

Corporate Parenting Board

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 9 February 2013 in
Committee Room No. 6, Civic Centre, Sunderland at 5.30p.m.**

Present

Councillor Stewart
Councillor Lawson
Councillor Williams

Members of the Board

Redhill Ward
Shiney Row Ward
Washington Central Ward

Young People

Kieran Boyce
Daniel Bensley

Change Council
Change Council

Also in Attendance

Councillor Davison
Councillor Price

Redhill Ward
Millfield Ward

All Supporting Officers

Denise Moore
Fay Wearmouth
Lynne Goldsmith
Sharon Willis

Assistant Head of Safeguarding,
Children's Services
Social Worker, Children's Services
Senior Manager, Children's Services
Acting Operations Manager of
Childrens' Homes

Welcome to the new Corporate Parenting Board

Members of the Board would recall that the Council, at its meeting on 15 May 2013 agreed that following a review of the make-up of the Corporate Parenting Board, it would be amended to comprise two members of Scrutiny

Committee and the Chairs from each of the five People Boards, as well as the Lead Member and Policy Lead for Children's Services.

It was considered that this would actively promote Corporate Parenting responsibilities of Elected Members across the Council. The review also recommended that all other Elected Members should be invited as participant observers to the Corporate Parenting Board, as all Members had corporate parenting responsibilities.

It was confirmed that an email had been circulated to all Members of the Council inviting them to attend future meetings of the Corporate Parenting Board, to be held on the following dates at 5.30pm in Committee Room 6:-

- Tuesday 9 July 2013
- Monday 14 Oct 2013
- Monday 3 Feb 2014
- Monday 7 April 2014

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors P. Smith, Shattock, Howe, Emerson, Macknight, Atkinson and Meg Boustead.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes of the meeting on 8 April 2013

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 8 April 2013 (copy circulated) be agreed and signed as a correct record, subject to an amendment to the date on the top of the first page of the minutes.

Adoption Diagnostic

The Head of Safeguarding submitted a report updating the Corporate Parenting Board on the outcome of the Adoption Diagnostic carried out by Core Assets and BAAF in April 2013 and to provide members with the draft action plan.

The Assistant Head of Safeguarding advised the Board that in April 2013, Core Assets/BAAF were invited to undertake an Adoption Diagnostic Assessment in Sunderland. The Primary focus of the diagnostic was to concentrate on the start of the performance/adoption process with a subsidiary aim of challenging the whole journey timescales in order to identify where delay arose.

At the end of the diagnostic the assessors presented their key findings to senior managers and the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services. An initial action planning session was held immediately after the presentation, which informed the subsequent draft action plan.

A copy of the Adoption Diagnostic Assessment was attached at Appendix 1 of the report and an Action Plan was attached as Appendix 2.

Members were advised that the Action Plan was centred around four key areas: -

- Vision Strategy and Leadership
- Managing Resources
- Assessment and Planning
- Family Finding and Matching

Councillor Stewart enquired if an update could be provided on the family finder vacancy. The Assistant Head of Safeguarding responded advising that the job profile had been undertaken and that it was hoped recruitment would take place in July 2013.

Councillor Williams enquired if the previous postholder had moved on, and if so, had been any gap in service. The Assistant Head of Safeguarding explained she did not have the information to hand, however agreed to produce an update for the Board.

Upon consideration of the information presented, it was:-

2. RESOLVED to note the contents of the report and receive further updates as appropriate.

Draft Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report 2012-2013

The Executive Director of Children's Services submitted a report to engage the Corporate Parenting Board in the production of the annual report which would be submitted to Scrutiny Committee in September 2013.

The Assistant Head of Safeguarding referred the Board to each individual section of the report and each one was considered in turn.

An opportunity was then presented for the Board to ask questions and raise any comments.

In relation to Section 3 entitled 'Where were our looked after children living on March 31st 2013?' Councillor Stewart referred to there being 18 private residential children's homes outside the local authority, and enquired what the rationale was behind those particular homes.

The Assistant Head of Safeguarding responded and in doing so explained that a number of young people had complex disabilities or an extreme need that required external placement. Also, children under the age of twelve years old were required to be in private residential care. The Assistant Head of Safeguarding acknowledged that an explanation of these reasons should be included.

Councillor Stewart enquired in relation to 'Children and Young People's Views' what was done to increase responses. The Assistant Head of Safeguarding advised that responses were obtained from various sources including the Viewpoint Software, Social Workers and Looked After Children Reviews. Young people were encouraged to share their views, however the 4-6 year old children were not as interested in sharing and that was described.

Councillor Williams referred to the areas for development within Section 5, where it was stated that seven to nine year olds expressed negative responses when asked about whether they could see their family when they wanted to; that their social worker spoke about their future and only 25% of looked after children had a life story book or sufficient information about the people they knew. Councillor Williams commented that the quality of the life story book was excellent and that she had found the comments surrounding areas for development disappointing.

Moving on to 'Children Living in Stable Placements', Councillor Price stated that it would be useful if a breakdown of age groups was made available to determine the longevity of young people living in placements.

In relation to 'How well do looked after children do at school', Councillor Stewart enquired how much work was undertaken in relation to expectations and breaking that down to ascertain if children should have achieved more. The Assistant Head of Safeguarding stated that schools were good at maintaining home to school contact. The Virtual School also monitored education through each individual child's Personal Education Plan.

Councillor Williams enquired in relation to 'Staying out of trouble' if the Authority was convinced that looked after children who got themselves into trouble were dealt with in the same way as other children. The Assistant Head of Safeguarding responded advising that the Authority did not want to criminalise children and confirmed that police intervention was only ever called when staff in the home agreed that it was necessary.

Councillor Williams referred to the length of time that was generally taken to match children with a family and enquired if that was what happened to take Sunderland the most time. The Assistant Head of Safeguarding responded advising that preparation time was certainly something that Sunderland spent considerable time getting right. She pointed out that this could take longer in some circumstances, for example if a case involved siblings, as Sunderland preferred not to split siblings and instead tried to place siblings together.

Having challenged and commented on the report, it was:-

3. RESOLVED to note the contents of the report and receive further updates as appropriate.

Corporate Parenting Board Planning and Development Session

Councillor Stewart stated that he had recently met with the Head of Safeguarding to discuss the manner in which future meetings of the Corporate Parenting Board could be conducted.

The outcome of the meeting was to introduce a Corporate Parenting Board Planning and Development session. The purpose of the session would be to look at Corporate Parenting Board priorities for the year ahead and agree a main theme for each quarterly meeting. The quarterly meetings would then follow a more structured approach, focus on specific topics and allow in-depth discussions to take place.

A draft agenda for the Corporate Parenting Board Development Session had been produced and was circulated for Board Members' information.

It was proposed that the Corporate Parenting Board Planning and Development Session be held on Thursday 5 September 2013 at 5.00pm. It was confirmed that the young people from the Change Council would be in attendance with hopefully as many Councillors as possible to agree future Corporate Parenting Board priorities. The meeting would also be a useful opportunity to raise any training issues.

Councillor Stewart requested that a reminder be circulated to all Members and stated that an agenda would be circulated in due course. The Governance Services Officer in attendance agreed to send an email reminder to Members.

Upon consideration, it was: -

4. RESOLVED to proceed with a Corporate Parenting Board Development Session on the 5 September 2013.

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

At the instance of the Chairman, it was: -

5. 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.