

## **CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**

**Minutes of the Meeting held remotely via MS Teams on Monday 19 April 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 McKeith	St Peter's Ward
Councillor P Smith	Silksworth Ward

#### **All Supporting Officers**

Councillor C Rowntree	Deputy Cabinet Member, Children, Learning and Skills
Jill Colbert	Chief Executive, TfC
Linda Mason	Headteacher, Virtual School
Nikki Donaldson	Participation and Engagement Officer
Jess	Change Council
Elishia	Change Council
Dr Sarah Mills	Designated Doctor for Looked After Health
Jo Morgan	Designated Nurse Looked After Children
Kelly Haslem	CYPS, Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear Foundation Trust
Suzanne Miller	
Gillian Kelly	Governance Services

#### **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Heron, Marshall, McDonough and Potts.

#### **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **Minutes**

26. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2021 be agreed as a correct record.

## **Change Council Update**

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

The Change Council had continued to meet face to face fortnightly in a Covid secure venue and senior managers had been regular visitors at Change Council to ensure that they were listening and responding to what young people were saying.

Four young people had expressed an interest in being part of the Independent Review of Children's Social Care and Rhiannon had been successful and was now part of the national EbE Board.

Members of the Change Council had taken part in International Women's Week and had recognised what social care professionals had meant to them as part of Social Work Week. National Care Day 2021 had been supported virtually through creative activities including baking, drawing and quotes.

Change Council had met virtually with the Regional Children in Care Council and young people across the region had identified six themes as follows: -

- Reduced or free Council Tax for all care experienced young people no matter which area they lived in
- More apprenticeships for care experienced young people and work training opportunities
- Reduced travel costs
- More work done around isolation and trusted key adults for care experienced children and young people
- Children and young people designed and delivered training for front line staff both in and out of councils
- More changes in the language used within the care system.

Researchers had met with members of the Change Council and young people from across the region to understand what had happened during the pandemic for Children in Care councils and the Change Council had delivered a presentation to Ofsted as part of a focused visit in March 2021.

Going forward, the Change Council had identified a number of activities including the launch of the cookbook, the Change the Language campaign, the Takeover Challenge, recruiting a wider representation of young people and looking at the isolation of care experienced young people.

The Chair congratulated Rhiannon on her appointment to the EbE Board and asked if Sunderland's Change Council had expressed a view on what was the most

important theme which had been identified regionally and it was noted that the Change Council had not discussed this yet.

The Chair thanked Jess and Elishia for presenting the report and suggested that they forward her the link for the cookbook and she would forward this to all Councillors.

27. RESOLVED that the Change Council update be noted.

## **Health of Cared for Children**

The Designated Nurse 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

The data being presented was for Quarter 3, October, November and December 2020 and the Board were advised that following the implementation of further restrictions in December 2020, assessments had returned to being by carried out virtually or by telephone. It was planned to reintroduce face to face appointments during April 2021.

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.

61 Initial Health Assessments (IHAs) had been carried out and there had been 95% 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.

126 Review Health Assessments had been carried out in the quarter and this was 98% compliance with timescales. Of these, 19 appointments had been missed but the majority were re-booked within timescale. One child was out of time and six young people had refused their health assessments and the refusal pathway was followed in these cases.

The compliance for out of area RHAs was 92%. It was noted that there were 37 children placed outside of the North East and the CCG assured all of the out of area health assessments for quality. An audit was currently being completed to provide assurance that cared for young people placed outside of Sunderland were receiving timely, quality health assessments and that unmet needs identified on health action plans were met within timeframes. 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.

18 Health passports had been issued during the quarter which represented 100% compliance. The Signs of Safety scaling system was being embedded into the health assessments to align with the Together for Children Signs of Safety model.

Health Profile Data continued to be collected at each health assessment and this would be used to improve services for cared for young people. A project around obesity had been completed and a leaflet about abnormal eating behaviours in cared for children was being produced to support carers in managing weight gain when children come into care.

The Chair commented that she would be interested to see the re-audit of the outcomes for Asthma and Epilepsy care in 2022 and said that anecdotally she had heard about cared for children having issues with eating disorders and thanked Jo for raising it.

Jill Colbert asked if there was now routine access for oral health for cared for children and Dr Mills stated that this was variable according to the dentist but carers were being encouraged by the looked after health team to register with a dental surgery and to make appointments.

Having considered the report, it was: -

28. 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 December 2020 to February 2021. Kelly Haslem advised that there had been seven referrals in December, ten in January and 13 in February. Five young people were discharged unseen during the period as they were deemed to be inappropriate referrals, another was declined as the young person was undergoing care proceedings and one young person requested that the referral was retracted as they did not wish to engage with CYPS.

The CYPS Intensive Community Treatment Service (ICTS) now sat within the Universal Crisis Team and offered a 24/7 service, 365 days a year. The ICTS would respond within one hour by telephone and would see all urgent cases before referring to CYPS. There had been no emergency appointments required during the period but there had been five urgent referrals.

Waiting times were still within the target with the wait to treatment in February being five 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 now well established and focused on two areas; direct therapeutic work with the young people and non-direct work with foster carers and staff working in residential homes. Young people were offered priority appointments with CYPS and would access treatment within six weeks.

The CYPS caseload had increased slightly and children looked after represented around 6.1% of all referrals. The team had recently appointed a Principal Psychologist which was a specific post working with TfC to support foster carers.

The Chair commented that it could be disorientating for a young person if their therapist changed whilst they were receiving treatment and she emphasised the need for consistency for young people.

Councillor Smith asked how the team felt about the caseload and was it at an expected level. Kelly Haslem said that it had been stable for quite a long time and she did not feel that there were any changes of concern.

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

### **Virtual School – Headteacher's Report**

Linda Mason, Headteacher of the Virtual School submitted a report providing information about cared for children since the last report to the Board in January 2021.

At the current time there were 625 cared for children in the city, a slight reduction since January and the report highlighted that the cared for population was dynamic. It was noted that the vast majority of cared for children who were able to access early year provision did so and the Chair said that it would be interesting to know the percentage for the next meeting.

Within the cared for school age population, 223 (45%) had an identified SEND, with 137 receiving SEND support in school, and 17% of the total had an EHCP. Of those children, 82% attended a specialist education provision. The report set out the primary need for those who had been identified as having SEND with the majority (32%) having primary need in relation to Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH), followed by mild learning disabilities (MLD) and Communication and Interaction.

Linda Mason highlighted that there were a lot of boys with SEMH; this could be passive or active and boys were identified more as active. This analysis fed into work which was being done on how the identification of need correlated with children becoming cared for and the period leading up to that decision.

The Chair agreed that early identification of needs in early years was very important and Linda stated that as part of the SEND Panel for EHCP assessments she had noticed the difference in the early years referrals coming through and that the information and evidence provided was very good.

In terms of progress and achievement, the Virtual School had a good three-year trend and this was monitored termly through the ePEP. Schools would set targets for children and young people and would identify progress against targets. 97% of ePEPs were in place for school age children, 96% for post-16 and 75% for Early Years. The focus was now on quality assurance and the feedback was generally positive.

School attendance in the Autumn term had been 94.9% and during the Spring term 60.9% of cared for children were actually in school with 38.4% accessing remote learning. Since the return to school on 8 March 2021, 99% of primary children had returned to school and 96% of secondary children. Overall attendance was 93.2% and all of these figures were above the national average. The Chair congratulated everyone involved in supporting the cared for children back to school.

There had been no expulsions of cared for children from school in the last three years and there had been 40 suspensions in the Autumn term, totalling 151.5 days. The report showed a breakdown analysis of cared for children who had received multiple suspensions.

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 person's best interests to remove them from the school.

The Governing Board of the Virtual School had been re-established and there were Headteacher representatives from all phases involved. The Chair of Governors, Councillor Geoff Walker had recently passed away and would be greatly missed. Councillor Claire Rowntree had now been appointed to the Governing Body.

The Virtual School had continued to ensure that it had membership of key groups to enable effective partnership working.

The Pupil Premium Grant would be fully utilised in support of improving educational outcomes as expected by the DfE Grant conditions. The local authority received £2,345 per cared for child and schools received £1,800 annually and the Virtual School retained £445 per child. Centrally retained funding was used for services such as tutors, alternative provision, 1-2-1 tuition, Welfare Call and Education Psychology reports.

Linda highlighted that the Covid response of the Virtual School, noting that a lot had been done to ensure that young people were in school, laptops had been provided and welfare checks were carried out on those viewed as most vulnerable. This had paid off hugely in the levels of attendance of cared for children.

The Chair thanked Linda for the comprehensive report and asked if a cared for young person was in school, who would pay for any school trips or activities. Linda stated that it could be the carer as part of their contract, but there were some very able young people who would argue that the school use PPI to enhance their learning in this way.

Upon consideration of the information, it was: -

30. RESOLVED that the Virtual School – Headteacher’s Report be noted.

### **Corporate Parenting Review**

The Board received a report which had recently been presented to the Council’s Cabinet on an external review into the Council’s corporate parenting arrangements and proposing a number of changes to the Council’s approach.

Jill advised that the review had been carried out by Karen Simmons and crystallised some of the conversations which had taken place around corporate parenting over recent months. The refreshed model for corporate parenting was intended to reinforce governance arrangements to evidence that the Corporate Parenting Board was proving effective scrutiny of the strategic plans and making a difference to the lives of cared for children.

An overarching strategy and vision for corporate parenting would be developed; this would not be a lengthy or complex document but would articulate what TfC wanted for cared for children in Sunderland. The Change Council would be part of tracking progress and impact and there would be greater access to regular training for all elected Members and officers.

Councillor Smith referred to discussions which had taken place in the past about the involvement of elected Members in Regulation 44 visits of Children’s Homes and where these conversations had got to.

Jill advised that Regulation 44 visits would be addressed as part of the review of governance which would be undertaken by the DfE, Together for Children and the Council. The Chair noted that the visits were only a small part of what TfC did, highlighting that she had sat in on a foster care review, and that Members could aim to get a wider grasp of what was going on. A way forward could be building an understanding with the young people and then being invited into the homes by them.

Jill added that often ward members would have relationships with the homes in their area and highlighted that the Area Committee had funded the purchase of a therapy dog for one home.

31. RESOLVED that report be noted.

(Signed) L FARTHING  
Chair

