

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 6 March 2023 at 5.30pm in the
Conference Room, Sandhill Centre, Grindon Lane, Sunderland, SR3 4EN**

Present:

Members of the Board

Councillor L Farthing (in the Chair)
Councillor C Burnicle
Councillor M Crosby

Washington South Ward
St Chad's Ward
Sandhill Ward

All Supporting Officers

Majella McCarthy

Tracy Jelfs

Anita Swales

Kimberley Richardson

Kaye Fox

Samantha Diston

Jo Morgan

Sharon Willis

Andrea Solomon

David Grayden

Alexandra Bowey

Chantelle

Caitlin

Katherine Corfield

Gillian Kelly

Director of Children's Social Care, TfC

Head of Service for Cared for Children, TfC

Acting Headteacher, Virtual School

Strategic Service Manager, TfC

Foster Carer

CNTW

Designated Nurse, Cared for Children

Strategic Service Manager, TfC

Team Manager, Next Steps

Assistant Team Manager, Next Steps

Participation and Engagement Officer

Change Council

Change Council

Housing Strategy Officer

Governance Services

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bewick, Price and Smith together with Catherine Hearne.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes

34. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 9 January 2023 be agreed as a correct record.

The Chair highlighted that some of the Board Members had been able to attend the training and this would be rolled out to all elected Members from May 2023.

The Notice of Motion on Addressing Discrimination of Cared for Children had been passed by the Council on 25 January 2023 and Councillor Farthing and Councillor Gibson had been photographed with cared for and care experienced young people as part of a press release issued after the meeting.

Change Council Update

The Change Council report had been submitted to the Board and was presented to Members by Chantelle and Caitlin.

The Change Council had continued to meet in their designated space and both the 10-15 and 16+ group were meeting fortnightly.

Planning had begun for the short films which the Change Council wanted to make to raise awareness and challenging the stigma in education for cared for young people. The group were working with Sunderland University and they would be funding two students as part of their Changemaker scheme to take this forward with the Change Council, however the project was at a standstill until the students were appointed.

The Chair asked if care experienced young people had a group at Sunderland University and Alexandra Bowey said that there was a new Change Council member from outside of the area who was very active in the university group.

The first training workshop for Corporate Parents had been delivered and Change the Language training would be delivered for NHS England staff as part of a digital conference.

The regional meeting with other children in care councils had taken place on 10 January and there would be a residential in April. It had been noted that the local offer varied widely across the region and regional groups would like to see the same entitlements for all cared experienced young people in the North East.

The Change Council had supported the press release on the Notice of Motion and would be keen to support the Council in any way with the implementation of the protected characteristic. The Chair suggested that this be added to the Change Council's planned work for the year ahead.

Two young people had taken part in the Safeguarding Education conference and had delivered the Change the Language and Changeable game to education professionals across the city. There had been some very positive feedback on this and young people were working on how this could be pushed further into schools.

Care Day had taken place on 17 February 2023 and had been celebrated on 22 February during the half term holiday.

The planned work for January to December 2023 was as follows: -

- Drive forward the Change the Language campaign, including working groups and workshops
- To set up a younger group aged 7-11 to capture younger voice.
- Corporate Parenting introduction training and support the development of the corporate parenting strategy
- Engage young people in enriching activities to celebrate their hard work and increase engagement
- Consult and involve more cared for and care experienced children and young people.
- Alex was to regularly drop in to Children's Homes and Support 2 Independence and also to be around for Warm Spaces.
- To create easy guides to different aspects of being cared for/care experienced to support other young people with things they have been unsure of – accessing records, entering care.

The Chair thanked Chantelle and Caitlin for presenting the report and accordingly it was: -

35. RESOLVED that the Change Council update be noted.

Next Steps Team – Update

Sharon Willis, Andrea Solomon and David Graydon were in attendance to deliver a presentation on the Next Steps team and their work in supporting cared for young people into independence.

It was confirmed that the team carried out planning based on the Signs of Safety model and the Chair commented that young people needed the right information at the right time in their lives and suggested that the team might feed into the 11-15 group at the Change Council. Sharon Willis agreed that the final cared for review provided an opportunity for checking for key issues and Tracy Jelfs advised that she was meeting with Andrea and David on this during the week.

The Chair noted that it was a difficult task for the team, particularly when a large number of young people came into the care system in their teenage years. Accommodation was one of the most difficult areas, there had always been cared for young people looking for suitable living spaces and there were other groups such as homeless adults and asylum seekers who were also seeking similar accommodation.

She highlighted that young people gained confidence through activities and post-18, family and community learning could tie in with this element. David explained that one of the student social workers was working on an information card for young people with information about Personal Advisors, what was on offer and what to

expect at age 21. It would be possible to bring this along to a future meeting of the Change Council.

Having thanked Sharon, Andrea and David for their presentation, it was: -

36. RESOLVED that the update be noted.

Health of Cared for Children

The Designated Nurse for Cared for Children submitted an update report on the health of cared for children.

The Health Partnership for Cared for Children had held their first meeting in January and it was planned to develop a health workstream which would then be reported into the Corporate Parenting Board. Partnership members were getting to know what other services were being provided for cared for children within Sunderland.

Jo Morgan advised that a Peer Mentor project had been agreed for care experienced young people and this would also offer a social prescribing element.

Discussions were still ongoing with commissioners regarding the Cared for Health team model and Jo stated that they were keen to lengthen the period of time the team had contact with young people. A proposal had been submitted to the Integrated Care Board (ICB) to provide free prescriptions for care experienced young people across the ICB footprint and this was to be considered.

37. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

CNTW – Sunderland Cared for Children

The Board received a report covering the period November 2022 – January 2023.

In November six referrals had been received and one had been discharged unseen, there were 10 referrals in December, five of which were seen and in January one out of four referrals was discharged unseen. There had been seven urgent referrals by the CYPS Intensive Community Treatment Service (ICTS) within the period.

The waiting time for treatment currently stood at 12 weeks and young people who were cared for would be offered priority appointments within CYPS. Cared for children currently made up 5.2% of the overall CYPS caseload. The Children who are Cared For Pathway was a multi-disciplinary team consisting of nursing, social workers, psychologists, child psychotherapists and was able to access Psychiatry if required. The team had all completed specific formal training to deliver psychological therapies to meet the needs of young people and their carers.

Board Members were advised of the training Liz Christie, Consultant Clinical Psychologist was delivering on Trauma Informed Care to new members of staff in Together for Children's homes. This training had also been offered to the new Next

Steps social worker, the new Edge of Care Team and the new postholder for young women who were at the risk of being exploited.

Liz had also been working on a Model of Care, and with the manager of Revelstoke Road had developed and published research around its effectiveness. This model was now being set up in other children's homes.

38. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Virtual School Headteacher's Annual Report

Anita Swales, Acting Headteacher of the Virtual School submitted the annual report of the Headteacher which provided an overview of the outcomes for cared for children during 2021/2022. The report utilised, where available, national and North East regional data alongside locally sourced data.

The reportable cohort for statistical purposes was the number of cared for children who had been in care for 12 months or more as of 31 March 2022 which was 306, and this was broken down to 40% in primary education and 60% in secondary. 55.5% of the cohort had been identified with Special Educational Needs, predominantly in the social, emotional and mental health category. 19.9% of the children had an Education Health and Care Plan. Anita reported that there remained a national shortage of specialist school places and this was mirrored locally, bringing a significant challenge to providing for children and young people's needs.

84% of all cared for children attended schools which were rated Outstanding or Good. If a school was judged to Require Improvement then the Virtual School would look carefully at the guidance and support offered by that school and would not immediately move a child if their needs were being met at the existing provision.

It was noted that 32% of children were educated in schools outside of Sunderland, the majority being in neighbouring authorities. The Virtual School had excellent relationships with Sunderland schools but these could be more difficult in other local authority areas.

Anita advised that achievement for cared for children was a mixed picture; there were good results at the Early Years Foundation Stage, Reading was good at Key Stage 1, Phonics was at the national average, Maths was close to the regional average but the expected standard in Writing was well behind the regional figure.

At Key Stage 2, Reading was well below the national and regional average. It was acknowledged that this was a challenge and there were already two reading programmes in operation to try to close the gap. Writing, Maths and combined scores were above average.

The Chair commented that she had been concerned when she saw the Reading statistics and suggested that it could maybe be looked at alongside SEND groupings. This problem would continue into secondary school if it was not addressed at an early stage. Kimberley Richardson highlighted that children had

missed some of the foundation blocks due to the pandemic and still needed to catch up.

Anita said that the capacity restructure had given the Virtual School team the opportunity to start drilling down and form meaningful interventions for young people. Any young person who was underachieving would be offered that support and SEN could also be identified quickly through this approach.

Turning to Key Stage 4, achievement for Attainment 8 and English Baccalaureate was slightly above average and the achievement of Grade 5+ in English and Maths was above average. Despite all the challenges, the cohort had done really well.

Board Members had been regularly updated on attendance during the year and the three-year trend across all key stages had shown an improvement year on year. There had been no permanent exclusions in the last academic year and the number of suspensions were declining.

Over the academic year 2021/2022 a total of 1,541 Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings had taken place for 629 young people. PEPs were quality assured and 92.7% were judged to be Good, an improvement from the 2020/2021 academic year. As there was an increased number of caseworkers within the Virtual School, for the coming academic year they would be able to attend all PEPs to ensure support and challenge was given to maximise outcomes for cared for young people.

Pupil Premium Plus funding was allocated to cared for children and schools had used the additional funding for a number of things including: -

- 1:1 and small group tuition
- Alternative education provision
- Extra staff to support individuals
- Music lessons
- Extra-curricular activities

The capacity of the Post-16 team had been expanded to enable more intensive support to be provided to young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). In particular, the work with young people transitioning from Year 11 to Year 12 was proving effective and 79% of all cared for young people in Years 12 and 13 were in employment, education and training, an improvement from 50% two years ago.

The Chair asked if young mentors might be useful in providing support for young people who were NEET and Anita said that the team were linking with university and college students to look at mentoring and would be getting in touch with the Change Council.

The Chair went on to commend the team for the excellent outcomes in relation to post-16 work.

The Virtual School Governing Board included representation from a broad spectrum of partners who provided support and challenge at meetings during the academic year. Governors were aligned to a specific area of the School Development plan.

The Chair highlighted that digital inclusion was also a crucial theme for cared for young people and it was important to make sure that they had the knowledge to use technology safely.

Having thanked Anita for the detailed report, it was: -

39. RESOLVED that the Virtual School – Headteacher’s Annual Report be noted.

Number of Changes of Social Worker for Children and Young People

The Head of Service for Cared for Children and Provider Services submitted a report setting out data relating to the number of changes in social worker which cared for and care experienced children and young people have experienced whilst in the care of Together for Children (TfC).

Tracy Jelfs explained that Members had requested this information after taking part in the Changeable game as part of the Corporate Parenting training. Historically there had been a high usage of agency staff and this had led to instability. There remained a national trend towards agency social workers but there were no agency workers in Children’s social care in Sunderland and one agency member of staff supporting a young person placed in London.

Tracy advised that there had been a lot of work carried out to stabilise the workforce and there were planned changes to social workers at certain stages in care proceedings but these were always child focussed. For the year to date there had been 320 changes involving 220 children and from April 2023 this data would be collated for the Department of Education. There would always be some degree of change for cared for young people but the focus was on more effective handovers between social workers.

The Chair noted that a large proportion of the cared for population had social, emotional and mental health needs and it helped them to deal with changes if there was appropriate communication.

Majella McCarthy commented that this issue had been raised at the younger Change Council group and she would communicate the information in the report back to them.

40. RESOLVED that the content of the report be noted.

Work Programme 2023/2024

The Board were informed of the work programme for the municipal year 2023/2024 and forthcoming agenda items.

41. RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

Councillor Louise Farthing

On behalf of the Corporate Parenting Board, Councillor Louise Farthing was thanked for her commitment and passion to improve the lives of children and young people during her time as portfolio holder for Children's Services and wished well for her retirement.

(Signed) L FARTHING
Chair