

Contact Officer: Sheila Dykes

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

Tuesday 10th September 2019

Present: Councillor Viv Kendrick (Chair)
Councillor Fazila Loonat
Councillor John Lawson
Councillor Andrew Marchington
Councillor Richard Smith
Gill Addy
Steve Comb
Keith Fielding
Colleen Kenworthy

In attendance: Anna Gledhill, Social Work Practice Lead
Andy Gresswell, Operations Manager – Youth Offending Team
Sara Hions, Virtual School
Sarah Johal, One Adoption (West Yorkshire)
Andy Quinlan, Service Manager Fostering

Apologies: Councillor Karen Allison
Christine Bennett
Julie Bragg
Tom Brailsford
Barry Lockwood
Sara Miles
Melanie Tiernan

1 Membership, Introductions and Apologies

Apologies from Councillor Karen Allison, Christine Bennett, Julie Bragg, Tom Brailsford, Barry Lockwood, Sara Miles, Melanie Tiernan and Janet Tolley were noted.

2 Minutes of Previous Meeting

Steve Comb was requested to provide feedback in relation to the proposal that delegated authority for personal advisors to approve expenditure on behalf of looked after children be reviewed (ref: resolution 4, item 7).

It was noted that the following had been added to the Board's Agenda Plan:

- sufficiency of foster placements living outside the area (ref: resolution (2), item 8).
- secondary school moves for looked after children (ref: resolution (2), item 10).
- the impact of 'staying put' on foster carers (ref: resolution (8), item 10).

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and that work was in progress in respect of:

- the Kirklees Fostering Network representative liaising with the Head of Corporate Parenting (Sufficiency) to discuss the issues in relation to the support needed for foster carers of birth children (ref: resolution (3), item 8).
- access to employee health care services for foster carers (ref: resolution (6), item 10).
- events for foster carers to raise awareness of the support available (ref: resolution (7), item 10).

RESOLVED -

- (1) That the minutes of the Corporate Parenting Board held on 19th June 2019 be agreed as a correct record, subject to the amendment of resolution (2) of item 7 to read:

‘The Board agreed that arrangements should be made for substance misuse workers from Change *Grow Live* to visit the new drop-in facility in Dewsbury’.

- (2) That the Statement of Purpose for the Fostering Service and the young persons’ draft version of the Fostering Service Statement of Purpose be circulated to Board Members (ref: resolutions (2) and (3), item 10).
- (3) That details of the foster carer recruitment events be circulated to Board Members.

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 Animation by Adopted Teenagers

The Board viewed a short animation produced by Adopted Teenagers giving important key messages to social workers, teachers and adoptive parents about what had helped them, and not helped them, throughout their childhood and into adulthood.

Sarah Johal explained that the film had particularly helped to raise awareness about the need to consider and manage connections to/with birth family at an early stage. It was noted that this was an issue that had been highlighted by every age group on the video.

Colleen Kenworthy advised that foster carers received memory box/book training and did work hard on this. Keith Fielding pointed out that life story work should be undertaken from the start and continually updated, not compiled at the last minute, as this could lead to errors and a lack of consistency. Sarah Johal accepted that regular updating had been an issue, associated with staff turnover, and was recognised as an area for improvement.

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In response to questions it was explained that:

- It was considered that many adoptive parents did recognise the importance of children meeting with other adopted young people.
- Activity and celebration events were organised for adoptive families and there were a number of established groups for different ages. There was a gap in this sort of provision for those aged 18+ that the service was looking to address; this group were also given support in terms of information about/contact with birth family.
- There was a greater emphasis now, than had been the case in the past, on the need for understanding and knowledge of birth parents and how to approach this subject.

Members commented that:

- There was an established network of designated teachers who received training and support in relation to previously looked after children and there was awareness of their needs.
- There was a need to support the child and ensure that they did not feel isolated; having peers in a similar position could make a significant difference.

RESOLVED -

(1) That the animation be welcomed as an invaluable insight into the things that adopted teenagers had identified as having helped them, and also those that had not helped them, throughout their childhood and into early adulthood.

(2) That the animation should be seen by all social workers, social work managers and carers.

(3) That it be noted that the animation is available on the PAC-UK and Adopteens websites and Sarah Johal will forward a link to Board Members.

7 Ofsted and Improvement Board update

The Board considered the report from Ofsted on the findings of the inspection of Children's Services in June 2019.

Steve Comb said that the progress made had been acknowledged by Ofsted but it was recognised that a significant amount of work remained to be done.

The priorities for improvement were set out on pages 2 and 3 of the report; in many cases measures were already in place to address these issues. In respect of the comments in relation to care leavers understanding of their health histories, Gill Addy assured the Board that this was undertaken.

In response to questions from Board Members, Steve Comb and Anna Gledhill said that:

- The authority had a good base to move forward and he was confident that the issues would be addressed; a comprehensive improvement plan was in place which included both Ofsted targets and the authority's own stretched targets. This was underpinned by plans within services.

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- Ofsted had acknowledged the issues associated with the change of IT system, which had been very challenging, but improvements could already be seen as a result.
- Audits, both case audits and themed, were being undertaken on a monthly basis.

RESOLVED -

That the update report and the progress being made be noted.

8 Children's Performance Highlight Report (July 2019)

The Board considered a report which provided key highlights on performance monitoring data for the Children's Service up to July 2019, presented by Steve Comb, Gill Addy and Sara Hions.

The Board noted that recruitment of foster carers was a challenge for Councils across the country. Andy Quinlan explained that new ways to advertise and raise awareness were being explored, for example a leaflet had been included in runner's gift bags at a recent 'colour run' event. Colleen Kenworthy said that the Fostering Network was also looking at the offer for foster carers.

In response to a question, Steve said that the figures quoted in terms of adoption levels and timescales were the average of statistical neighbours. It would be possible to provide individual figures for comparable authorities to the Board.

It was reported that a second hub for care leavers had now been established; 'No 12' in Dewsbury, and had been very well received. Ofsted had been impressed by the No 11 facility in Huddersfield.

It was noted that the introduction of bus passes was imminent and over 100 care leavers had Kirklees Active Leisure (KAL) cards.

RESOLVED –

(1) That the Children's Performance Highlight Report (July 2019) be noted.

(2) That, in a future report, individual authority figures be provided for the number of children in care per 10,000 child population for those statistical neighbours regarded as being similar and close in terms of socio-economic status to Kirklees.

9 Overview of Number of Children in Care

The Board considered an overview of the number of children in care.

RESOLVED –

That the report giving an overview of the number and profile of children in care be noted.

10 Annual Private Fostering Report

The Board considered a report giving information on the number of children and young people privately fostered in the District for the period April 2018 to March 2019.

Andy Quinlan explained that responsibility for the welfare of a child in a private fostering arrangement now lay with the Assessment and Intervention Team; and responsibility for assessment with the Connected Person's Assessment Team. Work was ongoing to raise awareness of private fostering and a progress report could be provided in 12 months time.

RESOLVED –

(1) That the annual report in relation to private fostering in Kirklees be noted.

(2) That it be acknowledged that the Virtual School will play a part in raising awareness/training in respect of private fostering arrangements.

11 Annual Report on the Health of Looked After Children

The Board considered an annual report on the health of looked after children, covering the period 1st April 2018 – 31st March 2019, presented by Gill Addy.

Gill explained that performance against the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) remained very good. Implementation of the new IT system had been a challenge but the team had worked effectively to ensure that assessments were completed within the statutory timescale.

In response to questions Gill explained that;

- Referral could be made to the Emotional Wellbeing Team at any point if there were concerns about a young person's emotional and mental health.
- The possibility of electronic communication with foster carers was being explored.

Sara Hions pointed out that mental health and emotional wellbeing were also included within a child's Personal Education Plan (PEP).

RESOLVED –

(1) That the Annual Health Report for Kirklees Looked After Children, for the period April 2018 to March 2019, be noted and welcomed.

(2) That an update be provided to the Chair in respect of the use of secure electronic communication with carers in relation to the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ).

12 Annual Report on Youth Offending Team (YOT) relating to Work with Children in Care

The Board considered an annual report on the Youth Offending Team, presented by Andy Gresswell, which gave details of the level of offending by Looked After Children (LAC), and the improvement in outcomes for LAC who had been subject to an intervention by the Youth Offending Team (YOT).

Andy explained that significant improvements had been achieved, further to the introduction of a small team of LAC specialists within the team. The use of a restorative approach had been expanded, to try and resolve issues at an early stage and help to divert young people from the criminal justice system. A lot of work had been undertaken with the residential units on this approach and tailored training could now be offered to foster carers.

RESOLVED –

(1) That the report in relation to the level of offending by Looked After Children and the improvement in outcomes for those subject to an intervention with the Youth Offending Team be noted and welcomed.

(2) That arrangements be made for training to be provided for members of the Kirklees Fostering Network in respect of the restorative approach/use of mediation.

13 Updates from Board Members on Interaction with Services

The Board gave consideration to verbal updates from Board Members on progress and key issues following interaction with Services and partners to challenge the role of the Corporate Parent.

Councillor Lawson reported on initial discussions with planning and that a further meeting was to be held in due course.

Members discussed the value of the National Citizen Service scheme (NCS) that was funded by the Government. Colleen Kenworthy suggested that their relaunch should include a linkage to NCS. It was also suggested that this should be promoted through schools.

Councillor Smith reported that he had spoken with the relevant officer in offending and a meeting was to be organised.

Colleen Kenworthy reported on a 'relaxed kids' session that had been undertaken as a pilot and funding for this was being explored. She had also discussed the possibility of organising free/reduced price events with an officer from Kirklees Active Leisure (KAL) along with the possibility of free KAL cards with a +1 feature.

Councillor Kendrick reported that she had attended a partnership support event in North Kirklees and a Social Work Conference both of which had been interesting and inspiring; she had also attended the opening of No 12 in Dewsbury.

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RESOLVED –

(1) That the updates from Board Members in relation to their interaction with services and partners to challenge their role as a Corporate Parent be noted.

(2) That the Kirklees Fostering Network liaise with the Service Manager (Fostering) to explore potential linkages with the National Citizen Service scheme.

(3) That it be noted that Service Directors have been asked to attend future meetings of the Board to discuss what their service does/could do to contribute to the role of corporate parent.

(4) That the Kirklees Fostering Network liaise with the Head of Corporate Parenting in relation to arranging a visit to the No.12 drop-in facility in Dewsbury for the Teenage Support Group.

(5) That it be noted that Ward Councillors who are interested in visiting the No.12 drop-in facility in Dewsbury should contact the Leaving Care Team to make the necessary arrangements.

14 **Corporate Parenting Board Agenda Plan 2019/20**

The Panel will consider the agenda plan for 2019/20 municipal year.

RESOLVED –

That an item in relation to 'Staying Put' and supported board and lodgings be considered for inclusion on the agenda for the December 2019 meeting.

15 **Dates of Future Meetings**

RESOLVED –

That the dates of meetings of the Board during the remainder of the 2019/20 municipal year, as set out below, be noted:

- 24th October 2019, 10am
- 18th December 2019, 10am
- 10th February 2020, 10am
- 9th April 2020, 10am