

# Public Document Pack

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## KIRKLEES COUNCIL

### CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

**Tuesday 23rd April 2024**

Present: Councillor Viv Kendrick (Chair)  
Councillor John Lawson, Liberal Democrat - Group Leader  
Gill Addy, Designated Nurse for Looked after Children/Care Leavers  
Kieran Lord, Interim Service Director: Resources, Improvements & Partnerships  
Stewart Horn, Head of Children's Integrated Commissioning  
Louise Hallas, Virtual School Headteacher - Children & Young People  
Tom Brailsford, Strategic Director for Children's Services  
Sara Miles, Head of Safeguarding & Quality Assurance  
Jo-Anne Sanders, Service Director - Learning & Early Support

Co-optees

In attendance: Stephanie Hill, Project Manager – Children and Families  
Lauren Stephenson, Service Manager – Family Support and Child Protection  
Zoe Prince, Service Manager – Family Support and Child Protection  
Lucy Fearnley, Team Manager Quality Assurance and Safeguarding  
Robert Fordyce, Head of Service QA & Prac Dev

Observers:

Apologies: Councillor Karen Allison, Green Group - Group Business Manager  
Councillor Andrew Cooper, Green Group - Group Leader  
Vicky Metheringham, Service Director - Child Protection & Family Support  
Keith Fielding, Kirklees Fostering Network  
Georgina Ioannou, Kirklees Fostering Network

- 1 Membership of the Board/Apologies**  
Apologies were received from Councillor Andrew Cooper (ex-officio), Councillor Karen Allison, Vicky Metheringham, Service Director - Child Protection and Family Support, Georgina Ioannou, Kirklees Fostering Network and Keith Fielding, Kirklees Fostering Network.
- 2 Minutes of previous meeting**  
The Board considered the Minutes of the previous meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

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**RESOLVED:** That Jo-Anne Sanders, Service Director's attendance at the meeting be recorded and that the Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2024 be approved as a correct record subject to the amendment.

### 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 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 the Board received a presentation which highlighted that:

- In April 2024 there had been a return visit from the National Implementation Lead for Care Leavers (Mark Riddell MBE) to review progress in respect of the recommendations made following the initial review which took place in October/November 2023 as requested by the Council.
- At the end of the visit, it was indicated that he had found significant and rapid improvement in many areas of the service including:
  - Plans to widen the corporate parenting partnership and governance.
  - Developments within the hubs (number 11 and 12).
  - Support to care leavers through specialist drop ins.
  - Recognising Care Experience as a protected Characteristics.
  - Development of the Continuous Service Improvement plan.
  - Positive morale of the workforce.
- There was a conversation nationally around how to fully realise care experience as a protected characteristic, including the acknowledgement within policies and procedures as well as raising the profile of the conversation highlighting some of the disadvantages and stigmas surrounding care experience.
- 2 Joint working Protocols had been established between Housing and Care Leavers including early bidding rights for care experienced young people 12 weeks prior to their 18<sup>th</sup> Birthday for suitable properties.
- The aim was to extend joint work to support care leavers to access a wider range of housing options including establishing rent guarantee and housing bond support schemes for care leavers.
- Work was also being undertaken to establish welfare benefits and housing support specialist representation within the drop ins at number 11 and number 12 to support Personal Advisors working with care leavers with housing and benefits advice needs.

The Board noted the presentation and welcomed the positive feedback. Tom Brailsford, Director for Children's Services further highlighted that the scale of change over a period of 6 months and the strong corporate support in the Council

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had been recognised. The Board further noted a report would be presented to the Board on receipt of the formal feedback.

**RESOLVED:** The Board noted the Head of Service Update, and it was agreed that a report would be presented to the Board on receipt of the formal feedback

### 7 Independent Visitors Scheme Update April 2024

The Board considered the Independent Visitors Scheme Update April 2024 presented by Sara Miles, Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance and Lucy Fearnley, Team Manager Quality Assurance and Safeguarding. It was highlighted that:

- The Independent Visitor's scheme (also known as Care2Listen) matched children Looked After with adult volunteers.
- Those volunteers befriended children and young people in the care of the local authority, offered support, guidance and opportunities to engage in positive activities.
- Currently there were 22 active volunteers, of which 3 had availability for new matches, and there were 5 volunteer applicants in the recruitment process.
- Of the 22 Independent Visitors, 2 lived outside of Kirklees in neighbouring Local Authorities and were matched with young people.
- 18 of the Independent Visitors were female with an age range of 31 to 70.
- 21 young people were matched with an Independent Visitor and were aged between 12 and 20 years old, and the majority are female, with only 4 being male.
- 7 young people were recorded as living outside of Kirklees and of these, 6 lived in neighbouring local authorities.
- The large majority (19/21) of children and young people had been matched successfully with their Independent Visitor for over a year.
- Many of the children and young people who benefitted from having an Independent Volunteer had the same volunteer for significantly longer.
- There were currently 23 children and young people who had been referred to the scheme and were waiting to be matched with a Volunteer.
- 13 were male and aged between 9 and 16 years old, of which only 6 lived in Kirklees. The 10 females were of a similar age range (9 - 17 years old), and 6 were recorded as residing in Kirklees.
- Of the 11 children and young people who lived out of area, the majority resided in neighbouring local authorities.
- 8 of the 22 children and young people on the waiting list had additional needs (i.e-ADHD, Autism, communication difficulties, and /or a physical disability).
- For some of these children and young people it was noted that they would benefit from being matched with a volunteer with knowledge of their specialist needs.
- For other children and young people waiting to be matched it was recognised that they would benefit from a cultural match with their Independent Visitor.
- A small number of children and young people had shared a preference with regards to the age or gender (male) of the Independent Visitor who they wanted to be matched with; this was a further complexity when considering the cohort of volunteers.

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- In January 2024, the Volunteer Service supported recruitment by promoting the Independent Visitor Role as their featured role.
- Between April- June 2024 work was being undertaken to build capacity in the service to progress recruitment and matches.
- From July 2024, work was being undertaken to review the advertising and marketing strategies to recruit volunteers who were able to meet the specific needs of children and young people.

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

- Responding to a question from the Board in relation to the length of time a young person was matched with a volunteer, it was advised that matches were young person led and some young people were matched for a shorter period whereas others would be matched from a young age into being a care leaver.
- Responding to a question from the Board in relation to the marketing and recruitment approach, it was noted that advertisement of the Independent Visitor Role would be undertaken as a part of Foster Carer fortnight. It was also agreed that an update would be provided to the Board later in the year following work undertaken with the recruitment and volunteer service.
- Responding to a question from the Board in relation to the joint commitment to recruitment, it was highlighted it was important to make sure the correct skills to match the needs of young people were sought when recruiting.
- Responding to a comment from the Board in relation to the demographic of volunteers (fewer male volunteers) it was noted that a targeted approach be taken to councillors and council officers stepping down and /retiring may help increase the number of volunteers and diversity within the cohort.

**RESOLVED:** The Board noted the Independent Visitors Scheme Update April 2024 and it was agreed that an update on the marketing approach be provided to the Board following work undertaken with the recruitment and volunteer service.

### 8 Terms of Reference of the Board

The Board considered the draft Corporate Governance and Audit Committee Report and the Draft Terms of Reference following amendment presented by Joel Hanna, Head of Service for Corporate Parenting and Children's Residential Services.

It was explained that the purpose of the report was to seek the Boards approval to amend the arrangements for the Corporate Parenting Board and to confirm the new terms of reference in line with officer recommendations prior to presentation to the next meeting of the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2024 subject to approval by the Board. The reasons for the recommendations to amend the arrangements were:

- To support the establishment of broader partnership arrangements to deliver the authorities duties. The strengthening of current arrangements would ensure the Council were effective in supporting children in care and care

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leavers in line with the authority's statutory responsibilities across a wider range of partners.

- To be able to engage with children and young people within the Board arrangements, so their voice would become central in delivering service development and improvements.
- To respond to recommendations set out in feedback provided to the Chief Executive and Executive Leadership Team following a visit from the National Implementation Advisor to the Department for Education considering the Councils corporate parenting arrangements and services to care leavers.

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

- Responding to a concern raised by the Board in relation to ensuring transparency and accountability when holding private meetings, it was advised that a report would be submitted annually to a meeting of the Full Council, and that public scrutiny would be enabled through the Children's Scrutiny Panel.
- Responding to a question from the Board in relation to representing the voice of children and young people it was highlighted that it was important to ensure that this was done in a way that was meaningful to them and use accessible language.

At the close of the discussion the Board noted that they were satisfied with the responses provided to concerns around transparency, and expressed support for the recommendations highlighting the amendments would allow for the Board to evolve since its establishment in 2015 and provide opportunity for children and young people through the widened partnership arrangements.

**RESOLVED:** The Board noted the draft Corporate Governance and Audit Committee Report and the Draft Terms of Reference, and it was agreed that (i) the amendments be approved by the Board and (ii) that the report be progressed to the next meeting of the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee to be held 10<sup>th</sup> May 2024 for consideration.

### 9 Corporate Parenting Strategy - Update

The Board considered a verbal update on the Corporate Parenting Strategy presented by Joel Hanna, Head of Service, Corporate Parenting and Children's Residential Services.

During the update the Board were provided with a presentation which set out the work undertaken to refresh the Corporate Parenting Strategy, which under the proposed Corporate Parenting Board arrangements would be driven by the Corporate Parenting Operations Group where 6 Chairs would be appointed to lead on one of the strategies six key priorities. These were:

1. Supporting engagement and achievement in lifelong learning, education, training, and employment.
2. Ensuring that children in care and care leavers had safe, stable comfortable homes with access to continuing care and support.

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3. Ensuring that children and young people had positive relationships and had opportunities to engage with positive fun activities.
4. Listening and responding to the voice of children, young people, and care leavers.
5. Ensuring that children, young people, and care leavers grow up healthy and had support to maximise their physical and emotional health.
6. Developing the Care Leavers partnership to deliver success for life.

It was noted that the next steps would be to develop ways to measure success confirm the chairs for the six priority operational groups and then circulate the final draft for consultation to the Care Leavers Forum, Children in Care Council, Staff and the Board.

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

- Responding to concerns raised by the Board that Priority 5 did not include reference to Review Health Assessments, it was acknowledged that it was important to highlight positive areas of work and following the establishment of the operational groups, there may be broader scope to include a greater variety of outcome measures relating to health data.
- The Board noted that it was important to make sure that each priority was shown to be of equal value in the strategy and suggested numbering each alphabetically rather than numerically to communicate this more clearly.

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

1. The presentation be shared with the Board.
2. Review Health Assessments be included under priority 5.
3. Consideration be given to listing the 6 priorities alphabetically to communicate equal value.

### 10 Update from Fostering Diagnostic Visit

The Board considered an update on the outcomes of the Fostering Diagnostic Visit, presented by Zoe Prince, Service Manager for the Fostering Service. It was highlighted that:

- The Fosterlink Advisor carried out a diagnostic visit to Kirklees Local Authority on 7th, 8th and 14th February 2024.
- The aim was to offer in-depth, diagnostic support to local authority fostering services that specifically focused on recruitment and approval practices.
- The visit included a series of meetings with existing and prospective foster carers, panel representatives, and staff members such as social workers, recruitment officers, marketing and communications personnel, administrators, and fostering managers.
- Key findings of the visit included that:
  - The team was well staffed as a dedicated resource, and there were two dedicated Fostering Recruitment Advisors who managed enquiries and Initial visits.
  - Feedback from 2 foster carers who had recently been recruited was positive highlighting a timely process from initial visit to application.
- Key recommendations included:

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- To complete quality assurance activity in respect of why enquiries were ceased or withdrawn from the process.
- To complete a competitor analysis of neighbouring Local Authorities and IFA's in relation to rates and benefits.
- To continue to work closely with Kirklees Fostering Network to involve foster carers in recruitment and training, service development and policies and implementation.
- In response to the recommendations work undertaken so far included:
  - The Recruitment and Marketing plan had been updated.
  - A proposal relating to Foster carer fortnight had been shared with SLT which included many of the recommendations.
  - Recommendations were to inform the updated Fostering Strategy which would be presented to the Board at a later date.

Tom Brailsford, Director for Children's Services expressed pride in the culture of transparency in the organisation and highlighted that there had been improvement in fostering recruitment and an increase in the diversity of foster carers prior to the diagnostic visit. It was advised that work had been undertaken to understand the reasons for the improvements and an update would be presented to the Board to follow.

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

- The Board welcomed the external peer review noting it demonstrated confidence in the service and ability to consider other perspectives.
- The Board noted the recommendation to 'Consider having a foster panel member with an educational background' and welcomed the finding but highlighted that panel members regularly changed and brought a range of different strengths and backgrounds.
- The Board noted that the broader Corporate Parenting Membership with wider partners would help support diving improvements.

**RESOLVED:** The Board noted the Update from Fostering Diagnostic Visit, and it was agreed that:

1. An update in respect of improvements in fostering recruitment be presented to a future meeting of the Board.
2. The updated Fostering Strategy be presented to a future meeting of the Board.

**11 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 who explained that:

- The Voice of children and young people was heard through weekly attendance at the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum (alternately) by the Head of Service to listen to the experience, voice and views and provide a 'you said we did' response to issues raised

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- Work was being undertaken together to inform the refreshed Corporate Parenting Strategy and arrangements for supporting governance and oversight.
- Work was being undertaken to increase the voice of our children and young people to the Corporate Parenting Board, (Takeover board events, attendance/representation at Board meetings and review and feedback from Webcast meetings etc.) with the ambition of children in care and care leaver representation at boards as part of our corporate parenting strategy refresh.
- The Care Leavers Forum are meeting with the Head of Service for Corporate Parenting to develop and co-deliver Corporate Parenting training for Members and Officers due to start at the end of May/early June.

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

### 12 **Report of Care Leavers Ambassadors Event**

The Board considered the Report of the Care Leavers Ambassadors Event presented by Stephanie Hill, Project Manager – Children and Families and Lauren Stephenson, Service Manager – Family Support and Child Protection. It was highlighted that:

- The Care Leavers Service were working to establish a 'Care Leavers Ambassadors Network' – a network of support for care leavers including partners, organisations, and businesses, to develop enrichment opportunities, raise funds for events and activities, and enhance the local offer for care leavers.
- On 7th March 2024, the Care Leavers Service held a 'Care Leavers Ambassadors Networking Event', sponsored by Kirklees College, where council colleagues, partners, organisations, and businesses were invited with the aim of strengthening relationships and to commence building the network of support.
- There were several speakers at the event, including care experienced adults who spoke around the ambition to create a 'Care Leavers Ambassadors Network', and why this is important for care leavers.
- The event was a success from which several offers of support for care leavers were received and work was being undertaken to progress these.
- Further networking events were to be held in the future with the aim to continue to form and build relationships with partners and organisations outside of these events.

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

- The Board expressed thanks to officers for organising a successful event which was inspiring and motivating.
- The Board welcomed the platform for fundraising noting that it would be helpful for a link to be circulated to the Board and every set of agenda papers going forwards.



**RESOLVED:** The Board noted the Report of the Care Leavers Ambassadors Event and it was agreed that the link to the fundraising platform be circulated to Board members, and with agenda papers, going forwards.

**13 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.

During the update the Chair noted attendance at:

- A meeting with the SENDACT team and Members of the Early Support Team.
- A meeting at Kim Leadbeater's (MP) office along with Heads of Services for a discussion on SEND at a national level.

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

**14 Corporate Parenting Board Agenda**

The Board considered the agenda plan for 2023/24.

**RESOLVED:** The Board noted the agenda plan for 2023/24 and it was agreed that a meeting be held to set the work programme for 2024/2025 based on the new terms of reference and corporate parenting strategy priorities.

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