

Contact Officer: Jodie Harris

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

Tuesday 23rd March 2021

Present:

Councillor Viv Kendrick (Chair)
Councillor Carole Pattison
Councillor Richard Smith
Councillor Karen Allison
Councillor John Lawson
Councillor Andrew Marchington (ex-officio)
Stewart Horn, Head of Joint Commissioning - Children and Families
Barry Lockwood, Kirklees Fostering Network
Janet Tolley, Virtual School Head Teacher
Sara Miles, Head of Service, Resources, Improvements and Partnerships
Elaine McShane, Service Director - Family Support and Child Protection
Sanna Mahmood, Care Leavers Advocate – Family Support and Child Protection
Colleen Kenworthy - Kirklees Fostering Network
Gill Addy, Designated Nurse Looked After Children
Julie Bragg , Head of Corporate Parenting (Children and Care Leavers)
Anna Gledhill, Service Manager Quality Assurance and Social Work Practice Lead – Children and Families
Dale O'Neill – Children's Scrutiny Panel Co-optee

In attendance:

Laura Caunce, Head of Service, Children's Sufficiency, Resources, Improvement and Partnerships
Hazel Adams, Information Officer
Ian Mottershaw, Senior Manager, Transitional Safeguarding

Apologies:

Jo-Anne Sanders, Service Director, Learning and Early Support - Learning and Skills
Christine Carmichael - Kirklees Fostering Network
Ophelia Rix, Principal Social Worker
Keith Fielding, Kirklees Fostering Network
Tom Brailsford, Service Director (Resources, Improvement and Partnerships)

1 Membership of the Board/Apologies

The Chair welcomed Board Members. Apologies had been received from Jo-Anne Sanders, Christine Carmichael, Ophelia Rix, Keith Fielding, and Tom Brailsford.

2 Interests

No interests were declared.

3 Minutes

The Board considered the minutes of the last meeting held on the 13th January 2021.

RESOLVED- That the minutes be approved as a correct record.

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 Public Question Time

No questions from the public were received.

7. Review of Terms of Reference of the Board

The Board considered the frequency of meetings of the Corporate Parenting Board as proposed in a draft amendment to the Terms of Reference.

RESOLVED - It was agreed that the Board will meet for a minimum of 6 times per annum, on a bi-monthly basis and that the Terms of Reference of the Board would be amended accordingly.

8. Children's Performance Highlight Report

The Board considered a report giving key highlights on Performance Monitoring data for Children's Services.

Julie Bragg, Head of Corporate Parenting, presented the performance data relating to 'children entering care' and 'children in care and placement stability'. It was reported the data up to February 2021 showed improvements across all performance indicators, which included a slight decrease in the numbers of children coming into care, a reduction in the number of placements outside of Kirklees, fewer placement moves and a decrease in the number of changes of social workers.

In response to a question from the Board concerning data relating to stability meetings, it was agreed that the possibility of reporting this information in the Children's Performance Highlight Report would be discussed at a briefing of the relevant portfolio holder.

Sara Miles , Head of Service, Resources, Improvements and Partnerships presented the performance data relating ‘Looked After Children (LAC) Reviews, Visiting, and Missing’. It was advised that the performance indicator showed that 98% of reviews were held within the designated timescales which was an improvement on the average for the proceeding 12 month period.

Anna Gledhill, Service Manager Quality Assurance and Social Work Practice Lead, Children and Families, gave an update on children’s advocacy in relation to Looked After Reviews during the Covid-19 Pandemic. Feedback on the virtual process from those individuals who required an advocate had been mixed with some reporting that they had found it difficult to receive support virtually. It was advised that the feedback given by children and young people was to be central in developing the future approach.

In response, the Board highlighted that it was important to recognise that each child had different support requirements and suggested that multiple options were provided to ensure that individual needs were met. The Board also requested that the outcomes and decisions made in relation to this piece of work be presented at a future meeting of the Board.

Responding to a previous question asked by the Board relating to understanding missing episodes, Elaine McShane, Service Director, Family Support and Child Protection, suggested that the data relating to LAC and the different types of missing episodes be provided at a future meeting of the Board. The Board welcomed this suggestion and further requested that this information included a breakdown of the different types of placements in relation to LAC going missing.

Janet Tolley, Virtual School Head Teacher, briefed the Panel on the work of the Virtual School during the Covid-19 pandemic and the support provided to children through the transition back into education. It was noted that a blended approach going forward may be adopted and the key priorities of the Virtual School were:

- To continue the completion of termly Personal Education Plans with transition support, and support for working from home where necessary.
- Targeting Attendance/Persistent absence as a high priority whilst being sensitive to the emotional impact the pandemic will have had on young people.
- Maintaining a strong focus on pupils not in full time education provision.
- To reduce school moves and the number of young people with a break in educational provision whenever possible.

The Board noted the update and thanked Janet Tolley and the Virtual School for their work in supporting children with their education throughout the pandemic.

Gill Addy, Designated Nurse for LAC in Kirklees, presented the data relating to ‘LAC Health’. It was reported that:

- Dental registrations had begun to increase following the pause on all routine and non-essential dental work during the national lockdown.
- The Dental Commissioner for West Yorkshire was asked to circulate communications to dentists to ask them to prioritise vulnerable LAC children.

- The data relating to Substance Abuse was collected from the ‘review health assessments,’ but it was noted that this information related mainly to high level use.
- This data provided in the report was reliant on young people reporting a substance misuse problem during the health assessments.

The Board congratulated Gill Addy for her work in supporting dental registrations for LAC and it was agreed that further discussions would take place to identify a new way of collating data relating to substance misuse and LAC.

In relation to adoption, Julie Bragg advised that a report was being prepared for presentation at the Quality Assurance Panel, which would contain more detail around adoption. The Board requested that this report be provided to a future meeting of the Board.

Laura Caunce, Head of Service, Children’s Sufficiency, Resources, Improvement and Partnerships presented the data relating to new carers approved , de-registration’s and placements.

During the discussion to follow the Board asked questions about exit interviews and what had been learnt in order to reduce de-registrations.

Laura Caunce explained that it was important to focus on a combination of strengthening the recruitment process alongside improving the support to Foster Carers. It was agreed that information relating to exit interviews, the number that had taken place and any key findings be provided to a later meeting of the Board.

The Board further asked about the progress made on ‘the mockingbird model’ (a method of supporting Foster Carers in Crisis) which was put on hold during the pandemic. Julie Bragg advised that a Hub-Carer and Liaison Officer had been successfully recruited and the aim was for this to be implemented alongside the Fostering Modernisation proposals.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Board noted the Children’s Performance Highlight Report and thanked all presenting officers for their contributions.
2. It was agreed that ‘the inclusion of data relating to stability meetings in the Children’s Performance Highlight Report’ would be discussed during a subsequent briefing of the Cabinet portfolio holder.
3. It was agreed that multiple options for the approach to Children’s advocacy and Looked after Reviews would be provided and that these options and any decisions made be presented at a future meeting of the Board.
4. It was agreed that further discussions would take place to identify a new way of collating data relating to substance misuse and LAC.
5. That data showing the different type of missing episodes and a breakdown of placements types in relation to LAC going missing be provided at a future meeting of the Board.
6. That the adoption report for the Quality Assurance Panel also be presented at a future meeting of the Board.

7. It was agreed that information relating to exit interviews, the number that had taken place and any key findings be provided to a later meeting of the Board.

9. Overview of Number and Age of Children in Care

The Board considered the report 'Overview of Number and Age of Children in Care' which was presented by Julie Bragg, Head of Corporate Parenting. The report included information relating to the number and profile of children in care in Kirklees as well as the number of Children placed outside of the District.

RESOLVED – The Board noted the report 'Overview and Age of Children in Care' and Julie Bragg was thanked for her contributions.

10 Youth Offending Team, Annual Report

The Board considered the Annual Report from the Youth Offending Team , now known as the Youth Justice Service (YJS) relating to their work with children in care and the comparative data for 2016/17 , 2017/18 and 2018/19 which was presented by Ian Mottershaw, Senior Manager, Transitional Safeguarding.

The report set out information about the level of offending LAC and the improvements in outcomes for Children Looked After (CLA) subject to an intervention from the YJS as well as the key next steps to continue improving the relationships with young people support services and to continue to improve the access to those services for users.

Ian Mottershaw highlighted the development of the Youth Engagement Service (YES) and explained that the YES integrated several support teams within children social care, including the YJS. The YES approach went beyond statutory interventions to deliver the right support to children and young people with the aim to provide flexible and responsive services that reduce the risk of exploitation and episodes of missing from home and care.

The Board asked what the data suggested in terms of the type of placement of a LAC in relation to youth offending. Ian Mottershaw advised that the majority of cases were from a residential setting. Elaine McShane, Service Director, Family Support and Child Protection added that it was important to note that some children become looked after due to the nature of their offences.

Though the Board noted many positives to the approach it was noted that it was important make sure that the effectiveness in terms of tackling antisocial behaviour and crime was not lost. In response, Ian Mottershaw understood the Boards concerns and advised that the YJS and YES carry out their work within the statutory framework.

The Board was interested in exploring how awareness of trauma and abuse is promoted with key Council partners ,such as the police, and asked what engagement had taken place, or was planned, in respect of this issue. In his response, Ian Mottershaw confirmed that he was attending a 3 day event which was to be attended by the whole of the local partnership in respect of awareness of trauma and abuse.

The Board welcomed this news and advocated the early intervention work and the integrated approach of the YES.

RESOLVED – The Board noted the Annual Report from the Youth Offending Team (now the Youth Justice Team) and thanked Ian Mottershaw for his contributions.

11. Proposal for Fostering Modernisation

The Board considered a verbal update on the Proposal for Fostering Modernisation from Elaine McShane, Service Director, Family Support and Child Protection and Laura Caunce, Head of Service, Children's Sufficiency, Resources, Improvement and Partnerships.

Elaine McShane gave an overview on the focus of the proposals and the developing approach. The Board were advised that this was still a work in progress and that a full report on the Fostering Modernisation would be presented to the Board at a later date.

The Board requested more detail in relation to the 'Staying Put' policy. Elaine McShane advised that the policy was in the final stages of development alongside the financial policy for care leavers. These policies were interlinked, and the aim was for these to be completed and presented to the Board at the same time.

Laura Caunce provided an overview on the planned developments to the Fostering Recruitment Process following the review, which took place in 2020, and focused on identifying where the process could be redeveloped to make services more efficient. Once this work had been concluded it was agreed that an update would be given at a future meeting of the Board.

Work had also been undertaken to improve the quality and accessibility of information on the website. As a part of this, enquiry forms had been added to the website with an auto respond feature to make sure that information about applying to be a foster carer was provided to prospective applicants quickly.

The Board emphasised the importance of timely responses to prospective Foster Carers. Laura Caunce agreed with Board members and advised that a target was in place to ensure responses to enquiries were made within 24 hours of receipt. However, there were clear expectations that if the enquiry was received within the working day that it should be responded to within that day.

In the discussion to follow, issues were raised about foster carer retainment. The Board requested that the details of how many foster carers the Council were losing to other organisations was included in the next report presented to the Board.

Laura Caunce advised that work was to be undertaken around the promotion of the Kirklees Fostering offer which included the formation of a marketing strategy which was in the late stages of development.

The Board felt that it was important to make sure the offer was promoted in a way that was honest but also brought into discussion the option to offer benefits to foster

carers to make the offer more attractive and suggested that research into the fostering offers of other local authorities was carried out to identify possible areas for improvement.

Laura Caunce agreed to provide a report at a future meeting of the Board once the work around developments to the Fostering Recruitment Process had been concluded. This report would contain the additional information on the number of carers lost to other organisations. It was also agreed that Laura would start work on researching the fostering offers of other organisations. The Board also advised that any information on these pieces of work as they developed would be welcomed.

The Chair reiterated the issue of the recent de-registrations of Foster Carers as described by one of the Boards representatives from the Kirklees Fostering Network (KFN) under Item 8. It was requested that the matter be discussed with the relevant member of the KFN to identify the key themes and reasons behind the issue.

RESOLVED:

1. The Board noted the Proposal for Fostering Modernisation and thanked Laura Caunce and Elaine McShane for their contributions.
2. It was agreed that once the work around developments to the Fostering Recruitment Process had been concluded that an update report would be provided at a future meeting of the Board.
3. The Fostering Proposals update report would also contain the additional information on the number of foster carers lost to other organisations.
4. It was agreed that research would be carried out in respect of the fostering offers of other organisations.
5. It was agreed that any information on these work streams as they developed would be provided to the Board.
6. It was agreed that the relevant member of the KFN would be identified to hold discussions around the key themes and reasons for de-registrations.

12. OFSTED and Ambition Board

Elaine McShane, Service Director for Family Support and Child Protection explained that the Ambition Board continued to receive reports around the progress in respect of the recommendations made following the last inspection.

It was suggested that it would be useful to identify which reports might be presented at both the OFSTED and Ambition Board and the Corporate Parenting Board where there were matters of joint interest.

RESOLVED:

1. The Board noted the OFSTED and Ambition Board update
2. It was agreed that a discussion would be held to decide which reports planned for presentation at the OFSTED and Ambition Board would also be presented to the Corporate Parenting Board.

13. Updates from Board Members on Interactions with Services

The Board considered verbal updates from Board Members in relation to progress and key issues following interaction with Services and Partners to challenge the role of the Corporate Parent.

A Board Member asked about the issue of settled status in relation to LAC following the UK leaving the EU. Julie Bragg, Head of Corporate Parenting, responded to advise that all the data relating to Kirklees LAC had now been submitted to the Government.

During the school half term holidays, the Chair of the Board had been invited to several virtual activities. This included virtual visits to 'Timestep studios', who provide dance and movement activities, and 'Wacky' a programme including a variety of activities such as quizzes and live virtual sessions on Microsoft Teams. Both virtual sessions were aimed at providing activity for children particularly those with complex needs during the holidays and the Chair highlighted that the virtual sessions were of great enjoyment to all who took part. The Chair also met with a representative who was researching the Council's improvement journey working alongside Leeds on behalf of the Department for Education.

A member of the Board highlighted the good work of the Mirfield Community Centre in supporting children in that area during the half term holidays. This included providing innovative and creative learning activities. Thanks, was also given to the Kirklees Fostering Network for their work in supporting carers throughout the pandemic.

RESOLVED- The updates from Board Members on interactions with Services were noted.

14. Corporate Parenting Board Work Programme and Agenda Plan for 2020/21.

The Board considered the work plan for 2020/21 and were invited to put forward suggestions for the 2021/22 period.

RESOLVED –

The Board noted the Corporate Parenting Board Work Programme and Agenda Plan for 2020/21 and the items listed for consideration by the Board for 2021/22.