

## **Corporate Parenting Board**

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2015 in Committee Room 6,  
Civic Centre, Sunderland, at 5.30pm**

### **Part I**

#### **Present:**

#### **Members of the Board**

Councillor P. Smith (in the Chair)	Silksworth Ward
Councillor A. Lawson	Shiney Row Ward
Councillor A. Emerson	Ryhope Ward
Councillor D. MacKnight	Castle Ward
Councillor L. Williams	Washington Central Ward

#### **Young People**

Kieran Boyce  
Saul Cranson

#### **Also in Attendance**

Councillor R. Davison	Redhill Ward
Councillor L. Farthing	Washington South Ward

#### **All Supporting Officers**

Neil Revely	Executive Director of People Services
Fiona Brown	Chief Operating Officer
Fran Arnold	Head of Safeguarding
Louise Hill	Head of Safeguarding
Lucy Pearson	Children's Safeguarding
Dawn Shearsmith	Sunderland Virtual School
Sharon Willis	Operational Manager for Children's Homes
Jane Wheeler	Participation and Engagement Lead
Alan Caddick	Head of Housing Support and Community Living

## **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Billy Hardy, Change Council.

## **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **Minutes**

27. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2015 be agreed as a correct record.

Councillor Farthing questioned the present position in relation to the Pledges, explaining that she had not received any notification. Fran Arnold explained that the decision was taken to circulate these details post-election.

Councillor Smith advised that there would be a change in the order of business and Item 6 would be considered first.

## **16-19 Year Old LAC Cohort NEET/EET Report**

The Executive Director of People Services submitted the 16-19 Year Old LAC Cohort NEET/EET Report.

The Chair invited David Barber to present the report.

David Barber explained that the report related to February 2015 statistics. Members of the Corporate Parenting Board had requested a comparison of the current LAC NEET cohort against the whole NEET cohort.

David Barber acknowledged that the statistical information detailed within subsection 3 of the report provided stark reading but highlighted that this information was derived from the CCIS system, which was the system used by the Connexions Team staff to follow and track children from 14 to 20 years. For individuals to remain on this system they needed to maintain contact. There was an overall dip in the cohort numbers over the year groups, but this was because some care leavers had moved away from the local area and were removed from the records.

David Barber explained that all efforts were made to try and track and contact individuals on a monthly basis but this was quite difficult as a proportion of the cohort was quite transient.

The Year 15, LAC/Care Leavers had reduced to 46% but this was because a significant proportion had reached the 20 years of age border.

Within the 16-19 age group approximately 70% of the cohort was within education or training, approximately 5% of the cohort was not included, for a variety of reasons. Almost 25% were NEET, which equated to nearly three times the non LAC rate, which was an area of concern. Over the last couple of years this group had been targeted for support from Connexions staff, who would also attend PEPs etc.

David Barber reported that young people within this category also received priority access to NEET, particularly the LA7 Project and support from the 16-19 Youth Contract, which had worked well in the City. Although the new ESF calls were not out LAC children would be a priority and they would be seeking to maximise the support available to these children.

David Barber highlighted that both the 16-19 Youth Contract and LA7 NEET Project were due to end in July 2015 but work was currently being undertaken with the Connexions Team to see what they could do, with the resources available, to replicate the support that was provided and looking to implement this over the coming term and summer period, which was a key transitional point for young children.

David Barber acknowledged that one area which needed to be developed was better data because they were aware of the degree of movement within the client group and a considerable period of time was utilised trying to track children rather than providing intervention.

David Barber shared that they were also trialling educational panels, which were already in place for young mums, where partners worked together to identify the way forward. Fay Gelling, from Connexions, was the lead.

Councillor Farthing acknowledged that there was a cohort of children who were highly mobile and questioned if these would be presented to Gateway. David Barber confirmed that service was working closely with Gateway and other providers and were looking to strength the links.

28. RESOLVED that the content of the report was noted.

### **Development of Work Plan 2015/2016**

Fiona Brown explained that there was a need to ascertain what should be discussed during the forthcoming year and whether there were any items of business members would like to include. The Corporate Parenting Board Work Plan 2014/2015 had been circulated as an example of what had been agreed previously.

29. RESOLVED that members would contact Fiona Brown with suggestions for the Work Plan 2015/2016.

## **Annual Performance Report 204-2015**

The Head of Safeguarding submitted the Annual Report 2014/2015.

Fran Arnold introduced Louise Hill, who would be the new Head of Safeguarding.

Louise Hill reported that the overall performance of the Council and partners in relation to Looked After children had improved within quarter 4, including:

- Stability of placements of looked after children: number of moves,
- Stability of placements of looked after children: length of placement,
- Looked after children cases which were reviewed within required timescale,
- Timeliness of Looked After children adopted following an agency decision that the child should be placed for adoption,
- Care leavers in suitable accommodation.

The number of Looked After children had increased each quarter through 2014/2015, with an overall increase of 76 young people looked after at the end of 2014/2015 compared to 2013/2014. This was in line with other authorities and equated to a 30% increase with 40% less funding and there was a need to “join the dots” in relation to strategy.

The stability of placements, the number of moves in a year, had improved from 12% for April to March 2014 to 10.2% for April to March 2015.

In terms of the views of young people the following satisfaction levels of their experiences in the looked after system, were shared:

- Satisfaction amongst 10-15 years old looked after children for 2014/15 was 81.3%, based on 99 responses.
- Satisfaction amongst 7 to 9 years old looked after children for 2014/2015 was 74.5% based on 54 responses
- Satisfaction amongst 4 to 6 years old looked after children for 2014/2015 was 73%, based on 23 responses.

The percentage of adopted children who were placed for adoption within a year had improved to 72.3% for April to March 2015. This was a 7.4% increase on the outturn figure for 2013/2014. The average number of days in the adoption process (Looked After to Placed for Adoption) had also improved during the year to 484 days, compared to the 2013-2014 outturn of 599 days. These timescales met the National threshold of 608 days.

The percentage of Sunderland LAC pupils achieving 5 A\*-C was above the National average but below for all children.

Looked after Children who had offended represented 12.3% (28 young people) of the cohort, as at the end of Quarter 3 2014/2015, however this equated to more young people as the cohort was greater.

In relation to leaving care 44.1% of 19, 20 and 21 years old care leavers were in suitable accommodation during 2014-2015 (this equated to 60 care leavers from a cohort of 136). In 2013/2014 this equated to 65.3% (96 care leavers from a cohort of 147).

Councillor Farthing questioned, given the increasing number of LAC children, whether services were confident that individuals were being removed from the statistics when they reached the age of 18 or 21 years. Fran Arnold confirmed that once a child reached the age of 18 years they were removed.

Councillor Farthing stated that she was concerned about the accuracy of the definitive numbers and questioned what processes were in place to ensure the data was checked. Councillor Smith acknowledged Councillor Farthing's concerns and proposed a representative was invited to the next Corporate Parenting Board to allay concerns.

Councillor Farthing questioned the statistics provided for leaving care children living in suitable accommodation and explained that she was aware that there was concern historically about the lack of appropriate accommodation. Councillor Farthing stated that given the focus on pathways she felt this should be improving. Alan Caddick explained that this issue was being addressed in different ways and explained that within the homeless log there were no young people currently residing in bed and breakfast accommodation. Alan acknowledged that there were some issues for young adults but stated that they were in the process of developing a range of options now.

Alan Caddick shared that over the last few months he had met with young people living at Burlington to gather their views on the way forward and he believed services were now at a stage that this could be taken forward. Children's Services were also looking to increase the number of training flats, developing more supported accommodation and "taster" flats for young people. Alan stated that these were the approaches that services wanted to take forward but there was a need to interrogate the data further.

Alan Caddick explained that they were also going to go through the supported housing route, as one thing that had never been done was to refer immediately into housing associations.

Alan Caddick stated that there was a need to ensure discussions with young adults were taken into consideration and he believed a full accommodation strategy would be available for the future.

Fran Arnold highlighted that the remaining 56% included those children who had moved without services knowing when they returned to the area. Services were working hard to engage with this cohort and had provided a dedicated place for them to attend.

Lucy Pearson noted that nearly 50% of the 18 year olds were currently not open to Leaving Care as they had moved to Adult Services or had successful reunifications with family. As this cohort was not automatically included it was difficult to ascertain

their current situation but options were being explored with legal representatives to ascertain how this information could be recorded.

Lucy Pearson explained that the level of contact for Adult Services was different than Children Services, therefore it was difficult to gather full details. Alan Caddick explained that his statement of interrogating the data further included these aspects.

Councillor MacKnight stated that she was pleased to hear Alan Caddick's response about accommodation but she still had concerns that some accommodation was not adequate for children leaving care and she felt this needed to be investigated.

Councillor Williams stated she believed accommodation would always be a difficult aspect but questioned if there were timescales attached to the training flats; if so how was the move forward managed. Alan Caddick explained that the trainer flats were for a set period but they had raised the question with Gentoo why, if the young person had settled, they were being moved on.

Alan Caddick explained that in terms of the pathway plan, this was about support work, looking at accommodation needs and options. Now that Gateway was being considered this should provide more available options.

Alan Caddick stated that there were also private providers, as well as Gentoo, and highlighted that accommodation was not necessarily the issue but the support provided.

Neil Revely enquired if a young person was settled in a trainer flat and this was converted into their permanent tenancy, would Gentoo be approached to provide alternative accommodation as a trainer flat. Alan Caddick confirmed that this would be the process but explained that they did not just rely on Gentoo to provide accommodation.

Neil Revely acknowledged that within the forward plan an Accommodation Strategy was discussed and stated he believed this needed to be revisited. Alan Caddick agreed and confirmed he would take this forward.

Fran Arnold congratulated services on their first foster adoption place.

30. RESOLVED that:

- (i) a representative from Children Services would be invited to attend the next Corporate Parenting Board to explain the process undertaken to ensure the accuracy of data;
- (ii) Alan Caddick would present an Accommodation Strategy at a future Corporate Parenting Board meeting; and
- (iii) the content of the report be noted.

## **Children's Home Inspection Framework**

The Executive Director of People Services submitted the Children's Home Inspection Framework Report.

Sharon Willis explained that in 2012 the DfE began a programme of reform for children's home. The first round of reforms sought to ensure that:

- Children's home were located in safe areas

Services worked closely with relevant organisations, for example the police, to take this forward and it was expected that this would be developed further as Champions had been identified.

- Children's homes and local authorities were effectively safeguarding children at risk of going missing.

Work was being undertaken for a joint protocol, with Northumbria Police, which continued to be developed. Sharon Willis shared that work was also being undertaken with Northumbria Police to avoid delays in responses.

Sharon Willis shared that the reforms had continued and the DfE had consulted with Ofsted and the providers of children's homes. The DfE felt the existing regulations were not focused enough on the outcome for young people, there was a disconnect between the regulations and the National Minimum Standards and the concept of minimum standards was unhelpful in driving up quality.

From April 2015 a revised framework for children's homes was implemented. These included replacing the current National Minimum Standards and including a set of Quality Standards:

- Quality and purpose of care
- Children's wishes and feelings
- Education
- Enjoyment and achievement
- Health and well being
- Positive relationships
- Protection of children
- Leadership and management
- Care planning

Sharon Willis shared that the DfE were moving away from being quite prescriptive and putting a greater focus on the journey of the child and progress made. Under the new Inspection Framework there was a lot more focus on consultation with young people and staff and the grading criteria had been changed, in line with school judgements.

Sharon Willis explained that there had not been a lot of opportunity to meet with partners to ascertain how these changes were being delivered but an event was

being held in July 2015. Network meetings were held quarterly, with managers within the region, to share experiences.

Sharon Willis highlighted that Regulation 33 visits had now been changed to Regulation 44 monitoring visits and Sunderland had entered into a reciprocal arrangement with North Tyneside to take these forward.

Councillor Farthing questioned how this new regulation impacted on those Councillors who previously undertook the Regulation 33 visits. Fran Arnold confirmed that Councillors were going to be linked to establishments. Sharon Willis explained that this process had been started but she believed there may be a need for refresher training for Members.

Fran Arnold highlighted that there was not a requirement for Councillors to be involved with the process. Councillor Smith acknowledged the comment but shared that as Corporate Parents she believed this was beneficial. Councillor Farthing shared that she felt this gave a third party viewpoint.

Sharon Willis explained that this process was not undertaken in North Tyneside but when the specifications for the visits were drawn up it was made clear this was something Sunderland would like to do.

Councillor Farthing shared that historically Members were on a rota for visits, which included Adult Services, and the visits were undertaken with a lay person and she believed it was beneficial to gain both viewpoints. Councillor Smith agreed with Councillor Farthing's comments.

Neil Revely proposed that once Members were aligned this information should be shared, together with proposed dates for visits. Sharon Willis explained that the visits would be taken forward unannounced, by North Tyneside, and agreed that further work needed to be undertaken.

Councillor Davison noted that the recommendation was for children's homes to be located in safe areas and questioned if consideration was given to planning applications. Sharon Willis acknowledged that there had been difficulties historically but stated that she believed, as this was now managed under one Council, there was less likelihood of this happening. Neil Revely stated that this could be raised with Planning.

31. RESOLVED that the content of the Children's Home Inspection Framework Report be received and noted.

### **Local Government Ombudsman Focus Report: Learning Lessons from Complaints March 2015**

The Executive Director of People Services submitted the Local Government Ombudsman Focus Report, Learning lessons from Complaints.



Councillor Farthing questioned whether the Council implemented the recommendations from Section 6: Encouraging local accountability – questions for scrutiny. Neil Revely stated that he believed so but he felt it was important to gain formal agreement for this through Scrutiny.

Councillor Lawson noted that when the complaints procedures was reviewed one recommendation was that debate on the current process would be welcomed. Councillor Lawson stated that she believed it would be beneficial for the Corporate Plan to focus on this, for example looking at how complaints were handled. Neil Revely agreed that this could be included within the process.

32. RESOLVED that the Local Government Ombudsman Focus Report be received and noted.

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

At the instance of the Chair, it was:-

33. 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.

