

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 26 September 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 C Burnicle	St Chad's Ward
Councillor M Crosby	Sandhill Ward
Councillor J McKeith	St Peter's Ward
Councillor P Tye	Silksworth Ward
Catherine Hearne	Non-Exec Director, Together for Children

Observing

Councillor J Price	Deputy Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Skills
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All Supporting Officers

Tracy Jelfs	Head of Service for Cared for Children, TfC
Majella McCarthy	Director of Children's Social Care, TfC
Anita Swales	Acting Headteacher, Virtual School
Kathryn McCabe	Service Manager, Cared for Children
Gavin Taylor	IRO Team Manager
Nikki Donaldson	Participation and Engagement Officer
Chantelle	Change Council
Caitlin	Change Council
Jo Morgan	Designated Nurse Looked After Children
Samantha Diston	CNTW
Gillian Kelly	Governance Services

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Smith.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes

9. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 May 2022 be agreed as a correct record subject to the addition of Kathryn McCabe to the list of attendees.

The Chair advised that 'Supportive Parenting Partnership' was the preferred new name of the group and the terms of reference would be reviewed prior to the changes being made for the next municipal year.

With regard to access to dental health treatment, it was noted that Jill Colbert had taken this away and Jo Morgan advised that there was buy-in from Public Health on the health working group and this issue was being pushed forward.

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, however both groups had a six week break for the summer holidays.

The Change Council had held their first Children's Home fortnight and all five homes had taken part with an awards event being held at Grasswell for all of the homes to come together. It was planned to hold another next year and the group would ask the homes for ideas on how they would like to celebrate.

The Change Council had supported Pride and created a short video for social media with messages of support.

The group highlighted their involvement in recruitment and selection and the Board heard that they had been involved in interviews for the Head of Service for Children's Social Care, two team managers, one RSHE worker, two Participation and Engagement Workers, two Prevention Bus and HAF workers and one IRO Manager. It was noted that a lot of these interviews were held during the day, and it was not always possible for young people to be involved if they were in education.

Inspired by a short film created by young people in Hull, the Change Council had started to plan their own film on education.

Two workers had visited the Change Council from Sefton Council to talk to the young people about the campaigns the group had worked on and they had been very interested in the Change the Language campaign. It was hoped that the Change Council could visit Sefton in the future.

The Change Council had been nominated for a Young Achievers Award and would be attending the event on 30 September. The Cared for Christmas celebration would be held in the City Hall this year and the group were currently planning the event.

The group had continued to work on the training for Corporate Parents and this was nearly complete. A date for training would be arranged in the near future.

There were three new members attending the 10-15 years group of Change Council and potentially two new members for the older group. The Change Council continued to encourage young people to join the group.

The Change Council was working with Together for Children on Life Story work and later life letters and had also participated in the Summer Holiday Activities and Food programme (HAF).

The planned work for January to December 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
- Children's Home Fortnight – Key project
- Recruitment and selection
- 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.

Catherine Hearne asked if any progress had been made in relation to the Care to Dance programme and Nikki stated that this would be picked up again now that summer holidays were over.

Catherine also offered her assistance with the development of the Change Council's film as she had worked in the industry and might be able to help.

The Chair asked if the University or College might be able to offer some resources for the film; Nikki said that she had approached the University before and not had much luck, but any contacts Members might have would be very useful.

With regard to encouraging more young people to become part of the Change Council, Councillor Tye asked if there were any informal drop-in type arrangements where young people could see what it involved. Nikki said that young people could come along to sessions or meet with a group of Change Council members or meet with Nikki herself prior to coming along to a formal meeting. The door was always open to new members and every effort would be made to make them comfortable in coming along.

Councillor Crosby asked about later life letters and it was explained that these were given to cared for young people at a certain age and were intended to help the young person understand the reasons why they were cared for and something of their history.

Nikki informed the Board that she was moving on to a new role and a new Participation and Engagement Officer would be in post in October.

The Chair thanked Chantelle and Caitlin for presenting the report and wished Nikki well in her new post. Accordingly it was: -

10. 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 Cared for Health team for sustained improvement in the health and wellbeing of cared for and care experienced young people
- Assure that the child's voice around health was included wherever possible
- Report on compliance with statutory targets

Work was ongoing to develop a Health Group for partners to work together to ensure that the health needs of cared for young people were met. The group would monitor and enable access to a range of health services which promote and support the emotional, physical and mental health of cared for children. A draft terms of reference had been developed and it was hoped to get more partners to join the group.

The first draft of the Health Passport app was now available and it was hoped that this was something which young people could use for guidance. There had been some discussion about reflecting local pathways and these were now in development.

Jo Morgan highlighted the regional task and finish group which was aimed at raising awareness of care experienced young people and improving outcomes. One of the areas of work was the development of a digital training tool for health services which would be implemented across the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board area.

The Chair referred to the large footprint which the NHS now had across the area and suggested that the Change Council might look at engaging with partners in the wider area.

Jo noted that it would be great to have a regional approach to the Change the Language campaign and Majella queried whether this was on the regional agenda. Nikki advised that it had been discussed in the regional group and she was aware that Durham were working to change their language but it was a varied picture across the region.

The Chair reported that Cumbria County Council had recently passed a Notice of Motion for 'care experienced' to be a protected characteristic. Any suggestion of this kind would only be a local consideration and the Change Council would be consulted before any proposal was made.

Jo said that she sat on a national committee for cared for and care experienced young people and the language she used had been commented on; it was important to continue to push the campaign. Gavin Taylor added that all North East regions were changing their language and the Change Council had been instrumental in this and should be rightly proud.

Councillor McKeith enquired about the timescale for the Health Passport app and Jo said that the draft was being shared with young people across the region but realistically it would not be available until the new year. She would share the prototype app in due course.

Having considered the report, it was: -

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

CNTW Cared For Children Report

The Board received a report covering the period May – July 2022.

In May ten referrals had been seen from a total of 12, there were ten referrals in June, seven of which were seen and in July all 13 referrals were seen. There had been two urgent referrals by the CYPS Intensive Community Treatment Service (ICTS) within the period.

Samantha Diston referred to previous concerns about limited information being provided for referrals and advised that there were some actions arising from a joint meeting which was held to look at this.

The waiting list for treatment had fluctuated and this reflected the large caseload of CYPS. Cared for children made up a quite small percentage of the overall caseload (5.5%) but did take priority.

Samantha highlighted the case study which had been included as part of the report and the positive outcomes which had been achieved for this particular young person.

The Chair noted that CAMHS was a community service and queried why cared for young people were referred to CYPS. Samantha stated that this was likely to be due to the level of complexity of the cases, the level of risk involved and also the knowledge of the professionals.

The Chair was interested in the case study and noted how this linked to the Virtual School. Anita Swales commented that the Virtual School would link in with mental health services when there was potential drift for a young person.

Samantha asked if there was anything which Board Members would like to see in future reports and Jo suggested it would be useful to have some information on transitions and the move to adult services; there were young people who were currently accessing CYPS but did not meet the criteria for adult services.

Majella McCarthy commented that sometimes circumstances did not allow for work to be done with a young person and consideration had to be given to how young people could be best supported if their placement was not stable. Samantha agreed that a collective response was needed and specialist therapies were difficult when a young person did not have a stable placement.

The Chair suggested that officers could meet with Kimm Lawson who was commissioning the 'I Thrive' emotional health and wellbeing model.

Councillor Tye asked for clarification about referrals for cared for children and whether these all went straight to CYPS. The Chair highlighted that the contract for children in care was with CYPS but she had asked officers to ascertain what was available through CAMHS. There had been an issue in Sunderland that there was no single entry point in Sunderland and this was something Kimm was tackling.

Samantha commented that there was a daily interface between CAMHS and CYPS and there was work ongoing in relation to the single point of access model which would make it easier for families and schools to access services.

12. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Children's Independent Reviewing Service Annual Report

The Board received the Annual Report for the Independent Reviewing Service for the period April 2021 and March 2022.

Gavin Taylor was in attendance to present the report and in doing so directed Members to the highlight summary of the report. All of the independent reviewing officers had attended national training on their roles and responsibilities and this had supported the strength base of the practitioners.

The service had continued to implement the signs of safety model and had revisited and adapted the signs of safety conference agenda so that it was more in line with a strength-based model. Parents felt more included and more young people were attending their conferences now that this model was in place and were also chairing their cared for review.

The service had continued to perform above national and local benchmarks despite the challenges caused by the pandemic and Sunderland was a regional lead in post Covid-19 service delivery.

The service had moved into new premises in December 2021 and this was being received positively by families who found the meeting spaces more inclusive and engaging.

The tracking of children's plans had been strengthened meaning that the continuing and progressing of actions could be clearly evidenced. Ofsted had mentioned that the footprint of the Independent Reviewing Service was visible throughout the young people's files. The use of Mind of My Own had also been strengthened and this had resulted in a stronger voice being evidenced in a child's records about their views being gathered, considered and recorded in care for meetings.

In terms of what the service was worried about, there was not always a plan for permanency at a young person's second review and there was a shortage of resources in terms of foster carers and children's homes. The impact of children living in poverty was also being seen and it was anticipated that there would be a rise in the use of the category of 'neglect'.

The report also highlighted what the Independent Reviewing Service would do next which included looking at what could be done differently to improve the timeliness of a permanency decision being made. IROs would continue to work with colleagues and commissioning to seek the best homes possible for young people and also in the implementation of Young People's Child Protection Plans, embedding learning from how services need to work more constructively with young people who were exposed to risks outside the family home.

The annual report included case studies and real experiences and examples of young people and their families.

The Chair commented that the final reference to children at risk from outside the family home was very important. There were more young people in the 10-15 age group than any other and Together for Children had done a lot of work in the last 12 months for children on the edge of care.

Regarding the timeliness of reports, the Chair noted that the Police had improved their performance considerably but other professionals had not. Majella stated that this was an area which was targeted and although some delays had been caused by the impact of Covid and staff sickness, this was not fair on children and families. Communication between the IRO service and Social Care was frequent.

Councillor McKeith asked if timeliness had increased since March 2022 and Gavin said that there were ongoing challenges with reporting.

Councillor Crosby referred to a case where a child had to wait for dental treatment and Gavin explained that the Dispute Resolution Procedure (DRP) had been raised appropriately and that the required funding was agreed for the young person to get the relevant dental treatment. Councillor Crosby asked if eye care was covered by Social Care and it was confirmed that this was the case.

Councillor Tye asked if the wider DRPs were counted within the figures for complaints and compliments. Gavin advised that DRPs were raised as a professional challenge to call into question the progression of a child's plan. They were used as a communication method and showed a healthy organisation which was open and transparent.

There had been a reduction in the number of DRPs raised and these were done in the best interest of the child in order to get the desired result for them. Majella said that it was embedded in the culture of Social Care to pick up the phone and have a conversation if it was felt that a plan was drifting.

Having thanked Gavin for presenting the report, it was: -

13. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Virtual School – Headteacher’s Report

Anita Swales, Acting 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 15 September 2022 was 515 and of these 71 were pre-school age, 23 attended nursery or early years provision, 338 were school age and 106 were post 16. It was noted that a high proportion of cared for young people were in Key Stage 4 and not all were educated in Sunderland; the majority of children were in good or outstanding schools.

There was an improving three year trend in attendance across all key stages following a dip in 2019/2020 and was an average of 94% across the board, however attendance in Key Stage 4 remained stubbornly low and had been identified as a key area of action for the Virtual School. The Chair suggested it would be useful to further detail on the reasons for Key Stage 4 attendance being lower than other year groups.

Fixed term exclusions continued to reduce year on year and there had been no permanent exclusions for cared for children in five years. The Chair noted that of the 11 children with an EHCP who had received suspensions, seven attended specialist provision and felt it was unusual for young people to be suspended from those settings. Anita said that it unfortunately did happen and not all specialist provisions were outstanding.

EPEPs were being maintained at a high level and over 91% had been assured as Good with current statutory compliance standing at over 97% The production of an initial PEP within 20 days of a child becoming cared for was the most difficult element of the process as the timeframe did not take school holidays into account. A young person would have their PEP updated each term and every six months once they were post-16.

There had been a decline in the number of young people who were seeking employment, education and training and this was now 23% of cared for children in the Year 12 and 13 bracket, an improvement from 50% in 2019.

The Chair was pleased to see that statistic, knowing the amount of work which had gone into this. Anita commented that it was about retaining young people on their pathway and a pilot grant from the DfE had enabled mentoring support, 1:1 tuition and incentives to support Year 11 students as they transitioned to post-16 provisions.

Councillor Burnicle noted that Anita was Acting Headteacher and asked whether this was a temporary arrangement. Councillor Tye expressed confusion as to how this arrangement could provide greater stability.

The Chair highlighted that the Headteacher role had expanded and now included young people under child protection or who were a child in need and tuition services. The Virtual School had a very new structure and it had been felt that bringing in a new person with a new team to induct might be destabilising. It was the goal to have a permanent appointment.

Councillor Crosby asked if the Virtual School had a special relationship with the careers service and Anita said that post 16 workers had strong links with their colleagues in careers.

As it was Anita's first report to the Board, she asked if there was anything which Members would like to see as part of the report and the Chair suggested signs of safety, a deep dive in to Key Stage 4 attendance and further information on work to reduce suspensions.

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

Fostering Service Annual Report

The Board received the Fostering Service Annual Report for information. Members were advised that it was in a specific format for Ofsted and Kathryn McCabe was in attendance to take questions.

The service was working well and had recently launched two Mockingbird Family Model constellations. There was expert peer support and guidance for carers but recruitment remained a challenge.

Ofsted had recently conducted an inspection of the service and the outcome was awaited.

Catherine Hearne referred to page 11 of the report and that there were no Schedule 7 notifications in relation to complaints but there were in relation to allegations of abuse or neglect. Kathryn said that there were different elements of Schedule 7 and Gavin explained that this was related to the LADO function and if concerns raised with the LADO were substantiated, these would result in a notification under Schedule 7.

15. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Adoption Annual Report

The Board received the Adoption Annual Report for information and Kathryn was again able to take questions.

It was reported that recruitment was doing well and there was an officer employed by the regional agency to oversee recruitment. There were 16 potential adopters at stage two of the process and 12 at stage one.

Kathryn highlighted that the recent Somerset Judgement had resulted in delays in the making of Placement Orders, but this did not stop plans progressing for children.

16. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Other Business

Tracy Jelfs advised that she had identified an officer from housing to attend future Board meetings and asked if Members would agree to invite them to attend the next meeting.

17. RESOLVED that a representative from housing services be invited to attend the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board.

Minutes Part II

18. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 May 2022 Part II be agreed as a correct record.

(Signed) L FARTHING
Chair