

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 2 July 2018 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
Councillor S Watson	St Anne's Ward

Also in Attendance

Councillor M Beck	Fulwell Ward
Councillor P Gibson	Silksworth Ward
Councillor D MacKnight	Castle Ward
Councillor B McClennan	Hendon Ward
Councillor A Lawson	Shiney Row Ward
Councillor L Williams	Washington Central Ward
Councillor K Wood	St Anne's Ward

All Supporting Officers

Simon Marshall	Director of Education, TfC
Margaret Clouston	Head of Commissioning and Quality Assurance (South), NTW
Kelly Haslem	CYPS, NTW
Deanna Lagun	Head of Safeguarding, Sunderland CCG
Annette Parr	Support and Intervention Officer, TfC
Gavin Taylor	IRO Service, Together for Children
Jane Wheeler	Participation and Complaints Manager, TfC
Sheila Lough	Service Manager, TfC
Liz McEvoy	People Services
Gillian Kelly	Governance Services

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Francis and Johnston, together with Maurice Davis, Dr Sarah Mills, Janet Thomson and Trish Stoker.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 16 April 2018 be agreed as a correct record.

The Chair requested that, with the agreement of the Board, an additional item be added to the agenda on 'Education for Children Looked After'.

Change Council Update

Jane Wheeler presented the update from the Change Council and advised that the group had recently had their annual Away Day at Moor House Adventure Centre to review the work plan for the year and also to have fun. Simon Marshall and Sue Carty had also attended the day, which was greatly appreciated by the children and young people.

The Children Looked After Nurse was invited to one of the sessions and this had led to the development of a Healthcare Action Plan. The group spend time discussing the Children Looked After celebration and Awards Evening which would take place on Friday 14 December, with the young people wanting to plan the event to mirror the success of last year's evening.

The Regional Children in Care Conference was discussed at the Away Day. This was scheduled to take place on Friday 2 November and tickets were already available at a cost of £80. The focus of the conference was to be 'entitlements' and 'family visits'. The Chair commented that the conference was a very interesting event and encouraged elected Members to attend.

The Local Offer was now complete and available in hard copy or on the Together for Children website. The Change Council would also be discussing their action plan in relation to 'Commitments' at their next meeting and would report back to the Board.

2. 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.

During the report period there was an average of 607 children looked after in Sunderland and 46 were recorded as being placed outside the North East. Deanna Lagun was in attendance to present the report and advised that a correction was required in relation to the Quarter 1 compliance for Initial Health Assessments. The

number completed was in fact 66 rather than 55 and this represented a compliance figure of 91%. Four of the IHAs which had not been carried out within the 20 working days timescale were due to the assessments being required from services outside of the North East. There was now a pathway in place to address this issue however the capacity of the receiving authority was not always known.

The number of Review Health Assessments (RHAs) carried out in Quarter 1 was 144, rather than 98 as stated in the printed report. The compliance stood at 95% which was back to the previous level achieved prior to the disruption caused by the introduction of Liquid Logic. 100% of the required Health Passports had been issued.

The Board were reminded that the post of the Designated LAC Nurse was currently vacant but this had been advertised and interviews were taking place later in the week. The Named Nurse LAC was on sick leave and the Children and Young People's Nurse was acting up during this period.

Dr Sarah Mills had now taken over the role of Designated Doctor for LAC from Dr Kim Barrett and was responsible for the Looked After service as well as sharing the role of Medical Advisor to the Adoption Panel with Dr Sian Firth.

Dr Mills, Dr Firth and the CCG Safeguarding Nurse had attended a meeting about Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children on 14 June to hear more about meeting the needs of this particularly vulnerable and complex group. This may become more of an issue in Sunderland.

The Looked After admin team were collecting information about health outcomes from each health assessment and it was hoped to present data about emerging health issues to the Board in the future.

Councillor Lawson asked about the current situation with unaccompanied children and Sheila Lough advised that one was in a care home, two were in supported accommodation and one had been placed in London due to a cultural match.

The Chair highlighted that recent statistics from Public Health had shown that levels of immunisation had fallen in the looked after population. Deanna commented that there had been an issue around data quality and there was some work being done to ensure that information was quality checked before submission as it was not felt that this was a correct reflection of the position.

The Board were also provided with a report for information on Demand and Capacity in relation to the Looked After Health Team between June 2017 and May 2018.

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

Education of Children Looked After

It had been suggested that the Board receive a regular report on the education of Children Looked After and Annette Parr proposed that the termly Governing Body report for the Virtual School be brought to the Board in future. The report covered

matters such as staffing, premises, governance, GDPR, reviews of effectiveness, PEPs and attendance. Annette asked for suggestions from Board Members about what they would like to see in the report.

The Chair suggested that information about PEPs would be useful as the Virtual School had been looking at compliance and was now focusing on quality. Annette said that some examples of good and not so good PEPs could be brought to the Board and added that all Headteachers were receiving letters about this.

The Chair noted that numbers of school moves had also been a concern and that this should be included in the report. The current Governing Board report would be circulated to all Corporate Parents for feedback.

Simon Marshall reported that individuals were still being recruited to the Board of Governors for the Virtual School and asked if Members had any suggestions for potential Governors to forward them to him. The Governing Body was particularly looking for people with skills in finance, bid writing, fundraising and with business links.

4. RESOLVED that the proposal be noted.

NTW Sunderland Looked After Children Data

The Board received a report presenting the data for looked after children currently accessing services from CYPS.

The overview of referrals received between March and May showed a total of 30 referrals with five not being accepted during the period. The reasons for referrals not being accepted were set out and these included there not being enough information within the referral or the service user not being ready to engage with treatment. The team was in discussion with the CCG about the service specification and how carers could be supported at a time when the young person was not engaging with CYPS.

In relation to sources of referral, the majority were from social services and there were no new trends identified. The CCG had requested that Children Looked After be seen as a priority and this had to be worked through as it had an impact on the rest of the team.

There had been 20 discharges between March and May, two children were discharged unseen and two had been discharged after assessment. The full reasons for the discharges were set out within the report. There was a slight improvement in relation to waiting lists and a service review was currently being undertaken to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the current service model and how this could be improved. In terms of the current caseload for CYPS, in May 2018 5% of the total in Sunderland was Children Looked After, this was 117 out of a total of 2,216.

Councillor Davison noted that there were a number of young people who had been waiting more than 30 weeks and asked if there was a maximum wait time. Margaret

Clouston said that this information would be included within the next report and Deanna Lagun advised that as part of the work with the Sunderland Safeguarding Board there had been exercises on 'Turning the Curve' looking at demand across the partnership.

It was noted that some of the acronyms being used in the report were confusing and it was clarified that 'ICTS' referred to Intensive Community Treatment Service.

Councillor Davison also commented that age 6 – 13 years was a broad age range and there could be significant differences between children in that group. Margaret stated that these were the national age bands which were used for reporting but thought that this could potentially be broken down further.

5. RESOLVED that the information be noted.

Housing Offer

The Senior Housing Manager, People Services submitted a report detailing the Council's housing offer.

Liz McEvoy was in attendance to present the report and advised that the Council had recently approved a Housing Strategy for Sunderland 2017-2022 and one of the main priorities of the strategy was supporting vulnerable people to access and maintain housing. Within this priority there was a key action to develop a joint protocol between Together for Children and Housing Services to ensure that homeless young people and those leaving care were supported to find suitable accommodation.

The duty to provide accommodation for young people fell under the Children Act 1989 and the Housing Act 1996 and from April 2018, the Council had a duty to prevent homelessness under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2018.

Young people who were within 56 days of their eighteenth birthday would be referred to Housing Services in line with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2018 (HRA). A Personalised Housing Plan (PHP) would then be drawn up with the young person which would outline their housing needs and any support they required.

The Board were advised that the Government's Homeless Advice Service Team (HAST) was visiting the Council later in the month to meet with officers from Housing and Together for Children and young people. The purpose of the visit was to give advice and make recommendations in the context of the Homelessness Reduction Act, current practice and any Ofsted recommendations.

The next steps to progress the key action were set out as follows: -

- Robust data is gathered on future housing and support needs of young people and care leavers by March 2019;
- Recommendations made by HAST are considered and implemented;

- Recommendations made by OFSTED in relation to the housing needs of homeless young people and care leavers are considered and implemented;
- Together for Children and Housing Services draw up a written joint protocol which sets clear and practical arrangements to prevent youth homelessness and to ensure 16 or 17 year olds have accommodation which meets their needs. This will be based on the recommendations above and in the light of Government guidance with a target date for completion being March 2019;
- A Homelessness Strategy is developed which addresses the needs of homeless young people and care leavers by September 2019; and
- The Council's Housing Allocation Scheme is revised in the light of the HRA and the needs of care leavers are reflected in the revised Scheme which has a target date for publication of January 2019.

Councillor Wood asked who would be responsible for supporting young people in their property and Liz stated that the PHP would link to support agencies and a young person would have a case worker to offer advice on the tenancy.

Councillor Gibson queried if there were any specialist young people's units in the city and Liz advised that these were commissioned with the YMCA. Nacro Homes Agency, good private landlords, Gentoo and other social landlords were also used to provide accommodation.

Councillor McClennan asked if there was enough suitable housing stock for care leavers and also, what emphasis was being placed on educating young people on how to be good tenants and neighbours. Liz commented that there was enough bricks and mortar but the main issue was whether this was where young people wanted to live. The suitability of accommodation and the support packages offered to young people needed to be monitored and the team was about to recruit a Tenancy Support Officer to look at this.

Councillor Lawson commented that a number of elected Members had raised the location of accommodation for young people over the years and there had been a view that the housing was more convenient for social workers than young people. Liz said that choice of location would be monitored and reported back at the next update.

Councillor Davison said that she would like assurances that the young people were adequately supported and Liz highlighted that Together for Children placed young people in commissioned properties and there was a wide range of accommodation available from age 18.

Councillor McClennan recognised that support packages were costly and queried if there had been any research showing that funds could be used to make property more suitable of the needs of young people so that less support was needed. Councillor Wood said that she was aware of a property developer doing something in the city which was tailor made for young people and Liz confirmed that the developer was applying to become a registered social landlord.

The Chair noted that supported accommodation was expensive and when young people began earning money, they were no longer able to access that provision. If

they were in receipt of housing benefit then they had to live in shared accommodation and this was a big issue.

Having thanked Liz for her report, it was: -

6. RESOLVED that: -

- (i) the update on the Housing Offer for young people and the new duty of prevention through the HRA be noted; and
- (ii) a further report be received by April 2019 on the joint written protocol and the Homelessness Strategy in relation to young people.

Annual Adoption Report

The Board received the Together for Children Adoption Report for 2017/2018 which had been prepared by the Lead Manager for Fostering and Adoption. The Voluntary Adoption Agency had now been in operation since 1 April 2017 and the main priorities of Together for Children Adoption Sunderland were: -

- To achieve the placement of children in care for whom adoption is the Care Plan, with appropriate approved adopters, matched according to the children's specific needs and circumstances and within appropriate timescales.
- To recruit, prepare and assess adoptive applicants who are likely to be able to meet the placement needs of the children waiting for families both locally and nationally.
- To provide post placement and post Order support to adoptive families.
- Birth Record Counselling for adopted adults.
- Birth Family Support for families whose children are adopted.

The sector was highly regulated and a very skilled workforce was required, particularly to recruit adopters for hard to place children. The agency provided a range of services and commissioned birth family support services from Arc Adoption.

The report set out the staffing levels for the team and that the agency had a Statement of Purpose and Recruitment Plan which were reviewed on an annual basis. Together for Children Adoption Sunderland was moving forward with plans to become a Regional Adoption Agency with Cumbria County Council and Durham County Council. It was envisaged that Regional Adoption Agencies would speed up matching, improve adopter recruitment and encourage specialisation.

There had been a steady improvement in the timeliness of each of the stages on a child's journey to adoption and adopters' assessments had also been completed within a timely fashion. It was highlighted that Together for Children Adoption Sunderland had an enhanced support offer for adopters and had successfully claimed £150,000 from the Adoption Support Fund which benefitted 63 families.

The agency outsourced services in relation to Inter-country adoption and birth family support and continued to receive a number of enquiries from step-parents regarding in-family adoption.

Together for Children had recently received its OFSTED inspection and the Adoption Agency would get a grading from this inspection, with verbal feedback having been positive, and would also receive an individual inspection relating solely to the adoption services which it was registered to provide.

The challenges and priorities for the year ahead were: -

- To continue to support the development of a Regional Adoption Agency (in line with Government expectations) ensuring that Together for Children Adoption Sunderland takes a key role in contributing to the design of the new service and the development of future practice in all areas.
- To support Together for Children with their forthcoming OFSTED Inspection with the intention of achieving a rating of 'Good' for the company's adoption services.
- To continue to improve the excellent record of the service regarding timeliness.
- To continue to seek feedback from the adopters with whom we work regarding all aspects of the service and to establish a 'survey monkey' to enable adopters to anonymously provide their views.
- To establish a 'survey monkey' for children who have been adopted and to use the information received to help to shape the service.
- To embed the feedback process from birth family members who use services from ARC Adoption, where they are spoken to directly and their verbal feedback is recorded and used to shape future provision.
- To continue to enhance therapeutic work that is provided to children pre and post adoption order and to continue to develop the engagement group recently established.

The landscape of adoption would continue to change both nationally and locally as the Government's Regionalisation of Adoption agenda was driven forward and Together for Children Adoption Sunderland aimed to continue to be at the forefront of good adoption practice.

Councillor McClennan asked if the Adoption Support Fund had to be used more because CAMHS had been slow to respond to requests for services. Sheila Lough stated that sometimes the counselling required was very specialised and the Adoption Support Fund had been introduced because there had not always been ready access for therapeutic provision.

Deanna Lagun asked if there was an issue with recruitment for the Adoption Team and also what learning was undertaken when placements broke down. Sheila advised that all of the staff were permanent within the team. Breakdowns were quite unique and a disruption meeting would be held to discuss what had led to the breakdown and an annual report was produced.

7. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Annual Fostering Report

The Board received the first Fostering Service Monitoring Form which had been completed since Together for Children Fostering Sunderland became an Independent Fostering Agency (IFA).

Sheila Lough stated that the IFA was unique in having responsibility for foster carers, connected carers and the children themselves. The report set out the summary data for foster carers and it was highlighted that the service had looked closely at improving training for foster carers alongside specific training for First Aid and administering medicines. Supervision arrangements were in place for all foster carers and there was good communication between professional and carers.

All complaints and compliments were recorded and the IFA worked closely with the LADO and would refer concerns to them. Work had been undertaken to increase engagement with foster carers and a number of Foster Carers were nominated for Together for Children Spotlight Awards. An online survey had been rolled out to Foster Carers and the results of this were being evaluated.

A report had been prepared on Foster Carer fees and presented to the Directors of Together for Children the previous week. This would now be taken to the Board and it was hoped to have a positive outcome and agreement to the new fees structure.

The two Fostering Panels were very busy and were considering a large number of applications to be connected carers at the present time. This pattern may change once the issues around fees were resolved.

Councillor McClennan asked about the 'Solihull Parenting Programme' which was referenced in the report. Sheila advised that this was a programme aimed at upskilling staff in therapeutic input for children and carers. There were currently a number of children under ten who were displaying challenging behaviour and efforts needed to be made to understand what this was about.

Councillor McClennan also noted the courses which were offered to carers and queried whether there was the potential to have an accredited qualification for carers. She also asked if the training provided by the IFA could be marketed to other organisations. Sheila stated that some training had been done with Northumberland County Council on 'Fostering to Adopt'.

Councillor Williams drew attention to the finding of the Lead Manager for Fostering and Adoption that there were a high number of inappropriate schedule 7 notifications being submitted to Ofsted. Sheila explained that when the service became an IFA there were new regulations and requirements to comply with and a cautious approach was taken initially. Notifications had increased for a time until staff began to better understand how IFAs worked. It was confirmed that the current levels of notifications were correct.

Councillor Davison commented on the allegations of suspicions of abuse or neglect and that 10 out of 37 of these had been substantiated. She asked what period this covered and how this had been picked up. Gavin Taylor stated that these had been

notifications to what was the LADO (Designated Officer) and it was common to receive a large number of these allegations. There was a clear definition within the Designated Officer functions in relation to allegations and the outcomes. Sheila noted that some allegations required a formal meeting, then possibly a formal investigation and referral to the Police.

8. RESOLVED that the Fostering Monitoring Form be noted.

Reg 44 Visits

The Board received a report providing an update on the findings in relation to the monthly unannounced visits undertaken between December 2017 and April 2018 to each of the Together for Children Sunderland Children's Homes in accordance with Regulation 44 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2015.

It was a statutory obligation for monthly Regulation 44 visits to be made to all five of the Sunderland's Children's Homes by an 'independent person'. Within Together for Children there were two Foster Care Review/Reg 44 Officers who took responsibility for conducting the visits to children's homes, however one of the officers had left their post in January and had been replaced in May 2018.

Gavin Taylor guided Board Members through the report highlighting the current Ofsted ratings for each home and the outcomes of the Regulation 44 visits. Colombo Road had been found to have sustained effectiveness and young people had been encouraged to give their views, as had parents. It was noted that the service was fostering safe and healthy relationships with parents and families. One recommendation had been made for the home within the period.

Monument View was also judged to have sustained effectiveness and each of the six residents was attending education or training provision. There was a reduction in missing incidents from the home and the views of young people and parents were taken into account. There were no recommendations in this period.

Grasswell House currently had four young people in the home but had six residents at the time of the inspection. The home had previously been judged to be inadequate by Ofsted in November 2017 but to have shown some improvement in January 2018. The Reg 44 visit found that young people and parents were consulted and nine recommendations had been made with regard to the update of risk assessments, individual crisis management plans and case files and consultation with young people. There was a culture of learning from events at the home.

There had been five young people resident in Revelstoke Road at the time of the visit and the home had been found to have improved effectiveness. One of the young people was not attending school regularly and staff at the home were working with him to improve his attendance.

Councillor Gibson expressed concern that there were 24 missing incidents for over 24 hours. Gavin explained that this represented one child who had been missing 24

times. The reasons for this type of incident often related to a specific event and staff had to develop appropriate strategies to deal with this.

Councillor Smith highlighted the recommendation with regard to staff supervision at Revelstoke Road and young people who were not in education. Gavin advised that the Reg 44 Officer had found that evidence of staff supervision was not in place and that had led to a recommendation which would be reviewed at the next visit. The Reg 44 visit provided a snapshot of the day and it was possible that the supervision had not been written up.

The next Reg 44 visit would look at the strategies which had been put in place to address the issue of young people not being in education. Contact had been made with the Virtual School and that would be driven forward. From the point of view of the Reg 44 Officer, this would be a continuing recommendation.

Simon Marshall said that there were only very small numbers of Children Looked After who would not engage with education and the Virtual School had been very creative in identifying young people's interests and trying to tailor education around that.

Councillor Wood asked what percentage of young people were in alternative education and Simon said that he could provide that information as list of each individual child and their educational provision had been required by Ofsted.

Councillor Davison asked what the 'improved effectiveness' judgement meant for Revelstoke Road and Gavin noted that the starting point was different to other homes. Revelstoke had been found to have an improved effectiveness on a judgement of 'good' for the overall experience and progress of children and young people. Ofsted had visited the home the previous week and found all three areas of judgement to be 'good'.

Sea View Road was a short break residential care home with a maximum of four young people in the setting. There were some good comments from parents in relation to the care at the home and there had been nine recommendations made. The service was shortly to move out of Together for Children and the new provider would take responsibility for monitoring the home.

The Chair raised the issue of elected Member involvement in Reg 44 visits and it had been suggested that a Member could have a link to a particular home. It was proposed that councillors be asked if they were interested in becoming a 'friend' of a home. The individual would become known to the home and would need a DBS check and to undertake Reg 44 training. This information would be circulated to all Members.

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

Corporate Parenting Board Training

Gavin Taylor asked the Board Members to consider what the Independent Reviewing Service might be able to offer in terms of training. He referred to the 'Change Game' training which explored the experiences of children and young people in care and had been found to be useful by Members in the past.

The IRO service would also offer training on Reg 44 and elective visits and also develop some procedures around visits. It was hoped to provide an overview of the statutory role of the IRO service and it was noted that there was potential to do this at a short session prior to a Corporate Parenting Board meeting.

A training session on the Change Game had been provisionally scheduled for Monday 24 September at 4.30pm and Reg 44 Visit Training would take place on Monday 10 September at 5.00pm.

10. RESOLVED that the information be noted.

Work Programme 2018/2019

The proposed work programme for the municipal year 2018/2019 was presented to the Board.

Suggestion for agenda items which had been made during the course of the meeting were noted and would be added to the work programme.

11. RESOLVED that the Work Programme 2018/2019 be noted.

(Signed) L FARTHING
Chair