

## ***Corporate Parenting Board***

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 11 July 2011 in  
Committee Room No. 1, Civic Centre, Sunderland at 4.30 pm**

**Present:**

Councillor P. Smith (Chair)  
Councillor Ball  
Councillor A. Hall  
Councillor Kelly  
Councillor Walker  
Councillor Williams

**Members of the Board**

Executive Member, Children and Learning City  
Ryhope  
Shiney Row  
Executive Member, Safer City and Culture  
Washington North  
Washington Central

**Also in attendance:**

Meg Boustead  
Alyson Boucher  
Jane Hedley  
Debra Dorward

**All Supporting Officers**

Head of Safeguarding  
Children and Young People's Rights Officer  
Solicitor  
Governance Services Officer

**Young People**

Tiffany Johnson  
Daniel Barwick  
Robert Barwick  
Daniel Johnson  
Konner McCully  
Craig Clifford  
Sarah Cranson

**Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of John Arthurs.

**Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**Minutes of Meeting held on 21 March 2011**

27. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 March 2011 be agreed as a correct record, subject to the following alteration: -

Ian Barwick to be amended to Dan Barwick.

### **Children Looked After: Performance Report (1 April 2010 – 31 January 2011)**

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

The Head of Safeguarding confirmed that the format of the report had still not changed and continued to report on old performance indicators. However, it was confirmed that this would be adjusted over time in accordance with the Children's Services Annual Framework.

Members of the Corporate Parenting Board were advised that data was collected annually over a period running from 1 April until 31 March, and that information was verified between the middle-end June. The National Indicator Set on which the report was based covered Placements, Placement Stability, Reviews, Care Leavers, Missing Children, Adoptions, Offending, Emotional and Behavioral Health and Ethnicity.

A summary of the key points listed within the report was highlighted. During which, the Head of Safeguarding stated that previous comments raised by the young people had been listened to, and that in future reports would contain specific numbers as well as percentages to identify how many Children Looked After were in foster care and how many of those were placed within the local authority boundary.

In terms of items for future meetings, it was confirmed that Janet Murray, Virtual School Headteacher would attend the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board to talk about Personal Education Plans. It was suggested that the young people may wish to meet prior to the Corporate Parenting Board to discuss the matter.

In response to an enquiry regarding why in the last month four additional children had experienced three or more placement moves during their time in care, the Head of Safeguarding stated that sometimes a placement might not be right for a young person therefore they have to be moved and placed elsewhere. On occasion, it may take more than three moves before the Authority gets this right and the placement is successful.

The Head of Safeguarding suggested that she would arrange to bring a report to a future meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board detailing the reasons why placements have had to be changed.

Councillor Kelly stated that he was keen to hear of the views of the young people in relation to placement moves and also the review process.

Alyson Boucher explained that the Change Council once met to examine and evaluate the review process and that this could be undertaken again.

Members of the Corporate Parenting Board discussed the importance and timeliness of Children Looked After Case Reviews and Foster Carer Reviews being undertaken.

The Head of Safeguarding stated that Children's Services were about to start looking at national outcomes with the involvement of the Care Leavers Service. This was to ensure that the numbers were kept up-to-date and to monitor improvements.

Tiffany Johnson referred to a statement that read "91.67% (33 of 36) of care leavers were in suitable accommodation" and in doing so enquired what type of accommodation the other three care leavers were living in. The Head of Safeguarding stated that that she would obtain this information.

Councillor Williams enquired how and why 0.49% (2 of 411) of Children Looked After were unaccompanied asylum seekers. In response, the Head of Safeguarding explained that one young person was Chinese and had entered the country unaccompanied. The second child was sixteen/seventeen years of age and he would stay in Local Authority care until reaching the age of 18.

Councillor Williams then enquired why 9 children had changed school as a result of a placement change since April 2010. The Head of Safeguarding advised that she would compile a list of reasons and circulate these with the minutes.

Having considered the report in detail, it was:-

28. RESOLVED to: -

- (i) Note the contents of the report;
- (ii) Discuss the issue of foster care at the next meeting;
- (iii) Invite the Virtual School Headteacher to the next meeting; and
- (iv) Invite the Head of Housing to a future meeting.

### **Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report 2010-2011**

The Executive Director of Children's Services submitted a report which detailed for Members the information presented to the Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Committee. The report set out the current position of the Council as 'Corporate Parent' as well as the purpose and history of the Corporate Parenting Board. This was to ensure Members were aware of their role and of the current performance of the Council in relation to meeting this responsibility.

Members were advised that the concept of the Corporate Parenting Board was introduced in 1998 by the Secretary of State for Health, Frank Dobson, who outlined the duties of Members as follows: -

“For children who are looked after, your council has a legal and moral duty to try to provide the kind of loyal support that any good parents would give to their children...you should do your utmost to make sure that those children in public care get a good start in life...”

Then, in 2007, the Government published the paper, *Care Matters: Time for Change*, requiring each local authority to re-examine and re-invigorate the way it meets the needs of children in care. Key elements of the paper were contained in the Children and Young Persons Act 2008.

The report highlighted the purpose of the Corporate Parenting Board, Numbers of Children Looked After in Sunderland, Care Arrangements, Placement Stability, Health Performance and Education Performance Outcomes, Leisure and Creation, Making a Positive Contribution, Looked After Reviews, Standards Monitoring, Placement Outcomes, Participation and Consultation with Young People, Services and New Developments.

The Head of Safeguarding reported that the total number of Looked After Children in Sunderland at any one time had always remained stable.

One of the young people in attendance referred to para 4.2 within the report and in doing so commented that number of children and young people coming into care during the 12 month period to the end of December was less than the number leaving care. The Head of Safeguarding agreed to take the comment on board.

Upon consideration, it was:-

29. RESOLVED to note the contents of the report.

### **Offending by Children and Young People Living in Children’s Homes**

The Executive Director of Children’s Services submitted a report providing Members of the Corporate Parenting Board with an up to date analysis of the numbers and causes of young people offending in children’s homes. The information had been compiled following a request from the Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Committee.

The Head of Safeguarding stated that young people in children’s homes tended to be high offenders, and that a lot of work had been carried out over the last few years to reduce the number of young people committing offences or being involved in criminal activity whilst being resident in children’s homes.

A breakdown of the 67 police arrests of children living in children’s homes was provided. The reasons why 32 of these arrests had been made following staff calls to police was also highlighted.

Councillor A. Hall enquired if it was likely that the police would take further action against a young person who offended that was living in a children's homes. The Head of Safeguarding responded stating that it would not seem appropriate for a young person living in a children's home to be treated differently to any other young person who offended. Penalties would depend on the incident and individual circumstances however this was an issue that could be discussed with the police.

Craig Clifford stated that staff working in care homes sometimes telephoned the police unnecessarily, and that staff did not always attempt to handle situations themselves.

Councillor Kelly commented that staff in children's homes may not be as tolerant with a young persons' bad behavior in a children's home compared to how they would as parents. It was suggested that the staff be asked to consider what was reasonable bad behavior for a teenager.

Councillor Walker agreed that the number of staff calls made to the police appeared to be high. The Head of Safeguarding responded stating that the matter was being looked into and monitored on a regular basis. Members were informed that the figures would be looked at more closely.

Upon consideration, it was :-

30. RESOLVED to note the contents of the report.

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

At the instance of the Chairman, it was:-

31. 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.

