item highlighting that the Governing Body had been developing a plan to refresh its support and challenge function. The action plan identified attendance, engagement, attainment and ECHP's as key priority areas.

Louise Hallas, Virtual School Headteacher further advised that at its last meeting the Governing Body considered:

- The Headteachers Report (previously presented to the Corporate Parenting Board).
- Areas of commissioned work such as training to support attainment in KS1 and KS2, the educational psychologist service and the CAMHS service.
- Action planning in respect of priority areas such as attendance (encompassing, suspensions, exclusions, and part time timetables) as well as progress and attainment.

RESOLVED: The Board noted the Virtual School Draft Headteacher Report and it was agreed that a report showing a breakdown of recorded unauthorised absences be provided to the Board.

14 Children's Ambition Board Update

The Board considered a verbal update in relation to the last meeting of the Childrens Ambition Board presented by Kieran Lord, Interim Service Director -

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Resources, Improvements and Partnerships and Jo-Anne Sanders, Service Director Learning and Early Support.

During its last meeting the Board considered highlights in performance for social care, exclusions/suspensions, strengths, and improvements. The Board also considered its future purpose, and it was agreed for there to be a key focus on improving outcomes for children with SEND moving forwards.

RESOLVED: The Board noted the Children Ambition Board Update

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

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

The Chair noted attendance at:

- The Kinship Carers Halloween Party
- A Care Leaving team meeting in Dewsbury.
- A Time to Talk session.
- 2 full staff engagement sessions (Huddersfield and Dewsbury)
- Magic Breakfast (online session)

Councillor Elizabeth Reynolds reported that she had attended the Foster Carer Christmas celebration, the West Yorkshire launch of Project Hope and the Kirklees Top 100 employer launch. It was noted that the Project Hope and Kirklees Top 100 employer events were well attended and a strong commitment to supporting young people was demonstrated through likeminded partners and local employers coming together.

Jo-Anne Sanders, Service Director Learning and Early Support visited Woodley School and College where pupils had been working with the Councils Our Voice Team to input their views into what they would like to see in their new school. It was positive to listen to the young people and see them receive their feedback in respect of the architects design.

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

16 **Corporate Parenting Board Next Steps**

The Board considered a verbal update in respect of the next steps for the Corporate Parenting Board presented by Joel Hanna, Head of Service for Children Looked After and Care Leavers. It was advised that upon request from the Local Authority a government advisor had reviewed care leaving services. Advice provided included plans to strengthen the Corporate Parenting Board by widening representation on the board, and by holding more powers to hold partners and the Council to account.

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

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- The importance of ensuring that the voice of children and young people were represented on the Board, and it was agreed that this be added as a standard item for each meeting of the Board.
- It was confirmed that a meeting had been held with the Children in Care Council and a meeting was to be held with the Care leaving Council and Personal advisors shortly in respect of representing children and young peoples voices.
- It was confirmed that work was being undertaken with the Childrens Rights Team around providing and refreshing Total Respect Training and the roles and responsibilities of corporate parents to all elected members.
- The idea of holding Board meeting at more accessible times and locations to enable place-based working and greater representation of the voice of children and young people was suggested.
- It was confirmed that an informal meeting of the Board in respect of strengthening understanding of the role of the corporate parent amongst elected members be held as agreed in a previous meeting of the Board.
- It was suggested that member group meetings may provide a space for representation, and it was agreed for the Governance Officer to provide Joel Hanna with a list of the names of group business managers.

RESOLVED: The Board noted the Corporate Parenting Next Steps, and it was agreed that:

1. 'Voice of Children Looked After and Care leavers' be added to all future Corporate Parenting Board meeting agenda's as a standard item.
2. The Governance Officer would provide Joel Hanna with a list of group business managers in relation to presenting on the principles and role of the Corporate Parent at group meetings.

17 Corporate Parenting Board Agenda Plan

The Board considered the agenda plan for 2023/24.

RESOLVED: The Board noted the agenda plan for 2023/24 .