

Contact Officer: Jodie Harris

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

Tuesday 29th June 2021

Present: Councillor Viv Kendrick (Chair)
Councillor Carole Pattison
Councillor Richard Smith
Councillor Karen Allison
Councillor Andrew Marchington (ex-officio)
Stewart Horn, Head of Joint Commissioning - Children and Families
Elaine McShane, Service Director - Family Support and Child Protection
Sanna Mahmood, Care Leavers Advocate – Family Support and Child Protection
Colleen Kenworthy - Kirklees Fostering Network
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: Melanie Tiernan, Service Manager, Family Support and Child Protection
Lisa Warnes, Programme Manager – Children's Services Improvements , Children and Families.

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 to the meeting. Apologies had been received from Gill Addy , Tom Brailsford , Sara Miles , Christine Carmichael, Cllr Fazila Loonat, Barry Lockwood and Janet Tolley.

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2. Interests

No interests were declared.

3. Minutes

The Board considered the minutes of the last meeting held on the 23rd March 2021.

RESOLVED-

- 1) That the Minutes of the previous meeting be approved as a correct record.
- 2) That the reports agreed to be presented to the Board as detailed in the Minutes be added to the Boards work programme for 2020/21.

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. Children's Performance Highlight Report

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

Ophelia Rix ,Head of Corporate Parenting, presented the performance data relating to 'children entering care, children in care and placement stability'. It was reported that the data as of 31 May 2021 continued to show a decreasing trend in the number and rate of children in care in Kirklees. The positive trend was attributed to clear and robust procedures. The following areas of work were highlighted:

- The Legal Gateway and Permanence Panel continued to oversee the decision making and planning around Placement moves and care planning for children and young people.
- The continuation of strong partnership working was helping to ensure that children and young people remained within their families where possible.
- Where children needed to become looked after, clear processes ensured that matters were presented before courts in a timely manner.

The Board commented that the data presented was reassuring and that it was positive that the services provided were enabling children and young people to remain with their families where possible.

Elaine McShane, Service Director - Family Support and Child Protection advised that the introduction of the Multisystemic therapy (MST) Teams was beginning to have a positive impact as reflected in the data presented. It was explained that the MST approach was a restorative, evidenced-based intervention that aimed to prevent children from entering care by working with families. Elaine further suggested that an update on the work of the MST teams be presented to a future meeting of the Board.

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The Board members welcomed this suggestion and agreed that the report to be presented to the Board should be focused on how the multisystemic approaches were helping to keep children with their families and on understanding data in respect of the outcomes produced. The Board further agreed that it would be helpful for Board members to visit the MST Teams to gain greater understanding of their work.

The Board noted that partnership work between Children's Services and the Police was ongoing in respect of the Philomena Protocol (a scheme that asks carers to identify children and young people who are at risk of going missing, and to record vital information about them that can be used to help find them quickly and safely). Ophelia Rix advised that there was an improving picture in respect of timelines, but more work was required to increase understanding and fully implement the protocol across the partnership.

In relation to educational outcomes, Cllr Carole Pattison reported that the number of in-year school moves had continued to decrease over 2018-19 and 2019- 20 and the Board were advised that continuing to reduce the number of young people with a break in educational provision whenever possible was a priority of the virtual school.

Stewart Horn, Head of Joint Commissioning – Children and Families presented the data for 'Children Looked After Health' and reported that, there was a steadily improving picture of review health assessment data. 93% of assessments were achieved on time, and for most of the year 100% were completed within the statutory timescales. There was also an increase in the number of dental registrations and immunisations continued to go well.

Elaine McShane presented the data in relation to 'Children Looked After Convictions' and explained that offending rates were decreasing. It was advised that a Youth Justice Inspection was taking place and the Board requested that a report setting out the outcomes of the inspection be presented to a future meeting of the Board.

In relation to Care Leavers and 'Staying Put' placements, the Board asked some questions around Personal Advisors (PA's) and how a change of PA related to disengagement with services. It was requested that a report detailing the number of PA changes be produced to identify any correlation between changes to PA's and care leavers levels of disengagement with services.

In response, Elaine McShane agreed with Board members comments and advised that modernisation of the PA service was being undertaken within the 'Staying Put Policy' which was currently being developed. Ophelia Rix added that it was important to continuously review and improve the ways PA's are matched with young people to build positive sustainable relationships.

In response to question from the Board about how often children and young people are contacted by PA's, Elaine McShane advised the standard frequency was 6 weekly, but this was not a one size fits all approach. Following a discussion around PA contact with Care Leavers, Ophelia Rix suggested that a review took place around how often young people were visited by their PA's against the individual's circumstances and to help take a more bespoke approach to visit frequency going forwards . The Board welcomed this suggestion.

In relation to Adoption figures, the Board welcomed the data showing that Kirklees was significantly below the England rate of 12.0% and the Statistical Neighbours rate of 19.0%.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Board noted the Children’s Performance Highlight Report.
2. It was agreed that an update on the work of the MST Teams be presented at a future meeting of the Board. This report should contain information on how the multisystemic approaches were helping to prevent children from entering care and on understanding the data in respect of the outcomes.
3. It was agreed that Board members may choose to visit the MST Teams to gain a greater understanding of their work.
4. It was agreed that a report setting out the outcomes of the Youth Justice Inspection be presented to a future meeting of the Board.
5. It was requested that a report detailing the number of PA changes be provided to a future meeting of the Board. This report should include data in respect of changes to PA’s and , levels of disengagement with services as a part of the ‘Staying Put/Fostering Modernisation Update’.
6. It was agreed that information was collected around how often young people were visited by their PA’s and that this should be reviewed against the young person’s circumstances to help take a more bespoke approach to visit frequency’s that is based on the individual’s needs.

8. 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 Ophelia Rix, 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.

Following a discussion about the retainment of foster carers and the inclusion of out of area carers, the Board agreed that data relating to the number of Kirklees foster carers who had moved out of the area be provided to the Board.

Elaine McShane, Service Director - Family Support and Child Protection advised that over the next 6-12 months significant work was being undertaken around supporting foster carers through the ‘Mockingbird Model’ which aimed to modernise the support given in terms of improving the stability of fostering placements. The Board requested any estimated dates for the completion of the ‘Mockingbird’ policy. Elaine advised that progress was been made and September was anticipated to be the next phase of moving forward.

RESOLVED –

1. The Board noted the report ‘Overview and Age of Children in Care’ and Ophelia Rix was thanked for her contributions.

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2. It was agreed that data relating to the number of Kirklees foster carers who had moved out of the area be provided to the Board.

9. Children's Rights Team Annual Report

The Board considered the Annual Report from the Children's Rights Team relating to service delivery from 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021 which was presented by Melanie Tiernan, Service Manager, Family Support and Child Protection.

Melanie Tiernan explained that the key priorities for the Children's Rights Team in 2021/22 were to:

- Increase children and young people's participation in Looked After Reviews and Child Protection conferences.
- Increase membership of both the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum, to ensure that the voices of children and young people inform future service delivery and that there is representation of all groups of young people.
- Work with others across Children's services to capture children's voices and experiences and to help support participation inform service development and design.
- Introduce improved quality assurance mechanisms, to support the development of the Children's Rights Service and the team.
- Develop the Independent Visitor Scheme to provide a consistently high service to children, young people, and volunteers

In relation to point 9.1 in the report, under Child Protection Conference Advocacy, the Board asked a question as to why no referral from a social worker was listed as a reason for children not been seen. In response, Melanie Tiernan reassured the Board that instances of no referral were always followed up by a social worker and explained that the reason given may have been because the referral wasn't received on time. Further to this, it was advised that work was been done to make the referral process smoother and more efficient. The Board noted the positive feedback given by young people highlighting that this showed the value having an independent visitor can provide.

In response to this, Anna Gledhill, Service Manager, Quality Assurance and Social Work Practice Lead, advised that part of the campaign was increasing the publicity of the Independent Visitors work and the positive outcomes achieved. The Board welcomed this approach. In the discussion to follow, the Board suggested that as a part of recruiting volunteers to be Independent Visitors, that information about being an independent visitor could be advertised to the Councils internal retirement.

The Board responded to a number of questions submitted in a letter to the Chair of the Board from the National Independent Visitor Network (via Barnardo's) in relation to reviewing and monitoring Independent Visitor provision, ensuring that statutory responsibilities are met and that children in care are receiving the support they are entitled to. It was agreed that Anna Gledhill would respond to the letter reflecting the discussion held during the meeting of the Board in response to the questions.

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The Chair of the Board verbally reported under this item, that Sanna Mahmood, Care Leavers Advocate – Family Support and Child Protection, would be resigning as the Boards standing care leaver representative. The Board thanked Sanna for her time and valuable contributions to the Board.

To follow a further discussion was held about how best to represent the voice of care leavers during meetings of the Board. Melanie Tiernan suggested that a new care leaver be appointed as the standing representative, alongside periodical submissions from the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum which would showcase their work, highlight issues raised by young people as well as representing the collective voice of children and young people in care.

It was also suggested that members of the Board visit meetings of the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum. The Board welcomed this suggestion and agreed that periodically 1 or 2 different Board members should be invited to these meetings and requested that Melanie Tiernan provide dates of future meetings to the Board.

Social media platforms were also highlighted as a mechanism for engagement with young people. A discussion concerning privacy and safeguarding followed and in response to Board members concerns, Sanna Mahmood advised that Facebook discussions could be made confidential by using a closed group. The Board agreed this was a work in progress and that it was important to be careful about the information that is shared on social media and that use of a closed Facebook group may be the safest method to use if taken forward.

RESOLVED –

1. The Board noted the Children’s Rights Team Annual Report.
2. The Board thanked Sanna Mahmood, Care Leavers Advocate – Family Support and Child Protection for her contributions to the work of the Board in her role as care leaver representative.
3. It was agreed that information about volunteering as an Independent Visitor be added if possible, to the Councils internal retirement course.
4. It was agreed that a written response be given to the National Independent Visitor Network reflecting the Boards responses to their questions.
5. That the dates of future meetings of the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum be provided to the Board and that 1 to 2 members would be invited to attend these meetings periodically.
6. That the matter of Care Leaver representation on the Board and the use of social media be a work in progress considering suggestions made.

10. Overall Financial Policy for Care Leavers

Elaine McShane, Service Director - Family Support and Child Protection gave a presentation setting out the refreshed Care Leavers Support and Financial Guidance Policy.

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Board members welcomed and fully supported the draft policy and highlighted that a clearer and more flexible financial support policy was an important part of supporting looked after children post 18 and fulfilling the Councils role of a Corporate Parent. The Board also recognised that the draft policy was a good starting point that would evolve as work was taken forward.

RESOLVED:- The Board noted the Care Leavers Support and Financial Guidance Policy and thanked Lisa Warnes, Programme Manager – Children’s Services Improvements, Children and Families and Elaine McShane, Service Director - Family Support and Child Protection for their contributions.

11. **Virtual School Governing Body Update**

Cllr Carole Pattison gave verbal update on the work of the Virtual School Governing Body. It was reported that

- Attainment in primary schools had improved and had stayed the same in secondary schools over the course of the pandemic to date.
- 100% of Personal Education Plans (PEP’s) were completed within the Spring Term in-line with the new termly processes.
- Children looked after by virtual school attended approximately 220 educational settings. Of those 220, 101 children were based within Kirklees and the rest were out of area.
- A grant had been awarded to extend the role of the Virtual school Head Teacher include children with a social worker in addition to Looked After Children.
- The focus going forward was to maintain the completion of termly PEP’s, attendance/persistent absence and the reduction of school moves remained a high priority.

RESOLVED:- The Board noted the Virtual School Governing Body Update.

12. **OFSTED Ambition Board Update**

Elaine McShane, Service Director - Family Support and Child Protection gave a verbal update on the work of the Ofsted and Ambition Board. It was noted that the Board now had broadened its scope of focus to include the SEND transformation programme. Elaine suggested that a report on SEND Transformation be provided to the Board in relation to Looked After Children, the Board noted the update and agreed that the report be presented to a future meeting.

RESOLVED:-

1. The Board noted the Ofsted Ambition Board Update
2. It was agreed that a report on SEND Transformation be presented to the Board in relation to Looked After Children within the Calendar year.

13. Membership of the Board

The Chair of the Board verbally reported that:

- Cllr Fazila Loonat was to be removed from the membership and be replaced by Cllr Elizabeth Reynolds
- Sanna Mahmood was to be removed as Care Leaver representative and future care leaver representation on the Board be reviewed as discussed under item 9.

RESOLVED –

1. The Board noted the membership changes and thanked Sanna Mahmood and Cllr Fazila Loonat for their time and contributions to the Board.
2. That the Boards new membership be formally agreed at the next meeting of the Board.

14. Updates from Board Members on Interactions with Services

Board members were advised that the Chair of the Board had been to visit 3 children's social work teams based in Batley, Huddersfield, and Colne valley. It was noted that the committed, positive and enthusiastic attitude that the social workers had towards their work was clear. The Chairs visit also gave members of those teams the opportunity to put forward various ideas and concerns. The Chair highlighted the value in visiting services and encouraged other Board members to visit teams.

RESOLVED:-

1. Board members noted the update on Interactions with Services.
2. It was agreed that Board Members would contact the Chair or Jodie Harris to arrange any visits to services.

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

The Board considered the work plan for 2021/22.

RESOLVED –

1. The Board noted the forward work programme for the 2021/22 municipal year,
2. It was agreed that all reports agreed within the meeting of the Board as of 29 June 2021 be added to the forward plan.