

**Name of meeting:** Corporate Parenting Board  
**Date:** 24<sup>th</sup> September 2018  
**Title of report:** Independent Visitors Scheme Annual Report

**Purpose of report**

To inform the Board of the work of the Independent Visitors Scheme during the period of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018 (annual report)

Key Decision - Is it likely to result in spending or saving £250k or more, or to have a significant effect on two or more electoral wards?	Not applicable
Key Decision - Is it in the <a href="#">Council's Forward Plan (key decisions and private reports?)</a>	Not applicable
The Decision - Is it eligible for call in by Scrutiny?	Not applicable
Date signed off by <u>Strategic Director</u> & name	Elaine McShane (for Sal Tariq) – 12.9.18
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance IT and Transactional Services?	Not applicable
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning Support?	Not applicable
Cabinet member <a href="#">portfolio</a>	Cllr. Viv Kendrick

**Electoral wards affected:** Not applicable

**Ward councillors consulted:** Not applicable

**Public or private:** Public

## 1. Summary

Kirklees Independent Visitors Scheme, also known as Care2Listen is a Local Authority funded scheme which sits within the Looked After Children Independent Service.

The aim of the scheme is to provide independent adult volunteers to befriend young people in Care; to spend time with them on a one to one basis, undertaking activities and developing a positive relationship with a trusted, responsible adult. The volunteers are someone who the young person can talk to, seek advice, guidance and support from and have fun with, in an informal setting.

Young People are referred to the Scheme by either their Social Worker or Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). The IRO has a duty to discuss the Scheme at a young persons' review. Young people are also encouraged to express an interest themselves in having an Independent Visitor, and can discuss this directly with the Scheme Coordinator, their Social Worker, key worker or carer.

The number of children and young people accessing this service has increased during the reporting period of April 2017 to March 2018 with 44 being matched with an Independent Visitor.

## 2. Information required to take a decision

For information only, no decision required

## 3. Implications for the Council

### 3.1 Early Intervention and Prevention (EIP)

Not applicable

### 3.2 Economic Resilience (ER)

Not applicable

### 3.3 Improving Outcomes for Children

Whilst it is difficult to quantify the 'softer' outcomes for children and young people who have benefited from the role of an Independent Visitor it is clear from comments from children / young people, carers, Social Workers and the Independent Visitors themselves that this is a highly valued service.

Children and young people enjoy going out to do fun activities but according to a report by Dr Roger Morgan the most important thing for them is that the Independent Visitors are volunteers. They are not paid to be part of their lives and they do not know everything about them which has been written in a file. This gives children and young people the freedom to build a trusting relationship with someone, sharing as much or as little about themselves as they wish. Below are some examples of comments made by young people:

- *'My Independent Visitor has helped me gain confidence in interacting with people socially'* (Girl, aged 16)

- *'I have a friend that I can trust and spend time with'* (Girl, aged 13)
- *'My Independent visitor has helped me to do things and become more independent'* (Boy, aged 15)

### 3.4 Reducing demand of services

Not applicable

### 3.5 Other (eg Legal/Financial or Human Resources)

Not applicable

## 4. Consultees and their opinions

Not applicable

## 5. Next steps

To create a 'pool' of volunteers either living within the Kirklees area or elsewhere who are willing to travel regularly to meet with young people placed Out of Authority.

The need for flexibility of volunteers to travel out of area and meet young people more frequently is being discussed with applicants at an early stage. A number of volunteers are prepared to travel greater distances and this has helped in matching some young people living in host Authorities.

### 18+ Care Leaver offer

In line with recent legislation relating to support for care leavers up to the age of 25 the Independent Visitor Scheme will be evaluated and consideration given as to whether it currently meets the needs of children who are looked after and care leavers. Currently the continuation of the Independent Visitor relationship post 18 is offered only to those who are the most vulnerable. It will be explored as to whether this should be offered more widely. Alongside this consideration will also be given as to whether an Independent Visitor should be offered to young people who are already 18 plus. If this were to be the case there would need to be clarity about what the role would entail and any differences between the volunteer role and that of the Personal Advisor who is currently appointed to all care leavers by the Leaving Care Team.

## 6. Officer recommendations and reasons

That the report be noted.

## 7. Cabinet portfolio holder's recommendations

Not applicable

## 8. Contact officer

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9. **Background Papers and History of Decisions**

Not applicable

10. **Service Director responsible**

Elaine McShane (Family Support and Child Protection)