

Name of meeting: Corporate Parenting Board
Date: 24th October 2019
Title of report: Independent Visitor Scheme 6 Monthly Report (01 April – 30 September 2019)

Purpose of report

To inform the Corporate Parenting Board about the work of the Independent Visitors Scheme during the first six months of the financial year 2019 to 2020 (April to September 2019) 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?	N/A
Key Decision - Is it in the Council's Forward Plan (key decisions and private reports?)	N/A
The Decision - Is it eligible for call in by Scrutiny?	N/A
Date signed off by <u>Strategic Director</u> & name	Elaine McShane (for Mel Meggs) 14.10.19
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance IT and Transactional Services?	N/A
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning Support?	N/A
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 Children Looked After Independent Service. The Scheme was established in its current format six years ago and is coordinated by an Independent Service Officer; day to day administration is provided.

The aim of the scheme is to provide Independent adult volunteers to young people in the care of the local authority; to befriend them, and spend time with them on a one to one basis, undertaking positive activities and developing 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 September 2019, there were 44 young people who had an Independent Visitor. During this period, four matches of volunteers with children /young people ended due to; a discharge of Care Order, two young people turning 18 and a match breakdown.

At the end of this period, 28 of the matched young people were living in 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 period, there were 10 young people waiting to be matched. 7 of these were living in host Local Authorities.

As previously reported, the scheme currently has 44 matches, and as such it is oversubscribed based on the National Independent Visitor Standard. (35 matches per full time Coordinator).

In order for the Independent Visitor Scheme to be able to support an increased number of volunteers and children / young people, a business case has been submitted for an additional Coordinator capacity.

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 chose to share whatever information about themselves 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.

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 a trusting relationship with, 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 with them. This often leads to improving a young person's confidence, self-esteem, and emotional well-being, whilst also providing them with opportunities to participate 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

A business case has been submitted for consideration of additional funding to increase capacity in order to resource and sustain the development of the Independent Visitor Scheme, ensuring 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
Anna Gledhill – Social Work Practice Lead, 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