

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 21 November 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 J McKeith	St Peter's Ward
Councillor P Smith	Silksworth Ward

Observing

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

Jill Colbert	Chief Executive, Together for Children
Majella McCarthy	Director of Children's Social Care, TfC
Tracy Jelfs	Head of Service for Cared for Children, TfC
Anita Swales	Acting Headteacher, Virtual School
Kathryn McCabe	Service Manager, Cared for Children
Daniel Kenny	Fostering Team Manager
Samantha Diston	CNTW
Nikki Donaldson	Participation and Engagement Officer
Alexandra Bowey	Participation and Engagement Officer
Chantelle	Change Council
Caitlin	Change Council
Katherine Corfield	Housing Strategy Officer
Leanne Hill	Transport Policy Officer
Vicky Tubman	Sustainable Travel Officer
Gillian Kelly	Governance Services

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Crosby, Laws and Tye together with Catherine Hearne.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes

19. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2022 be agreed as a correct record.

The Chair noted that dental health treatment had been discussed with Public Health and Jill Colbert said that it might be tabled for a future meeting; the position was improving but it was necessary to understand access to dental care for cared for children.

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.

The Board had previously heard that the Change Council planned to make some short videos on raising awareness and challenging the stigma in education. This process would take some time as it was necessary to get the support needed to produce the films and Sunderland University and the Virtual School had been approached to help with this.

It had been agreed that social workers from the permanence team would support the 10-15 group and the 16+ group had asked that a Next Steps worker also attend as it was felt they would be able to offer more relevant advice.

The Regional Children in Care Council meeting had been hosted at City Hall and a team building residential had been discussed to take place in April 2023. There had also been talks about the possibility of creating two regional Children in Care Councils so that issues relevant to different ages could be addressed.

There had been a cooking event for the National Care Experienced Week and through this it had been hoped to raise awareness of cooking on a budget.

Planning had been taking place for the Cared for Christmas event, young people were disappointed that they could not hold this in the usual venue but it was understood why this was not possible. Venue and budget constraints meant that some things that the Change Council had wanted to do may not be possible.

The Change Council had held a 16+ Movie Night to give them the opportunity to spend time together and had taken photographs to promote Anti-Bullying Week. Unfortunately, the Anti-Bullying Day Dip had been postponed due to bad weather and it was hoped to re-arrange this to a later date.

The training for corporate parents was nearly ready and a practice run was being planned with the participation team. It was hoped to agree a date to deliver the training in the New Year.

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

The 16+ Change Council had written to corporate parents asking that Sunderland support making being care experienced a protected characteristic to help protect young people from discrimination and harassment based on their care identity.

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
- 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.
- Alex was to regularly drop in to Children's Homes and Support 2 Independence and also to be around for Warm Spaces.

The Chair noted that the young people were all very busy but managed to make great progress with the Change Council's work. She would take back the request that being care experienced be considered a protected characteristic in Sunderland to the City Council.

Jill Colbert said that there had been discussions with the Police and Crime Commissioner on this issue and Nikki advised that young people had started working on a video explaining what the change would mean to them. Jill noted that the Change the Language campaign would continue to run through this and this was something which could also be reflected.

The Chair also referred to a presentation from Greater Manchester on their offer for care experienced young people and suggested that officers could speak to regional colleagues to see what innovative programmes were operating in other areas.

In relation to the residential proposed at the Regional Children in Care Council, this had not yet been confirmed but it was hoped that Members would endorse the costs of this being supported by Together for Children.

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

20. RESOLVED that the Change Council update be noted.

Supportive Parenting Partnership – Terms of Reference

The Board received a draft terms of reference for the Supportive Parenting Partnership which would be the new name for the Corporate Parenting Board from May 2023.

The terms of reference set out the purpose, responsibilities and operation of the Partnership, together with the proposed membership.

The Chair commented that she had discussed the terms of reference with the Leader and the Cabinet as they moved the Board into an area where it would be held to account by Scrutiny and she felt that it might operate as a subset of the Cabinet and link in to the themes of the City Plan.

Currently appointments to the Board were politically balanced and there would need to be further discussion on any proposals before these were considered at the Annual Meeting of the Council in May 2023. There would need to be further changes to the terms of reference of the Partnership if it was agreed to reformat the group in the way described.

21. RESOLVED that the draft terms of reference for the Supportive Parenting Partnership be approved.

CNTW Cared For Children Report

The Board received a report covering the period July - September 2022.

In July all 13 referrals had been seen, there were 13 referrals in June, 11 of which were seen and in September five out of nine referrals were discharged unseen. There had been no urgent referrals by the CYPS Intensive Community Treatment Service (ICTS) within the period.

Samantha Diston stated that the position had not changed much from the previous report but there had been an increase of referrals across the system. She noted that there were a range of reasons why young people were not seen after being referred but there were no particular issues or difficulties.

The Chair noted that queries had been raised about children and young people having to be in a settled situation before they had intervention from CYPs. Samantha said that came up quite a lot and was judged on a case-by-case basis. Sometimes it was not safe to begin a course of therapy when a young person was in a transient situation, however the care pathway in Sunderland allowed CYPs to go along to meetings etc and transience would not be a block to treatment.

The waiting list for treatment was currently nine weeks and cared for children made up a quite small percentage of the overall caseload (6.0%) but were offered priority appointments.

Jill welcomed the honest and direct way which the position was presented in the report and agreed that the data had not changed massively in recent months. She referred to the current anxiety around children's mental health and wellbeing as a whole and in the light of reports such as the investigation into West Lane Hospital and the fear that a Sunderland young person could be in that position. She queried if there were other things which partners could be doing together.

Samantha commented that it was right to ask these questions and she was keen to develop working on shared issues.

Councillor Smith asked if there were any particular thoughts on the CYPS caseload and Samantha stated that it had increased post-pandemic but the cared for caseload remained relatively static and there was dedicated resource in the team for cared for children.

22. 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 11 November 2022 was 498 and of these 46 were pre-school age, 18 attended nursery or early years provision, 331 were school age and 103 were post 16.

The report showed a deeper dive into attendance and absence monitoring and the trend for attendance across all key stages was improving. The Virtual School had been looking at what promoted good attendance and it was noted that 87% of 100% attendees were attending good or outstanding provision. Of the young people with 100% attendance, 83% of these were living with foster carers, 93% had been in care for over 12 months.

In relation to young people who had attendance of less than 80%, 64% were in residential or transitional care and 32% had been in care for less than 12 months, there was also an increasing number of unaccompanied asylum seekers who were in the cared for system.

Anita noted that young people who were being cared for in Key Stage 4 had a history of educational neglect; very often parents themselves had poor educational experiences and it was a challenge to maintain engagement when children transitioned back to living with their parents. There could be difficulties in arranging appropriate provision for asylum seekers due to language issues and life experiences. Overall special educational provision was also very difficult to access.

The Chair thanked Anita for providing more information on attendance, this had provided a useful overview of the situation.

Councillor Burnicle asked if the service was able to cope with an increasing number of unaccompanied asylum seekers and Anita stated that it was manageable in Key Stage 4 at the moment but it was possible that things may become stretched in the future. Jill assured Members that the numbers were very small at the present time and the issue was that these young people had to be looked after and found somewhere appropriate to live. There was a general concern about international students and their families but there had been some misinformation around this and it was mainly voluntary organisations who were working with these communities.

The Chair commented that concerns had been reported to the University regarding international students and there had been a report on the National Transfer Scheme to the Children, Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee. The issue for Together for Children was funding and requirements which increased year on year and these matters would continue to be raised with the Government.

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

Ofsted Inspection of the Fostering Service

The Board received a copy of the Ofsted report on the Together for Children independent fostering agency.

Daniel Kenny, Fostering Team Manager, was in attendance to talk to the report. Daniel highlighted that the inspection for the fostering service had been overdue, but the agency had been included as part of the overall Children's Service inspection. Ofsted had visited between 12 and 16 September 2022 and there were three elements of the inspection: -

- Overall experiences and progress of children and young people
- How well children and young people are helped and protected
- The effectiveness of leaders and managers.

All three elements had been judged to be good and the overall judgment of the inspection was good.

There had been a great deal of focus on matching in the 2018 Ofsted report and there had been a lot of work carried out in that area in the intervening period which had been recognised by Ofsted. The Mockingbird programme was also acknowledged for the nurture and support it provided for families and the report commented that this improved children's experiences by extending foster family networks and peer friendships.

Ofsted had also looked at how 'missing from home' incidents and how allegations against foster carers were dealt with and it was highlighted that although supervision was good, the recording of this was inconsistent.

The Chair commended the positive report, noting that Ofsted had highlighted some areas for improvement and asked how the agency would be addressing the points around illustrating children's progress. Daniel said that they were satisfied that

children did know about their progress but the evidence was not always there and they were working to rectify this.

Majella McCarthy commented that it had been a very challenging inspection and highlighted that Together for Children with over 200 carers was being compared with other agencies who had less than 30. Ofsted inspections could not always reflect the fabulous work done and fantastic outcomes achieved by the service. Majella referred to the launch of the second Mockingbird group and the amazing day to day reality of the fostering agency and the ambitions to continue taking it forward.

Jill noted that nationally the numbers of foster carers had dropped in 2021/2022 but this was not the case in Sunderland. Councillor Smith referred to the current challenges facing the country and how this could impact on fostering.

Daniel said that money was of course important but was not everything and carers were offered excellent support and training. The Fostering Network was currently looking at the national picture and was carrying out research on the cost of fostering and Kathryn McCabe added that the Government issued guidance on the weekly allowance to be paid to carers.

Members were pleased to note the Ofsted report and felt that overall it showed a service which was better than 'good'. All involved were congratulated on the excellent inspection.

24. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Work Programme 2022/2023

The Board were informed of the work programme for the municipal year 2022/2023 and forthcoming agenda items.

It was noted that transport had been raised a number of times in relation to the costs and access for care experienced young people and that this could be a future agenda item.

Katherine Corfield said that she would like to consult with the Change Council on the Housing Strategy and the Chair noted that Manchester had employed a charity to help care experienced young people to manage their tenancies and this was something else that could be looked at.

25. RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

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

26. 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 contained information relating to any individual or information which was likely to reveal the identity of an

individual. (Local Government Act 1972, Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, Schedule 12A, Part I, Paragraphs 1 and 2).

CNTW Cared for Children Report – Case Study

The Board received detail of a positive case study of a cared for young person who had been treated by CYPS.

27. RESOLVED that the case study be noted.

(Signed) L FARTHING
Chair