

Corporate Parenting Board

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 4 February 2013 in
Committee Room No. 6, Civic Centre, Sunderland at 5.30p.m.**

Present

Councillor MacKnight
Councillor McClennan
Councillor P. Smith
Councillor D. Trueman

Members of the Board

Castle Ward
Hendon Ward
Silksworth Ward
Washington West

Young People

Kieran Boyce
Daniel Bensley

Change Council
Change Council

Also in Attendance

Councillor Davison
Councillor Farthing
Councillor Stewart
Councillor Williams

Redhill Ward
Washington South Ward
Redhill Ward
Washington Central Ward

All Supporting Officers

Meg Boustead
Dot McGough
Fay Wearmouth
Dawn Shearsmith

Children's Services
Children's Services
Children's Services
Sunderland Virtual School

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors Ball, Blackburn, Lawson, D. Smith, Speding and Walker.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes of the meeting on 4 February 2013

18. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2013 (copy circulated) be agreed and signed as a correct record.

Adoption Inspection Report and Action Plan

The Head of Safeguarding tabled a report detailing the findings of a recent Ofsted inspection of the Council's Adoption Service. A draft action plan was also enclosed.

A copy of the Ofsted inspection report was stated to have been appended to the main report, however was not attached, therefore the Head of Safeguarding agreed to circulate copies after the meeting as it was an important piece of information for the Board to read.

The Head of Safeguarding reported that the inspection went very well and that some very positive feedback was provided by the inspectors. The service was considered to be 'good' for each of the four sub-judgements, with the exception of 'quality of service' which was considered to be 'outstanding'.

The Chair commented that it was pleasing to hear the inspectors praise the service.

An action plan had been produced and the Board was advised that it would be provided with progress updates at future meetings of the Corporate Parenting Board.

Councillor McClennan in referring to the action plan enquired in relation to Sub Reference R2.1 if CAMHS were able to effectively manage the mental health provision of young people in Sunderland. The Head of Safeguarding advised that CAMHS was being closely monitored by Children's Services alongside Northumberland, Tyne and Wear Foundation Trust.

Councillor McClennan requested through the Chair that a report be presented to a future meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board on the progress CAMHS was making. The Head of Safeguarding agreed to do this and stated that the CAMHS service provider would be asked to attend to answer any questions.

Councillor McClennan in referring to the Potential Area for Development section of the Action Plan enquired what action was required under the following issue 'to consider the inclusion of adopted children within education policies (i.e. within the scope of the virtual school)'. The Head of Safeguarding responded stating that this action appeared to have been missing from the Action Plan and that it would be presented again at the next meeting.

Upon consideration of the information presented, it was: -

19. RESOLVED to: -

- i) note the information contained within the report;
- ii) a copy of the Ofsted inspection report of the Council's Adoption Service was to be circulated to the Board; and
- iii) A CAMHS update was to be provided to a future meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board.

Annual Report

The Head of Safeguarding stated that the opinions of the Board were important with regard to revising the size and content of the Annual Report, and would like to gather any views.

The Board was advised that every year an annual report was produced and presented to Scrutiny Committee. However, since the scrutiny arrangements had changed, the Head of Safeguarding proposed producing a much shorter report and enquired if the Board had any ideas regarding what type of information they would like to see included.

Upon discussion, the Board were keen to make the Corporate Parenting Board more proactive, and would be interested to see information that provided progress updates on work undertaken to develop and combat issues in children's homes, key successes relating to corporate parenting, any risks that had happened to be identified regarding looked after children, plus any future areas for development.

The Board nominated Councillor Stewart to work alongside the Head of Safeguarding to discuss what had worked well when annual reports had previously been presented to Scrutiny Committee, and also to talk through the subject areas that the Board had suggested for inclusion.

Upon consideration of the matter, it was:-

20. RESOLVED that:-

- i) Councillor Stewart work alongside the Head of Safeguarding to review the annual report; and
- ii) Further updates to be provided as appropriate.

LAC Commissioning Strategy

Board Members were referred to the LAC Commissioning Strategy (copy circulated) which had been provided for information.

The Head of Safeguarding advised that the Commissioning Strategy had been produced following a recommendation that had been made by Ofsted. The document was very detailed and included a large amount of information regarding performance outcomes.

It was confirmed that consultation had taken place with the young people and that their views regarding what they wanted to see in the document had been taken on board.

In referring to the document the Chair enquired what were the numbers of the looked after children. The Head of Safeguarding responded advising that the numbers had increased and there were two main reasons for this. One was that in April 2011 new care planning regulations were launched. The second was that since March 2012 young people living with friends or family where the local authority was involved were now categorised as looked after children. Also, since September 2012 onwards there happened to have been fewer young people leaving care.

There had also been an increase in the number of young people entering the care system, particularly into foster care. Children's Services were currently working to try to identify the reason for this.

It was confirmed that Children's Services continued to closely monitor each and every young person through their journey of the care system and more details regarding this matter would be presented at the next meeting.

The Board were invited to make comments or ask questions regarding the Strategy.

Councillor Williams commented that the increase in numbers of children coming into care was perhaps sadly linked to the present economic situation and that some families may be struggling under financial pressures, thus causing social neglect.

The Virtual School Headteacher in referring to page 9 of the LAC Commissioning Strategy where the young people stated that they would like the "Letterbox Scheme" to be available more often confirmed that the scheme was available in May and September. The impact of the Letterbox scheme was currently being assessed to ascertain if it was improving reading.

The Chair highlighted that the report stated that some young people were not aware that the Letterbox Scheme existed. The Head of Safeguarding explained that the young people invited for consultation were not part of the Change Council.

The Head of Safeguarding confirmed that members of the Change Council were looking into advertising issues to make young people more aware. Those young people would be invited to a future meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board.

There were no further comments or questions forthcoming.

The Board was invited to email the Head of Safeguarding with issues should they arise at the close of the meeting.

It was then: -

21. RESOLVED to note the LAC Commissioning Strategy 2013-2016.

Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006

At the instance of the Chairman, it was: -

22. RESOLVED that in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 the public be excluded during consideration of the remaining business as it was considered to involve a likely disclosure of information relating to an individual, or information which was likely to reveal the identity of an individual (including the Authority holding that information) (Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A, Part I, Paragraphs 1 and 2).

(Signed) P. SMITH
Chairman

Note:-

The above minutes relate only to items considered during the time which the meeting was open to the public.

Additional minutes in respect of other items are included in Part II.

