

Name of meeting: Corporate Parenting Board

Date: 3rd November 2020

Title of report: Independent Visitor Scheme 6 Monthly Report (01 April 2020 – 30 September 2020)

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?	“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	23/10/2020 Tom Brailsford
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 seven years ago and is coordinated by an Independent Service Officer; administration is provided by the Children's Rights Business Support Officer.

The aim of the scheme is for Independent adult volunteers to support 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 develop independent trusted adult relationships. The volunteers provide children and young people with someone to talk to, and offer advice, guidance, and support, together with opportunities to have fun with, in an informal setting.

At the end of September 2020, there were 34 young people who had an Independent Visitor. 23 were living in Kirklees and 11 were living in a host local authority area. There were 14 young people waiting to be matched with an Independent Visitor, of these 8 were living in host Local Authority areas.

During the past six months the Covid-19 Pandemic has affected the ability of Independent Visitor's to engage with young people as previously; however virtual methods have been utilised, together with other methods, such as volunteers sending, cards and letters, books, craft activities etc to young people.

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. The scheme provides young people with opportunities to build trusting relationships, have new experiences, chose what information to share information about themselves

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 and location 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 scheme offers a child or young person in care the opportunity to be supported by 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.

During the last six months Covid-19 restrictions have impacted on the ability to support children in person, however volunteers have kept in regular touch with young people through telephone calls, texts, video calls and sending cards, letters or small gifts through the post; which has helped to continue the development of positive meaningful relationships

3.5 Other (eg Legal/Financial or Human Resources)

Not applicable

4. Consultees and their opinions

Not applicable

5. Next steps and timelines

The priorities for the next 6 months for the Independent Visitor Scheme are:

- In anticipation of the Coronavirus pandemic restricting the ability for group training to take place, an Independent Visitors training workbook will be developed, to be delivered and completed virtually with new Independent Visitors.
- Explore virtual matching / support for young people living in host local authority areas
- Support the safe resumption of in person contact /activities between Independent Visitors and young people in accordance with risk assessments.

6. Officer recommendations and reasons

That the report be noted

7. Cabinet portfolio holder's recommendation

Not applicable

8. Contact officer

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9. Background Papers and History of Decisions

Not applicable

10. Service Director responsible

Tom Brailsford – Service Director, Resources, Improvements and Partnerships