

## **Corporate Parenting Board**

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 2 February 2015 in Committee Room 6,  
Civic Centre, Sunderland at 5.30pm**

### **Part I**

#### **Present:**

Councillor P. Smith (in the Chair)  
Councillor Stewart  
Councillor Lawson  
Councillor Emerson  
Councillor MacKnight  
Councillor Williams

#### **Members of the Board**

Silksworth Ward  
Redhill Ward  
Shiney Row Ward  
Ryhope Ward  
Castle Ward  
Washington Central Ward

#### **Young People**

Daniel Bensley  
Kieran Boyce  
Billy Hardy

#### **Also in Attendance**

Councillor Davison  
Councillor Farthing  
Councillor P. Gibson  
Councillor McClennan  
Councillor G. Miller  
Councillor H. Trueman  
Councillor D. Trueman  
Councillor Tye

Redhill Ward  
Washington South Ward  
Silksworth Ward  
Hendon Ward  
Washington South Ward  
Washington West Ward  
Washington West Ward  
Silksworth Ward

#### **All Supporting Officers**

Neil Revely  
Fran Arnold  
Rosemary Pickering  
Lynne Goldsmith  
Lucy Pearson  
Dawn Shearsmith  
Shirley Gounder  
Sharon Willis  
Sue Metcalfe

Executive Director of People Services  
Head of Safeguarding  
Adoption Team  
Senior Safeguarding Manager  
Children's Safeguarding  
Sunderland Virtual School  
Deputy Head of Children's Safeguarding  
Operational Manager for Children's Homes  
Children's Home Manager, Grasswell  
House

## **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillor Shattock.

## **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **Minutes**

18. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 14October 2014 be agreed and signed as a correct record subject to amendments to show that Councillor Stewart's apologies had been submitted to the meeting and to the fourth and fifth paragraphs on page 4 to show that Councillor McClennan should read Councillor MacKnight.

## **The Pledges Launch**

Fran Arnold, Head of Safeguarding, informed Board Members that the Change Council had reviewed their Pledges. Each pledge would be owned by the children in care, who would hold the responsibility of a critical friend.

Fran Arnold requested Board members to consider proposals for each pledge to be allocated a "buddy". Their role would be a strategic driver, to ensure the pledge was delivered. Fran explained that the proposal would involve quarterly meetings, with the Change Council and "buddies" to look at the influence and challenge strategy delivered and a brief end of year joint Corporate Parenting Board and Change Council Meeting to review the pledges

Fran Arnold proposed the following:

- Pledge 1: "I don't want to leave care until I'm ready" - owned by Kieran. The buddy proposed was Sheila Lough, Strategic Service Manager;
- Pledge 2: "I want to get a good education and enjoy my free time" - owned by Michael. The buddy proposed was Dawn Shearsmith, Virtual Head;
- Pledge 3: "I want to keep fit and healthy" - owned by Billy Joe. The buddy proposed was Gillian Gibson, Public Health, or Deanna Lagan, CCG Safeguarding Lead;
- Pledge 4: "I feel that I am being listened to" - owned by Chaniece. The buddy proposed was Paul Jackson, Strategic Service Manager;
- Pledge 5: "If I need to come into care we will make sure that you are safe and appropriately cared for" - owned by Kieran and Michael. The buddy proposed was Jim Stewart, IRO Manager

Pledge 6: “If possible I want to live with my own family or relatives”- owned by Saul. The buddy proposed was Neil Revely, Executive Director, People Service

In response to Councillor MacKnight’s query, Fran Arnold confirmed that future plans would be to roll this forward.

Councillor Williams agreed with the proposed matches but questioned whether councillors should be attached, within their remit of corporate parent. Fran Arnold agreed the option was there to have a council pledge alongside each Change Council pledge.

Fran Arnold informed the Board that the proposals would include an escalation policy. The Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board would be contacted if no progression had been made or if there were barriers to delivery. Councillor Smith acknowledged that future proposals were for a forum to be implemented, to enable councillors to work with young people to ascertain their views.

In response to the Chair’s enquiry, representatives from the Change Council confirmed that they felt the proposals were excellent.

19. RESOLVED that

- (i) the buddy proposals be accepted; and
- (ii) Councillors be contacted to request expressions of interest for links to the young person and buddy proposals.

### **Annual Report of the Virtual Head Teacher for 2013 – 2014**

The Virtual Head Teacher submitted the Annual Report for 2013 - 2014.

Dawn Shearsmith introduced the report and highlighted some of the main points to the Board.

Members were informed that the percentage of Key Stage 4 pupils, who had been looked after continuously for at least 12 months, attaining 5 GCSE at grades A \* - C was 10% above the National Average.

The number of Looked After Children pupil exclusions had reduced slightly from 2012 – 2013 to 2013 – 2014 but the number of days that they had been excluded for had risen.

An Ofsted expectation was Looked After Children would not be placed within a school which was not good or outstanding. At the time of writing the report, 88% of school aged Looked After Children attended good or outstanding schools. Due to the Ofsted expectations there was a dilemma whether to move those Looked After Children in schools below these categories but following discussions this was felt inappropriate.

Within the academic year 2013 – 2014, 68 Looked After Children were placed outside of the area. 61 pupils had attended good or outstanding schools and the remaining seven pupils had been placed within schools before they were judged to require improvement.

At the time of the report there were 24 pupils not in full time education. The pupils were attending alternative provisions, such as the Pupil Referral Unit, on a full or part time basis.

Board Members were informed that Education now held responsibility for young people up to the age of 18 years. There were currently 42 Year 12 pupils within this cohort and at the time of the report only four were not in education, employment or training (NEET). 33 pupils were in employment, education and training and there were three pupils whose activities were unknown but follow up was taking place.

The expected percentage of Looked After Children pupils on Personal Education Plans, throughout 2013 – 2014, was 95% but the actual numbers were below this target. There were a number of reasons for this but the situation had improved and closer links had been established, for example with Social Care.

Following full consultation with concerned parties, including Head Teachers, Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) and social workers, it was agreed that from April 2014 £700 of the allocated £1,900 Pupil Premium would be retained to support additional complementary and alternative provisions, for example temporary additional support in schools.

Board Members were informed the Celebration of Achievement event was held in July 2014. The achievement of those children who had done very well was recognised at the event.

Dawn invited questions and comments from Board Members and attendees.

Councillor Smith acknowledged that it was becoming increasingly challenging to meet the complex needs of older pupils and requested examples of the challenges. Dawn responded and provided a case scenario for Board Members and reported that there were now closer working relationships between Social Care and Education to get children into more stable placements and stable schools. Through the retained pupil funding a staff member had been employed, as a counsellor, to work with individual children who were not working with other professionals.

In response to Councillor H Trueman's enquiry, Dawn confirmed the overall pupil attainment within Sunderland had reduced but the National Average was not known at this stage. Dawn informed Board Members that there was an expectation that Looked After Children pupils were compared against all children.

Councillor McClennan queried the three Year 12 children whose whereabouts were unknown. Dawn reported that the pupils were now engaged within either employment or training. Board Members were informed regular meetings were now

held with Connexions but there was a need to improve communication around services.

Councillor Stewart queried how, within Key Stage 1 and 2, a child's expected level of progress was assessed. Dawn responded that a child's level of progress at the end of reception would dictate the expected level of progress at the end of Key Stage 2 and these expectations would continue to Year 6. Dawn acknowledged that a child's assessed level/grades were not always known and reported that she had liaised with schools to ensure that they received the information.

Members of the Board were informed that the assessment process had changed this academic period and schools no longer needed to assess a child's level of progress. Dawn acknowledged the new categories, Emerging Year 2 and again Emerging in Year 5, provided insufficient detail and reported that a consultant had been engaged to look at the data to try to bring this into line.

Councillor McClennan queried what was offered to the 24 young people currently undertaking vocational courses in light of the current climate, where employers may prefer to employ individuals with an educational background. Dawn reported that work was being undertaken with Leaving Care and Connexions but highlighted that the reason none were currently in employment was because there was an expectation that they would still be receiving some form of education. Dawn agreed that there was a need to ensure these young people secured employment and acknowledged that some would need additional support. In response to Councillor McClennan's query, Dawn confirmed there were active links with employment schemes, for example Connexions.

Councillor Price commended the Celebration of Achievement event, which provided support and recognised achievements. Councillor Price endorsed Councillor McClennan's proposal that the Mayor of Sunderland should be invited to attend future events.

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

### **Fostering Placements/School Moves 2013-2014**

The Executive Director of People Services submitted a School Moves 2013-2014 report outlining the current position as at January 2015

Dawn Shearsmith informed Members of the Board that following a data report the number of school moves for Looked After Children had been questioned. Following analysis of the 2014 data it was ascertained that there were only 16 pupils who had attended two schools, other than those who undertaken natural transitions at key phases. Dawn acknowledged that this number may appear high but explained that there were a variety of reasons for the moves, for example adoption, family preference and behavioural issues.

Councillor Farthing noted that the information had been requested because of concerns about the detrimental effect a number of changes would have on children

who were already experiencing issues within their life. Councillor Farthing commended the commencement of the work which ensured protocols were being used.

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

### **Performance Report Update**

The Head of Safeguarding submitted a Performance Report providing the Board with an updated position on the performance data for Looked After Children in Sunderland.

Fran Arnold brought Board Members attention to the Looked After Children Scorecard and reported that from September 2014 to December 2014, 22 additional children were received into care. The Authority had fully met one of the five National Indicators, two of the National indicators were within the banding “ask questions” and the remaining two were within the banding “investigate”. The National Indicators were:

- NI 62 Stability of placements of looked after children: number of moves – Banding “Very Good”.
- NI63 Stability of placements of looked after children: length of period. Banding “Ask Questions”
- NI66 Looked after children cases which were reviewed within required timescales. Banding “Investigate”.

Fran reported that the percentage of cases reviewed within required timescales was 75.7%, the target was 100%. The target had not been met due to the additional volume of children entering care, capacity issues within the IRO Team and the increase in management oversight and support challenge around practice. Fran acknowledged that there was need to ensure front line colleagues were aware of the need to arrange early reviews.

- NI61 Timeliness of looked after children adopted following an agency decision that the child should be placed. Banding “Ask Questions”.

Board Members were informed that following investigation the average number of days between the decision process and a child being placed in adoption by the Authority was 515 days. This was very positive as the National Average was 628 days but the actual statistical information was not reported in this manner.

- NI147 Care leavers in suitable accommodation. Banding “Investigate”.

Fran reported that work was on-going on this area. One issue encountered was engagement and there was a need to consider how engagement could be undertaken more flexibly. In response to Councillor Smith, Fran explained the engagement issues included professionals not being able to make arranged appointments and appointment arrangements being unsuitable to the care leaver. Fran acknowledged there was a need to be more creative with the methods of

interaction. Lucy Pearson informed Members that figures had differed this year but highlighted that as care leavers got older they often believed they no longer needed to keep in contact with Social Care.

22. RESOLVED that the performance data for quarter 3 be received and noted.

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

At the instance of the Chair, it was:-

23. 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 was 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) P. SMITH  
Chairman

### **Note:-**

The above minutes relate only to items considered during the time which the meeting was open to the public.