

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 1 April 2019 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 C Marshall	Doxford Ward
Councillor P Smith	Silksworth Ward

Young People

Gabby Dunn
Skye McBurnie

Also in Attendance

Councillor L Williams	Washington Central Ward
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All Supporting Officers

Jill Colbert	Chief Executive, TfC
Martin Birch	Director of Social Care, TfC
Linda Mason	Head Teacher, Virtual School
Gavin Taylor	IRO Service, Together for Children
Jane Wheeler	Participation and Complaints Manager, TfC
Dr Sarah Mills	Designated Doctor for Looked After Health
Janet Thomson	Associate Director, NTW
Maurice Davis	Foster Carer
James Harrison	Sunderland Echo
Gillian Kelly	Governance Services

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors O'Brien and Johnston, together with Councillor D MacKnight and Kay Dixon.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes

27. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2019 be agreed as a correct record.

The Chair asked if there had been any progress with regard to the Life Story Co-ordinator role and Martin Birch advised that it was still on the agenda but had not been progressed at this time. Jane Wheeler highlighted that the young people on the Change Council were undertaking some life story training.

Change Council Update

Gabby Dunn presented the report of the Change Council and advised that the council had now agreed to run two separate groups based on age, one to cover 10-15 years and the other for 16 and over. The groups would then be able to focus on issues which they felt were relevant to them and other young people their age. Change Council 10-15 years would focus on issues around being a child looked after and 16+ would focus on issues such as becoming a care leaver and staying put.

The Change Council had named the family time centre 'The Bramble Centre' and the signage for the facility was to be created by young people. The council would be working on ideas to support the centre to raise donations and funds for equipment to make the family time experience better for all.

The Board were advised that the Change Council were focusing on how life story work could be improved for children and young people and some of the group were planning to support the delivery of a workshop to Together for Children staff along with the Next Steps Team Manager. Young people had been looking at the pledges made at the Regional Children in Care Conference and would be contacting professionals to see what progress had been in implementing their pledges.

The Change Council had the opportunity to review an app for care leavers which would hold information and advice on the local offer. Young people had looked at an app that already existed but felt that a 'virtual world' would be more inclusive and preferable for young people so they could access advice and guidance on the local offer, information around health, housing and finance in a relatable and engaging way. This had been discussed in Change Council meeting with the Sunderland City Council Chief Executive, Jill Colbert and Martin Birch. The Chief Executive had suggested that the Change Council should pull some ideas together and a meeting had been held with David Dunn at the Software Centre to progress this.

Jane Wheeler advised that a specification was being developed now and children and young people would be very much involved in the process.

The Board were informed that Saul Cranson had recently started in his role as Regional Children in Care Young Ambassador for Sunderland and Durham. Saul would be working to support and represent young people in both areas and was attending all regional meetings.

IRO Service Managers Gavin Taylor and Kim Roberts had attended both the 10-15 and 16+ Change Council groups to talk to the groups about the best way to introduce their IRO and what they would like to know about them. The Change Council made some suggestions for information which could be given to children and young people before they met their IRO and how best to access this.

The Chair noted that there had been some discussion about providing photographs of IROs before they met young people but it had been felt that there were pros and cons about this approach.

Councillor Davison asked about the intention raise funds for the Bramble Centre and Gabby said that this would be for equipment for the centre. A lot of items had already been donated but young people ideally wanted equipment which would be appropriate for all ages.

Councillor Davison suggested approaching the area committees for funding, however this had been ruled out as it was a citywide facility. The Chair commented that she had raised this matter with officers as it was difficult for organisations which served the whole city to access funding due to the area structure. Board Members would support any efforts to raise funds for the Bramble Centre.

28. RESOLVED that the Change Council update be noted.

Commitments Review

The Board were advised that the Change Council had identified the first two commitment themes which they would be focusing on and would carry out the following actions from March to June 2019 to gather as much evidence as possible: -

- Surveys with young people and staff members
- Interviews with young people and staff members
- Interviews with commissioned providers such as National Youth Advocacy Services (NYAS)
- Collection of communication information relevant to the two themes
- Review of tools used to gather children and young people's voice

The 16+ group would focus on Commitment 3, 'We will make sure that your voice is heard and listened to' and the 10-15 group would be looking at Commitment 2, 'If you need to come into care we will make sure that you are safe and properly cared for'.

Jane Wheeler advised that the work had started on these and a report would be brought back to the Corporate Parenting Board on each Commitment in due course.

29. RESOLVED that the Commitments Review 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.

There had been an average of 600 children looked after in this quarter which was a slight reduction on the previous quarter. At the present moment, compliance with Initial Health Assessments (IHA) being carried out within 20 working days of a child being looked after was 100% for the first quarter ever.

Compliance with Review Health Assessments (RHA) was 98%, however this had been 100% in January and March. Two young people had refused to attend, one had since been seen and the looked after nurses would attempt to engage with the remaining young person in the coming months.

Children who were placed outside of the North East were seen by their local looked after health teams and the Sunderland team had been doing an audit of the out of area health assessments and looking at timeliness and quality of these. There had been 14 out of area health assessments required in quarter 4 and compliance with the target time was 71%. There were big issues around capacity in the South of the country and the Board were advised that out of area review health assessments were requested three months in advance. Two of the teams could not accommodate the assessment in time and one young person did not attend the two appointments offered, however they now had an appointment booked in April.

Issuing of health passports stood at 100% for quarter 4 and it was noted that in the 2019 work plan, the Health passport would be revised in line with improved joint working between the next steps and looked after health teams. It was highlighted that services would be aligned across geographical areas to reflect the merger between City Hospitals and South Tyneside Hospital Trusts.

A leaflet for young people explaining health assessments was being developed in conjunction with the Change Council and was awaiting sign off. Data collection for health outcomes had been established and some early information was coming through regarding the health needs of children looked after.

Jill Colbert referred to out of area health assessments and noted that nearly one third of children placed outside the area were not having assessments conducted in a timely manner and queried if the health team was satisfied that enough was being done.

Dr Mills advised that on most occasions notifications and consent was delaying the process and it was hoped that the improved system for this would have an impact and had already changed since the audit had been carried out. When children had been moving frequently it had could be difficult to follow them around the country. It was highlighted that the themes from the out of area health assessments were the

same as those carried out in area and it was reassuring to know that concerns were not being discounted because a young person was from out of the area.

Having considered the report, it was: -

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

NTW Sunderland Looked After Children Data

The Board received a report from NTW for the period December to February 2019. There had been a slight increase in referrals in the period; six young people had been discharged unseen out of 16 in December for a variety of reasons and in January five out of 15 were discharged unseen. It was highlighted that a refusal to engage could be an issue for older young people and in February two from ten referrals were discharged unseen. There had been one urgent referral in both December and January and none in February.

The Board were advised that the Trust was undertaking a range of initiatives to support the reduction of waiting times within community services and were looking at the pathway for children looked after, specifically in CYPS. There was a lot of work to be undertaken in relation to engagement, scaffolding and support and a service was still offered to residential homes and for foster carer training.

The Chair commented that it was useful to have the background for some of the cases and noted that one mentioned a lack of consent and when a young person did not attend she queried if that young person had consented or understood the process. Janet Thomson advised that there had been a change in practice over the last six months and specialist looked after clinicians would look at referrals to see what was going on in each individual case.

Jill Colbert stated that TfC would be engaging with work on the pathway and felt that having a range of models was the answer. It was important that the young people should be referred with good quality information and with their consent.

The total CYPS caseload as of February 2019 was 2,332 of which 121 were children looked after, representing 5.2% of the total.

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

Virtual School Update Report

Linda Mason, Headteacher of the Virtual School provided a verbal report to the Board and in doing so advised that PEP compliance currently stood at 95% and thanked the data technician for enabling this. A failsafe two week warning notice had been developed to increase compliance.

School attendance was still around 92% but was being maintained and it was hoped to bring something back to the Board on this.

The Virtual School was working with designated teachers in schools and had held five training sessions which had been attended by between 75 and 80% of teachers. There was some new statutory guidance for designated teachers and the Virtual School and an extended role for previously looked after children. The guidance set out a clear definition and that it was good practice for adopted children to have education plans.

A session had also been carried out on the role of the Governing Body and provided some suggested questions that Governors should be asking. A key aspect of the Governor role was to test out that outcomes, policies and procedures for children looked after were appropriate.

Teachers were keen to move to an ePEP system and it was hoped to have this in place for September. There would be designated training for teachers and step training for social workers on ePEPs. The Virtual School had also provided an example of a Pupil Premium Policy for schools to use and a model children looked after policy which had been developed nationally and could be adopted by schools.

There was a raft of draft documentation available from the Virtual School including a school self-evaluation document to assess how effective the school was in supporting children looked after and also advice on avoiding exclusions. With regard to SEN processes there was also an ambition for primary schools to request EHCPs as soon as they had concerns.

It was hoped to develop joint training to look at the expectations from schools and also IROs, carers and adoptive parents. A reference group of designated teachers and social workers had been pulled together.

In terms of technology, the Virtual School worked closely with performance and data teams and would be looking at using Capita 1 going forward and fine tuning Liquid Logic. Additional funding would be provided for Years 5 and 6 and Years 10 and 11 to help with preparation for SATs and exams. The Board were invited to make suggestions for what they would like to receive in future update reports.

Councillor Smith asked what was the biggest issue for the Virtual School at the moment and Linda stated that it was ensuring that they had accurate data and good quality PEPs which spend could be matched with. It was also important to get a robust training programme for colleagues in place and to have the website up and running.

It was queried if the additional funding for young people about sit SATs or exams would also apply to the sixth form and Linda said that this was a possibility. She added that she would like to explore how she could utilise some of the Virtual School funding for years 12 and 13.

Councillor Smith said that she would be interested to hear more about how young people were doing and what were the barriers if they were not progressing. Linda suggested that it might be useful to produce some anonymised case studies when the data for the year was available.

Maurice Davis asked if links with young people were lost once they were no longer classed as being in care and were in staying put or independent arrangements. Jill Colbert advised that once young people became 'corporate adults' then information could only be provided on the basis of consent but it was necessary to think about how corporate parenting could continue post-18.

Martin Birch highlighted that young people had a personal advisor until they were 18 and it was suggested that some examples could be brought forward showing where that had worked well.

Having thanked Linda for her update, it was: -

32. RESOLVED that the information be noted.

Provisional Work Programme 2019/2020

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

The Chair suggested that the Commitments Review should be a standing item for every meeting and an update on Foster Care Recruitment should come in March 2020 as well as October 2019.

Jill Colbert proposed that updates on the Regional Adoption Agency be brought to the meetings in July and October. In addition, it was suggested that items on the regional position with regard to pocket money, sufficiency planning and case studies for pathway planning and personal advisers should be added to the work programme.

33. RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

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

At the instance of the Chair it was: -

34. 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 exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) (Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A, Part 1, Paragraph 3). The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2019, Part II, be agreed as a correct record.

(Signed) L FARTHING
Chair