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KIRKLEES COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

Tuesday 5th March 2024

Present: Councillor Viv Kendrick (Chair)
Councillor John Lawson, Liberal Democrat - Group Leader
Stewart Horn, Head of Children's Integrated Commissioning
Louise Hallas, Virtual School Headteacher - Children & Young People
Vicky Metheringham, Service Director - Child Protection & Family Support

In attendance: Michelle Rawlings, Head of One Adoption West Yorkshire
Ian Mottershaw, Head of Service for Contextual Safeguarding and Youth Engagement Service

Observers:

Apologies: Councillor Elizabeth Reynolds, Cabinet Member - Learning and Aspiration
Gill Addy, Designated Nurse for Looked after Children/Care Leavers
Kieran Lord, Interim Service Director: Resources, Improvements & Partnerships
Sara Miles, Head of Safeguarding & Quality Assurance
Keith Fielding, Kirklees Fostering Network

1 Membership of the Board/Apologies

Apologies were received Councillor Elizabeth Reynolds, Sara Miles, Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance, Gill Addy, Designated Nurse, Kieran Lord, Interim Service Director - Resources, Improvements and Partnerships, Kieth Fielding, Kirklees Fostering Network.

2 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Board considered the Minutes of the meeting held on 23rd January 2024. When reporting on action undertaken in response to matters arising the previous meeting it was noted that in response to action point:

- 7 (1) a 'draft' version of the Dashboard infographic be shared with the Board during the meeting.
- 7 (2, 3, and 4) engagement with elected groups in respect of corporate parenting principles and training had begun.
- 9 (2) work was in progress to designing the wording of the corporate parenting pledge with the Children in Care Council.

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RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 23rd January 2024 be approved as a correct record.

3 Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

4 Admission of the Public

All Items were held in public session.

5 Deputations/Petitions

There were no deputations or petitions received.

6 Public Question Time

There were no questions received from members of the public

7 Head of Service Update

The Board considered a verbal update presented by Joel Hanna, Head of Service for Corporate Parenting and Children's Residential Services. During the update Joel Hanna gave a presentation highlighted that:

- In relation to children accommodated out of area, it was noted that 80 children (13%) were placed over 20 miles from their home address, and of these 58 (72.5%) were living in family-based care arrangements.
- 45 (56%) of those children were confirmed as living in accommodation identified as part of their plan (e.g. - connected carers /kinship carers etc...)
- The remaining young people included 6 sibling groups, where placements were identified to retain children together.
- At its meeting held on 7th February 2024, the Council formally moved to recognise care experience as a protected characteristic in line with several other Local Authorities.
- This was a positive development and had been well received by the Children in Care Council (CICC).
- The immediate work to recognise this would include referring to groups with protected characteristics when making changes to policy and taking decisions, as well as undertaking work to rebalance negative connotations around growing up in care.
- Following on from the 2-day review of the Care leaving service provided by Mark Riddell (MBE) work had been undertaken to:
 - Establish better links between the CICC/CLF
 - Work with the Children Looked After Team to provide early preparation for becoming a care leaver.
 - Work closely with North Yorkshire around improving the quality of pathway plans.
 - The delivery of an ambassador event (hosted by Kirklees College) where over 40 organisations and partners had been invited.

In the discussion to follow, questions and comments were invited from Board Members, with the following issues being covered:

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- In response to a question from the ex-officio in relation to sharing of best practice around recognition of care experience as a protected characteristic, it was advised that the national care leaving benchmarking forum measured what Councils were doing to implement the meaning nationally.
- The Board welcomed that being in the care system had barriers, but that the approach to the recognition of this as a protected characteristic needed to be proactive and question what the impact would be on care leavers.
- In response to a question from the Board in relation to supporting care experienced young people with accommodation who were studying at university mid-term, it was noted that this was a challenge and work was being undertaken with housing providers and Personal Advisors' to help address this.
- In response to a question from the ex-officio around contact with student welfare as corporate parents it was advised that Personal Advisors' did this on an individual basis.
- The Board highlighted that it was important to recognise that university placements could put care leavers in a difficult situation with regards to accommodation and welcomed that work was being undertaken to address these challenges.

RESOLVED: The Board noted the Head of Service Update.

8 One Adoption West Yorkshire - 6 monthly report

The Board considered the One Adoption West Yorkshire (OAWY), Half Year Performance Report – Kirklees Highlights presented by Michelle Rawlings, Head of One Adoption West Yorkshire who provided a summary of the activity in relation to Kirklees children and families during the first 6 months of the year. It was noted that:

- The number of children adopted remained stable and consistent and the same number of children were adopted and placed as in the same reporting period the previous year.
- There had been a slight increase in adoption plans made during the reporting period and a slight decrease in number of placements orders.
- 2 children sibling groups had disrupted and returned to Local Authority care.
- Most children continued to be placed with OAWY approved adopters.
- A key priority for OAWY was to address low Early permanence figures and work undertaken included offering training sessions across children's social care in January, and an educational webinar which would be rolled out to all staff.
- At the half year point there was a slight increase in number of children for agency decision not yet matched (25) and at year end there were 16 children with a placement order but not matched.
- Of those these children were from overwhelmingly white British backgrounds but over half were part of a sibling group.
- Of the 16 children with a placement order awaiting a match, 12 had characteristics which made them more difficult to match (i.e. - aged 5 or over, need a family alongside a brother or sister, are from an ethnically diverse background or had a disability), 6 of whom had more than one characteristic.

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In the discussion to follow, questions and comments were invited from Board Members, with the following issues being covered:

- In response to a question from the Board around how Kirklees compared with other neighbouring Local Authorities in relation to A1 and A2 indicators it was advised that this varied from period to period. Some Local Authorities had higher numbers of children, where in Kirklees smaller numbers meant 1 child could significantly affect the data and this was the same as other Local Authorities with similar numbers of children.
- The Board highlighted that high performance in the number of Special Guardianship Orders meant that there were lower numbers of adoptions which was positive.

RESOLVED: The Board noted the report 'One Adoption West Yorkshire, Half Year Performance Report – Kirklees Highlights'.

9 Children's Performance Report

The Board considered the latest Children's Performance Highlights Report which was presented by; Joel Hanna, Head of Service for Corporate Parenting and Children's Residential Services, Louise Hallas - Virtual School Headteacher, Stewart Horn - Head of Children's Integrated Commissioning, Ian Mottershaw - Head of Children's Integrated Safeguarding and Y.E.S and Anna Gledhill, Head of Sufficiency. It was highlighted that:

- As a part of the key focus to improve the performance indicator for stability, the MST team were now embedded within the Children Looked After Service.
- Changes in social workers were another element affecting stability, and work had also been undertaken with the CCIC to develop a pen picture to introduce social workers to children and young people prior to meeting.
- In relation to Children Looked After Education Outcomes, a breakdown for the reasons why young people were persistently absent was provided (as requested by the Board) and it was noted that:
 - 51% of young people who were currently persistently absent were seeing improved attendance.
 - 25% were currently ranked 'amber', which indicated there had been progress but improving the stability of progress was required.
 - 24% were currently ranked 'red' which indicated concerns around the absence of those young people.
 - Reasons for absence that affected Persistent Absence data included illness, lates, suspension and emotionally based school avoidance.
- In relation to Children Looked After Health Outcomes, it was noted that:
 - In relation to Review Health Assessments strong compliance with targets was being achieved and stability had been established in the staffing team.
 - Work continued to address challenges relating to Initial Health Assessments, and there had been improvements in attendance at clinics.

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- In relation to children looked after convictions, figures remained consistently low and there was an overall downturn to 0 this quare, which was attributed to work of the investment of the Disposal Panel.
- In relation to Fostering, a fostering diagnostic took place at the end of February 2024 and the feedback was anticipated feedback by the end of March 24.

In the discussion to follow, questions and comments were invited from Board Members, with the following issues being covered:

- The Board welcomed the idea of social worker pen pictures and MST involvement in preventing the destabilization of placements.
- The Board welcomed news of the Fostering Diagnostic feedback and it was agreed that this be presented to the Board.
- In response to a question from the board around looked after convictions and high performance in this area it was confirmed that the approach taken by the disposal panel would be adopted for all children not just looked after children.

RESOLVED: The Board noted the Childrens' Performance Highlights Report, and it was agreed that the feedback of the fostering diagnostic be presented to the Board.

10 The Voice of Children and Young People and Care Experienced Young People

The Board considered a verbal update in respect of the Voice of Children and Young People and Care Experience Young People presented by Joel Hanna, Head of Service for Children Looked After and Care Leavers. Joel Hanna gave a presentation which explained that:

- The voice of young people was heard by the Head of Service through weekly attendance at the Children in Care Council (CCiC) and Care Leavers Forum (CLF) alternately.
- Engagement had now taken place with the CCiC and CLF to inform the current review and revision of the Corporate Parenting Strategy.
- The Head of Service had also begun to meet with a smaller group of representatives from these forums along with other care leavers to design and deliver corporate parenting training to be provided to officers and elected members after the elections.
- Along with the launch of the new care leavers website work had been undertaken to review branding which included holding a competition with young people to design a new logo.
- Further engagement was held with the CICC and CLF around recognising 'care experience' as a protected characteristics following passing of the motion by the Council.

In the discussion to follow, questions and comments were invited from Board Members, with the following issues being covered:

- In response to a question from the Board around closing the feedback loop with young people, it was advised that feedback would be enabled through reviewing the governance arrangements of the Board and holding young person friendly meetings and 'takeover' meetings periodically.

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- In response to a question from the Board around negative feedback to the requests from young people it was explained that where there were limitations that it was important to be transparent and thoroughly explain the rationale behind why certain decisions were made.
- In response to a question from the Board around capturing the wider views and feedback of care leavers and children in care in Kirklees it was advised that work has been undertaken to widen out the activity and membership of the CICC. Mystery shopping and the exploration of advocacy for those groups and better connections with children's residential settings were also potential approaches discussed.

RESOLVED: The Board noted the verbal update 'The Voice of Children and Young People and Care Experience Young People'.

11 Corporate Parenting Strategy - Initial Update on Review

The Board considered a verbal update on the Corporate Parenting Strategy – Initial Update on Review presented by Joel Hanna, Head of Service, Corporate Parenting and Children's Residential Services. During the update Joel Hanna gave a presentation which set out an overview of work undertaken to refresh the Corporate Parenting Strategy, it was noted that the key elements of this work which included:

- Setting out the refreshed Corporate Parenting Strategy and priorities for 2024-2027.
- Reconfiguring the Corporate Parenting Board arrangements including a revision of the Boards Terms of Reference with the ambition to establish a broader membership with wider partners and the development of new performance report.
- Establish the delivery of the arrangements to implement and deliver those priorities through partnership approach.
- Engagement with the Children in Care Council (CICC) and Care leavers Forum.

In the discussion to follow, questions and comments were invited from Board Members, with the following issues being covered:

- In response to the Boards question around the governance arrangements it was advised that the draft strategy would include more detail and it was agreed for this to be presented to the Board.
- The Board noted that other key stakeholders such as foster carers for example should be included in the co-production of the strategy.

RESOLVED: The Board noted the verbal update 'Corporate Parenting Strategy – Initial Update on Review' and it was agreed that:

1. The Board the presentation be circulated to all Board members.
2. The Draft Strategy to be brought to the Board in the near future.

12 Updates from Board Members on interaction with services

The Board considered verbal updates from Board Members in relation to progress and key issues following interaction with Services and partners to challenge the role of the Corporate Parent.

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During the update the Chair noted attendance at:

- The Mockingbird 3rd installation event.
- A meeting with the Kirklees Fostering Network and Third Sector Leaders to discuss volunteering opportunities for looked after young people.
- A meeting with the Kirklees youth alliance ambassadors.
- A meeting with the Chief Executive of Locala.
- A meeting with the Councillor Elizabeth Reynolds and Councillor Paul Moore for a briefing session on children's services and a visit to Number 12.
- Chaired the Yorkshire and Humber Lead Member network where there was a focus on SEND.
- The Front Door Health check set up meeting.

RESOLVED: The Board noted the Updates from Board Members on Interaction with Services.

13 Corporate Parenting Board Agenda Plan

The Board considered the agenda plan for 2023/24.

RESOLVED: The Board noted the agenda plan for 2023/24 and it was agreed that the following reports be added:

1. Corporate Parenting Strategy
2. Fostering Annual Report
3. Update from Fostering Diagnostic Visit

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