

Contact Officer: Jodie Harris

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

Tuesday 29th March 2022

Present: Councillor Viv Kendrick (Chair)
Councillor Richard Smith
Councillor Elizabeth Reynolds
Councillor Karen Allison
Councillor John Lawson
Barry Lockwood - Kirklees Fostering Network
Colleen Kenworthy - Kirklees Fostering Network
Elaine McShane, Service Director - Family Support and Child Protection
Ophelia Rix, Head of Service for Children in Care, Care Leavers and Looked After Children
Sara Miles, Head of Service – Resources, Improvement and Partnerships
Jo-Anne Sanders, Service Director – Learning and Early Support
Gill Addy, Designated Nurse for Looked After Children

In attendance: Louise Hallas, Virtual School Team Manager

Apologies: Councillor Andrew Marchington (ex-officio)
Councillor Carole Pattison
Christine Carmichael - Kirklees Fostering Network
Janet Tolley, Virtual School Headteacher
Tom Brailsford, Service Director (Resources, Improvement and Partnerships)

1. Membership of the Board/Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Andrew Marchington, Councillor Carole Pattison, Christine Carmichael- Kirklees Fostering Network, Janet Tolley, Virtual School Headteacher and Tom Brailsford Service Director (Resources, Improvement and Partnerships)

2. Minutes

The Board considered the minutes of the last meeting held on the 15th February 2022.

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. Update on the Role of the Corporate Parent

The Board considered a verbal update on the Role of the Corporate Parent within the directorate for Environment and Climate Change presented by Colin Parr, Strategic Director for Environment and Climate Change. It was explained that:

- The Directorate was split across 3 areas, Environmental Strategy and Climate Change, Highways and Street Scene and Culture and Visitor Economy.
- The Directorate was the largest in the Authority and could provide a role in supporting Care Leavers into work i.e., supported apprenticeships, work experience placements etc.
- The Climate Youth Festival was an upcoming event which could provide potential opportunities for Children Looked After.
- Celebrating the Year of Music was a large initiative which could also provide opportunities for Children Looked After.

The Board noted the update and were invited to ask questions. In the discussion to follow the Board highlighted the need to improve access to early work and training opportunities for Care leavers as only 54% of young people were in education or jobs, meaning that the remaining 46% were missing out. The Board welcomed the information in relation to supporting Care Leavers into work through supported apprenticeships and work experience placements but questioned how Foster Carers would be made aware of any upcoming opportunities.

In response, Colin Parr asked whether there was a thematic jobs fair for Care Leavers and suggested that the Directorate could help to develop an event for this purpose as a way of sharing information about the opportunities available. The Board advised that C & K Careers worked individually with children and young people to improve access to opportunities, but there was no targeted jobs fair for Children Looked After and Care Leavers and agreed that consideration should be given to developing an annual event for this purpose delivered by both the Authority and key partner organisations.

The Board also highlighted that information about upcoming opportunities should be circulated to Foster Carers and the Fostering Network that the Year of Music would be a fantastic opportunity for Children Looked After to be invited to showcase their talents.

Jo-Anne Sanders, Service Director – Learning and Early Support agreed that the Year of Music could provide new opportunities for young people and advised that additional capacity had been sourced for the event. Consideration was also being given to linking in with, and engaging key stake holders.

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The Board raised a question in relation to job opportunities and if they could be mentioned in the Personal Educational Plans (PEP's).

Louise Hallas, Virtual School Team Manager responded and advised that job opportunities were mentioned in PEP's when the young person was suitable, and it was the right step for them. Louise also advised that in years ten and eleven the young person was seen by C & K Careers to discuss their interests and opportunities.

The Board noted the update on the Directorate for Environment and Climate Change's role as Corporate Parent and thanked Colin Parr for his attendance. It was agreed that:

RESOLVED:

1. An update on the Climate Youth Festival, the environmental sustainability strategy and engaging Looked after Children and Care leavers in its development be provided to a future meeting of the Board.
2. That consideration be given to developing an annual Careers Fair for Looked After Children and Care Leavers.
3. Information about upcoming work and training opportunities should be circulated to Foster Carers and the Fostering Network.
4. Children Looked After should be invited to showcase their talents through the Year of Music Festival.

7. Children's Performance Highlights Report

The Board considered the latest reports giving key highlights on Performance Monitoring for Children's Services.

Ophelia Rix, Head of Service for Children in Care, Care Leavers and Looked After Children presented the key highlights in relation to Looked After Children and Care Leavers. It was noted that:

- Data showed an improving picture in the work being undertaken.
- There was a decrease in the number of Children Looked After which was now 615 compared with the previous month.
- 490 children / young people were subject to Special Guardianship Orders.
- There were ongoing concerns in relation to the number of children in education, training or employment which was a key area of focus.
- Links needed to be made to create wider opportunities for young people to aspire and achieve.
- There had been an increase in the number of placements moves which was due to notice being given, issues relating to carers and the experience of young people throughout the pandemic.
- Weekly meetings took place to consider stability, which was another area of focus.
- There was a full overview report which set out the work being undertaken across the Children Looked After teams

Louise Hallas, Virtual School Team Manager provided an update in relation to the Virtual School, and highlighted that:

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- All children / young people in care aged between 3 and 18 years of age should have at least one Personal Education Planning (PEP) meeting each term.
- The team continued to work virtually and were able to attend all PEP meetings.
- As a result, 100% of children / young people had their PEP meeting each term.
- 96% of initial PEP's were completed within 10 working days for new children / young people entering care, and 100% were completed within 11 working days.
- Work continued across the service with social care to meet the educational needs of children / young people.
- Attendance remained difficult to compare due to COVID absences.
- Monitoring of attendance for all children / young people continued and individual work was undertaken with children / young people with attendance concerns or who were not in full time education.

The Board acknowledge that 100% of PEP meetings had taken place but questioned whether there was any disadvantage to doing them virtually.

Louise Hallas responded and advised that the advantages outweighed the disadvantages, as virtual meetings allowed an education professional to be present at each meeting who could support and challenge, which added quality to the meetings. Louise also advised that previously, only 40% of PEP meetings were attended in person due to the need to travel and that there was a clear criterion in place for when it was necessary to attend a meeting in person.

Gill Addy, Designated Nurse for Looked After Children provided an update in relation to Children Looked After Health, and highlighted that:

- Kirklees Local Authority (LA) rolling 12-month data showed that 85.9% of Initial Health Assessments were completed in the statutory 20 working day timescales.
- Locala monthly data showed that 100% were completed in timescales for February 2022.
- A breakdown of the 12 month rolling data identified that there were only 4 children whose initial assessment was completed late within the last year.
- Health assessments were still taking place via an initial telephone assessment followed by a clinic visit.
- The 12 month rolling data for review health assessments (RHA) showed 91% of under 5's and 91.6% of over 5's were completed within timescales.
- Locala monthly data for review health assessments showed 72% of under 5's and 60% of over 5's were completed within timescale.
- There had been a reduction in the completion of RHA's by the exact date over recent months.
- A contingency plan was introduced to reduce pressure on the team and the team were now trying to complete RHA's within timescales.
- A business case had been developed to look at extra staffing but had not progressed.
- The 12 month rolling data for dental checks showed 63.8% of children aged one and above had attended the dentist. The figure took in consideration data

from the previous year when dentists re-opened and had a backlog of routine appointments to schedule.

- Monthly data for February 2022 showed 73% of children aged 18 months to 4 years, and 100% of children 5 and above attended the dentist in February 2022.
- 89% of children aged 18 months to 4 years and 93% of children aged 5 and above were registered with a dentist. Those not registered were likely to be children who had moved placement, were new into care or young people who refused to attend their appointment and could not be kept on the register.
- The flexible commissioning project continued to help ensure all children including Care Leavers could be registered with a Dentist.
- Although data showed substance misuse had increased slightly, this was for the same 7 young people already known to have significant issue.

Elaine McShane, Service Director for Family Support and Child Protection shared an update on adoption. The Board were advised that the data highlighted a lengthy timescale in terms of decision making. Elaine advised that a specific piece of work was being undertaken to understand the decision-making process in relation to the adoption pathway from the point of initiating care proceedings to the final offer, to provide further clarity and understanding.

RESOLVED: The Board noted the Children’s Performance Highlights Report, and it was agreed that a detailed update in respect of the adoption pathway and decision-making process be provided to a future meeting of the Board.

8. Children Looked After Overview Report

The Board considered the Children Looked After Overview Report presented by Ophelia Rix, Head of Service for Children in Care, Care Leavers and Looked After Children who shared the key points and highlighted that:

- The number of Children currently looked after was 615 and concerns had been raised regarding that number.
- Work was undertaken in relation to maintaining children at home with their families.
- There were 490 Special Guardianship Orders in total which was positive.
- Since January 2021, 51 Special Guardianship Orders had been secured.
- Ongoing data identified 50 children were successfully returned home.
- In terms of ethnicity, there had been an increase in the number of Asian children becoming Looked After, which was at 10.2% in February 2022.

The Board highlighted that the number of Special Guardianship Orders had risen quickly and questioned how the Council ensured that the 490 children / young people were being properly supported and resourced.

Elaine McShane, Service Director for Family Support and Child Protection responded and advised that the increase had grown over a period of time and recognition had been given to the commitment of families to take on children. Elaine shared that practical support and financial support was offered, including the connected person support team, support groups within the community and universal services. Elaine

also shared that a review of the financial policy had been undertaken to support Special Guardianship placements in terms of pay rates and age criteria.

The Board highlighted the concern that sometimes families agreed to Special Guardianship Orders but were not always aware what opportunities were available and what could be expected.

In response, Elaine McShane advised that the decision was overseen by the Courts and that each child / young person had a guardian who took the perspective of the child as well as robust viability assessments and decision making to ensure children were placed in the right setting.

The Board highlighted that the Staying Put Policy was a positive step forward in ensuring support for children post 18 but shared that the allowance for children had not risen much within the last 8 years which was concerning when taking into account the increased cost of living. The Board asked if the matter could be looked at urgently and if consideration could also be given to other incentives.

Sara Miles, Head of Service for Resources, Improvement and Partnerships responded and advised that a draft financial policy was in place which would be sent out for consultation and included additional bonuses. Sara agreed that an update on the draft financial policy could be provided to the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board.

RESOLVED:

The Board noted the Children Looked After Overview Report, and it was agreed that:

1. Regular updates be provided in relation to ethnicity data.
2. An update be provided in relation to the draft financial policy at the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board.

9. Statement of Purpose for the Fostering Service

The Board considered the Statement of Purpose for the Fostering Service presented by Sara Miles, Head of Service for Resources, Improvement and Partnerships who highlighted that:

- The Statement of Purpose had been revised in line with ongoing works in relation to the modernisation of the Fostering Service.
- It evidenced the aims and objectives of the service, and those for carers and children and young people.
- It shared the same view and aims as any parent, for their child to grow and achieve their full potential.
- It included information in relation to skills level payments, available services and work that was being undertaken with the placement support team.
- It included the development and support for foster carers and children / young people.
- The mockingbird offer was to be extended.
- Work had been undertaken regarding the review processes and another Independent Reviewing Officer was to be recruited.
- A draft financial policy was being developed to review Foster Carer finances and allowances.

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- There were 12 fostering assessments ongoing and 19 active stages at enquiry.

Sara Miles also shared that she would like to provide more detailed information to the Board in relation to the recruitment and retention of Foster Carers.

The Board highlighted the Mockingbird programme and their keen interest for a 2nd constellation to be developed. The Board questioned if there was a timescale for this?

Sara Miles was unable to provide a timescale but agreed to come back and share an update on the progress.

Elaine McShane suggested that Kieran Lord shared an update on The Mockingbird programme as well as other services including MSTFIT and placements support.

The Board highlighted the increase in Asian children entering care and questioned the successful recruiting of Foster Carers of an Asian background?

Sara Miles responded and advised that community work was being carried out to seek enquiries across all communities and agreed to provide a more detailed report to include the data showing what had been achieved and what work was ongoing.

The Board highlighted Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA'S) and questioned if any work had been carried out to identify what they offer compared with the Kirklees offer?

Elaine McShane advised that a piece of work had been done previously and highlighted that there were different layers of provision within IFA's depending on the needs of the children which replicated the Councils skills level, and in comparison, financially, there wasn't much difference. Elaine acknowledged that in terms of reviewing the financial policy and payments to Foster Carers, it was the right time to re-look at IFA provision.

RESOLVED:

The Board noted the Statement of Purpose for the Fostering Service and agreed that:

- Detailed information in relation to the marketing and recruitment of Foster Carers in relation to the recruitment, retention and ethnicity be shared at a future Corporate Parenting Board meeting.
- An update be provided in relation to the development of the mockingbird programme, as well as other services including MSTFIT and placement support.
- A comparison be undertaken to identify IFA provision and how this differed from Kirklees provision.

10. Update on the Role of the Corporate Parent

The Board considered an update on the Directorate for Growth and Regeneration's role as Corporate Parent, presented by David Shepherd, Strategic Director for Growth and Regeneration who highlighted that:

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- The Directorate for Growth and regeneration was formed less than 2 years ago and there were 3 service areas which included, Homes and Neighbourhoods, Skills and Regeneration and Development.
- The Young People's Pathway sat within Homes and Neighbourhoods and provided targeted support to tenants under 25 years of age including Care Leavers.
- Assessments were undertaken and individual bespoke support plans were developed with the relevant services.
- There were regular check points throughout the tenancy, so support could be provided when required to ensure a successful tenancy.
- Additional support could be added to the pathway if required, such as money advice, income management, employment support etc, with the young person's consent.
- There was an allocations policy in place that gave young people priority (Band A), particularly Care Leavers.
- Accommodation support was available for people who were accommodating young people i.e., foster cares, who were awarded Band C to access council accommodation.
- The Pre-Apprenticeship Programme was a 26-week unpaid study programme for 16 –18 year olds, which ran annually.
- Its aim was to engage young people as they entered young adulthood to build on their skills and help them become successful in labour market engagement.
- It brought together all services to support the young person as well as those who disengaged.
- Multi Systemic Therapy Family Integration Transition (MSTFIT) was targeted at 11 to 17 year olds with behavioural difficulties. It supported unified work with families to help get them out of care.
- Joint work with Housing Solutions and Homes and Neighbourhoods had proved successful in re-housing families.
- Most children had a stay at Healds house as part of the initial transition model whilst ongoing work was undertaken with the child and family to identify a suitable property.
- An allocation's policy review would explore how managed lets could accommodate this rather than using 'choose and move', to provide a better match of property and ensure a higher potential for success.
- Although there were just short of 22,000 Council properties, there was not a great supply of properties and turnover each year, therefore the more properties taken out for managed lets resulted in less properties being available to others.
- In terms of Fostering and Adoption, work was undertaken to engage with Children's Services, support staff and families to find solutions to issues in relation to housing.
- Creative approaches were necessary to provide solutions, using the available resources.
- There was a dedicated employment support function within the Directorate which engaged all partners to develop bespoke arrangements, particularly for Care Leavers Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).
- There was an action board in place that monitored and managed the support that was provided to NEET Care Leavers.

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- Kickstart was available for young people, particularly Care Leavers to actively engage them with private sector employers who were sponsored through the scheme.
- More employment opportunities were becoming available for young people as the economy bounced back following the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Lots of sectors were looking for people to move into entry level jobs which the Kickstart Programme supported in terms of employer funding and a package of support for the young person.
- Social value arrangements were always evolving, and services bought in through procurement arrangements were required to demonstrate and deliver them.
- The Cultural Heart (a large-scale regeneration programme) strategic delivery team were asked to carry out social engagement with young people, which included working with schools to provide opportunities of working with employers and to inspire young people to be part of the regeneration.
- The aim was to engage Care Leavers in the process, with a view to standardising this through the procurement process.

The Board raise concern that information in relation to the Works Better programme, Kickstart programme and social values arrangements was not shared directly with Foster Carers and questioned how this could be done better? David Shepherd noted the concern and agreed to distribute information, so everyone had access to it.

The Board highlighted the Pre-Apprenticeship Scheme and questioned the number of places available. David Shepherd responded to advise that he did not have the information but agreed to provide it. David shared that the scheme was not limited by the number of places but was about engaging young people to help them see it as something that worked for them. David also shared that the schemes were very well attended and attractive, and provided the opportunity to bring young people through into to employment with the right support packages in place for them to succeed.

The Board asked for more information about the approach to engagement with Care Leavers suggesting that it was important to communicating with Personal Advisors (PA's) as well as Carers. Ophelia Rix, Head of Service for Children in Care, Care Leavers and Looked After Children added that Personal Advisors were now involved at the early age of 15 in relation to planning and aspirational opportunities. Links were already developed with other services.

David Shepherd responded to agree that early engagement was best, and that Phil Marks and Gillian Wallis were the people to liaise with.

RESOLVED:

The Board noted the update on the Directorate for Growth and Regeneration's role as Corporate Parent, and agreed that:

1. Further information in relation to the Works Better programme, Kickstart programme and social values be shared with Foster Carers.
2. The number of places available on the Pre-Apprenticeship Programme be provided.

11. Virtual School Governing Body Update

Louise Hallas, Virtual School Team Manager advised the Board that a virtual school governing body meeting had not taken place since the last Corporate Parenting Board Meeting and so no update was given.

RESOLVED:

The Board agreed an update be provided at the next Corporate Parenting Board meeting.

12. Children's Ambition Board

The Board considered an update on the Children's Ambition Board presented by Jo-Anne Sanders, Service Director for Learning and Early Support who highlighted that:

- The Ambition Board provided a positive opportunity to meet with partners and to share the key priorities that the Directorate was working towards.
- An update was given on Kirklees Futures (districts learning strategy), Special Educational Needs and Disabilities transformation plan, and the aim for Children's Services to be 'outstanding'.
- There was an opportunity to look at data across the Directorate.
- There was a review in relation to timeliness of Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP's) and compliance.
- High level Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 outcomes and attendance were shared.
- The focus of next meeting would be around Early Support and the progress of the whole partnership.

RESOLVED:

The Board noted the update on the Children's Ambitions Board.

13. Update from Board Members on Interaction with Services

The Board shared their attendance at the young parent's network meeting (virtually) and advised that it was a useful event where young parents were able to share their success stories.

RESOLVED:

The Board noted the update on Interactions with Services.

14. Corporate Parenting Board Agenda Plan 2021/22

The Board highlighted some of the agenda items to be considered in the next municipal year 2022/23, which included:

- Supported Lodging Schemes
- Support for Foster Carers
- Adoption Report
- Standard Items.

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The Board were asked to consider other Directorates who could be invited to the Corporate Parenting Board to share how they contribute as Corporate Parents.

RESOLVED: The Board noted the agenda plan 2021/22 and it was agreed that:

- Directors continue to be invited to the Corporate Parenting Board to share their contribution to the role of Corporate Parent within their services.
- Items to be added to the agenda for 22/2023 be sent to the Chair and Jodie Harris.