

## ***Corporate Parenting Board***

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 14 July 2009 in  
Committee Room 6, Civic Centre, Sunderland at 5.00 pm**

### **Present:**

Councillor P. Smith (Chair)  
Councillor A. Hall  
Councillor Paul Maddison  
Councillor Trueman  
Councillor Walker  
Councillor N. Wright

### **Members of the Board**

Executive Member, Children and Learning City  
Coalfield  
Opposition  
Executive Member, Sustainable Communities  
Washington North  
North Sunderland

### **Part I**

### **Also in attendance:**

Mick McCracken  
John Arthurs  
Simone Common  
Helen Fay  
Jane Hedley  
Debra Dorward

### **All Supporting Officers**

Head of Safeguarding  
Development Manager for Looked After Children  
Young People's Services Strategic Manager  
Residential Services Manager  
Senior Solicitor  
Democratic Services Officer

### **Young People**

Shannon Arnold  
Peter Wright  
Kirstyn Wood  
Konner Addison  
Natalie Carroll  
Jordan Sawyer

### **Appointment of Chairman**

1. RESOLVED that Councillor P. Smith be appointed as Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Board for the Municipal Year 2009/2010.

## **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors E. Ball, Oliver, D. Smith and L. Walton.

## **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **Minutes of Meeting held on 10 March 2009**

Councillor N. Wright stated that paragraph 7 on page 4 of the minutes should refer to the Health and Well-Being Review Committee, not the Children's Services Review Committee.

2. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2009 be agreed as a correct record.

The young people in attendance drew attention to the figures on page 2 of the minutes which referred to the Performance Report. They stated that they had previously requested that numbers be recorded as actuals rather than in percentages. In response, Mick McCracken suggested that Ken O'Neill, Performance and Information Team Leader who is an expert in this field be invited to a future meeting of the Change Council where he can translate the percentages into numbers. John Arthurs was asked to arrange this with Ken.

## **Children Looked After – Performance Report**

The Head of Safeguarding submitted a report providing Board Members with information about performance indicators and targets for looked after children.

The report highlighted a number of areas of good performance including that the numbers of young people in care had remained stable for the last year at between 390 – 400, and that in May there had been a reduction in the numbers to 388 young people in care. Therefore, for every 10,000 children in Sunderland, around 57 of them are looked after.

In terms of comparisons with the other 153 Local Authorities in the country, Members attention was drawn to a grid contained within the report indicating that Sunderland had achieved top ranking in three of the six categories. Each of the six rankings were then outlined in turn.

The Head of Safeguarding stated that the only target that was missing from the grid was the No. of Children Permanently Excluded, and went on to explain that Sunderland's ranking was first because there were no children permanently excluded.

Attention was then drawn to the priorities for improvement, where it was highlighted that there had been a fall in the number of children who offend from 46 in September 2008 to 37 in March 2009. Nevertheless, the Head of Safeguarding stated that there was a long way yet to go to prevent young people from getting into trouble.

Councillor N. Wright commended staff working in the Directorate for the excellent results that they had achieved.

Upon consideration, it was:-

3. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

### **Absent Report**

Helen Fay, Residential Services Manager introduced the above-mentioned report, providing details of young people missing for in excess of 24 hours.

The information showed that one child had gone missing from Burlington Close and another from Colombo Road. A child had also gone missing from their foster carer's home.

It was confirmed that protocols were followed in each and every instance.

Councillor Hall stated that the report in relation to Burlington Close showed that all absences happened to have occurred over a weekend and enquired whether staff were able to anticipate this and put interventions in place. Ms. Simone Common, Young People's Services Strategic Manager responded advising that young people were free to come and go therefore it was difficult.

Upon consideration, it was:-

4. 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 for the year 2008-2009.

John Arthurs, Development Manager for Looked After Children outlined the report and informed the Board that the contract had been extended to the end of March 2010 within the provisions of the original contract.

Mr. Arthurs was able to report that in total twenty young people had accessed the service during 2008-2009.

Members were then informed that an analysis of referrals over the last 12 months had identified a number of young people with learning disabilities who were wholly dependent upon referrals via professionals and the Young People's Officer. As a result, Service providers were currently in negotiations with the Council regarding setting up proactive arrangements for people with learning difficulties and disabilities, such as Direct Outreach.

In terms of Contract Review, new Contract Monitoring arrangements had been put in place by the Quality Assurance Officer to ensure continued service monitoring.

At the request of the Chairman, Mr. Arthurs explained that the Council are required by statute to provide an advocacy service to allow young people to report any issues or concerns they may have to an independent person.

Upon discussion, it was:-

5. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the arrangements and extension of the contract continue to develop; and
- (ii) to continue to receive quarterly reports.

### **Young People in Care Changing Lives**

John Arthurs, Development Manager for Looked After Children submitted a report providing Board Members with an update on the work of the Change Council since the last meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board.

Members were informed that a range of activities had taken place over a number of months, including the publication of the Change Council Magazine; "Change News", which was packed full of information about what the young people from the Change Council had been up to.

The report provided details regarding training that had taken place involving the young people and information about the work of young people regionally.

Details were also provided of the various issues that the young people had raised with Councillor Pat Smith during her visit to the Change Council on 20 May 2009. Responses from Nick Murphy, and Helen Fay, Residential Services Managers were also included.

John Arthurs having briefly outlined the reports, then took questions from Members.

Councillor Trueman referred to paragraph 5.1 regarding holiday budgets for youngsters living in children's homes and enquired whether Councillors could obtain any additional funding for them.

Councillor Smith responded stating that this could prove to be difficult because some homes manage their budgets better than others.

The Head of Safeguarding added that children's homes should be encouraged to discuss matters in the same way a family does, for example, discussions about what holidays are going to be planned during the year, which would then provide an opportunity for negotiations and sacrifices to be made and to decide how the holiday budget is going to be spent.

Councillor Wright commented that she understood but felt that there should be more funding available for youngsters to go abroad.

Councillor Smith stated that circumstances were different in each home and that sacrifices are made by the children to achieve whatever it is that they want. As an example, one of the young people in attendance stated that in his home all the children had agreed to holiday in the UK.

Councillor Trueman enquired whether the young people use the facilities at Derwent Hill. In response Ms. Common, Young People's Services Strategic Manager stated that Derwent Hill was used by them regularly.

Councillor Smith then took the opportunity to ask the young people of the Change Council if they were satisfied with the responses they had received to the questions they had raised.

The young people stated that they felt that the issues they had raised were improving, however, the Leaving Care office still did not appear to be very welcoming despite there being some changes made to it. The young people stated that they would like the room redecorating and better pictures on the walls.

Ms. Common stated that arrangements had been made to discuss this issue.

The Head of Safeguarding stated that overall, processes were changing significantly for the better and that Officers were attending Change Council meetings to engage in dialogue with the young people.

The young people were then asked to provide their opinions in terms of what they considered to be the differences between now and how they were before they began to liaise with Officers.

The Head of Safeguarding suggested that in future, Natalie Carroll may want her name at the end of this report, and with the support of John Arthurs and Alison Boucher take the Corporate Parenting Board through the report at future meetings.

Natalie agreed and commented that it was nice to meet with Councillor Pat Smith and to have had an opportunity to raise issues/concerns in person.

Upon consideration, it was:-

6. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

(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.