

Contact Officer: Helen Kilroy

## KIRKLEES COUNCIL

### CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

**Thursday 24th October 2019**

- Present: Councillor Viv Kendrick (Chair)  
Councillor Karen Allison  
Councillor Fazila Loonat  
Councillor John Lawson  
Councillor Richard Smith  
Gill Addy  
Christine Bennett  
Tom Brailsford  
Steve Comb  
Colleen Kenworthy  
Barry Lockwood  
Melanie Tiernan  
Janet Tolley
- In attendance: Andy Quinlan, Service Manager (Fostering)  
Yasmin Mughal, Complaints and Represent Manager  
Andy Quinlan, Service Manager (Fostering)
- Observers: Cllr Andrew Marchington (ex-officio)
- Apologies: Charlotte Jackson  
Elaine McShane  
Sara Miles  
Jo-Anne Sanders  
Ophelia Rix

#### **1 Membership of the Board, Introductions and Apologies**

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies had been received from Ophelia Rix, Julie Bragg, Elaine McShane, Jo-Anne Sanders, Charlotte Jackson and Sara Miles.
2. The Board noted that Tom Brailsford's new job title was Service Director (Resources, Improvement and Partnerships) and that he would remain a member of the Board.
3. The Board noted that the Head of Commissioning post was currently vacant, but that the new post-holder would be a Member of the Board.
4. The Board noted that the Terms of Reference Membership would be updated accordingly.

#### **2 Interests**

No interests were declared.

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### 3 Admission of the Public

It was agreed that all agenda items would be held in public session.

### 4 Deputations/Petitions

No deputations or petitions.

### 5 Public Question Time

No questions from the public were received.

### 6 Role of Corporate Parent - Strategic Director (Corporate Strategy Commissioning and Public Health)

The Board considered a verbal report from Rachel Spencer-Henshall, Strategic Director (Corporate Strategy Commissioning and Public Health) on the role of the Corporate Parent.

Rachel Spencer-Henshall highlighted the following key areas where the Corporate Strategy Commissioning and Public Health could act in an enabling role to Corporate Parenting:-

- Concessionary Council Tax relief for Care Leavers;
- Integrating Asylum Seeker looked after children into the local community;
- Job Scheme for Care Leavers – Sanna Mahmood was leading on a pilot to support care leavers into employment, it was hoped this could be continued long term;
- Exploration of gaining access for Care Leavers to employee benefits, such as My Staff Shop and Employee Healthcare;
- Commission services in public health to work directly with children and looking at needs of and assets for carers, including trying to achieve better targets for this vulnerable group;
- Free KAL passes for care leavers now available.

In response to a question from the Board relating to the Saturday Job Scheme for young people who were 16 years of age and in care, Rachel Spencer Henshall agreed to report back to the Board with further information.

The Board agreed to consider a future report on the outcomes of the pilot Job Scheme for Care Leavers and the Saturday Job Scheme. The Board agreed that these schemes should be part of the Corporate Parenting Strategy and that the Head of Service for Assessment and Intervention would make the link via the local community hubs with local business representatives, who might be able to offer employment opportunities to young people in care and care leavers.

In response to a question from the Board relating to Oral Health Care and dental support for looked after children and care leavers, the Board requested that this be included in the Oral Health Strategy and Action Plan 2019. Gill Addy advised that registering looked after children at dentists should be part of the Strategy. Rachel Spencer Henshall suggested that the Oral Health Strategy and Action Plan 2019 be taken to the Health and Wellbeing Board for consideration.

The Board suggested that a strategic overview should be drafted which outlined what was available across the Local Authority for looked after children and care

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leavers, which would ensure that those who were entitled received the same offer and that this was properly communicated to youngsters and carers in Kirklees.

Colleen Kenworthy from the Kirklees Fostering Network (KFN), advised that Kirklees Active Leisure had emailed the KFN with apprenticeship vacancies, which had been really helpful and had not previously been provided. The Board agreed it would be useful for the KFN to receive this information from KAL on a regular basis so that it could be shared with Foster Carers and thus promote potential employment opportunities to care leavers and young people in care.

The Board agreed that further enquiries should be made as to whether Council Tax Relief could be provided for care leavers and that this should be in comparison with other local authorities.

The Board agreed that further consideration should be given to providing KAL passes to foster carers as they had to take looked after children to leisure facilities but currently had to pay entry fees. Rachel Spencer-Henshall and Steve Comb agreed to liaise with KAL on this matter.

In response to a question from the Board relating to providing Max cards for foster carers at a cost of £3 and whether this could be part of the pupil premium funding, Janet Tolley agreed to liaise with the Kirklees Fostering Network to discuss further.

### **RESOLVED -**

1. The Board noted the verbal update on the role of the Corporate Parent and thanked Rachel Spencer-Henshall for her contributions.
2. That the Board consider a future report on the 'Saturday Job Scheme' for looked after children.
3. That the Oral Health Strategy Action Plan be considered by the Health and Wellbeing Board at a future meeting.
4. That the Board consider a report on the outcome of the pilot job scheme for care leavers.
5. That the Head of Service for Assessment and Intervention make the link via the local community hubs with local business representatives who may be able to offer employment opportunities to young people in care and care leavers.
6. That KAL send regular updates to the Kirklees Fostering Network outlining apprenticeship vacancies so that these could be shared with foster carers.
7. That the Virtual School Head Teacher liaise with the Kirklees Fostering Network regarding max cards for foster carers and how these could be funded via the pupil premium.
8. That enquiries be undertaken to find out if council tax relief could be given to care leavers and that this should be in comparison with other Local Authorities.
9. The Board agreed that further consideration should be given to providing KAL passes to foster carers as they had to take looked after children to leisure facilities but currently had to pay entry. Rachel Spencer-Henshall and Steve Comb agreed to liaise with KAL on this matter.

**7 Ofsted and Improvement Board update**

The Board considered a verbal update on key issues from Ofsted and the Improvement Board presented by Steve Comb, Head of Corporate Parenting (Sufficiency)

Steve Comb highlighted the following key areas:-

- Unregulated and unregistered Children's Homes provision; unregulated Children's Homes did not have any regulations applied - this was a current focus for Ofsted and Kirklees Children's Services were currently looking at this area;
- There had been a recent increase in the number of children in care and the Improvement Board had requested a report which would identify further information relating to the children and their circumstances.

**RESOLVED -**

1. The Board noted the update on Ofsted and Improvement Board and thanked Steve Comb for his contributions.

**8 Children's Performance Highlight Report (Sept 2019)**

The Board considered a report giving key highlights on Performance Monitoring data for the Children's Service up to September 2019 presented by Steve Comb, Head of Corporate Parenting (Sufficiency), Janet Tolley, Virtual Head Teacher and Gill Addy, Designated Nurse for LAC and Care Leavers.

The Board agreed to consider a report in February 2020 showing a breakdown of persistent absentees by foster carers, Connected and Kinship Carer placements.

In response to a question from the Board relating to how the figures for dental checks of looked after children and how the figures compared nationally, Gill Addy advised that Kirklees was above average, but that the team were trying to improve on the collection of data from dentists and carers. Colleen Kenworthy advised that foster carers did inform the supervising Social Worker when they took a child to the dentist. The Board were concerned that this information was not being passed on and Andy Quinlan agreed to follow up.

The following key areas were highlighted:-

- Persistent absentees of looked after children from education – this had improved since last year;
- A bid which had been made to the Department for Education to fund the 'Mockingbird' model of fostering had been unsuccessful; Kirklees was looking at developing its own model and would consult the Kirklees Fostering Network to discuss further.

The Board agreed that the use of acronyms in reports should be avoided where possible but if they had to be used, they should be put in full at least once. The Board agreed that the use of acronyms in reports should also be consistent.

In response to a question from the Board relating to One Adoption and how Kirklees compared nationally and with statistical neighbours in terms of the number of children adopted, Tom Brailsford advised that Kirklees would shortly be reviewing One Adoption arrangements and its partnership with Kirklees.

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In response to a question from the Board relating to how many children remained an adopted child, Steve Comb agreed to ask One Adoption to provide the information in a future report. The Board noted that One Adoption would be attending the December meeting to give a 6 monthly update.

### **RESOLVED -**

1. The Board noted the Children's Performance Highlight Report (September 2019) and thanked Steve Comb, Janet Tolley and Gill Addy for their contributions.
2. That the Board consider a report in February 2020 showing a breakdown of persistent absentees by foster carers, Connected and Kinship Carer placements.
3. That the Service Manager for Fostering liaise with Children's Social Care to ensure that records reported by foster carers on attendance at dental practices by looked after children was passed on to the Designated Nurse Team.
4. The Board agreed that the use of acronyms in reports should be avoided if possible but if used should be consistent throughout.
5. That One Adoption provide figures on the number of children who remained adopted, including the numbers where the adoption had not been successful.
6. That the Board consider a future update on how Kirklees compared both nationally and with statistical neighbours in terms of the number of children adopted.

### **9 Overview of number of Children in Care**

The Board considered an overview of the number and age of children in care, which included information relating to young people aged 16 plus placed in unregulated semi-independent accommodation inside and outside of the District presented by Steve Comb, Head of Corporate Parenting (Sufficiency).

Steve Comb advised the Board that this report was also considered by the Children's Scrutiny Panel.

The Board was informed that there had been a recent increase in the number of children in care and the Improvement Board had requested a report to look at who the children were, their age and what was known about them. Steve Comb further explained that Kirklees did support children to stay with their families, however, if they needed to come into care the necessary steps would be taken.

Steve Comb advised that good progress had been made on the number of children placed more than 20 miles from their home address.

In response to a question from the Board relating to whether the number of foster carers had increased, the Board noted that the numbers were only just stable. The Board was informed that 7 foster carers had been recruited but 12 had left. The Board agreed that more information was needed on why people left foster caring.

Tom Brailsford advised that the Mockingbird model in Kirklees would focus on what was best and would not be financially driven.

In response to a question from the Board regarding what support and information was available for people who might be thinking about becoming foster carers,

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Colleen Kenworthy advised that Kirklees Fostering Network held coffee mornings where people could come and get more information and talk to other foster carers. Andy Quinlan advised that the service was looking at a 'buddying up' approach for those who were unsure if foster caring was right for them. The Board was informed that training was also available for potential foster carers to help them decide.

### **RESOLVED -**

1. The Board noted the report on Number and age of Children in Care and thanked Steve Comb for his contributions.

## **10 Annual Report on Review of Foster Carer Handbook**

The Board considered an Annual Report on the Review of the Foster Carer Handbook presented by Andy Quinlan, Service Manager for Fostering.

Andy Quinlan highlighted the following key areas:-

- In early stages of investigating whether the full Handbook should be made available on the internet with links so users could go straight to the information they required; the Board was informed that paper copies of the handbook would still be provided;
- Next review of the Handbook would be July 2020;
- Discussions had begun to look at the fees paid to Kirklees Foster Carers and any proposed changes would be built into the budget at Council in February 2020;
- Foster Carer recruitment process included information regarding allowances and how these could be calculated;
- Foster care was regulated and some information in the Handbook had to be displayed in a certain format.

The Board agreed that a foster carer allowance calculator should be made available on the internet to allow people to calculate their own allowances for foster caring.

The Board suggested that advice regarding Housing Benefits should be made available to foster carers and agreed that training for new foster carers should include information on how to apply for housing benefit for those carers who decided to give up work.

The Kirklees Fostering Network advised that the Handbook was a really useful guide for foster carers. The Board agreed that an early version of the web based Handbook should be shared with the Board as soon as possible.

### **RESOLVED -**

1. The Board noted the Annual Report on the Review of the Foster Carer Handbook and thanked Andy Quinlan for his contributions.
2. That the Board consider the web version of the Handbook before it went live on the Council's website.
3. That a foster carer allowance calculator be added to the website when the Handbook was live so that people could work out their own allowances for foster caring.

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4. That the Recruitment Training for foster carers included information relating to how to apply for housing benefit should foster carers decide to give up work to become a foster carer.

- 11 **Annual report on Children's Rights and Independent Visitors Scheme (1st April to 31 March 2019) and a 6 monthly update (April 19 to Sept 19)**  
The Board considered an Annual Report on Children's Rights and Independent Visitors Scheme (1<sup>st</sup> April to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019) and a 6 monthly update (April 2019 to Sept 2019) presented by Melanie Tiernan, Service Manager (Children's) and Anna Gledhill, Social Work Practice Lead.

### **Annual Report on Children's Rights and Independent Visitors Scheme**

Melanie Tiernan highlighted the following key areas:-

- The highest proportion of work undertaken by the Children's Rights Team between April 2018 and March 2019 related to advocacy for children and young people looked after or care leavers (78%);
- Children and Young people who were supported at their Looked After Review or other meetings, 179 children and young people fed back that a positive outcome was achieved regarding issues they requested support for;
- Children and young people looked after living in another local authority area were some of the most vulnerable children and over the last twelve months a total of 82 had received support from the Children's Rights Team;
- Comments received from young people had been included in the report.

### **Children's Rights Team - 6 monthly report**

Melanie Tiernan highlighted the following key areas:-

- Between 1.4.19 and 30.9.19 the Children's Rights Team supported children and young people relating to 198 advocacy issues and 132 of these were involved providing support at Child Looked After Reviews or other meetings;
- The issues of contact and placement continued to be recurring themes, however, if current figures continued for the next 6 months these would show an overall annual reduction from 2017-2018;
- There had been a reduction in the number wanting to make a formal complaint;
- Children and young people aged 10 or over who were subject to a child protection conference had the opportunity to speak with an Advocate to ensure that their wishes and feelings were heard within the process and taken into consideration;
- The Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum continued to meet twice a month; the 2 groups worked on a piece of graffiti art for a number of weeks which was presented to Corporate Parents in July.

### **Independent Visitors Scheme – 6 monthly report**

Melanie Tiernan highlighted the following key areas:-

- At the end of September 2019, 44 young people were matched with an Independent Visitor; Councillor Kendrick advised that Councillors could help to promote the independent visitors scheme for looked after children;

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- 9 new referrals for young people to be allocated an Independent Visitor were received during 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30 September 2019, 5 of which were allocated an Independent Visitor of their choice;
- A short questionnaire was completed by Independent Visitors who attended a recent Peer Support meeting to capture the areas of support they felt they provided to young people;
- In September 2019 there were 10 young people who had been referred to the scheme had not been allocated an Independent Visitor, the scheme was currently oversubscribed;
- In order for the Independent Visitor Scheme to develop and support an increased number of children and young people, a business case had been submitted for additional Co-ordinator capacity.

Councillor Kendrick reported on the success of the Achieve Awards Event for Care Leavers held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2019. The Board agreed it would like to support funding for future events of this type.

### **RESOLVED -**

The Board noted the Annual Report on Children's Rights and Independent Visitors Scheme (1<sup>st</sup> April to 31 March 2019) and a 6 monthly update (April 2019 to Sept 2019) and thanked Melanie Tiernan and Anna Gledhill for their contributions.

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### **Annual report on Complaints and Compliments for Children in Care**

The Board considered an Annual Report on Complaints and Compliments for Children in Care during the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 to 30 September 2019 presented by Yasmin Mughal, Complaints and Represent Manager.

Yasmin Mughal highlighted the following key points:-

- A significant number of complaints received were being resolved in the early stages;
- Working closely with the Children's Rights Teams in terms of complaints;
- Only 5 complainants out of 85 registered at Stage One had proceeded to Stage Two formal investigation;
- 2 complainants who were dissatisfied with the Stage 2 responses had proceeded to Stage 3;
- The Ombudsman had agreed with the view of the Local Authority in relation to all complaints and had taken no further action;
- The majority of complaints were consistently responded to within the statutory deadlines at Stage 1 and there had been a great improvement in the average time taken in responding to complaints;
- 100% of complaints received from young people were being responded to within statutory deadlines;
- Learning identified from complaints investigations was being shared with the Learning and Development Service.

The Board noted that the figures for failing to consult or communicate to complainants were still high, but acknowledged the trend was reducing. Yasmin Mughal advised that where a mistake had been made, an apology would be given by Kirklees and the matter followed up.



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In response to a question from the Board on what had changed as a result of complaints, Yasmin Mughal advised that the team were now reporting a lot more on trends and had made significant improvements in terms of meeting timescales and were striving to respond earlier than statutory timescales.

Christine Bennett, Head of Service for Assessment and Intervention, advised the Board that it was positive that a Senior Manager would apologise where a mistake had been made and that she was working with Yasmin Mughal's team to try and get resolutions to complaints in the early stages. Melanie Tiernan advised that Managers would sometimes go out and visit the complainants when it was felt this was necessary to resolve a complaint.

The Board agreed that the report showed a significant improvement and culture change within the organisation where there was now a better sense of ownership for complaints.

Colleen Kenworthy advised the Board that the Kirklees Fostering Network were also working closely with Yasmin Mughal's team to keep complaints low and were continuing to build links between the Local Authority, looked after children and foster carers to resolve complaints.

### **RESOLVED -**

1. The Board noted the Annual Report on Complaints and Compliments for Children in Care and thanked Yasmin Mughal for her contributions.

### **13 Updates from Board Members on interaction with Services**

The Board considered verbal updates from Board Members who gave an update on progress and key issues following interaction with services and partners to challenge the role of the Corporate Parent.

Councillor Lawson advised the Board that he had been in discussions with Planning to look at future build of Children's Homes and the voice of the child could be taken into account as part of the planning process.

Councillor Kendrick advised the Board that she had presented a challenge to all Councillors at full Council in September 2019 relating to their role as Corporate Parents and the areas where they could help to promote and create opportunities for looked after children and care leavers in Kirklees. The Board was informed that following Council in September 2019, an email had been sent to all Councillors regarding recruitment events for foster carers and they were also sent a copy of the Fostering Newsletter. Councillor Kendrick further explained that some feedback had been received from Councillors and this had been fed back to the Kirklees Fostering Network.

Councillor Kendrick advised the Board that she had attended the following key events:-

- Kinship Carers Workshop at No 12 in Dewsbury on the 8<sup>th</sup> October 2019 and had agreed to take a number of issues away to follow up;

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- Children in Care Council meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2019; the Board agreed that it would be good to see more children and young people get involved in the Children in Care Council;
- Achieve Awards for Care Leavers on the 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2019 which had been a very successful and emotional event.

### **RESOLVED -**

The Board noted the updates from Board Members on interaction with services.

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

The Board considered the agenda plan of the Corporate Parenting Board for 2019/20.

### **RESOLVED -**

1. That the 2019/20 Agenda Plan for the Corporate Parenting Board be noted and updated as agreed.
2. That the Governance Officer be authorised to liaise with officers on agreed actions.

#### **15 Dates of Future Meetings**

The Board noted the dates of future meetings of the Board during the remainder of the 2019/20 municipal year and agreed to schedule an additional meeting in March 2020 to consider the high volume of agenda items on the agenda plan.

### **RESOLVED -**

1. The Board noted the dates of the remaining meetings in the 2019/20 municipal year:-
  - 18<sup>th</sup> December 2019, 10 am
  - 10<sup>th</sup> February 2020, 10 am
  - 9<sup>th</sup> April 2020, 10 am
2. The Board agreed to schedule an additional meeting in March 2020 to consider the high volume of agenda items.