

Name of meeting: Corporate Parenting Board

Date: 21st January 2019

Title of report: Independent Visitor Scheme Quarter 3 Report (October 2018 to December 2018)

Purpose of report

To inform the Corporate Parenting Board about the work of the Independent Visitors Scheme during the 3rd quarter of the financial year 2018 to 2019 (October to December 2018) and plans for development of the scheme.

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” If yes give the reason why .
Key Decision - Is it in the Council's Forward Plan (key decisions and private reports?)	“not applicable” If yes also give date it was registered
The Decision - Is it eligible for call in by Scrutiny?	“ not applicable” If no give the reason why not
Date signed off by <u>Strategic Director</u> & name	Give name and date for Cabinet reports
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance IT and Transactional Services?	Give name and date for Cabinet reports
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning Support?	Give name and date for Cabinet reports
Cabinet member portfolio	Cllr Viv Kendrick

Electoral wards affected: Not Applicable

Ward councillors consulted: Not Applicable

Public or private: Public

(Have you considered GDPR?) Yes

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 Scheme was established in its current format five years ago. The scheme is coordinated by an Independent Service Officer and day to day administration is provided.

The aim of the scheme is to provide independent adult volunteers to befriend young people in the care of the local authority; to spend time with them on a one to one basis, undertake positive activities and develop independent meaningful trusted adult relationships. The volunteers provide children and young people with someone to talk to, seek advice, guidance and support from, and have fun with, in an informal setting.

At the end of December 2018, there were 44 young people who had an Independent Visitor. During this quarter, three matches of volunteers with children /young people ended due to; a discharge of Care Order, a young person turning 18 and a match breakdown.

In this quarter, 28 of the matched young people were placed within Kirklees and 16 were living in a host Local Authority. On average, the young people and their Independent Visitor continued to meet every 3-4 weeks.

At the end of the quarter, there were 7 young people waiting to be matched. 4 of these were placed in host Local Authorities.

A marketing and recruitment campaign is underway; seven applications from prospective new Independent Visitors have so far been received by the Scheme's Coordinator. The closing date for applications is 31 January 2019. A wide range of marketing is being used including Social Media, a Press Release, Internet and Intranet presence, presence on a National Volunteering website and promotion through partner agencies. Following shortlisting, interviews will take place in February and the training of new volunteers should be completed by the end of March 2019. Appropriate references, employment and DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checks will also be carried out for all successful candidates following their interviews. The Volunteers will not be permitted to work with a young person prior to these references and checks being returned but it is envisaged that matches between Volunteers and children / young people will begin early / mid April 2019.

As previously reported, the scheme currently has 44 matches, and as such it is oversubscribed based on the National Independent Visitor Standard. (37 matches per full time Coordinator). In order for the Independent Visitor Scheme to be able to support an increased number of volunteers and the children / young people they are matched with, a Business Case is being prepared for an additional Coordinator capacity (1 FTE worker.)

2. Information required to take a decision

For information only – no decision required

3. Implications for the Council

3.1 Working with People

Children and young people who are in the care of the Local Authority have the opportunity to work with someone who is not paid to be part of their lives but wants to spend time with them on a voluntary basis. This provides great benefit for the young person as they can build a relationship of trust and only share whatever information about themselves that they wish to share.

Adults volunteering with the scheme have the opportunity to provide a valuable service to children and young people which they often say leads to them feeling that they have helped others and 'given something back to their community'.

3.2 Working with Partners

Not Applicable

3.3 Place Based Working

Every effort is made to ensure that the range of volunteers who are part of the scheme are reflective of the diversity of the children and young people who are in the care of the Local Authority although there is a lack of male volunteers and those whose English is not their first language. It is hoped that the media strategy implemented for recruitment of new volunteers during the month of January will help to appeal to these under represented groups of people.

3.4 Improving outcomes for children

All children and young people who are looked after have the right to be allocated an Independent Visitor if it is felt that they would benefit from this service. The volunteer offers a child or young person in care someone with whom they can build up trusting relationship, speak to if they have worries or concerns and look up to as a positive role model. They are able to go out with someone who is not paid to be part of their lives and do fun activities together. This often leads to improving a young persons confidence, self-esteem, emotional well-being and the opportunity to take part in new experiences.

3.5 Other (eg Legal/Financial or Human Resources)

Not applicable

4. Consultees and their opinions

Not applicable

5. Next steps and timelines

- Interviews for potential volunteers will be held during February
- Training of successful volunteers will take place during March
- Matching of volunteers with children / young people to begin early to mid April
- A business case to be presented to Senior Management to apply for additional funding to employ one additional worker in order to resource and sustain the development of the Independent Visitor Scheme in order that children and young people who need an Independent Visitor are able to access one.

6. Officer recommendations and reasons

That the report be noted

7. Cabinet portfolio holder's recommendation

Not applicable

8. Contact officer

Christopher Berridge – Independent Service Officer

Sara Miles – Service Manager, Family Support and Child Protection

9. Background Papers and History of Decisions

Not applicable

10. Service Director responsible

Elaine McShane – Family Support and Child Protection