

Corporate Parenting Board

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 30 March 2010 in
Committee Room No. 6, Civic Centre, Sunderland at 5.15 pm**

Present:

Councillor P. Smith (Chair)
Councillor A. Hall
Councillor D. Smith

Members of the Board

Executive Member, Children and Learning City
Coalfield
Houghton

Also in attendance:

Meg Boustead
Nick Murphy
Dorothy McGough
Alyson Boucher
Steve Robinson

All Supporting Officers

Head of Safeguarding
Services for Looked After Children Manager
Service Improvement Facilitator
Young People's Officer
Assistant Leaving Care Worker

Young People

Shannon Arnold
Kirstyn Wood
Shanice-Dawn Sykes
Daniel Barwick

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors E. Ball, Gofton, Trueman, Walker and N. Wright.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes of the Meeting held on 12 January 2010

18. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2010 be agreed as a correct record.

The Head of Safeguarding in referring to the minutes stated that at the last meeting the young people enquired if they could expect to receive any feedback on the presentation that they delivered at the October 2009 meeting. In doing so, it was confirmed that this matter was being picked up and a response to the presentation was being drafted. However it was worth noting that the recommendations contained within future reports needed to be clear in terms of what the Board were being asked to do.

Councillor Hall enquired if Members could be updated on the accommodation issues documented within the minutes. Councillor P. Smith concurred with Councillor Hall and recommended Alan Caddick, Head of Housing and Simone Common, Young People's Services Strategic Manager to attend a future meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board to address these issues. The Head of Safeguarding agreed to make the necessary arrangements.

Children Looked After: Performance Report

The Head of Safeguarding submitted a report providing Board Members with information about performance against key performance indicators and targets for Children Looked After.

Members noted that within England, the numbers of Looked After Children had increased by approximately one-quarter since the Baby P tragedy, with some Council's reporting rises of up to 70% (July 2009).

Members were advised that comparative information had been compiled in relation to how Sunderland was performing compared with other Local Authorities. This information was contained in the report.

In referring to the report, the Head of Safeguarding explained that the indicators measuring placement stability were stable in relation to the number of Children Looked After. In Sunderland, at the end of January 2010 there were 391 Children Looked After, equating to 67.4 per 10,000 children under age 18, an increase of 5 in December 2009.

Attention was then drawn to each indicator in turn, and a description of performance was provided. These included updates on Placement Stability, Timeliness of Reviews of Children Looked After, Leaving Care, Children Missing from Home, Participation of Looked After Children in Reviews, Percentage of Children Adopted, Offending, Education, Disabilities and Ethnicity.

Councillor P. Smith in referring to paragraph 4.1 – Placement Stability – NI 62 (CLA with 3 or more moves) enquired what was meant by "If those who went missing from care are excluded this figure would fall to 7.9% or 31 from 391". In response the Head of Safeguarding responded advising that if a child is missing from care for more than 24 hours then it is technically classed as a 'placement move' which unfortunately has a negative impact upon the figures.

Councillor D. Smith enquired if this could be recorded separately, to which the Head of Safeguarding responded that indeed it could be reported in a separate column in future to ensure that the figures are demonstrated clearly for Members.

The Head of Safeguarding in referring to page 14 of the report explained that the Police data showed that a higher number of young people go missing on a Friday evening and that they tended to be the same people time after time, therefore discussions were taking place on how best to collate this data.

Councillor P. Smith commented that she would like to know the ages of young people going missing, where they are going and what was being done about it. The Head of Safeguarding advised that these issues were being managed through various meetings, but in order to find out where the young people recorded as missing go, it is up to the young people to divulge the information.

The Young People's Officer drew Members' attention to the fact that the young people had requested that the report on performance detail the exact figures rather than percentages. The Head of Safeguarding responded that attempts had been made to include numbers instead of percentages where possible.

Members having considered the report:-

19. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Independent Advocacy for Looked After Children

The Head of Safeguarding submitted a quarterly report concerning the Independent Advocacy Service.

Alyson Boucher, Young People's Officer outlined the report and in doing so advised Board Members that a request for an extension beyond March 2010 had been raised in order to maintain continuity of service.

Accessibility issues regarding the Service had been promoted in "Change News".

Members were advised that the number of advocates remained steady, with twelve young people requesting advocates during this year.

Work was still required in relation to young people with learning disabilities and this was being looked into alongside colleagues, together with the transition arrangements from Children's Independent Advocacy Service to Adult Services.

Upon consideration, it was:-

20. RESOLVED that the Service continue to develop including the re-commissioning of the contract.

Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Board

The Head of Safeguarding submitted a report informing Members of the information presented to the Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Committee regarding the Council's fulfilment of its duties as 'Corporate Parent'.

The report explained the current position of the Council as 'Corporate Parent', to ensure Members were aware of their role as corporate parents, of the current performance of the Council in meeting this responsibility and of services and initiatives in place and under development to further improve outcomes for the children and young people to whom the Council has a parenting responsibility.

Whilst referring to the report, Councillor P. Smith enquired how the young people felt when independent reviews were undertaken in the home. In response, the Young People's Officer explained that independent reviews were considered favourable and positive in the eyes of young people, particularly by those who have little interaction with adults.

Nick Murphy, the Services for Looked After Children Manager explained that the Children Act 2008 may change to ensure that young people who do not have regular contact with adults receive more independent visitors.

Discussions then ensued regarding the 'Pledge to Children and Young People' as detailed within the Appendix. It became apparent during these discussions that although the Pledge had been previously submitted to the Corporate Parenting Board, it had never been formally launched.

Councillor Hall then enquired whether the Pledge could be featured in the Change Magazine. The Young People's Officer responded advising that this would not be a problem, however drew Members attention to the fact that the Change Magazine was owned by the young people and that the Pledge was the Authority's promise to the young people, therefore in order to publicise the Pledge to its full potential may require a more corporate approach.

Shannon Arnold then asked whether it would be possible for a fun-day to be arranged, with the focus being on officially launching Pledge. The fun-day would provide an opportunity for representatives from the Council to be in attendance alongside the young people where they could show the Authority's commitment to it. The Head of Safeguarding thanked Shannon for her suggestion advising that her idea would be considered.

At this juncture, the young people were asked to think about what other types of events they might like, which could also be considered.

Upon consideration of the detailed report, it was:-

21. RESOLVED to note the contents of the report and that support be given to the three main priorities for the Safeguarding Service in 2010/2011:-

- (i) to further improve placement stability for Looked After Children;
- (ii) to improve the recruitment and retention of well qualified and effective staff within Safeguarding; and
- (iii) to improve the timeliness and effectiveness of Children's Assessments and plans.

Review of Multi-Agency Looked After Partnership (MALAP)

The Head of Safeguarding advised Members that work had been undertaken to review the way in which the Multi Agency Looked After Partnership (MALAP) works, including the extent of Partners' involvement and the involvement of the Youth Offending Service (YOS).

Members of the Corporate Parenting Board were asked if they would like to be involved and take the Review forward.

Councillor P. Smith commented that a presentation would be useful for all Members of the Corporate Parenting Board, to which Councillor Hall agreed.

Upon consideration from Members, it was:-

22. RESOLVED that a presentation would be provided to a future meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board on the topic of the Review of MALAP.

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

At the instance of the Chairman, it was:-

23. 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 is 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.