

## **CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 21 January 2019 in Committee Room 2,  
Civic Centre, Sunderland at 5.30pm**

### **Part I**

#### **Present:**

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

Councillor L Farthing (in the Chair)	Washington South Ward
Councillor B Francis	Fulwell Ward
Councillor K Johnston	Copt Hill Ward
Councillor S O'Brien	Sandhill Ward
Councillor P Smith	Silksworth Ward

#### **Young People**

Gabby Dunn  
Blaine Richardson

#### **Also in Attendance**

Councillor M Beck	Fulwell Ward
Councillor P Gibson	Silksworth Ward
Councillor L Lauchlan	Washington Central Ward
Councillor A Lawson	Shiney Row Ward
Councillor B McClennan	Hendon Ward
Councillor L Williams	Washington Central Ward

#### **All Supporting Officers**

Jill Colbert	Chief Executive, TfC
Martin Birch	Director of Social Care, TfC
Kimberley Richardson	Education Services Manager, TfC
Linda Mason	Head Teacher, Virtual School
Gavin Taylor	IRO Service, Together for Children
Jane Wheeler	Participation and Complaints Manager, TfC
Dr Sarah Mills	Designated Doctor for Looked After Health
Janet Thomson	Associate Director, NTW
Kelly Haslem	NTW
Liz McManus	NTW
Maurice Davis	Foster Carer
Kay Dixon	Foster Carer
Chris Binding	Sunderland Echo

### **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Davison and Marshall, together with Sheila Lough.

### **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **Minutes**

17. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 8 October 2018 be agreed as a correct record.

Councillor O'Brien asked if all elected Members had been given the opportunity to see some PEPs and the Chair stated that the Headteacher of the Virtual School would be happy to share these with any interested councillor.

### **Change Council Update**

Blaine Richardson presented the report of the Change Council and advised that the council had been consulted in relation to the 'Family Time Centre' and had decided that this would be called the 'Bramble Centre'. In line with this theme, the individual rooms were to be named after berries such as Blackberry, Strawberry and Mulberry.

Young people had also said what they would like to have in the centre, including a sensory room, a soft play room, a film and TV room and an outside play area.

The Regional Children in Care Council had held their annual conference on 2 November 2018 and Sunderland had worked with South Tyneside on a workshop called 'It's my life'. The aim of the workshop was to get professionals to understand how important life story work was and how much it meant to children and young people. Together for Children staff along with others made pledges to children and young people. The pledges included: -

- **Cllr Louise Farthing** – Ensure a 'good' life story co-ordinator and worker are employed within 12 months.
- **Kim Roberts** – Remind and encourage all IROs to make life story/later life letters a recommendation for all children and young people, and a recommendation that is re-visited from time to time.
- **Sheila Lough** – Employ life story work co-ordinator. Ensure every child looked after has some life story work.
- **Catherine Witt** – Find funding to recruit a life story work co-ordinator. In the meantime share the presentation 'Bramble' with all social workers in TfC.

- **Karen Davison** – Ensure that there is a life story work co-ordinator.
- **Gavin Taylor** – Ensure in staff supervision that team are asked to reflect on how many children/young people have their life story completed.
- **Jessica Moore** – Make sure that life story work is given priority for children on their care journey and check that this is happening when auditing case files.
- **Sharon Willis** – Speak to providers of supported semi-independent accommodation to influence them replicating from work done in children's homes. Life story can and should start at any time.
- **Sarah Mills** – Find out if health information and passports can feed into life story work.
- **Martin Birch** – Look at employing a life story co-ordinator. Discuss with all team managers the importance of life story work and re-launch this.
- **Emma Stewart** – Make sure all of the work we do in commissioning includes the voice of the young person. Make sure all placements support young people with life story books/work.

The Board were advised that the Regional Children in Care Council had appointed five young ambassadors to help with the activities of the regional council. The five posts would be employed at six hours a week on a fixed term basis and the ambassadors would support children and young people in care across the region and would have a key role in assisting and organising events throughout the year, including the annual Regional Conference.

Councillor McClennan asked if the ambassadors would be receiving the living wage and it was confirmed that they were.

The Christmas celebration for children looked after and leaving care had been another huge success and had included 30 children and young people receiving awards in categories including education, inspiration to others and sports.

Kay Dixon commented that she had recommended one of her young people for an award but had not been made aware that he was receiving it and was not there to see him receive his award. Jane Wheeler said that this was an unfortunate oversight and that she would pick that up for this year. It was ensured that all young people who were receiving awards were informed prior to the event.

18. RESOLVED that the Change Council update be noted.

## **Commitments Review**

Jane Wheeler advised that the process of reviewing the pledges/commitments had been ongoing for some time and it had been decided to create an assurance framework for each of the commitments. A young person would be attached to each of the commitments, matched with a senior officer from Together for Children, and would then report back to the Corporate Parenting Board.

Jane stated that work was ongoing with officers in the service to evidence that commitments were being addressed and to provide assurance that young people's voices were being heard.

19. RESOLVED that the update be noted.

### **Health of Looked After Children**

The Designated Doctor for Looked After Children submitted a report providing an update on health activity for looked after children.

There had been an average of 609 children looked after during the quarter which was a reduction from the previous quarter. 37 young people were recorded as being placed outside of the North East which again was a decrease from the previous number.

Compliance with Initial Health Assessments had been 93% in Quarter 3 and had reached 100% during December. The new notification process was proving to be more efficient, consent forms were being received in a timely fashion and the Looked After Health admin team now had read only access to Liquid Logic.

All of the out of area health assessments were undertaken in a timely manner, three were in the North East and one was nationwide.

The figures for Review Health Assessments were also looking good with 95% compliance in each of the last three quarters. 100% of all Review Health Assessments were completed in November and this was due to the hard work and dedication of the Named Nurse and the administration team. Dr Mills advised that she and Victoria Smith, the Designated Nurse for Looked After Health were undertaking an audit of out of area health assessments over the last year.

Compliance with Health passports had dropped slightly due to hard to reach young people not engaging in the process. Brigid Iley, the new Children and Young People's Nurse would be looking at Health passports as part of her role.

The 'Commitments' leaflet produced by Together for Children had been used as a basis for a leaflet explaining health assessments and had been developed in conjunction with the Change Council.

The Looked After Health Team had met with Sheila Lough, Linda Mason and Kelly Haslem to begin to work on improving the mental health support for looked after children and young people. A business case had been developed for the 'Kooth' app and had been submitted to Sunderland CCG for consideration.

Data collection for health outcomes had been established and would be collated after each health assessment looking at issues such as smoking rates, substance misuse and obesity. It was hoped to present this data to the Corporate Parenting Board in the future.

Councillor Williams asked for more detail on the Kooth app and was informed that it had been developed around 15 years ago to enhance and support the tiered model of care. It was a comprehensive online support tool with trained counsellors and

psychologists available for live chat, however it was not an urgent out of hours service.

Gabby said that Kooth had delivered a workshop at her school and she had found the app really valuable. The Chair added that there had been a demonstration of the app at the CAMHS Conference and it had been taken to the Change Council and Sunderland Youth Parliament. She stated that she had, and would continue to, press the CCG to commission the service.

Having considered the report, it was: -

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

### **NTW Sunderland Looked After Children Data**

Dr Liz McManus was in attendance to deliver a presentation on the NTW CYPS and Together for Children Residential Care Homes Partnership working to provide psychologically informed care.

Dr McManus specialised in attachment and trauma and working with children in the local authority system. She was working with Sharon Willis to provide psychologically informed care in residential settings.

The incidence of mental health difficulties within the looked after population was significantly higher than the non-looked after population but the take up of services was lower. This was particularly seen in relation to young people in residential care who often had the most complex and severe presentations.

Dr McManus outlines some of the impacts of trauma and why this could lead to young people being reluctant to engage with therapy services. The demands of therapy required an individual to form a relationship with the therapist, to tolerate part of the self being deconstructed and reconstructed and recalling traumatic experiences.

The Psychologically Informed Care initiative aimed to train and support residential carers to provide a very specific form of care for children and young people and to apply Attachment Theory. This would provide new experiences of relationship, thus creating new learning about the self, others and relationships. The care would help to repair developmental trauma and create readiness for therapy.

Residential carers were to be trained in Attachment Theory and how to apply it and would be given ongoing supervision in how to apply the training in their care giving of specific young people and additional training in how to respond to specific presentations within an Attachment framework. Individual formulations of each child/young person would be developed which would draw on the full range of psychological theories. These would then be used in supervision to inform care plans and carer responses/interactions to maximise repair.

Enhanced quality of care within residential homes would lead to the repair of developmental trauma, increased capacity for emotional regulation and resilience within young people and improved placement stability.

Councillor Lawson asked if the young people in residential homes were aware that their trauma was being addressed and Dr McManus said that her role in visiting the homes was explained to young people.

Councillor Williams noted that there was a lot of research taking place and that this data needed to be sought so that outcomes could be triangulated. She asked if the training provided for carers was accredited; the Board were advised that this was not the case at the present time but it was something which could be looked at.

Councillor Francis asked if this approach to care was unique and Dr McManus stated that to her knowledge, no other authority in the North East was doing this. There were a number of private homes which provided 'therapeutic care'.

Councillor McClennan queried if there had been any evidence to suggest that a reduction in the stigma around mental health had impacted on the willingness of young people to ask for help. Dr McManus was not aware of any specific research but it had been observed that more non-looked after children were seeking support but this had not affected the looked after population.

From the perspective of Together for Children, Jill Colbert stated that they were wholly committed to this programme and its methodology. The work was showing an impact and she was confident that measures of success could be determined.

The Chair thanked Dr McManus for her presentation.

Turning to the regular report from NTW, there had been seven referrals in September 2018, 15 in October and 12 in November. The report set out the reasons for some referrals being discharged without seeing the young person involved.

All cases referred to CYPS were reviewed on a daily basis by a member of the clinical team, the purpose of this being to signpost any cases which had been inappropriately referred and to ensure any cases requiring an urgent or priority response were highlighted and actioned immediately. An urgent referral would be seen within 72 hours by the Intensive Community Treatment Service (ICTS).

Waiting times for services continued to be a challenge and some work was being done around 'Did Not Attend' and cancellations and some additional administrative support had been provided to support this. A review of clinical pathways was to be undertaken in February and there was also a digital dictation pilot taking place in a few weeks' time to improve record keeping procedures and remove some time barriers so that more young people could be seen.

Of the total caseload for CYPS in November 2018, 5.4% of the 2,253 young people in the service were looked after.

21. RESOLVED that the presentation and the content of the report be noted.

## **Regionalisation of Adoption**

The Board were advised that the Council's Cabinet had considered a report at their meeting on 16 January 2019 advising on the development of proposals for a Regional Adoption Agency with Durham and Cumbria County Councils.

Jill Colbert reported that the proposed Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) was a regionalised solution to deliver more effective collaboration and was borne out of the Government policy and vision that all areas would form part of an RAA. The Cabinet had agreed the outline business case which committed the Council to the next phase of the work and endorsed the principle of developing early permanence for children.

The Cabinet approved the principle of establishing the RAA based on a host authority model comprising the areas of Sunderland, County Durham and Cumbria and working in partnership with five Voluntary Adoption Agencies subject to the approval of the Department for Education. They had also agreed to receive a further report on the full business case for the RAA and the proposed detailed terms for the establishment and operation of the RAA.

Councillor McClennan queried what would happen to the staff and when would they be consulted. Jill stated that the business case was looking at a range of options for the organisational form and it had not yet specified what this would be. It was well understood by staff that they would TUPE transfer to a new organisation and the full business case would cover all of this detail. Staff consultation would form part of a dedicated project and this could not begin until the formal decision had been made.

Councillor Smith asked if there would be less staff across the board once the RAA was established. Martin Birch said that conversations had been taking place with staff over a two year period and potentially all of the staff from the current adoption service could transfer, but it could also be a smaller number.

Councillor Lawson noted that the RAA was to be in place by 2020 and queried if there was a chance it would be operational before that time. Jill advised that the aim was for an Autumn 2019 'go live' date but this could be delayed. Many other regions did have their RAAs up and running.

Councillor Francis referred to the role of the court services in this and Martin noted that court hearings would have taken place before the child or young person entered the adoption services. The Adoption team did not hold the case, rather they were concerned with recruiting adopters, and the Permanence team would deal with the court aspect.

22. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

## **Report of the Headteacher, Virtual School**

The statutory Annual Report of the Virtual School Head, the Virtual School for Together for Children and Sunderland City Council was presented to the Board. The report highlighted the work of the Virtual School in improving the educational

outcomes for children in care from the early years up to targeted care leavers aged 25. The data contained within the report related to children and young people who were in care for a year or more as of 31 March 2018.

Linda Mason, Headteacher of the Virtual School was in attendance to present the report and highlighted the key points within it. It was noted that 35% of Sunderland's children looked after had been identified as having a Special Educational Need or Disability (SEND). Virtual School Headteachers had a key role to ensure that these children had the maximum opportunity to reach their full potential and also acted as a source of advice and information for previously looked after children.

The Virtual School team monitored the educational outcomes of children looked after on a term by term basis and worked closely to ensure that children were maintained in school. Personal Education Plans (PEPs) were quality assured and Pupil Premium monies were released on a termly basis if the PEP was of a sufficiently high standard. The compliance rate for PEPs being complete and on time did fluctuate, with the current rate being 80%, although it had been 92% when the report was written.

Training was a key role of the Virtual School and specific training was being offered to all designated teachers in schools, as well as carers, adoptive parents, school staff, SENCos, social workers and IROs.

The Virtual School had its own governing body which would provide support and challenge to the Headteacher. The Virtual School could only be successful if it had good relationships across services and it emphasised that, just because a child was looked after, the processes they would go through at school would be the same as any child.

Councillor O'Brien was encouraged to hear that there was a focus on children looked after with SEND and asked if there was any delay in accessing educational psychology services. Linda stated that there could be delays, depending on the situation and this was an area she was looking into.

She drew attention to the numbers of EHCPs which were seen in children looked after post-16 and suggested that there must be earlier indications of this level of SEND coming through the system. A lot of need was categorised as emotional, social and mental health and schools often only reacted when a child becomes 'naughty'. This was an underlying learning issue which needed to be addressed. The Chair commented that as the brain developed at different times in a child's life, teenagers could be more angry and challenging and this might be why EHCPs were not required until secondary school.

Gabby noted that she had requested facilities which she was told would be supported through Pupil Premium funding, but this had all been placed in one pot. Linda advised that as part of a school's budget planning, money could be allocated for robust intervention or small group work and the Virtual School would be able to challenge on the outcomes for the child. Different children would require different levels of support and one of Linda's key roles was to work closely with social workers so that they could challenge provision in the right way.



Councillor Williams asked if Designated Governors would also be offered training and Linda highlighted that a series of challenge questions for both governors and teachers to ask of a school were being developed.

One of the tables in the report showed the distribution of pupils in schools by OFSTED category and Linda advised that children were not automatically moved if a school entered a category and it would first be explored whether certain activities were supporting their placement.

There had been a significant development in terms of educational outcomes data and allowed a like for like comparison nationally. Each cohort was different but comparisons with other children looked after were more meaningful than those made with non-looked after children.

In terms of the outcomes for children looked after, the Early Years Foundation Stage was not as strong as it could be and there was a significant gap between all schools and the looked after population. Key Stage 1 was a much better picture with performance being very close to or above the national and regional average. Key Stage 2 was also displaying positive indicators and strong performance, with progress over time being good.

However, Key Stage 4 outcomes showed performance at Attainment 8 being below both national and regional figures, with Progress 8 also significantly below the national average. This would be a key area of the Virtual School's improvement work going forward. In relation to Post 16 and Key Stage 5, the NEET indicators were positive, but it was acknowledged that there was still a lot of work to do.

Attendance was showing a declining trend and it was noted that Welfare Call collated the data on a daily basis. One of the improvement targets for the Virtual School would be to scrutinise the attendance of any child looked after whose attendance fell below 95% and a task group had been established to review this.

The number of exclusions of children looked after was generally declining and there was ongoing work to prevent children receiving fixed term exclusions.

The Virtual School, in consultation with governors, would complete a full school self-evaluation and produce a school improvement plan. Key areas of focus would be: -

- Improved outcomes for EYFS, KS1, KS2, KS3 and KS4
- Leadership and Management
- Teaching, Learning and Assessment
- Early Years
- Post 16
- Joint Working
- EPEP development and improvement of quality and timeliness of completion
- Improving attendance
- Reducing Exclusions
- Education placement for all LAC
- No drift on admissions to new schools

- New structure including the development of Associate Tutors
- Annual training programme

The Chair thanked Linda for the comprehensive report and welcomed the focus on SEND. She suggested that it would be useful to see some data in relation to the Phonics screen in the future.

23. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

### **Regulation 44 Visits**

The Board received a report providing an update on the findings in relation to the monthly unannounced visits of Sunderland Children's Homes between May and October 2018 in accordance with Regulation 44 of The Children's Home Regulations 2015.

All of the four homes had received monthly visits as well as an Ofsted within the reporting period. The Board were advised that Sea View Road had been decommissioned and had been transferred from Together for Children to Sunderland Care and Support Limited.

Members were advised that Colombo Road and Monument View had been judged to be outstanding, Revelstoke Road was good and Grasswell House had been found to require improvement. Gavin Taylor stated that the outstanding and good homes displayed stability, both in relation to young people and staffing, however this had not been the case with Grasswell House. Recommendations continued to be made in relation to the home and the IRO service worked intensely with residential and service managers to address these recommendations.

The report set out areas of service development as follows: -

- Continued work towards consistent standards across the four mainstream children's homes
- Support two homes to maintain their outstanding ratings
- Support one home to maintain 'good' judgements and aspire to 'outstanding'
- Support one home to achieve a minimum of 'good' judgements in the inspection year 2019-2020
- De-commission Sea View Road as a short break children's home with effect from 1 December 2018
- Continue to work closely with Dr Liz McManus, Lead Clinical Psychologist for Looked After Children to improve staff understanding of the impact of trauma and abuse and to plan interventions with young people

24. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

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

At the instance of the Chair it was: -

25. 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 exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) (Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A, Part 1, Paragraph 3). The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

(Signed)      L FARTHING  
                    Chair

### **Note: -**

The above minutes comprise only those relating to items during which the meeting was open to the public.

Additional minutes in respect of other items are included in Part II.

