

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 3 April 2017 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 R Davison	Redhill Ward
Councillor B Francis	Fulwell Ward
Councillor L Lauchlan	Washington Central Ward
Councillor C Marshall	Doxford Ward
Councillor P Smith	Silksworth Ward
Councillor W Turton	Houghton Ward

Young People

Billy Hardy
Blaine Richardson

Also in Attendance

Councillor L Williams	Washington Central Ward
Councillor P Gibson	Silksworth Ward
Councillor M Beck	Fulwell Ward
Councillor D MacKnight	Castle Ward
Councillor M Turton	Copt Hill Ward
Councillor S Foster	Castle Ward

All Supporting Officers

Alex Hopkins	Director of Children's Services and Chief Executive, Together for Children
Debra Patterson	Director, Children's Social Care, Together for Children
Sharon Willis	Service Manager, Together for Children
Sheila Lough	Service Manager, Together for Children
Emma Stewart	Commissioning Specialist, Together for Children
Maurice Davis	Foster Carer
Kay Dixon	Foster Carer

Anne Brock
Jill Stewart
Angela O'Dell
Gillian Kelly

Safeguarding Children Lead Nurse and
Designated Nurse LAC
NTW CYPS
NTW CYPS
Governance Services

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Scanlan, Lawson, McClennan and Stewart.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes

30. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2017 be agreed as a correct record.

Annual Update on the Virtual School

Councillor Smith enquired if an appointment had been made to the Virtual Headteacher post and the Chair advised that Simon Marshall was still acting up into the position and a permanent appointment had not been made at this point.

Change Council Update

Blaine Richardson presented the report of the Change Council and advised that the Change Council had supported the Self-Harm Awareness Day at Washington Mind in March. Loren had been instrumental in running some of the activities and the event had been aimed at self-harm not being a taboo subject.

The Board was reminded that the Change Council had now split into two age categories to enable it to be more focused, however some of the work plan would still involve both groups.

Kieran had recently met with the local authority chief executives from the region along with other young people from the regional children in care council. The issues to take forward from the meeting were: -

- Free leisure passes for all looked after children and care leavers across the North East;
- Specific apprenticeships and work experience opportunities for care leavers with extra support;

- For all children in care to keep their social worker until 18 but also receive support from a personal adviser from 16 onwards; and
- Councils to look at new and creative ways for supporting lodgings and young people moving into independence.

Kieran had also met with the local authority leaders and this had been another positive meeting culminating in the suggestion that a regional memorandum of understanding may be created to ensure that all care leavers in the region received the same service.

Four young people from the 16+ Change Council group would be attending a residential at Kielder on 19 April. The aim of the weekend was to identify the top issue for care leavers and the ballot paper which had been issued to all young people aged 11-21 in care or leaving care across the region was attached to the report from information.

Work continued to redesign the complaints and compliments leaflet and the group would be looking at the changes made by the Communications team at their next meeting.

Councillor Smith queried the situation with free leisure passes and Blaine advised that this was going to be taken forward at the residential event. The Chair indicated her surprise that this had not yet been put into effect and noted that this needed to be taken further than what was on offer in the homes. Sharon Willis commented that Stockton Borough Council had secured a good deal in relation to this and that she could seek information from them on their scheme. Alex Hopkins also undertook to raise this matter with partners.

In relation to apprenticeships, Councillor MacKnight stated that she had recently attended a meeting of the Sunderland Boys Fund charity which could help young people with tools, equipment and clothing as they were entering employment and the Chair added that the Hope Springs organisation could also assist in this area.

31. RESOLVED that the information be noted.

Sunderland Looked After Children's Pledge

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

Update on Semi-Independent Homes and Supported Lodgings

The Strategic Service Manager – Accommodation submitted a report providing Members with a service update with regard to the expansion of the internal semi-independent accommodation for care leavers.

All of the three internal provisions at Elwin Terrace, Chester Road and Burlington Close had been fully occupied since the last report to the Board and there was now one manager across the services which had ensured greater consistency and a co-

ordinated approach. There was a mixture of young people in the provision from externally commissioned placements and the authority's own internal homes and foster placements. Planned moves from children's homes into internal semi-independent provision had enabled four young people to return to the city from externally commissioned placements.

The Supported Lodgings scheme had expanded since the last report was presented to the Board and there were now nine providers offering up to 14 placements. One provider had left the scheme but were now offering a 'Shared Lives' placement for a young person over 21 years old. There were currently nine young people placed and five vacancies. Young people were carefully matched to Supported Lodgings placements to maximise the chance of positive outcomes.

A potential new provider for Supported Lodgings was being assessed and the scheme would be re-advertised once re-branding had been completed following the transition to Together for Children. The planned rise in payment for Supported Lodgings providers had been achieved so that it was now equivalent to that for Staying Put carers at £197.80 a week.

Seven of the current providers were attending a consultation event with a view to them offering emergency placements for young people in crisis. One young person had recently been placed as an emergency and this was working well. A Supported Lodgings provider had also received the Jeannie Pounder award at the recent Sunderland Stars event in recognition of the exceptional pattern of support which she provided for two care leavers in her home and the immeasurable difference she had made to their lives.

The Allocations and Pathways Panel continued to meet on a weekly basis and the Commissioning Specialist attended these meetings which assisted with planning for young people and meant that fewer placements were being made in a crisis situation.

Councillor Davison asked if there were care leavers who required emergency placements and Sharon advised that the emergency placements offer was for 16-17 year olds who were presenting as homeless but who required the same level of service as care leavers.

Following consideration of the report, it was: -

32. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Annual Report of the Fostering Panel

The Strategic Services Manager submitted a report informing the Board of the work of the Fostering Panel from April 2016 to March 2017.

Sunderland City Council's Fostering Service had now become an Independent Fostering Agency following the transition to the new company and would be known as Together for Children Fostering – Sunderland. This change would not have any

significant impact on the service offered but it was likely that the work of the Panel would come under greater scrutiny from Ofsted.

There continued to be two Fostering Panels convened each month, chaired by the same independent person. Catherine Witt, Principal Social Worker had been appointed as the Agency Decision Maker and was due to observe her first panel meeting later in the month. She would hold regular meetings with the independent Chair of the panels going forward.

The service was working with Creo Communications on foster carer recruitment and creative solutions were being sought to recruit more carers with some young people being keen to be involved in the process. The panel profile had now been completed which provided a summary of panel members' experience and reasons for joining the panel which applicants could read before they attended a panel meeting. This also fed into the annual appraisal process.

Councillor Kay continued to represent elected Members at one of the fostering panels and his support and input were valued by panel members. Sheila Lough advised that if any other elected Member wished to join the second fostering panel to represent the voice of the corporate parent, then they would be very welcome.

Panel members had undertaken training in November 2016 on 'Allegations Management – Implications for Carers and Panel' and had provided extremely positive feedback on the session. All of the panel appraisals were up to date, although there was a slight issue with some of the technical detail which it was hoped would be resolved soon.

Both of the panels were very busy, with the largest area of work being assessments for Connected Carers. The Panel had observed an improvement in the quality of assessments for Connected Carers and there had also been an improvement in the attendance of the child's social worker or team manager at the panel meetings.

The Panel had escalated one case to the previous Agency Decision Maker as there was evidence of missed opportunities, drift and delay for three siblings. The Panel had also heard one appeal following a re-assessment of a foster carer which did not recommend suitability to practice.

Future developments for the panel were mainly around the greater involvement of young people in the proceedings and enabling greater involvement of potential foster carers in discussion about their assessments.

Councillor MacKnight asked if social workers were now more permanently allocated to each individual child and Sheila Lough advised that the workforce was being stabilised and that the majority of social workers in the Permanence Team were permanent members of staff. There was only one member of agency staff in the Fostering Team and the remainder were permanent.

Councillor MacKnight went on to ask how long Family Carer Assessments would take and Sheila stated that these would be carried out over of a period of 16 weeks. The assessment had to be very carefully considered as workers had to be convinced

that the arrangement would be suitable. These situations could be extremely complex and involved extended family relationships which would not be an issue for foster carers.

Councillor Williams queried how many young people were placed with family or friends rather than foster carers. Sheila explained that this depended on the plan for the child, their age and the other carers available. Currently 76 children were placed with connected carers and 413 were in foster care. The figure had been greater than that as a number of children had been secured by a court order and had subsequently come out of the care system.

The Chair referred to the attendance at foster care information evenings and Sheila commented that only one potential carer had attended the last event. Approaches were being sought which were more accessible and attractive, such as a Saturday Open day with a rolling programme taking place all day.

Maurice Davis commented that it was clear that the current methods did not work, that an information evening was off putting to many and an open day would relieve the pressure of that session. Debra Patterson stated that she had had a recent meeting about advertising and publicity for foster care recruitment but also highlighted that there had been 18 foster carer approvals since last April.

Having thanked Sheila for her comprehensive report, the Board: -

33. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Commissioning Placements for Outcomes

The Commissioning Specialist submitted a report providing an update on the commissioned provision at Harbour View and outlining the outcomes which were being achieved for young people accessing the provision.

Harbour View had been operational for six months and it had been agreed to commission the service in order to increase the offer for supported accommodation and to provide a greater choice of location.

The service provided high quality supported accommodation as a stepping stone for care leavers aged 16 to 21 and was fully occupied. One of the criteria for a placement in the service was that the young person should be actively engaged in education, employment or training and this was the case with all of the nine current occupants. The young people were working with staff to develop their independent living skills and their progress was discussed at fortnightly monitoring meetings to ensure that individual outcomes were being met and the provision continued to meet the needs of the young person.

Councillor MacKnight asked about the physical layout of the provision and was advised that each young person had individual sleeping and cooking facilities but that there were facilities to prepare group meals as well.

Councillor Williams queried if that would continue to meet needs as young people moved through their time at the provision and also asked about the numbers of children who were coming through the system who would want to access this provision. Emma Stewart stated that she regularly discussed with young people their preferences in terms of facilities to determine what was needed moving forward. She added that conversations began with young people when they were 15+ and that these would involve their social worker. Young People were then encouraged to visit all provision before making a decision. It was confirmed that there was no commissioned provision in Washington or the Coalfields but places were available through the YMCA.

Councillor Francis raised the attitude of the neighbours to the provision and Emma advised that a residents meeting had been held at Harbour View but there had not been an open day. She was unaware of any issues being raised by the local residents. Councillor Francis was pleased to hear this.

Upon consideration of the report, it was: -

34. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Health of Looked After Children

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

The Board were advised that the MALAP sub-group had been stood down as it was agreed that any health matters which needed to be resolved could be addressed in the MALAP meeting itself.

Anne Brock set out the improvement in compliance with statutory timescales for Initial Health Assessments (IHAs) which had to occur within 20 days of a child becoming looked after. This had improved quarter by quarter from 23% in quarter 1 to 56% in quarter 3. However there had been significant improvements in the early part of quarter 4 and compliance was 100% for February 2017. The LAC Health Team had restructured clinics to assist this improvement.

Review Health Assessments (RHAs) had to take place at least every six months before a child's fifth birthday and compliance had also improved to stand at 92% in February 2017. There was more flexibility for these appointments now, particularly for 'hard to reach' young people. Those which were out of timescale were mainly out of the area cases and therefore out of control of the local LAC Health Team, however to try and improve this, the team was now requesting that the RHAs were done three months prior to the deadline.

The performance in relation to Health passports had also improved, with compliance at 100% for February 2017.

The annual engagement survey of children and young people's satisfaction and understanding of health provision was completed in February 2017 and the results were attached as an appendix to the report. The survey was very positive and going forward, the team would ask one or two questions every month and ask young people to place responses in a comments box in the waiting room.

Alex Hopkins expressed his pleasure in seeing the performance at the level which it was and the Chair extended her appreciation to the LAC Health Team for their work to achieve these improvements.

Jill Stewart went on to give a verbal update on CYPS data for quarter 4. She advised that there were 523 young people in CYPS with nine looked after children cases being opened in month 11 and a total of 101 accepted over the year. By way of comparison there were 4,045 non-looked after children cases open. 122 referrals had been received within the year and 117 young people had been discharged. The main source of referrals was social services at 33.3% of the total, with Accident and Emergency, crisis team, GP and Youth Offending Team being responsible for the remainder of referrals.

The Chair requested that a written report be provided with the CYPS figures for the next Board meeting and asked about the pathway to the service. Jill advised that a referral would come to the duty team and would then be triaged by a team manager, clinical psychologist and member of staff in the looked after children part of the service. Urgent cases were seen within seven working days and priority referrals within 20 days. If additional information was needed then a team member would discuss that with the referrer.

Jill stated that there had only been two 'did not attends' within the last year and that in these cases, most would be offered another appointment. The Chair asked if consultations were carried out at home and Angela O'Dell said that assessments were certainly done there and therapy sessions would take place wherever the young person was most comfortable and could include evening and weekend appointments.

Councillor MacKnight queried how long that it took for a non-emergency referral to receive a CYPS appointment and also the feedback which was given to the referrer. She was advised that the waiting time for an appointment depended on the information given in the referral, however the waiting list for CYPS had reduced significantly. Any feedback given to the referrer would be with the consent of the young person involved.

Debra Patterson noted the number of referrals which did not go through the triage stage and Jill Stewart advised that 21 were not accepted and that 13 were discharged after the first appointment. The Chair commented that mental health issues for looked after children had been a longstanding matter and requested that Debra follow up with regard to those young people who did not come through the triage process.

Upon considering the report, it was: -

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

(Signed) L FARTHING
Chair

