

Corporate Parenting Board

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 10 October 2011 in
Committee Room No. 1, Civic Centre, Sunderland at 5.30 pm**

Present:

Councillor Ball
Councillor A. Hall
Councillor Kelly
Councillor Macknight
Councillor D. Smith
Councillor Walker
Councillor Williams

Members of the Board

Ryhope
Shiney Row
Executive Member, Safer City and Culture
Castle
Copt Hill
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

Tom Ellison
Konner McCully
Reece Maxted
Dan Johnson
Kieran Boyce
Saul Cranson
Kallam Addison
Tiffany Johnson
Dan Bensley

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillor P. Smith. In the absence of the Chair Councillor Williams was elected Chair for the purpose of the meeting.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes of Meeting held on 11 July 2011

34. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2011 be agreed as a correct record, subject to the following alteration: -

Sarah Cranson to be amended to Saul Cranson.

Councillor Williams in referring to page three of the minutes, enquired whether the Head of Safeguarding had produced a list of reasons regarding why nine children had changed school as a result of a placement change since April 2010. The Head of Safeguarding stated that she would action this.

Looked After Children Education Performance and Personal Educational Plans Presentation

Janet Murray, Virtual School Headteacher delivered a presentation on Looked After Children Education Performance and Personal Education Plans. In doing so, she explained that the virtual school was a wrap around service designed to help young people to develop and grow.

Personal Education Plans (PEP) were a statutory requirement for all school age children in care. The plan was designed to support looked after children to do well at school by providing essential information for schools and carers. The Plans also encouraged dialogue between social workers, carers and schools in order to identify areas of strength, plus any other areas where additional support may be necessary. The plans were a working document and were regularly reviewed.

Members of the Board were advised that following a review of the PEP process a new form had been launched. A copy of which was circulated and an opportunity was offered for any comments or questions to be raised.

Saul Cranson enquired what was a 'designated teacher'. In response, The Virtual School Headteacher advised that a designated teacher was a teacher in school responsible for ensuring that the needs of a looked after child were met.

Councillor Williams enquired whether school governors could be involved in the consultation process for issues that directly affect looked after children. The Virtual School Headteacher responded stating that during the PEP review she had ensured to involve other Virtual School Headteachers in the consultation process.

In response to an enquiry regarding the number of children receiving home based tuition, the Virtual School Headteacher confirmed that at present there were approximately eight children receiving home based tuition and that there were two referrals going before a panel the following day.

Members of the Corporate Parenting Board were then provided with an update of the 2011 Key Stage 1, 2 and 4 Results.

An opportunity was then offered for comments and questions.

Dan Bensley enquired what was the meaning of 'School Action'. The Virtual School Headteacher responded advising that young people requiring additional help and support in school were categorised as school action.

Reece Maxted enquired why he was required to wait until he was eighteen before he received any support. The Virtual School Headteacher responded stating that the Council had acknowledged that there had been delays previously and that they were trying to rectify that and provide support to young people earlier in their lives, by working closely with schools and Early Years. Also every school now had a SENCO (Special Educational Needs Coordinator) in place, whose responsibility it was for supporting young people that require extra help.

Councillor Williams commented that SENCOs had been in place for a long time and that issues such as the provision of additional support should have picked up much earlier.

Konner McCully commented that when ever he had required any support or assistance he was unsure of where to go. The Virtual School Headteacher stated that letters would be sent out very soon outlining the types of support available to improve the skills of young people in care and also that one-to-one tuition was available upon request. All young people were recommended to discuss any skills or support requirements at their PEP meetings.

Discussions then ensued in relation to housing and the range of housing available, including supportive accommodation. The Head of Safeguarding stated that Alan Caddick, Head of Housing would be attending the Corporate Parenting Board in February 2012 to discuss the matter.

Councillor Ball enquired if it would be possible for her to visit young people living in supported accommodation. The Head of Safeguarding advised that a visit could be arranged with the necessary permissions.

Members of the Corporate Parenting Board thanked Janet Murray, Virtual School Headteacher for her presentation.

Verbal Update by the Young People – Change Council/Council Dialogue

Alyson Boucher, Young People's Officer explained that the Change Council had been provided with some guidance from the Department for Education suggesting a series of questions and issues that they could raise with Elected Members and Officers within the Local Authority.

The young people presented a report detailing their views on ten issues that they stated they would like to share with the Corporate Parenting Board before submitting

to the Department for Education. The ten issues were then referred to in turn as follows: -

Setting Up home Allowance (Leaving Care Grant) of at Least £2,000

The Change Council felt that the grant provided in Sunderland was lower compared to other parts of the Country. Also, in Sunderland, there were conditions attached in relation to how the money could be spent, whilst in other parts of the Country the money was given to care leavers in their hand. The Head of Safeguarding confirmed that Sunderland currently paid a grant of £1,400, however acknowledged that the grant amount was likely to vary in different parts of the country. Councillor Williams commented that it might prove useful if some guidance could be pulled together to inform the young people what essential items they may wish to reserve some of the grant money for i.e. television, washing machine.

CIC Council Training of Councillors as Standard

The Change Council stated that they would welcome the attendance of Councillors at their Change Council meetings in order to raise awareness of what it was like to be in care, and what was important to Looked After Children.

Free Access to Council Leisure Services

The general consensus amongst the young people was that the Max Card Scheme was not as useful as the previous Life Card, which used to allow Looked After Children to gain access to leisure facilities at a reduced rate.

The Head of Safeguarding commented that if the Max Card Scheme was not as good as the Life Card then a solution was required. Councillor Kelly, Safer City and Culture Portfolio Holder would be requested to look into the matter.

The Change Council would consider inviting Councillor Kelly to a future meeting.

Standard Information Pack / Lisa of Entitlements that children should be given when entering care for the first time

The Change Council did not consider this item to be a priority because they were happy with the information pack that they currently received.

Involve children in checking and monitoring the council's services for looked after children

The Change Council felt that their involvement and participation in reviews of services which affected them was important, and that they would benefit if the Council could involve them more during these processes.

Ways to improve your children in care Council with the help of your Local Authority and Participation Officers

The young people explained that the Change Council had previously discussed meeting with the Executive Director of Children's Services on a quarterly basis however, that their work with the Young People's Officer and regular attendance at quarterly Corporate Parenting Board meetings proved to be an effective way of communicating their views and concerns. Nevertheless, whilst this worked, they did still feel that it would be useful to have regular discussions with the Executive Director regarding issues that affected them.

Hold surveys/meetings with LAC outside of the Council to ensure Council represents as wide a range of LAC as possible

The Change Council felt that they already did this, and that in the past they had fully participated with regional and national groups.

Review outcome indicator twice a year, including placement stability and educational achievement, holding officials and councilors to account

The Change Council stated that they had specifically requested for the statistical information contained within the performance to be submitted to the Corporate Parenting Board in numbers, not just percentages. The Head of Safeguarding confirmed that this was currently being looked into.

Regularly audit/interrogate LA to ensure legal requirements are being met

The Change Council already felt that this requirement was fulfilled by the Council.

Reward young people appropriately for attending meetings

Members of the Change Council were happy to volunteer to attend the Corporate Parenting Board, therefore this point was disregarded.

Councillor Williams enquired whether the Change Council had any linkages with Sunderland Youth Parliament. The young people responded advising that the Change Council had involvement in certain activities and on occasion partnered alongside the Youth Parliament during certain events. The Change Council were also invited as guests to events hosted by the Youth Parliament and the Youth Parliament also attended meetings of the Change Council to update the young people on issues that may affect them and work developments.

Members thanked the young people for bringing their report before the Board

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

At the instance of the Chairman, it was:-

35. 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) L. WILLIAMS,
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.