

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 9 January 2023 at 5.30pm in the Conference Room, Sandhill Centre, Grindon Lane, Sunderland, SR3 4EN

Present:

Members of the Board

Councillor L Farthing (in the Chair)	Washington South Ward
Councillor C Burnicle	St Chad's Ward
Councillor J McKeith	St Peter's Ward
Councillor P Smith	Silksworth Ward
Catherine Hearne	Non-Exec Director, Together for Children

Observing

Councillor J Price	Deputy Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Skills
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All Supporting Officers

Jill Colbert	Chief Executive, Together for Children
Majella McCarthy	Director of Children's Social Care, TfC
Tracy Jelfs	Head of Service for Cared for Children, TfC
Anita Swales	Acting Headteacher, Virtual School
Kathryn McCabe	Service Manager, Cared for Children
Michelle Ash	Adoption Officer
Kaye Fox	Foster Carer
Samantha Diston	CNTW
Wendy Coghlan	Prevention and Participation Manager
Alexandra Bowey	Participation and Engagement Officer
Chantelle	Change Council
Caitlin	Change Council
Katherine Corfield	Housing Strategy Officer
Gillian Kelly	Governance Services

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Laws and Tye.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes

28. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2022 be agreed as a correct record.

Change Council Update

The Change Council report had been submitted to the Board and was presented to Members by Chantelle and Caitlin.

The Change Council had continued to meet in their designated space and both the 10-15 and 16+ group were meeting fortnightly.

Planning had begun for the short films which the Change Council wanted to make raising awareness and challenging the stigma in education for cared for young people. The group were working with Sunderland University and they would be funding two students as part of their Changemaker scheme to take this forward with the Change Council. The students would be funded for 100 hours of work and it was hoped that a production student could start later this month.

A 'dry run' of the training for corporate parents had been undertaken with staff and this was now ready for elected Members. It was intended to organise a date for the training in the next month.

There were two new members attending the younger Change Council group and a leaflet was going to be created which social workers could give to young people to encourage them to come along to the Change Council. The Chair suggested that the Virtual School could also promote the Change Council and Anita Swales said that she could communicate this through the designated teacher network.

At the last Board meeting, the Change Council had put forward a proposal to make being care experienced a protected characteristic in Sunderland. The Chair reported that this had been formulated into a Notice of Motion to be presented to the Council meeting on 25 January 2023 which she would propose and Councillor Price would second. The Chair asked that if members of the Change Council had anything specific they would like her to raise in her speech, they should let her know.

Jill Colbert highlighted that she had been interviewed for a feature on the Radio 4 Today programme which had been guest edited by Dame Sharon White, which was focused on education, employment and training opportunities for care experienced young people. There was a strong focus on protected characteristics and what would make a difference for care experienced young people in relation to employment. The feature had run on 2 January 2023.

The Change Council reported that four young people had been given the opportunity to have a tailor-made dress for the Christmas party. It was an amazing experience and there would be a photo shoot for the young people who were lucky enough to receive the dresses. There was a tight timescale to get the dresses made so it was not possible for everyone to get exactly what they wanted and unfortunately more young people wanted dresses than were able to have them. The dressmaker was interested in continuing this process with other young people on a monthly basis and this would not be restricted to dresses. This offer would also be passed to the permanence and next steps teams.

The Chair commented that at the regional change council meeting it was noted that one local authority had provided prom outfits for cared for young people. This had been discussed for Sunderland's young people at the time but could potentially be put back on the agenda.

Chantelle said that wearing the dresses had made them feel really special and Jill suggested that it would be nice for the Board Members to see the results of the photo shoot.

The Change Council had been involved in the planning and set up for the Cared for Christmas event. The event had been a success but the young people would like to revert back to the previous venue for future events. The Change Council had also held a Bonkers Bingo event for both groups.

Activity coming up included the Winter holiday activities and food programme, the regional Children in Care Council meeting in January, Care Day in February and the Children in Care Council residential in April.

The planned work for January to December 2023 was as follows: -

- Drive forward the Change the Language campaign, including working groups and workshops
- Create leaflets to promote Change Council and encourage new members.
- Corporate Parenting introduction training and support the development of the corporate parenting strategy
- Engage young people in enriching activities to celebrate their hard work and increase engagement
- Consult and involve more cared for and care experienced children and young people.
- Alex was to regularly drop in to Children's Homes and Support 2 Independence and also to be around for Warm Spaces.
- To create easy guides to different aspects of being cared for/care experienced to support other young people with things they have been unsure of – accessing records, entering care.

The Chair asked if the Change Council had thought about having videos on TikTok and it was noted that this had been considered and may be looked at again.

The Chair thanked Chantelle and Caitlin for presenting the report and accordingly it was: -

29. RESOLVED that the Change Council update be noted.

Health of Cared for Children – Workplan Update

The Designated Nurse for Cared for Children submitted the designate workplan for 2022-2023 with updates under each area of work.

It was noted that the report included a link to the draft Health passport app which Members could view.

As Jo Morgan could not attend the meeting, Members were advised to direct any questions on the report to Jo via email.

30. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Response to the Urgent Action Required in response to the ‘Safeguarding children with disabilities and complex health needs placed in residential settings’ Phase 1 Report Letter

The Director of Children’s Services presented a report which outlined the approach and findings from the deep dive of children with complex needs and disabilities experience of living away from their families in residential settings. This was in response to National Safeguarding Panel request following the concerns which had been reported about three homes in and around the Doncaster area.

For the Sunderland review, the experience of all children with complex and additional needs living or staying outside of the area in a variety of different circumstances was investigated. An audit tool was developed and visits were made to all provisions to undertake quality reviews and the Quality Assurance team and IRO leadership team reviewed children’s case records and spoke to social workers and team managers to assess their understanding of children’s experiences and needs.

The report set out a number of excerpts from recorded exchanges between children and their workers giving an insight into their lived experience of care. There were detailed findings from the exercise and a number of recommendations which had been discussed with statutory partners. These were: -

Local actions: -

- A strengthened process was required for the Designated Officer (DO) and the Integrated Contact and Referral Team (ICRT) services to share/notify information regarding children currently placed in Sunderland from another local authority.
- The DO service should notify the placing local authority commissioning services alongside the allocated Social Workers of any referral that met the DO thresholds

relating to a care accommodation in Sunderland, to support a holistic analysis of risk for the child/ren and also to notify them of the referral outcome.

- More could be done to strengthen the recording and analysis of children's cultural needs. Although their voices were strongly present and captured clearly, the understanding of their culture and identity was implicit rather than explicit.
- Children's allocated Social Workers to ensure that children were regularly seen within their education settings.
- Work to be undertaken with providers to develop creative ways of ensuring all settings had a homely and nurturing feel.

National actions:

- There was no routine process for clinical experts (Named or Designated professionals or children's community nursing teams) to advise, support or assist in the assessment of the quality of care for children with complex needs who did not live at home some, or all, of the time. This was an area of anxiety for non-clinical children's services staff who were assessing the risks to children who often had complex diagnoses and presenting needs. Integrated multi-disciplinary assessment and oversight should be at the heart of children's care, and closely knitted together with regulatory processes. This was an area that Government could consider developing clear guidance for the ICB and local authority to take forward together.
- A national workforce development plan was urgently required for health and social care workers which reflected the pressures, skills and responsibilities of the role, particularly when working with children with disabilities.

Catherine Hearne commented that the report was very comprehensive and she asked if it was difficult to adapt Mind of My Own (Momo) to be used for all children. Tracy Jelfs said that Momo was picture based and was designed to be easy to use, however a child with complex needs might be used to working with only a small number of pictures. PECS was picture exchange and communication.

Jill noted that providers did need to be reminded that the tool was always there but a separate report could be run for those children who were unable to use Momo.

The Chair asked if Momo Express was designated for children with disabilities and Jill stated that this was used in an educational setting although some preferred STARS. Wendy Coghlan added that there was a lot more youth voice in schools than ever before.

Councillor Smith commented that some homes had lost staff after they had been inducted and queried when these roles would have the salary level which they deserved. Jill noted that nationally a significant number of homes had closed and she did find it strange that settings would recruit without being clear about what the job would involve. Sunderland was in a fortunate position in that children were able to be kept close by and with strong arrangements for managing placements. Sunderland children in private establishments did have agency workers but these workers were long term.

31. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Ofsted Inspection of the Adoption Service

The Board received a copy of the Ofsted report on the Together for Children voluntary adoption agency.

Michelle Ash, Adoption Officer, was in attendance to talk to the report. Ofsted had visited between 1 and 3 November 2022 and there were three elements of the inspection: -

- Overall experiences and progress of service users, taking into account;
- How well children and young people are helped and protected
- The effectiveness of leaders and managers.

All three elements had been judged to be good and the overall judgment of the inspection was good.

Inspectors had been impressed by the set up of the agency and that all social workers carried out all areas of practice which gave a more holistic picture of adoption and provided a realistic view for adopters. It was understood that prospective adopters would meet a lot of the team and were comfortable in asking for support. Ofsted had also attended 'children waiting' meetings and were impressed with Adoption Champions and the up-to-date planning for children. The training provided for adopters was praised and it was noted that the Adoption team were passionate about their role and aspirational for children and adopters.

Michelle drew the Board's attention to the quotes from adopters within the report which showed that they felt welcomed and supported. Ofsted had also been very interested in family network meetings where the identified support network for adopters was brought together and had been complimentary about child appreciation days which brought together all people who had worked with a child. The team also spoke with Ofsted about post adoption and birth parent support.

The Chair suggested that the Change Council might potentially include some life story work as part of the corporate parenting training.

Councillor Smith referred to the third recommendation in the report which said that the registered person should ensure that all managers, staff and volunteers were clear about their roles and responsibilities.

Jill highlighted that the service was inspected as a voluntary agency but in reality it had a far larger caseload and operated differently to any other voluntary agency; unfortunately the Ofsted framework did not recognise the very specific set up of Together for Children. The recommendation was around fostering to adoption placements and related to the number of visits received by one set of adopters.

Kathryn McCabe added that the service took away the good outcomes achieved by children who made attachment with carers who then became adopters and Tracy Jelfs stated that she was satisfied that relevant policies and procedures were being followed.

The Chair commended the positive report and noted that on reading it, the service felt better than 'good'. Jill highlighted that this was the second inspection of the Adoption service and it was subject to a higher level of assurance and oversight than other local authorities.

32. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Work Programme 2022/2023

The Board were informed of the work programme for the municipal year 2022/2023 and forthcoming agenda items.

33. RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

(Signed) L FARTHING
Chair

