

Contact Officer: Jodie Harris

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

Tuesday 28th March 2023

Present: Councillor Viv Kendrick (Chair)
Councillor John Lawson
Councillor Carole Pattison
Councillor Elizabeth Reynolds
Councillor Andrew Marchington (ex-officio)
Gill Addy, Designated Nurse for Looked After Children and Care Leavers
Tom Brailsford, Service Director (Resources, Improvement and Partnerships)
Louise Hallas, Virtual School Head Teacher
Colleen Kenworthy, Kirklees Fostering Network
Mel Meggs, Strategic Director for Children's Services
Sara Miles, Head of Service - Resources, Improvement and Partnerships
Ophelia Rix, Head of Service for Children in Care, Care Leavers and Looked After Children

In attendance: Anna Gledhill, Head of Children's Improvement, Partnerships and Voice
Vicky Metherington, Service Director – Family Support and Child Protection
Krissy Podgorski, Team Manager – Children Looked after Independent Service
Zoe Prince, Service Manager - Resources, Improvement and Partnerships

Apologies: Councillor Richard Smith

1 Membership of the Board/Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Richard Smith.

2 Minutes of Previous Meeting

Gill Addy provided an update in respect to the Flexible Commissioning Project; each dental practice in the Yorkshire and the Humber region had now been contacted about this initiative, which was proving to be of real benefit in assisting with access to dental services for a number of vulnerable groups. The numbers of practices involved had increased overall and an updated list had been requested.

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 24 January 2023 be approved as a correct record.

3 Interests

No interests were declared.

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4 **Admission of the Public**

All items took place in public session.

5 **Deputations/Petitions**

No deputations or petitions were received.

6 **Children's Performance Highlight Report**

The Board considered the latest Children's Performance Highlights Report in respect of the performance monitoring data for Children's Services.

Ophelia Rix, Head of Service for Children in Care, Care Leavers and Looked After Children highlighted the following points:

- The data indicated an improving picture.
- Collaborative and creative work across the services was continuing. This included working alongside the Virtual School to ensure that these children and young people had access to education and were supported to remain in education.
- It was considered essential that feedback from young people was used to help shape services and strategy for the future and an engagement session had been scheduled for May. Further reports would be submitted to the Board in due course.
- The number of Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) had increased, and the service was working to ensure appropriate support was provided to all SGO carers.

In response to questions and comments, it was explained that:

- An item would be scheduled on the Board's forward plan to provide comparative data in respect of accommodation and outcomes, including education outcomes, for those children being cared for under SGOs and those who were adopted or fostered.
- In terms of the improvement of timelines for transitional payments to foster carers adopting the child in their care; agreed transitional arrangements were in place across West Yorkshire. It was considered that these payments did assist with stability and transition and the process was therefore being reviewed to ensure the right outcomes.

Louise Hallas, the Virtual School Head Teacher explained that no new national benchmarking data was available in respect of education outcomes at this point in time. Personal Education Plans (PEP) continued to run at 100% up-to-date with a 99% figure for initial PEP completion within the relevant timescale. This figure had been impacted by issues with just one PEP.

Gill Addy, the Designated Nurse for Looked After Children and Care Leavers updated the Board in relation to the health data, which provided both twelve-month rolling and monthly figures:

- The rates for initial health assessments completed on time had improved to 85.9% since January.

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- A hybrid telephone/face-to-face model was still in use and this was proving to be successful.
- Those aged 16+ and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children were seen face to face for initial assessments to aid engagement and understanding.
- Team capacity was a continuing challenge. A temporary part-time bank nurse was supporting the team. This had helped to ease some of the pressure and the data in respect of the review of health assessments indicated significant improvement.
- Background was given in respect of the breaches that had occurred in January and February, which were associated with capacity issues or flexibility to accommodate carer's arrangements amongst other things.
- The data on dental checks was skewed due to one of the systems automatically identifying a child as being 'out of date' upon reaching the age of one year but some dental practices not registering children until they were one, there had also been a number of large sibling groups.
- The monthly data was indicating positive figures for review of health assessments and registration with a dentist.
- Substance misuse that had a significant impact on daily life stood at 0.87%. If issues were identified, then a referral was made to the outreach service. Monthly review meetings took place to ensure that all young people had access to, or had been offered, appropriate support.

The report was noted.

7 Sufficiency Needs Assessment and Strategy

The Board considered the Sufficiency Needs Assessment and Strategy, January 2023 to March 2025, which aimed to establish a framework to assess, understand and forecast placement demand to ensure the provision of high-quality homes and care environments for those children and young people cared for by Kirklees.

Tom Brailsford, Service Director (Resources, Improvement and Partnerships) introduced the report with the following points being highlighted:

- The numbers of children looked after had reduced since 2020.
- Long-term placement stability (in current home for two and a half years or longer) was above the regional and national average.
- Placement stability for children with three or more moves in twelve months had increased since the last report, associated with capacity challenges, but was in line with regional and national averages.
- The majority of the children looked after by Kirklees were in family-based care settings, which was positive.
- The Authority needed to recruit further foster carers and increase its residential provision over the next three years to meet demand.

In response to questions, it was explained that the 'satellite' model would involve a maximum of six places, within a reasonable distance, being overseen by one manager of a registered children's home; this would facilitate increased capacity and would allow a flexible response if young people were in crisis or needed assessment.

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The importance of for planning for the future was acknowledged and the report was welcomed.

8 Annual Fostering Report

The Annual Fostering Report, covering the period October 2021 to September 2022 was submitted to the Board.

Anna Gledhill, Head of Children's Improvement, Partnerships and Voice introduced the report and commented that:

- The next report would cover the six-month period between October 2022 and March 2023 to re-align the reporting period with financial reporting periods and to enable the service to provide comparative data from national and regional service reporting in future reports.
- There had been a significant reduction in the number of children looked after under the age of 1 year and a significant rise in the numbers over the age of 16 years, which impacted on sufficiency in terms of the foster carer profile.
- Between April 2021 and March 2022, 33 new fostering families had been approved and 26 had resigned or de-registered.
- Exit interviews were undertaken where possible, to establish if there was any learning to take on board from those resigning or being de-registered.
- The aim was to increase the number of initial enquiries and the conversion rate.
- An increase in the levels of allowance payable had been agreed for 2022/23 and consideration was being given to the figures for 2023/24.
- There had been an increase in the number of Special Guardianship Orders which was welcomed.
- 132 cases had been considered by the Fostering Panel.

Questions and comments were invited from Committee Members, with the following issues being covered:

- The refreshed Recruitment Plan included weekly performance meetings to review the figures, including the source of enquiries, and to achieve an understanding of the reasons why they had not progressed to the next stage including tracking the timescales and ensuring timely responses. Consideration was also being given to a targeted marketing plan, as achieving the right kind of enquiry would improve the conversion rate.
- The detail in each case was important, for example if it was just not the right time for one person, perhaps they could be contacted at a later stage. The panel was assured that enquiries were tracked and followed-up as appropriate.
- The Panel should maintain scrutiny in terms of the diversity of the Authority's foster carer profile.
- The work undertaken by the Authority's foster carers was invaluable and the significant level of work being undertaken by the Fostering Panel was recognised and appreciated.
- The Fostering Network had not been involved in the discussion around the allowances for 2022/23 but had been assured that this would happen for future years.

9 Voice of the Child Report

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The Board considered a report which aimed to represent the voice and key messages, themes and feedback from the Authority's children and young people, with a specific focus on those living in Kirklees children's homes.

Zoe Prince, Service Manager Safeguarding, Quality Assurance and Homes for Children introduced the report explaining that scoping work was being undertaken to establish how best children and young people might be facilitated to present their views to the Board. This would include consultation with the Children in Care Council and the wider looked after population, including those who were subject to Special Guardianship Orders.

The report was noted.

10 **Virtual School Governing Body Update**

The Board received an update from Councillor Carole Pattison, the Chair of the Virtual School Governing Body, and Louise Hallas, the Virtual School Head Teacher. They explained that:

- The Governing Body met every half term, with the last meeting having taken place on 28th February when a comprehensive and positive update had been provided by the Virtual School Head Teacher.
- Each meeting now included a focus on a particular issue in detail. At the February meeting this had been suspensions and exclusions. The Governing Body had been assured that the Virtual School was providing the necessary support. The Virtual School continued to have nil permanent exclusions; this was a key focus with the aim being to do everything possible to ensure the right thing for that child at that time.
- In response to a question about sharing learning from the Virtual School's approach, it was explained that this was a very complex area involving a significant amount of work in each individual case and dealing with a wide range of children and schools. It therefore might be difficult to identify any particular best practice but this would of course be done wherever possible.

The update was noted.

11 **Children's Ambition Board Update**

Tom Brailsford, Service Director (Resources, Improvement and Partnerships) updated the Board in relation to the work of the Children's Ambition Board including:

- A continued focus on the data associated with the improvement of the three key areas: family support and child protection, learning and early support and resources, improvement and partnership.
- Updating the three key strategies.
- A report on the quality and timeliness of Education Health and Care Plans.

The update was noted.

12 **Updates from Board Members on Interaction with Services**

The Board noted updates from Board Members in relation to progress and key issues following interaction with services and partners to provide challenge in the role of the Corporate Parent.

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Councillor Reynolds reported that she had attended a Mockingbird meeting which had involved a wide range of carers and a number of interesting discussions. Councillor Marchington reported that the Children's Scrutiny Panel had undertaken a number of visits including to the Child Protection Team clusters which had identified issues in respect of increasing caseloads, recruitment and retention. He had also attended a referral and review meeting which involved partners in the scrutiny of data and 'deep-dives' on particular cases.

The Panel thanked the members of the Children's Scrutiny Panel for the feedback provided as a result of this work.

The Chair reported that she had:

- Received a briefing in respect of unregistered/unregulated homes.
- Met with colleagues in the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Team, which had included a discussion about the approach to some very challenging situations.
- Attended the Children Looked After Council where she had been made very welcome and discussed how they might share their views with this Board. She noted that the timeliness of response to any issues they raised was very important to them and had undertaken to provide them with an overview of the role of the Corporate Parenting Board, and that she would attend a future meeting of the Care Leavers Forum.

The updates were noted.

13 Corporate Parenting Board Agenda Plan 2022/23

The Board considered the agenda plan for 2022/23.

Resolved –

That items in respect of:

- The multi-agency local authority partnership,
- Comparative data for outcomes of those cared for under Special Guardianship Orders, be added to the work programme.