

Contact Officer: Jodie Harris

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

Tuesday 24 January 2023

- Present
- Councillor Viv Kendrick (Chair)
 - Councillor Elizabeth Reynolds
 - Councillor Karen Allison
 - Councillor John Lawson
 - Councillor Richard Smith
 - Councillor Andrew Marchington (ex-officio)
 - Colleen Kenworthy - Kirklees Fostering Network
 - Louise Hallas, Virtual School Head Teacher
 - Anna Gledhill, Service Manager Quality Assurance and Safeguarding
 - Ophelia Rix, Head of Service for Children in Care, Care Leavers and Looked After Children
 - Sara Miles, Head of Service – Resources, Improvement and Partnership
 - Elaine McShane, Service Director - Family Support and Child Protection
 - Tom Brailsford, Service Director (Resources, Improvement and Partnerships)
 - Stewart Horn, Head of Childrens Integrated Commissioning
- In Attendance
- Joel Hanna, Head of Service for Sufficiency for Children and Young People
 - Michelle Rawlings, Interim Head of One Adoption West Yorkshire
 - Nicola Steele, Service Delivery Manager – One Adoption West Yorkshire
 - Adele Lakey, Service Manager – Family Support and Child Protection
 - Vicky Metherringham, Service Director - Family Support and Child Protection
 - Helen Sanderson, Complaints and Represent Manager, Family Support and Child Protection
- Apologies:
- Jo-Anne Sanders, Service Director – Learning and Early Support
 - Gill Addy, Designated Nurse for Looked After Children

1. Membership of the Board/Apologies

The Board thanked Elaine McShane, Service Director - Family Support and Child Protection for her contributions to the Board and welcomed Vickey Metherringham as a Board member as the new Service Director - Family Support and Child Protection.

The Board noted that apologies had been received from Jo-Anne Sanders, Service Director – Learning and Early Support and Gill Addy, Designated Nurse for Looked After Children.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Board considered the Minutes of the last meeting held on 15 November 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. Public Question Time

No public questions were received.

7. One Adoption West Yorkshire Annual Report

The Board considered the One Adoption West Yorkshire Annual Report which was presented by Michelle Rawlings, Interim Head of One Adoption West Yorkshire (OAWY). Michelle summarised the work and developments of OAWY from April 2021 to March 2022 as set out in the report. It was highlighted that:

- OAWY had experienced some change during the reporting period, including interim appointments within the management and senior management team.
- This created some instability, but staff retention and recruitment remained positive, and staff sickness levels were low.
- Hybrid working arrangements had been implemented following consultation with staff and this was working well.
- OAWY continued to build on a strong working relationship with Kirklees Council; with Kirklees representatives as members of OAWY management Boards and operational leads meetings.
- There were also regular joint meetings between the Council and OAWY at a service manager/team manager level to maintain effective communication.
- During the reporting period there had been considerable change in the Multidisciplinary Team staffing which had impacted capacity.
- The Clinical Psychology Lead left the team in early 2022 and a new Psychology Lead had now been appointed.

- Discussions were ongoing with commissioners around the future of the Multidisciplinary Team and funding arrangements.
- Challenges relating to Medical Advisor capacity (not within Kirklees but in other authorities) and the issues around GP's progressing medicals for prospective adopters continued. These challenges had been escalated and raised in the relevant platforms.
- In terms of performance, 112 adopters were approved during the reporting period, which was a slight decrease from the previous year.
- Across West Yorkshire 197 children had an adoption plan, and 17 were in Kirklees.
- OAWY approved 27 households for sibling groups and 19 households who were open to offering early permanence.
- There were also 143 children across West Yorkshire with a placement order.
- OAWY continued to have challenges around sufficiency in West Yorkshire and there were more children with an adoption plan than approved families.
- 73% of children were placed with OAWY approved adopters which was an increase on 66% in the previous year.
- There was an improvement in the timeliness of children coming into care and being placed for adoption and from placement order to being matched with adopters.
- Continuing to improve performance in relation to timeliness in this area was a key priority.
- In relation to front door arrangements for prospective adopters, 2 team managers had oversight of all enquiries which improved the consistency of decision making.
- During the reporting period OAWY had a 'mystery-shopper exercise' and the feedback, which was very positive, highlighted that OAWY were very open and welcoming to prospective adopters and actively sought to remove any barriers.
- Adoption Panels continued online and had increased to 8 panels per month. 2 Panel Chairs had also been recruited which increased flexibility and improved capacity.
- Online Adoption Panels also increased diversity in Panel membership.
- The adoption support offer had been increased and both online and in person support options were available.
- 624 applications were made to the Adoption Support Fund (ASF) during the reporting period, and £2.5m was secured to support families in West Yorkshire.
- An additional £51,000 was secured in match funding from local authorities to support families whose needs exceeded the limit set by the ASF.
- OAWY offered a range of different support workshops and training opportunities such as 'Stay and Play' Groups, Therapeutic Parenting sessions, a specific group for single father's, single adopters and adopters who had adopted a child of different ethnicity, culture, or religion to themselves.
- During the reporting period there were 330 requests for access to records.
- This figure was increasing year on year, and OAWY had an appointed archivist to respond to these requests, whose work had recently received national recognition.
- There were 8 disruptions during the reporting period, but none were Kirklees Children.

- Internally there had been a range of audits undertaken including joint audits with Kirklees.
- The feedback from the audits had reassured OAWY around quality of their practice as well providing insight into key areas for development.
- In terms of the budget, had been a slight overspend during the reporting period but this had been covered by reserves.

The Board noted the update and were invited by the Chair to ask any questions. In the discussion to follow the Board highlighted that the report indicated that there was a shortage of perspective adopters in West Yorkshire from more diverse backgrounds to adopt and requested further explanation.

Michelle Rawlings responded to highlight that this was reflective of national challenges in recruiting adopters from more diverse backgrounds, and reassured the Board, that children were not only placed with adopters of same background and that ethnicity was a consideration but not overriding factor in respect of matching. However, it was important to encourage a more diverse cohort of adopters as it could help introduce different skills, knowledge and experiences amongst the cohort that could help children to better understand their identity, which included their ethnic and religious background. It was beneficial to seek adopters who had the relevant skills to meet all a child's support needs including helping them understand their identity, which was crucial to trauma experienced young people, and all these factors should be taken into consideration when matching children. It was also highlighted that regionally children did not wait longer for adoption because of ethnicity but there were national challenges.

The Board (ex-officio) highlighted that in Kirklees there was high number of Special Guardianship Orders (SGO's) and wanted to know if this had an impact on the number of children placed for adoption, and how this compared with other Local authority areas.

Michelle responded to agree that the decrease in adoption figures in Kirklees correlated with increasing SGO's. It was further advised that across West Yorkshire, there were different patterns in different areas and the data in relation to this was variable and dependent on those Local Authorities offers and priorities in relation to connected carers.

The Board highlighted that during the pandemic there were challenges in obtaining timely decisions from the courts and wanted to know if this had now improved or stabilised?

Michelle responded to advise that there had been significant improvements in the timeliness of the decisions from courts, and there were no longer delays in prioritising decision making around children planning and adoption orders. The Board welcomed the response as positive and reassuring.

The Board were interested to know if there was any research available in relation to the disconnect between the number of adopters and the number of children requiring adoption in West Yorkshire as opposed to the national picture.

In response, Michelle advised that this may partly be due to the demographic of the area and the impacts regionally of the Covid-19 pandemic. In West Yorkshire there was a high number of adopters recruited, but there was also still a higher number of children requiring adoption.

The Board noted the response and asked for the figures in terms of the number of adopters specifically for Kirklees. Michelle responded to advise that as OAWY are a regional agency that they did not breakdown the data by local authority area.

RESOLVED: The Board noted the One Adoption West Yorkshire Annual Report and thanked officers from One Adoption West Yorkshire for their update.

8. Children's Performance Highlights Report

The Board considered the latest Children's Performance Highlights Report giving key highlights on Performance Monitoring data 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 Children Looked After Reviews and Missing and it was highlighted that:

- There had been a slight decline in relation to the performance data for Visits, and the service, continued to maintain oversight of this.
- The decline was partly due to delays in the recording of information or declined visits where there were no safeguarding concerns.
- Declined visits were a result of some children living with connected carers, who wanted the Council to afford them normal family life.
- Where this was the case, the service ensured there was clear oversight and no safeguarding concerns.
- The service also worked to ensure that children were safe through clear connections with the fostering service and schools.
- Some delayed visits were also planned, i.e.- where a social worker was off work the visit was delayed by a day, to allow a young persons regular social worker to visit and maintain consistency where it was safe to do so.

The Board noted the update and asked in respect of Children Looked After Reviews and Missing and in the discussion to follow asked a number of questions.

Responding to a question from the Board about the number of foster carers for out of area placements and whether the figure presented in the report (55) related to in house or IFA's foster carers, Tom Brailsford, Service Director (Resources, Improvement and Partnerships) agreed that the data would be provided to the Board to follow.

Responding to points highlighted by the Ex-officio, including staffing challenges in social work and continuing to keep children safe whilst managing the additional pressure on staff, Ophelia Rix reassured the Board that social worker vacancies were being managed through recruiting other practitioners who could bring additional skills to provide a network of support to children and young people. This included Family Support Workers and Youth Engagement Officers who would work alongside social workers to ensure that children were visited, and that the service continued to build good quality relationships with young people. In relation to education, employment and training, work was undertaken to ensure that there was a network of practitioners not

just within social work but within the wider Council who could continue to build those relationships and ensure children and young people were seen in a variety of settings, including the home, and schools.

Responding to a question from the Board about the number of foster carer vacancies, Tom Brailsford advised that this information was managed on a weekly basis through the new Dashboard and agreed that this information would be provided to the Board to follow.

Ophelia Rix, presented the monitoring data in relation to Care Leavers and highlighted that:

- Areas of concern related to the timeliness and quality of pathway planning.
- Pathway Planning was about ensuring young people were able to access further education employment and training.
- Work was being undertaken to understand how we work across the council to develop different opportunities for young people including working with the virtual school and our post 16 provision.
- There was a clear plan in development, and a commitment from the Council to drive this piece of work forward.
- The impact of these changes, would be presented to the Board to follow.

The Board agreed it was essential to individualise pathway plans and agreed to receive the data around impact of the work undertaken. The Board also asked if staff had dedicated time to complete admin work, and in response Ophelia Rix confirmed that all practitioners had protected dedicated time to record information on the system.

Louise Hallas, Virtual School Head Teacher presented the data in relation to Children Looked After Educational Outcomes, and it was highlighted that:

- 100% of PEPs had been completed within the Autumn Term with 100% initial PEPs completed withing 10 school days.
- The Virtual School was currently leading on all PEPs which were virtually held meetings.
- The Virtual School continued to work closely with social care to improve young people's educational experiences.
- 73% of school moves since the start of the academic year were carefully planned across the service to ensure a smooth transition with no break in provision.
- Attendance was key area of focus, which had reduced but there had been a lot of illness in the past month in addition to other reasons.
- Reducing the number of unauthorised absences in both frequency and duration was also a key priority of the Virtual School.
- There had been a reduction in the number of suspensions, and in the number of young people who are classed as PA (Persistent Absenteeism (90%).
- Not in full time education was another key area which impacted on attendance.
- School moves were very low in December but some of this was planned to ensure school moves were in line with the start of the new school term.

Stewart Horn, Head of Childrens Integrated Commissioning presented the data in relation to Children Looked After Health and it was highlighted that:

- Workload for the Children Looked After Nursing Team continued to be high but there was an improving picture in due to a temporary increase in staffing.
- Initial health assessments (IHA):
 - LA rolling 12-month data shows that 76.8% were completed in the statutory timescale.
 - Locala monthly data for November showed that 28 IHA's were completed + 3 for OLA, 100% in timescales.
 - The number of IHA's had doubled from the previous month and sees the largest increase since 2017.
- Review Health Assessments (RHA):
 - Kirklees rolling 12-month data shows that 86.9% and 91% of the 'Developmental' assessments (under 5yrs old) and 'Annual' assessments (over 5 yrs. old) were completed in statutory timescales.
 - Locala monthly data showed that 54% of under 5-year-olds and 62% of over 5-year-olds RHA's were completed in timescales.
 - This showed a continuing downward trend.
 - There were 19 inhouse breaches, with capacity and carer arrangements being the most common reasons.
 - A Business Case has been presented to the Commissioners to request additional nursing resources.
- Dental Checks (attended) within last 12 months:
 - Kirklees rolling 12-month data shows that 61.5% of children aged 1+, at the point of their RHA had attended the dentist.
 - 100% children over the age of 5 had registered with a dentist at the point of their last RHA.

In response to the Boards suggestion around increasing the accuracy of data in relation to dental checks through taking into account the information from foster carers (at 4-6 weekly visits from supervising social workers) Stewart Horn agreed to discuss this with Gill Addy, Designated Nurse.

The Board acknowledged that the team had been under pressure for a sustained period, and that a business case had been put forward to help resolve this. The Board further asked about the future of the flexible commissioning project highlighting its value and impact. The Board also requested to receive feedback from the Oral advisory group via the Designated Nurse. Stewart Horn agreed to bring information in response to the Boards comments to a future meeting of the Board.

RESOLVED: The Board noted the Children's Performance Highlights Report, and it was agreed that:

1. The breakdown of IFA and in-house foster carers for out of area placements be provided to the Board.
2. Data in relation to the number of Foster carer vacancies be provided to the Board.
3. An update in relation to the impact of improvements made to the timeliness and quality of pathway planning be provided to the Board.

4. Information relating to the future of the Flexible Commissioning Project be provided to the Board by the Designated Nurse.
5. Feedback from the Oral Advisory Group in relation to supporting children in Kirklees be provided to the Board by the Designated Nurse.
6. The possibility of including data in relation to dental checks from foster carers when reported to their supervising social worker by included in the monitoring figures. To be discussed with the Designated Nurse.

9. Childrens Services Annual Complaints Report.

The Board considered the Childrens Services Annual Complaints Report which was presented by Sara Miles, Head of Service – Resources, Improvement and Partnerships.

The Board noted the annual report set out the compliments and complaints regarding Children’s Social Care during the period of 01 April 2020 to 31 March 2022 and that:

- During 2021-22, 60 contacts (of 261) were made to team relating to 3 service areas of Care Leavers, Children Looked After and the Fostering Service
- Of the 60 contacts, 41 were complaints and 7 were made by children and young people (C&YP)
- All complaints made by C&YP were resolved to their satisfaction though the local resolutions process.
- This was positive for both the C&YP and in terms of learning how best to engage C&YP.
- C&YP were supported by the Children’s Rights Team through the process of raising a complaint.
- Section 9 of the report detailed the nature of the complaints raised, with effective communication being one of the main areas where a complaint was raised by C&YP.
- Section 10 highlighted the outcomes of the complaints, (i.e., upheld, partial upheld or not upheld).
- Section 12 of the report highlighted the learning from any complaints, around information sharing, implementation of new policies and the timeliness of decisions.
- The Children’s rights team worked closely with the responding managers across the 3 services areas to ensure responses were strengthened and to learn from the voice of C&YP.
- There was an action plan around areas for development going forward. Alongside this the team were looking to hold a practice learning day to further strengthen learning.

In response to a question from the Board around any significant thematic complaints, Helen Sanderson, Complaints and Represent Manager, Family Support and Child Protection advised that a key element was managing C&YP’s expectations about what can practically be achieved through the complaints system. The Complaints Team had been working closely with the Children’s Rights Team to address how to manage expectations from the start of the process.

The Board welcomed news of a practice learning day and noted the value in hearing the voices of children and young people noting previous Board discussions around this.

Ophelia Rix, Head of Service for Children in Care, Care Leavers and Looked After Children responded to advise that a plan was being developed in relation to the inclusion of C&YP's voice in the work of the Corporate Parenting Board, which was to be presented to the Board at the appropriate time. This involved working in collaboration with partner organisations and the Children's Rights Team to find a variety of avenues (such as a 'takeover week') to enable this, including arranging meetings at a time that was convenient to enable C&YP's participation. Linking into complaints, it was important to set clear expectations and appropriate timescales around the approach.

In response, the Board acknowledged comment about timescales but highlighted that the Board would be willing to be flexible about times of meetings to progress the work. The Board also highlighted the further work undertaken by the children's social work team around listening to and responding to C&YP as positive and suggested that this piece of work be reported on to share the learning and best practices across Children's Services.

RESOLVED: The Board noted the Childrens Services Annual Complaints Report, and it was agreed that:

1. The plan in respect of the inclusion of C&YP's voice in the work of the Corporate Parenting Board be presented to the Board at the appropriate time.
2. The work undertaken around learning from complaints and engaging with C&YP be reported on to share the learning and best practices across Children's Services

Virtual School Governing Body Update

The Board considered the Virtual School Governing Body Update, which was introduced by Councillor Carole Pattison, who highlighted the continuous positive work of the Virtual School Team and the resulting above average statistics. The appointment of a new Virtual School Team Manager had allowed for the Virtual School Head Teacher to focus on the virtual school action plan; and the consideration of the new dashboard, and the post-16 pupil premium plus pilot were noted as key highlights of the last meeting of the Governing body.

Louise Hallas, Virtual School Head Teacher presented a verbal update in respect of the Virtual School Governing Body, and it was noted that:

- At the last meeting of the Virtual School Governing Body, the new virtual school dashboard was considered.
- This was highlighted as positive in giving clarity to areas of focus, and sharing this information with Governors to enable their support and challenge.
- The action plan was the Virtual School Head Teachers key pieces of work to improve the education for children in care.

- An area welcomed by the Governing Body was the good relationship between the Virtual School and social care and the joint work undertaken around improving education for children in care.
- Unauthorized absence and persistent absence were key areas of focus as well as reducing number of children not in full time education.
- Another area discussed was finance and new commissions including the new post 16 pupil premium pilot.
 - This included a programme embedded with Kirklees College around helping college age children achieve their English and Maths qualifications as well as how to use these skills practically.
 - Kirklees College had committed to be a trauma informed college; the council had delivered training around emotional coaching in the college.
 - Pupil Premium was also being given directly to young people where needed in post-16 whilst the pilot was in place.
- Around improving aspirations for care leavers work was being undertaken around supporting young people into employment, further education and training.
- This included the commissioning of a careers event for younger children and their carers.

The Board noted the update and in respect of the Post-16 Pupil Premium Pilot highlighted it would be interesting to follow the cohort of children who were a part of this to monitor its impact in the long-term. The Board also asked about how the pilot funding could be accessed for children?

In response, Louise Hallas advised that the funding could be accessed through the electronic PEP system as in the same way as it was for statutory school age children. Though funding would be discussed at termly PEP's, Louise further highlighted that the Virtual School was also working with providers to discuss potential funding if required in between PEP's.

RESOLVED: The Board noted the Virtual School Governing Body Update, and it was agreed that consideration be given to following the cohort of children who were a part the Post-16 Pupil Premium Pilot to monitor its impact in the long-term.

10. Children's Ambition Board Update

The Board considered a verbal update in respect of the Children's Ambition Board which was presented by Tom Brailsford, Service Director (Resources, Improvement and Partnerships) who advised that 3 key improvement strategies were discussed, the Improvement Strategy for Social Care, the SEND Improvement Plan and the Kirklees Futures Learning Strategy. Service Directors presented the key data points both positive and areas of concern before considering the Kirklees Futures Learning Strategy in more depth.

RESOLVED: The Board noted the Children's Ambition Board update and it was agreed that the Minutes of the meetings of the Board be circulated to the Corporate Parenting Board.

11. Update from Board Members on Interaction with Services

The Board noted verbal updates from Members in respect of interactions with Services. The Chair of the Board reported attendance at:

- (17th November 2022) Childrens Emotional Wellbeing Partnership Event.
- (18th November 2022) Foster Carer Celebration Event.
- (25th November 2022) Online conference - Supporting fathers separated from children, and single fathers.
- (1st December 2022) Kirklees Families Together meeting.
- (2nd December 2022) a visit to the Rainbow baby bank to discuss the development of a new hub to form a drop-in centre for parents.
- (12th December 2022) a meeting of the Childrens Ambition Board.
- (13th December 2022) a meeting of the Yorkshire and Humber Lead member network as the Chair.
- (14th December 2022) a meeting of the Yorkshire and Humber Children's Improvement Board as the Chair.
- (20th December 2022) the Kinship Carers Christmas event.
- (6th January 2023) a meeting with Locala in respect of the Children's Nursing Team.
- (9th January 2023) a meeting of the Schools Organisation Advisory Group (SOAG).
- (17th January 2023) a virtual meeting of the Children's Assurance Panel
- (18th January 2023) Training with the LGA.

Councillor Elizabeth Reynolds also reported attendance at the Foster Carer Celebration Event and had been invited to attend a Mockingbird meeting in the coming weeks. Tom Brailsford, Service Director (Resources, Improvement and Partnerships) reported a visit to the Independent Visitors who gave a presentation around how they developed relationships with young people. Tom further suggested it would be helpful to invite the Independent Visitors to share this presentation with the Board. In response the Board added that Board members would welcome invitations to visit the Independent Visitors team also. The Chair of the Board further welcomed suggestions of other areas to visits from Board Members.

RESOLVED: The Board noted the update on Interactions with Services, and it was agreed that

1. Independent Visitors be invited to share their presentation around developing relationships with young people with the Board.
2. Board members visit the Independent Visitors Team.

12. Corporate Parenting Board Agenda Plan 2022/2023

The Board considered its agenda plan for 2022/23. It was noted there were new items arising from the meeting to be added to the Plan.

RESOLVED: The Board noted the agenda plan for 2022/23 and it was agreed that:

1. The items highlighted during the meeting be added to the document for the Boards consideration.
2. The child's voice report be presented at the next meeting of the Board.
3. The plan around the inclusion of the child's voice be brought forward and added to the agenda plan as soon as possible.