

Contact Officer: Jodie Harris

## **KIRKLEES COUNCIL**

### **CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**

**Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> January 2022**

Present:

- Councillor Carole Pattison
- Councillor Richard Smith
- Councillor Elizabeth Reynolds
- Councillor Andrew Marchington (ex-officio)
- Councillor John Lawson
- Councillor Karen Allison
- Elaine McShane, Service Director - Family Support and Child Protection
- Janet Tolley, Virtual School Headteacher
- Tom Brailsford, Service Director (Resources, Improvement and Partnerships)
- Ophelia Rix, Head of Service for Children in Care, Care Leavers and Looked After Children
- Colleen Kenworthy - Kirklees Fostering Network
- Barry Lockwood - Kirklees Fostering Network
- Dale'O Niell – Children's Scrutiny Panel Co-optee

In attendance: N/a

Apologies:

- Councillor Viv Kendrick (Chair)
- Christine Carmichael - Kirklees Fostering Network
- Stewart Horn, Head of Joint Commissioning - Children and Families
- Jo-anne Sanders, Service Director – Learning and Early Support
- Sara Miles, Head of Service – Resources, Improvement and Partnerships
- Gill Addy, Designated Nurse for Looked After Children
- Keely Lucas- Care leaver Representative
- Keith Fielding – Kirklees Fostering Network
- Stewart Horn – Head of Joint Commissioning Children and Families

## **1 Membership of the Board/Apologies**

Apologies had been received from Councillor Viv Kendrick, Chair of the Board. The Board were invited to nominate a Chair to preside over the meeting. Councillor Carole Pattison was nominated by Councillor Karen Allison, seconded by Councillor Elizabeth Reynolds.

Apologies had also been received from Christine Carmichael, Kirklees Fostering Network, Keith Fielding, Kirklees Fostering Network, Stewart Horn, Head of Joint Commissioning – Children and Families, Jo-Anne Sanders, Service Director – Learning and Early Support, Gill Addy, Designated Nurse for Looked After Children, Sara Miles, Head of Service – Resources, Improvement and Partnerships and Keely Lucas- Care Leaver Representative.

The Board were advised that Farrah Munir was to join the Boards Membership as a Care Leaver Representative.

**RESOLVED:** The Board noted the Membership of the Board/Apologies, and it was agreed that Councillor Carole Pattison preside as Chair for the meeting.

## **2. Minutes**

The Board considered the Minutes of the last meeting held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2021.

**RESOLVED-** That the Minutes of the previous meeting be approved as a correct record.

## **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 Public Question Time**

No questions from the public were received.

## **7. Children's Performance Highlights Report**

The Board considered the latest reports giving key highlights on Performance Monitoring data for Children's Services up to the end of November 2021.

Ophelia Rix, Head of Service for Children in Care, Care Leavers and Looked After Children presented the key highlights arising from the data relating to 'children entering care, children in care and placement stability'. It was noted that:

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- As of November 2021, there was 119 children looked after (CLA), within this cohort, there were 149 males and 116 females and the highest ethnic group White British at 71.9% .
- As part of scrutiny and oversight, weekly Permanence Panel planning meetings took place to identify where children could remain with connected families and communities where it was safe to do so.
- There had been a positive increase in placement with parents, achieved through supporting families within communities and engaging with the family group conferencing service.
- The data showed that children were been seen in a timely manner and work was ongoing to ensure the timely recording and presentation of data.
- Ophelia Rix regularly interrogated the data and was assured that all young people had been seen by their social worker or supervisor.
- There had been an increase each year in the number of Special Guardianship Orders (SGO's), and recent analysis of the data identified that Kirklees Council had the highest number of SGO's regionally.
- Work was ongoing to continue to support and promote applications for Special Guardianship's.
- The next update to the Corporate Parenting Board would include a focus on work undertaken in relation to care experienced young people.

The Board asked a question in related to the number of children (75) placed outside 20 miles of Kirklees. In response Ophelia Rix advised this was a result of the availability of Foster Placements.

The Board requested a breakdown of stability data to identify, for example, where children had moved back home. A further question was also asked in relation to the reasons for the increase in changes in social workers (i.e.- sickness, placement break down, children with additional needs).

In response, Ophelia Rix advised that there was a natural change in social worker within the process as a child moved from the Assessment and Intervention Team. To manage this transition, joint visits were made prior to the change to build the relationship between the young person and the new social worker and minimise any disruption. There had also been some staff sickness and resignations that had resulted in some increase in the number of changes of social workers. Ophelia Rix reassured the Board that as Head of Service she maintained oversight in relation to changes to ensure that any disruption was minimised.

Elaine McShane, Service Director - Family Support and Child Protection added that the increase was closely related to the challenging circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic. It was also important to note that in some circumstances social workers were dually allocated to help minimise disruption.

Janet Tolley, Virtual School Headteacher presented the data in relation to Children Looked After Education Outcomes and highlighted that:

- The Virtual School continued to work with and support all young people from the age of 3 to 18 and 18 plus (with consent).
- The approach included bringing together all the professionals surrounding a young person to examine the individual's current situation and provide the correct support that the young person might need to accelerate their progress, as well as funding through the pupil premium.
- This was extremely important during the Covid-19 pandemic, where young people had missed school missing education.
- 100% of Personal Education Plan's (PEPs) had been completed within the Autumn Term in-line with the termly processes.
- The Virtual School was currently leading on all PEPs since the Covid-19 lockdowns began in March 2020. These were currently virtually held meetings.
- 100% of initial PEPs were completed within 10 school days of a child coming into care since 01/09/2021.
- 97% of school moves since the start of the academic year had been carefully planned across the service to ensure a smooth transition with no break in provision.
- Covid-19 continued to impact on Persistent Absence data, and it was important to note that there was no comparative national data since 2018/2019 (pre-pandemic).
- Addressing Persistent Absence remained a high priority, and the Virtual School continued working closely with social workers and parents to ensure support back into education.
- The Virtual School was taking a proactive approach to exclusions and suspensions, working closely with schools to implement preventative measures to ensure children stayed in education.
- As a result of high numbers of local Omicron (Covid-19 variant) infections there were some concerns about staff absence.
- Government Guidance stipulated that those children classified as vulnerable should remain in school.
- It was the Virtual School's role to challenge where that was not the case, and to provide support in the exceptional circumstances where the child was to be educated at home in the short term.

Responding to a question from the Board about the benchmarking of data, Janet Tolley advised that due to the lack of national comparative data that it was anticipated the impacts of the pandemic, on areas such as attainment and persistent absence, would begin to show over the next 6-12 months.

The Board agreed that this was an important area to continue to monitor, and further commented that the Winter term may begin to highlight new challenges and issues for young people. Janet Tolley responded to advise that the approach to children's physical attendance to school was to be fluid and responsive to new Covid-19 variants as they arise, enabling the best response for young people and their education.

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The Board agreed this was the best approach to take highlighting how the virtual school's preparedness in relation to online working had built resilience for the future and had effectively allowed involvement with more young people.

Tom Brailsford, Service Director (Resources, Improvement and Partnerships) presented the data in relation to Looked After Children Health and highlighted that:

- Dental Checks within the previous 10-12 months for Looked After Children had increased by 61.9%, this was above statistical neighbour and national averages of 40%.
- Performance for Initial Health Assessments remained high with Kirklees Local Authority rolling 12-month data showed that 86.7% were completed in the statutory 20 working day timescale, and Locala monthly data showed that 100% were completed in timescales for November.
- In relation to Review health assessments Kirklees rolling 12-month data showed that 89.1% and 91.6% of the 'Developmental' assessments (under 5years old) and 'Annual' assessments (over 5 years old) were completed within the statutory timescales.
- The data showed a positive trend in relation to Looked After Children Health, but it was important to consider how the pandemic was affecting staffing and the redeployment of staff.

The Board noted the data in relation to Looked After Children Health, commenting that it showed a positive trend, but that there had been some challenges around obtaining data as the information wasn't shared in a central database. In response Tom Brailsford confirmed that further work would be undertaken to investigate and address any delays in obtaining data.

**RESOLVED:** The Board noted the Children's Performance Highlights Report and it was agreed that that further work would be undertaken to investigate and address any delays in obtaining data in relation to Looked After Children Health.

## 8. Complaints and Compliments for Children in Care Annual Report

The Board considered the Complaints and Compliments for Children in Care Annual Report presented by Tom Brailsford, Service Director (Resources, Improvement and Partnerships) who gave an overview of the report and highlighted that:

- The report related to complaints and compliments made by Foster Carers, Children Looked After (CLA) and Care Leavers under the statutory complaints procedure within the Children Act 1989.
- The statutory complaints procedure included three stages:
  - Stage One: Complaints should be responded to by the relevant responding manager within 10 working days (automatic extension of a further 10 working days where necessary).
  - Stage Two: Implemented when a complainant was dissatisfied with findings at stage 1 and involved an independent investigation usually conducted by an independent person appointed to the investigation.
  - Stage Three: At this stage the Local Authority was required to establish a Complaints Review Panel (made up of 3 independent panel members)

to make recommendations to the Service Director who would decide on the complaint and any action to be taken.

- Most complaints were resolved either at stage 1 which showed the effectiveness of the restorative approach.
- It was important to make sure that key learning points arising from complaints were reported back to the Quality Assurance Panel and analysed.
- Key objectives were to ensure responses to complaints were made in a timely manner using clear and understandable language; to ensure that positive feedback was collated and shared to enable learning from best practices; and to improve the feedback loop from complaints to facilitate learning from children and families' experiences of services.

The Board highlighted that the compliments showed that the approaches taken to service delivery were effective in many ways. The Board also noted the importance of understanding and learning from positive feedback to share best practices and learning from any complaints was equally as important.

The Board were pleased to note that most complaints were dealt with within the statutory timescales but asked about the process for where there was a delayed response and if there was an independent review undertaken.

Tom Brailsford advised that where a response to a complaint was delayed that it was sent to a Head of Service/Strategic Director for analysis which ensured a level of independence. Further to this, in progressing through the stages of the statutory procedure a complaint would be reviewed by different Managers maintaining independence. In response, the Board were satisfied that the approach used the correct balance of internal oversight and independent review.

The Board noted that reducing the delay in implementing the policies was essential to reducing foster carers concerns around finances.

In response to a question from the Board about the timeliness of implementing staying put arrangements for Foster Carers, Ophelia Rix agreed that it was important to make sure that early conversations about staying put arrangements took place and advised that there were plans to address the challenges in implementing the policy such as maintaining communication with staff through regular briefing sessions and setting clear expectations of timescales. It was anticipated that there would be a reduction in concerns as the implementation of the policy progressed.

**RESOLVED:** The Board noted the Complaints and Compliments for Children in Care Annual Report, and it was agreed that a meeting be arranged with the Kirklees Fostering Network about the implementation of the staying put arrangements.

## 9. **Virtual School Governing Body**

The Board considered a verbal update on the work of the Virtual School Governing Body presented by Councillor Carole Pattison and Janet Tolley, Virtual School Headteacher who explained that:

- The Virtual School Governing Body met regularly with a cross section of representation that holds the Virtual School to account through supportive and challenging meetings.
- The Virtual School Governing Body had met on the 15<sup>th</sup> December 2021 to discuss the Annual Virtual Headteachers Report.
- Key areas of focus arising for the Virtual School included Key Stage 2 Outcomes, lowering the age range of Children accommodated for to ensure access to appropriate nursery provision and increasing involvement supporting young people with further education post 18.
- There was a new statutory duty and responsibility for advice and information for any young person previously looked after.
- Additional capacity had been created by appointing team managers on an honorarium basis to work strategically across services to focus on the new duty whilst maintaining support to the children currently within the Virtual School.

The Board commented that the new duty was a positive way forward and looked forward to further updates.

**RESOLVED** – The Board noted the Virtual School Governing Body Update.

## 10. **Children’s Ambition Board Update**

The Board considered a verbal update on the work of the Children’s Ambition Board presented by Elaine McShane, Service Director - Family Support and Child Protection who advised that the Ambition Board now included a wide range of services within its remit and proposed that a thematic approach was taken to future updates to the Corporate Parenting Board.

The Board noted that last meeting of the Children’s Ambition Board had been cancelled and the next update would be given at the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board to be held on the 15<sup>th</sup> February 2022.

**RESOLVED** – The Board noted the Children’s Ambition Board Update, and it was agreed that a thematic approach be taken to future updates to the Board.

## 11. **Update from Board Members on interaction with services.**

Board members shared updates following key interactions with services.

The Board noted that Councillor Lawson had proposed during a meeting of the Council that young carers be considered as allies in Corporate Parenting. In response, Elaine McShane, Service Director - Family Support and Child Protection reassured the Board that young carers received full assessment to ensure their needs

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were met. It was also suggested that a piece of communications work be undertaken using different forums, such as GP surgeries, to raise the profile of work carried out in relation to young carers and private fostering.

**RESOLVED** – The Board noted the Update from Board Members on interaction with services and it was agreed that communications work be undertaken to raise the profile of work carried out in relation to young carers and private fostering.

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

The Board considered the Work Programme and Agenda Plan for 2020/21.

**RESOLVED** –

1. The Board noted the forward work programme for the 2021/22 municipal year.
2. It was agreed that the Samantha Sykes Foundation Trust be invited to a meeting of the Board to provide an update on their work.
3. That regular reports in respect of implementing the Staying Put Policy be added to the Boards work programme for 22/23.