

Contact Officer: Jodie Harris

**KIRKLEES COUNCIL**  
**CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**

**Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> July 2023**

Present: Councillor Viv Kendrick (Chair)  
Councillor John Lawson  
Gill Addy, Designated Nurse for Looked After Children and Care Leavers  
Kieran Lord, Interim Service Director: Resources, Improvements & Partnerships  
Louise Hallas, Virtual School Head Teacher  
Stewart Horn, Head of Joint Commissioning, Children and Families  
Jo-Anne Sanders, Service Director for Learning and Early Support  
Vicky Metheringham, Service Director - Family Support and Child Protection

Apologies: Councillor Karen Allison, Councillor Richard Smith, Councillor Carole Pattison, Councillor Elizabeth Reynolds, Councillor Andrew Cooper (ex-officio), Keith Fielding (Kirklees Fostering Network), Colleen Kenworthy (Kirklees Fostering Network), Ophelia Rix (Head of Service for Children in Care, Care Leavers and Looked After Children)

**1 Membership of the Board/Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillor Karen Allison, Councillor Richard Smith, Councillor Carole Pattison, Councillor Elizabeth Reynolds, Councillor Andrew Cooper (ex-officio), Keith Fielding (Kirklees Fostering Network), Colleen Kenworthy (Kirklees Fostering Network), Ophelia Rix (Head of Service for Children in Care, Care Leavers and Looked After Children)

**2 Minutes of Previous Meeting  
RESOLVED –**

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 28 March 2023 be approved as a correct record.

**3 Interests**

No interests were declared.

**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.

Vicky Metheringham, Service Director - Family Support and Child Protection highlighted the following points in relation to :

- During the 12-month period from Jun 22 to May 23, the number of children looked after peaked at 64.3 (630 children) in Oct 22 and has since decreased to 61.3 (601 children) in May 23. The current 12-month average for Kirklees is 62.4 (612 children), marginally above the 31 March 2022 published rate of 62.0, but below the England 2022 rate of 70.0 and significantly below our Statistical Neighbours 2022 rate of 92.0.
- Of the 68 children placed outside of Kirklees and more than 20 miles from their home address, the large majority are placed in fostering.
- The Heads of Service continue to have oversight of permanency planning through Legal Gateway and Permanence Panel. The panels are held weekly to ensure consistency regarding decision making and care planning for children and young people. The panels also provide a quality assurance framework and opportunity to evidence good practice and areas for development.
- Senior Leadership Team (SLT) maintains oversight of children and young people placed in external placement through review panel held monthly and chaired by the Service Director. The purpose of the panel is to ensure better oversight of children who are not placed in Local Authority provision and provides a quality assurance function in that it provides high support and challenge as required to avoid drift and delay in care planning for children and young people.
- The number of social work changes remains a focus to ensure we are minimising the impact on children and young people children as it is important that we maintain and continue to strengthen relationships. This will remain a challenge due to the recruitment of Social Work Practitioners, of which is not just specific to Kirklees Council. We are mindful of the impact this has on our children and young people and to address this we recruited youth engagement and family support practitioners who continue to develop relationships and provide additional support and stability for the children and young people they are working with. In addition, all young people aged 17 now have an allocated personal advisor, to ensure earlier planning to adulthood and independent living. We will also continue to focus on staff retention and consistency in case allocation.
- There had been a slight increase in relation to the number of children who have had 3 or more home moves. This remains a focus to ensure stability is provided to our children and young people. It was reported that work across service is taking place to address this.
- With regard to convictions it was reported that there had been zero in quarters 3 and 4 due largely to the focus and positive work of the sub groups.

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- 17 requests for Initial Review forms were received by the Child Protection and Review unit for Children to become Looked After in May 2023, relating to 30 children in total - an increase on the previous month. 9 of the requests were for sibling groups of 2 or more, which is also higher than usual. For all the referrals received, children and young people were allocated an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) within 24 hours and Initial Child Looked After Reviews were arranged within 4 weeks of the children and young people becoming Looked After. One child ceased to be Looked After within one week as their parents ended their agreement to Section 20, and the Local Authority agreed with this decision.
- With regard to contact with care leavers there has been a decrease in relation to the number of Care Leavers we were in touch with during this month. This also has to be viewed in the context of this group being aged 18 plus and, in some situations, young people do not wish to keep in contact with their Personal Advisor. The team continue to work innovatively to keep in touch with all young people and we are confident that our post 18 young people all are aware of the support of offer if required.

Louise Hallas, the Virtual School Head Teacher provided an update in relation to Children Looked After Educational Outcomes and explained that:

- There had been good performance at Key Stage 4 and low Exclusion rate in comparison to national data.
- 100% of PEPs have been completed within the Spring Term with 98% initial PEPs completed within 10 school days.
- The Virtual School is currently leading on all PEPs which are virtually held meetings.
- Work continues with social care to improve young people's educational experiences.

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:

- LA rolling 12-month data showed that 75.8% of initial health assessments were completed in the statutory timescale.
- Locala monthly data for May showed that 92% of initial health assessments were completed in the 20-day timescale. 2 breaches of timescales due to placement of children in another LA delaying arrangements.
- With regard to review health assessments (RHA), Kirklees rolling 12-month data showed that 89.2% & 89% of the 'Developmental' assessments (under 5yrs old) and 'Annual' assessments (over 5 yrs. old) respectively, were completed in statutory timescales.
- Locala monthly data for May shows that 50% & 68% for under and over 5 years olds respectively, were completed in timescales. 16 breaches (7x staff sickness in Locala, 4x difficulty arranging, 1x referred back to specialist team, 2x capacity, 1x unable to engage, 1 unknown)
- The Business Case to consider additional nurse resources remains under commissioner consideration.

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- With regard to dental checks at the point of their RHA, Kirklees rolling 12-month data shows that 56.2% of children aged 1+, had attended the dentist. Several factors affecting the recording have been found and are being followed up.
- Locala monthly data for May shows that 100% of children age 18months to under 5 yrs., and 94% 5 years+, had attended the dentist at the point of their RHA.
- Locala data shows 88% & 96% of children age 18m to 4 years and 5 years+ respectively at the point of their RHA, were registered with a dentist.
- The use of the 'Flexible Commissioning Project' has supported CLA and care leavers to register with a dentist.

During discussion of the performance report and data, Board Members raised the following issues and questions:

- Board Members welcomed the 100% PEP rate and enquired about confidence in maintaining this level of performance. In response, Louise Hallas highlighted the strength of the team and explained that strong performance in this area had continued over the previous 2 years.
- In response to a question relating to preventing absenteeism, Louise Hallas explained that work was ongoing to ascertain whether the data was accurate in all cases as often incorrect coding of absences can result in unauthorised absences being recorded wrongly. Where cases of unauthorised absence are highlighted work is done on an individual case basis to improve attendance.
- With regard to the issue of substance misuse, the Chair acknowledged the relatively low numbers and the work that was ongoing with all services.
- The Chair highlighted the importance of Directorates and partner organisations being encouraged to offer opportunities through work, training and apprenticeships
- Board Members acknowledged to good fostering offer in Kirklees in terms of the support given to foster carers. The Chair re-iterated the importance of all Board Members encouraging people to come forward as potential foster carers.

**RESOLVED** – That the report be noted.

### 7 **Corporate Parenting Strategy**

The Board considered the Corporate Parenting Strategy for 2022-2024 which set out the approach to improving the lives of all children in care. The strategy set out the Council's vision for corporate parenting to ensure that all of our elected members and officers and everyone else in the Council champion our children in care and care leavers in everything they do and that our children in care and care leavers aspire and achieve, are safe and well, and are prepared for successful independent lives. In addition to the vision the Strategy set out 3 key pledges and associated actions, namely:

**We will be a good corporate parent to children in care and care leavers.** We will...

a. Listen to the needs of children in care and care leavers and to our health and education partners;

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- b. Encourage elected members and officers from across the Council to advocate and champion children in care and care leavers;
- c. Design services that work with children in care and care leavers to meet their needs, not doing to them.

### **We will create the conditions for our children in care to thrive in stable placements.** We will...

- a. Create the conditions for placements of the right kind, including attracting and retaining more foster carers;
- b. Support all our children to aspire and achieve in education and training and to be as healthy and well as possible;
- c. Work with partners to assess future placement, education, and health.

### **We will support our care leavers into independence at a pace that suits them.**

We will...

- a. Work with our children in care.
- b. We will work with families so they are ready to support them on leaving care, when appropriate;
- c. Create the conditions for positive, lasting relationships.

During discussion of this item, Councillor Lawson welcomed the reference to special guardianship orders and thanked all staff, foster carers and partners for their work in bringing the strategy together. All Board Members were encouraged to widely share the pledges set out in the strategy.

## **8 Virtual School Governing Body Update**

Louise Hallas, the Virtual School Head Teacher provided a verbal update in relation to the Virtual School Governing Body. It was reported that focus had been on part time timetable, attendance and the impact that suspensions could have on attendance. The final headteachers head teacher report was considered at the last meeting in light of the updated DfE data. Work had also been undertaken in respect of children with a social worker, this strategic work and casework had been developed to improve performance in this area. It was reported that DfE data is strong for children in need.

## **9 Updates from Board Members on Interaction with Services**

Board Members commented on interactions since the last meeting and continued to welcome invites to the various events

The Chair reported that she had:

- Attended foster carers awards
- Undertook home visit to a young person
- Attended 3 listening events
- Attended a staff engagement session to say goodbye to the Director of Children's Services, Mel Meggs.

## **10. Corporate Parenting Board Agenda Plan 2022/23**

The Board considered the agenda plan for 2023/24.

**Resolved –**

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That the following items be considered as part of the agenda for the next meeting:

- Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire Update
- Health Outcomes for Looked After Children