

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

**Minutes of the Meeting held remotely via MS Teams on Monday 18 January
2021 at 5.30pm**

Part I

Present:

Members of the Board

Councillor L Farthing (in the Chair)	Washington South Ward
Councillor S Foster	Castle Ward
Councillor J Heron	Houghton Ward
Councillor C Marshall	Doxford Ward
Councillor D McDonough	St Chad's Ward
Councillor J McKeith	St Peter's Ward
Councillor J Potts	Millfield Ward
Councillor P Smith	Silksworth Ward

All Supporting Officers

Councillor C Rowntree	Deputy Cabinet Member, Children, Learning and Skills
Jill Colbert	Chief Executive, TfC
Martin Birch	Director of Children's Social Care, TfC
Linda Mason	Headteacher, Virtual School
Wendy Coghlan	Participation and Engagement and Anti Bullying Team Manager
Nikki Donaldson	Participation and Engagement Officer
Sharon Willis	Strategic Service Manager, TfC
Gavin Taylor	Independent Reviewing Service
Keith Munro	Fostering Review and Reg
Dr Sarah Mills	Designated Doctor for Looked After Health
Claire Elwell	Trainee Advanced Clinical Practitioner
Jo Morgan	Designated Nurse Looked After Children
Kelly Haslem	CYPS, Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear Foundation Trust
Gillian Kelly	Governance Services

Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes

17. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 5 October 2020 be agreed as a correct record.

Councillor Smith asked about the recruitment by 'A National Voice' of the 2020 - 2021 ambassadors and Nikki Donaldson advised that there had been applicants from the Change Council in Sunderland but unfortunately they had not been successful at this time.

Change Council Update

The Board had received a copy of the Change Council report and this was presented by Wendy Coghlan.

The Change Council had continued to meet face to face during the period October to December in Covid secure venues. There were young people who were keen to join the group and Nikki Donaldson was working to keep them in the loop until another group could be brought together. During the pandemic, senior managers had regularly visited the Change Council to ensure that they were listening and responding to need during these uncertain times.

The Change Council had been working on the 'Change the Language' campaign and Together for Children had agreed the following: -

- Young people would no longer to be referred to as a 'child in care' or 'looked after', they would be **cared for**;
- Rather than 'care leaver', young people would be **care experienced**;
- The term 'contact' would no longer be used, it would be **family time**; and
- Instead of saying 'placement' it would be **home**.

Senior leaders had pledged to support the campaign and partnerships and partner organisations would also be encouraged to change their language. The Chair noted that Board Members could also help to promote this change.

Dr Mills advised that she had raised the campaign with her directors and they were willing to adopt the language but unfortunately it may not be possible to change job and team titles at this stage.

National Care Experienced Week had taken place between 26 October to 1 November 2020 with the theme of Care Leavers with Careers and young people had been involved in sharing their stories. The Christmas Celebration event had not gone ahead as planned due to the pandemic ahead but each cared for and care experienced young person received a goody bag from the Change Council with the

support of CCG and Together for Children. Following the success of last year, luxury hampers were again provided by Hopespring for care experienced young people who may have been feeling isolated at Christmastime. The Chair recorded her appreciation to Hopespring for the work which they did to support cared for and care experienced young people.

The Change Council ended the year with a socially distanced Christmas meeting and the group were pleased to watch the Young Achievers awards where one of the care experienced young people received the Service in the Community Award. The Change Council also ran a quiz for professionals from across Together for Children.

Moving forward the Change Council would be focusing on launching the cookbook, recruiting a wider representation of young people, looking at the isolation of care experienced young people and the wellbeing of children and young people.

18. RESOLVED that the Change Council update be noted.

Health of Looked After Children

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

The purpose of the report was to: -

- Demonstrate the duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children looked after
- Assure the Corporate Parenting Board that support and health services to children looked after 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 children looked after and care leavers
- 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

Face to face appointments had continued during the second lockdown with reduced capacity due to minimal staffing; in the third lockdown period the team had offered telephone appointments.

There had been an average of 623 children cared for in quarter 3 which was a slight increase from the previous quarter and represented 107 children per 10,000. This remained higher than the national average.

41 Initial Health Assessments (IHAs) had been carried out and there had been 93% compliance. Two health assessments had been done outside of timescale because of siblings having to self-isolate and one young person was seen out of timescale because they had other appointments which took priority.

79 Review Health Assessments had been carried out in the quarter to date and this was 95% compliance with timescales. Of these, 19 appointments had been missed but the majority were re-booked within timescale. Two children were out of time and two young people refused their health assessments and the refusal pathway was followed in these cases.

The compliance for out of area RHAs was 86%. It was noted that there were 34 children placed outside of the North East and the CCG quality assured all of the out of area health assessments for quality. When young people were placed out of the area, nursing staff now shared a 'medical summary' to ensure that all health needs could be met in the local area without delay.

Nine Health passports had been issued during the quarter which represented 100% compliance. The Next Steps team and the Named Nurse for Looked After Health were working together on how best to meet the health needs of care leavers and the passport process was under review and discussions were ongoing about how to make it more functional.

Jo Morgan had been appointed as the new Designated Nurse for Looked After Health and started in post on 5 January 2021. Claire Elwell, Named Nurse, was undertaking training to become an Advanced Clinical Practitioner within the team. This would mean that she could take up more of a clinical leadership role within the team and Claire was the first in the region to undertake this demanding and pioneering training for a role with cared for children.

Health Profile Data continued to be collected at each health assessment and this would be used to improve services for cared for young people. The Designated Doctor had joined the Best Start in Life group with Sunderland City Council and the Looked After Health team, Paediatric team, Sunderland CCG and the Youth Drug and Alcohol Project (YDAP) were continuing joint working could help tackle some of the issues caused by drug use in young people in the city.

Claire Elwell was in attendance to talk through the refusal pathway for young people who had not attended either an initial or review health assessment. Claire highlighted that best practice was to have a health assessment in person but for over 16s who refused then nurses would try to talk to the young person and offer alternatives and ask whether available information could be shared. Occasionally a young person might refuse to engage in any way and the Care Team would receive a letter to this effect.

Young people could opt back in to health assessments, their right to refuse was acknowledged but the team would continue to give them options to engage with health assessments.

For young people under the age of 16 who had refused health assessments, the team could often gather and share health information through the person with parental responsibility. This could still be overridden by the young person and backed up by the guardian. The flowchart enabled nurses to be secure in what they were doing and the guidelines they were operating under.

Councillor McDonough commented that, in the general population, mental health issues were being impacted by lockdowns and queried if this was being observed in cared for children. Dr Mills stated that cared for children had not presented any differently to other young people, however during the first lockdown CYPS had brought in a new looked after pathway which had transformed things and they had been able to reassure young people that they had the help and support which they needed.

Claire added that this was being touched on in face to face assessments and a number of foster carers had taken more advantage of the school provision this time around.

The Chair asked if oral health was being monitored and Dr Mills said that there was generally a good uptake for dental care, however the impact of Covid had meant that routine check ups had not been offered to some children for almost a year. It was noted that some dentists had been offering appointments so it was a mixed picture.

Having considered the report, it was: -

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

NTW Sunderland Looked After Children Data

The Board received a report from CNTW for the period September to December 2020. Kelly Haslem advised that there had been ten referrals in September, six in October and ten in November. Two young people were discharged unseen during the period, one declined to engage as they did not feel that they required a service and the other was signposted to Paediatrics as it was felt to be an inappropriate mental health referral.

The CYPS Intensive Community Treatment Service (ICTS) offered emergency or urgent contacts and appointments had been made for four young people in September, three in October and three in November. The ICTS would respond within one hour by telephone and would see all urgent cases before referring to CYPS.

Waiting times continued to reduce and the waiting time for treatment in October and November was four weeks. During Covid the service had continued to accept all referrals, complete assessments and interventions and face to face appointments were offered when clinically necessary.

The Pathway for cared for children was a multi-disciplinary team who had been specifically trained to deliver psychological therapies to meet the needs of young people and their carers.

There was a steady caseload within CYPS and children looked after represented around 5.5% of all referrals. There had been no change in referral rates during the pandemic.

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

Annual Report of the Virtual School Headteacher

Linda Mason, Headteacher of the Virtual School submitted a report providing information about cared for children highlighting performance and outcome trends over the last three-year reporting period 2016/2017, 2017/2018 and 2018/2019. Due to the pandemic there was no formal national reporting of performance for 2019/2020.

At the current time there were 633 cared for children in the city and of those who were of school age, 66% were currently attending school and 33% were undertaking remote learning. The highest population of cared for children were in the pre-school cohort. Within the total population, 227 (46%) had an identified SEND, with 140 receiving SEND support in school, and 18% of the total had an EHCP. Of those children, 70% attended a specialist education provision. National data suggested that Sunderland did not have as many cared for children with EHCPs as similar authorities but had a higher figure receiving SEND support and this was something which the Virtual School was working to understand.

Linda Mason advised that she was part of the SEND Panel for EHCP assessments and emphasised the need for early identification of needs. It was apparent that boys were more like to have SEND and this increased towards the end of Key Stage 2. For cared for children, the identified SEND was most likely to be in relation to Social, Emotional and Mental Health; this was not seen as a discrete SEND and would sit alongside other learning disabilities.

Councillor Smith asked what was known about the level of speech and language needs in Sunderland at the current time. Linda explained that there was a significant interrelationship between this and social, emotional and mental health needs and it could be difficult to separate these. This was an area for the Virtual School to scrutinise; schools were good at responding to behaviours but not always what was underpinning them.

The report set out the progress and attainment for the last three years for each of the Key Stages comparing the Virtual School with national cared for children and all Sunderland schools. There was a caveat around all data as cohorts could have very different group dynamics which could have a significant impact on the results. Key Stage 1 had an improving picture with positive narrowing of gaps; Key Stage 2 had some positive trends and narrowing of the gap.

For Key Stage 4, there had been a significant improvement in the number of cared for children obtaining a A* - C or grade 5 – 9 in English and Maths in 2019 and this had improved again in 2020 to 17.4%, although this had not been formally reported due to Covid. Performance had also improved in relation to young people achieving five GCSEs A* - C or grade 4 – 9 to 34.7%.

Attainment 8 was also showing a strong and improving performance when compared to national rates, however Progress 8, measures of progress from Year 6 to Year 11, were all negative. There were a number of factors which may have impacted on this including the period of care and prior attainment before entering care, length of time

being cared for, placement stability and whether young people were placed in Sunderland or outside of the area.

The school attendance of cared for children had been better than the national performance in 2017 and 2018 but dipped below this in 2019. The Virtual School monitored attendance daily through Welfare Call and generally levels were good.

In relation to exclusions, this had shown an improving three-year trend and there had been no permanent exclusions in the period. Linda highlighted that the DfE were changing terminology from exclusion and were reverting to 'suspension' and 'expulsion'.

Cared for children who had been in education, employment and training had been an improving picture but this had dipped in 2019. In 2020, 66% of the cohort were in education, employment or training and 34% were not. There was now a full-time post-16 Co-ordinator in place and a post-16 ePEP. It was ensured that every young person moving from Year 11 to Year 12 had a robust plan in place and if these had stalled, they were quickly picked up.

79% of cared for young people were in good or outstanding schools. The Board had previously been advised that children would not automatically be removed from a school if it was judged to Require Improvement or was Inadequate, there were many factors which would be considered in relation to whether it would be in the young persons best interests to remove them from the school.

Linda stated that 97% of PEPS had been completed in the autumn term and were still in compliance. During this term, Early Years Foundation Stage ePEPs would be rolled out.

Upon consideration of the information, it was: -

21. RESOLVED that the Annual Report of the Virtual School Headteacher be noted.

Regulation 44 Visits – May to October 2020

The Board received a report providing an update on the findings of Regulation 44 visits. Gavin Taylor advised that during the period there had been robust risk assessments and the Regulation 44 visits had been completed in various different ways using new technology and available data with a limited number of direct visits to homes. Since the onset of the pandemic, Ofsted had not carried out any inspections unless there were serious concerns.

It was highlighted that Nook Lodge had now been registered as a three-bed home which would provide targeted and focused work for young people placed there.

Keith Munro explained that all Regulation 44 visits were unannounced visits and there was a themed audit for each month. Colombo Road was currently judged to be 'Outstanding' and the latest visit had found that missing incidents had reduced from

36 to one and critical incidents had also reduced from six to four. Three recommendations from the visits were accepted and implemented within the given timescales.

The Chair noted that there seemed to have been a number of accidents experienced by young people at the home and queried if this was a concern. Keith said that it was not and these were all random incidents; the home had experienced no accidents at all for the rest of the year.

Monument View was rated 'Good' and had also seen a reduction in missing incidents, however there were five critical incidents reported to Ofsted where there had been none in the previous period.

Staff were committed to improving the home and driving it up to Outstanding. Jill Colbert noted that an Ofsted judgment of 'Good' was still very good and it was more important to ensure that things were being done in the right way, rather than chasing Ofsted ratings.

Grasswell House was most recently judged to be 'Good with improved effectiveness'. There had been three recommendations made and there had been an increase in missing episodes in this period from 21 to 25. There had also been an increase in critical incidents, however it was important to note that during the period four young people had moved out and four had moved in who were a younger age group with different care needs reflecting their ages and stages of development.

Councillor Smith referred to one of the critical incidents where a young person had received inappropriate attention on public transport and asked if this was a regular problem. Keith advised that this was a one-off report and he was not aware of any other incidents.

Revelstoke Road home was another rated as 'Good' and there had been five recommendations within the period. The number of missing incidents had increased slightly and there had been ten critical incidents. It was noted that relationships were strong within the home and good progress was being made.

Overall, all of the homes continued to show their commitment to providing the best possible care for vulnerable children and young people. Learning and recommendations were shared with individual homes and managers and staff teams use the recommendations to provide the standards of care which will support young people in achieving their full potential.

Gavin Taylor said that the report was about the lived experience of children but equally important was the passion which the residential staff had and the resilience they had shown during these challenging times.

Having thanked Gavin and Keith for the report it was: -

22. RESOLVED that the Regulation 44 Visits report be noted.

Adoption Annual Report 2019/2020

The Annual Adoption Report for the period April 2019 to March 2020 was submitted to the Board for information.

Councillor Potts referred to the forthcoming partnership with Cumbria and Durham adoption services and asked whether, going forward, joint reports would be produced or if there would continue to be Sunderland only data.

Jill Colbert stated that presentation of performance data and outcomes was a very important part of the work of the adoption agency and although Sunderland was entering into a partnership agreement it would not stop having its own adoption service. Data would continue to be presented on a Sunderland basis but this would be done by the joint Head of Service.

The Chair commended the work of the Chief Executive in achieving a 'hub and spoke' model for the new joint arrangements. It had been of huge importance that Sunderland was able to retain the very good team and personalisation which it currently had rather than having staff transferred out of the service.

23. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Fostering Annual Report 2019/2020

The Annual Fostering Report for the period April 2019 to March 2020 was submitted to the Board for information.

24. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Provisional Work Programme 2020/2021

The Board received a report setting out the proposed work programme for the municipal year and were asked to consider any additional topics for discussion at a future meeting.

The Chair requested that Members advise her of any comments or additions to the work programme.

25. RESOLVED that the work programme be noted and the suggested new items added.

(Signed) L FARTHING
Chair

