

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 7 March 2022 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)	Washington South Ward
Councillor J Blackburn	Hetton Ward
Councillor C Burnicle	St Chad's Ward
Councillor J McKeith	St Peter's Ward
Councillor P Smith	Silksworth Ward
Councillor P Tye	Silksworth Ward
Catherine Hearne	Non-Exec Director, Together for Children

All Supporting Officers

Jill Colbert	Chief Executive, TfC
Linda Mason	Headteacher, Virtual School
Tracy Jelfs	Head of Service for Cared for Children, TfC
Sharon Willis	Strategic Service Manager, TfC
Nikki Donaldson	Participation and Engagement Officer
Chantelle	Change Council
Caitlin	Change Council
Jo Morgan	Designated Nurse Looked After Children
Angela O'Dell	CNTW
Gillian Kelly	Governance Services

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Crosby.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes

22. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2022 be agreed as a correct record.

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 face to face in a secure venue and both the 10-15 and 16+ group were meeting fortnightly.

Members of the Children, Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee had attended the Change Council and young people had discussed the issues which they felt were important which had included public transport, jobs and apprenticeships. The Change Council would like elected Members to attend the 16+ group again and also visit the 10-15 group. Nikki Donaldson would progress the arrangements for this and it was noted that the Change Council met on Wednesdays at 4.30pm.

A young persons panel made up from both Change Council groups was part of the interview process for the new Director of Children's Social Care and the Change Council had developed their own questions for the interview.

Care Day had taken place on Friday 18 February with the theme of community. It was unfortunate that this was day when young people were at school, college or work but there were two drop-in sessions held at Sandhill for young people to spend time with professionals and each other.

The planned work for January to June 2022 was as follows: -

- Drive forward the Change the Language campaign, including working groups and workshops
- Corporate Parenting induction training and support the development of the corporate parenting strategy
- Foster Care Fortnight – Key project
- Children's Home Fortnight – Key project
- Recruitment and selection training
- 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.

The Chair noted that a number of schools were still using the old language and this needed to be flagged up to finance teams as well. Nikki Donaldson advised that training on the Change the Language campaign was being delivered to social workers in the next week and Linda Mason commented that the campaign had been publicised twice through the schools newsletter.

It was highlighted that statutory data returns used the old language and schools did want to be in line with the DfE definition but Ofsted had embraced the campaign. It was suggested that the Corporate Parenting Board promote the Change the Language campaign with the Government.

Councillor Blackburn referred to the issues young people could face with public transport, especially when they needed to travel to get to work and did not have family support to help with this. The Chair commented that the cost of transport had always been an issue and was something which would remain on the agenda.

The Change Council were working on a training package and an update of the 'Change Game' which it was hoped would be rolled out soon. Jill Colbert highlighted that it was hoped that all elected Members would attend corporate parenting training.

The Chair advised that the Regional Lead Members' Network had set up a North East Care Experienced Board and a common care offer. The aim of the Board was to help care experienced young people be better prepared with improved access to education, employment and training, to achieve financial stability, improved access to health and well being support and access to better homes.

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

23. RESOLVED that the Change Council update be noted.

Health of Cared for Children

The Designated Nurse for Cared for Children submitted a report providing an update on health activity for cared for children.

The purpose of the report was to: -

- Demonstrate the duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of cared for children
- Assure the Corporate Parenting Board that support and health services to cared for children were provided without undue delay or geographical prejudice
- Demonstrate the aim of the Looked After Health team for sustained improvement in the health and wellbeing of cared for and cared experienced children
- Assure that the child's voice around health was included wherever possible
- Report on compliance with statutory targets from the Looked After Health Team for South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust

39 Initial Health Assessments (IHAs) had been carried out and there had been 90% compliance in the quarter. Three appointments were cancelled by carers and rearranged and one was cancelled as there was not consent and these accounted for the 10% seen outside the timeframe. 91% of Review Health Assessments had been completed within timescales and Jo advised that there was some ongoing work on raising the importance of attending appointments through training and carers drop-ins.

In relation to Out of Area Health Assessments, 75% of IHAs had been completed in timescale and 86% of RHAs were within the timescale. One IHA was out of timescale by one day and one RHA was out of timescale due to the young person refusing to engage at the first appointment was offered.

There were some capacity issues with regard to the Health Passport and another nurse was due to be appointed. 11 young people had turned 18 during quarter three and all had their Health Passport information shared verbally at their final health assessment, however only 18% had received their passport by the time of their 18th birthday.

Jo advised that she did not have any further information regarding dental appointments for cared for children. Jill commented that in the context of concerns around oral health it was important to keep an eye on the data and the general trends regarding access.

Jo highlighted that it would be great to have a specific dental pathway and attempts were being made to track dental data through the health profile. There were examples of other pathways, in North Yorkshire for example, where priority was given to vulnerable patients.

Jill noted that dentists were independent contractors and unfortunately were not represented on bodies like the Health and Wellbeing Board because they did not operate on a local footprint. It was suggested that Oral Health lead within Public Health could provide an update at a future meeting.

Councillor Tye queried if it was known that there was a problem with dental health for cared for children and the Chair noted that there were general problems across Sunderland. Jill added that there had been exceptionally limited access during the pandemic which was now starting to return and there had been an impact on children's oral health. There was not a co-ordinated approach to gathering data and young people were just asked at their health assessments if they had seen a dentist and it was felt that the health team could do better with this.

Jill highlighted that young people had the universal right for free dental treatment and the success measure was in relation to decayed, missing and filled teeth.

Having considered the report, it was: -

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

CNTW Cared For Children Report

The Board received a report covering the period October – December 2021.

In October ten referrals had been seen, there were 19 referrals in November, 17 of which were seen and in December six of 11 referrals were seen. All urgent referrals had been seen and the CYPS Intensive Community Treatment Service (ICTS) offered a 24/7 service.

The majority of cared for children would be seen within six weeks, however this had increased to eight weeks recently due to the number of referrals being received.

Councillor Burnicle noted that in some cases, young people had declined to engage with services and were therefore discharged unseen and he asked what the process was if the team could not get in touch with a young person. Angela O'Dell explained that a young person would be telephoned and written to more than once before being discharged. The Chair asked if there would be any liaison with the social work team and Angela said that the referring social worker would be contacted. Social workers did quite often bring young people to their appointments and would be offered a range of options to get the most convenient appointment for that young person.

Tracy Jelfs highlighted that TfC had employed someone to provide psychological support in residential homes and also for foster carers and there was a consistent investment in this type of support for young people.

Catherine Hearne commented that although this was a snapshot of the reasons for discharge she wondered if there was any pattern to this. Angela said that there was no real theme, it was purely down to the referrals which came through. There were some young people who had briefly been placed in Sunderland but had then moved on and this had contributed to referrals being discharged.

25. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Virtual School – Headteacher's Report

Linda Mason, Headteacher of the Virtual School submitted a report providing the Board with updated information about the education of cared for children.

The number of cared for children as of 28 February 2022 was 561 and of these 90 were pre-school age, 40 attended nursery or early years provision, 389 were school age and 82 were post 16. It was noted that 109 young people attended school outside of Sunderland but the majority of these were still in North East schools. Linda advised that the North East Virtual Heads met together to discuss any regional issues.

19 young people were currently classed as not being in education, employment or training, however this was a snapshot and could change.

Indicators were good in relation to attendance, particularly given recent Covid rates of absence and cared for children in Sunderland had a higher attendance rate than that national average for all children.

There had been no permanent exclusions for cared for children and there was a downward trend for fixed term suspensions. The Virtual School was informed of all suspensions and worked to try and reduce episodes which were usually related to many different factors. It was expected that schools would look at behaviour as communication and the Virtual School had an SLA with the Educational Psychology service and were able to commission a report quickly. An external service had also been commissioned which specialised in Out of Area reports.

EPEPs were being maintained at a high level and over 90% had been assured as Good with current statutory compliance standing at 98.5%.

Linda reported that the Virtual School now had some young people on its Governing Board and had foster carer representation. The Board Chair was Wendy Price from Sunderland University.

A structure review was being undertaken of the team and roles and responsibilities were being looked at with a view to increasing capacity. New roles were being advertised, crafted within the existing budget, with a focus on SEN.

Councillor Burnicle asked about where a young person had been placed elsewhere rather than receiving a permanent exclusion and the impact that would have. Linda advised that in Sunderland a child would be placed in the Pupil Referral Unit and a mainstream school would possibly be sought afterwards.

Councillor McKeith referred to the excellent attendance between September and February and asked whether in a normal year there would be any drop-off in this period. Linda said that she would not expect that and she would have been concerned if the Virtual School attendance did not compare well with the national attendance figures. Councillor Smith commented that everyone concerned should be congratulated on the high levels of attendance for cared for young people.

The Chair requested that the Board receive a report at a future meeting about the young people who were not in education, employment or training, possibly with case studies so that Members could understand how the Virtual School worked with these young people.

26. RESOLVED that the Virtual School – Headteacher's Report be noted.

(Signed) L FARTHING
Chair