

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 16 April 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 B Francis	Fulwell Ward
Councillor I Kay	Millfield Ward
Councillor L Lauchlan	Washington Central Ward
Councillor C Marshall	Doxford Ward
Councillor P Smith	Silksworth Ward

Young People

Clark Brettwood

Also in Attendance

Councillor L Williams	Washington Central Ward
Councillor A Lawson	Shiney Row Ward

All Supporting Officers

Jane Ivory	Director of Performance and Quality, TfC
Catherine Witt	Principal Social Worker, TfC
Anne Brock	Safeguarding Children Lead Nurse and Designated Nurse LAC
Dr Sarah Mills	Designated Doctor for LAC
Janet Thomson	Assistant Director, NTW
Margaret Clouston	Head of Commissioning and Quality Assurance (South), NTW
Abbi Adair	Together for Children
Gavin Taylor	IRO Service, Together for Children
Jane Wheeler	Participation and Complaints Manager, TfC
Loren Nergaard	Participation and Engagement Officer, TfC
Maurice Davis	Foster Carer
James Harrison	Sunderland Echo
Gillian Kelly	Governance Services

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Debra Patterson, Sheila Lough, Suzanne Miller and Rihanna Parkinson.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes

19. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2018 be agreed as a correct record subject to the inclusion of Anne Brock's apologies and an amendment to the beginning of the last sentence on page 7 to read:
"There were a number of young people with challenging behaviour . . ."

Change Council Update

Clark Brettwood presented the report of the Change Council and advised that after a lot of hard work the pledges had now been revised and re-launched as 'commitments'. The young people decided that they did not want the commitments to be matched to elected Members or service managers as this had not always worked in the past, however it would be necessary to ensure that the commitments were actioned, measured and moved forward. The commitments were: -

1. When you come into care we will make sure you feel like you have a sense of belonging.
2. If you need to come into care we will make sure that you are safe and properly cared for.
3. We will make sure your voice is heard and listened to.
4. We will make sure you get a good school education and support you to go into higher education if you would like to.
5. We will make sure you have opportunities to keep fit and healthy.
6. We will make sure you don't need to leave care until you feel ready and have the right support into independence.

The Chair suggested that 'Commitments' be included as a standing agenda item to ensure that progress was being made and welcomed other suggestions for how these could be monitored.

The Board were informed that preparations for this year's regional children in care conference taking place in October/November had begun and a residential had been planned for July to enable the young people to plan the event.

The Change Council had looked at a draft for the local offer in February and identified areas which they thought should be included and also discussed how it should look and how the message should be communicated.

The Chair noted that she had seen an 'app' at the conference which could be used to display the local offer and this would be something for the Change Council to take forward.

The Board were informed that five young looked after or leaving care young people had won awards at the Sunderland Young Achievers 2018 and the overall winner had been Chantelle Beaney.

Sunderland had joined in and supported 'Care Day' this year. This was a joint initiative between children's charities across the UK under the 5 Nations 1 Voice Alliance. Care Day 2018 on 16 February 2018 looked at the rights of the child and Sunderland had a large number of Together for Children staff and young people taking part in writing placards for Care Day including Next Steps staff, residential staff, service managers and many more.

The Change Council had discussed how to spread MOMO (Mind of My Own) further and to encourage more people to use it. The group thought that training foster carers would be a good idea because they could encourage young people to use it and support them if they wanted to make a statement.

The Chair commented that some schools were willing to get involved in MOMO training and Jane Wheeler advised that all SENDCos in primary and secondary schools had been trained.

The Change Council had also discussed pets and how children in care were missing out on the opportunity to have their own pet due to rules in some of the children's homes or foster care settings. Older members of the group who were transitioning to independence said that they would love to have a pet in order to feel less isolated in their accommodation. The Chair agreed that this was a challenge for all corporate parents and should be a future agenda item for the Board.

Having thanked the Change Council for their report, it was: -

20. RESOLVED that the information be noted.

Health of Looked After Children

The Safeguarding Children Lead Nurse submitted a report providing an update on health activity for looked after children.

The Board was reminded that local authorities were responsible for making sure that a health assessment of physical, emotional and mental health needs was carried out for every child looked after and Initial Health Assessments (IHAs) had to be carried out within 20 days of a child becoming looked after. In order for the health team to ensure compliance with this requirement, it was imperative that they were advised of the child coming into care in a timely manner.

Compliance in relation to IHAs had dipped in Quarter 4 and this had been due to late notifications as a result of the migration of data from CCM to Liquid Logic. The Chair explained for Board Members who were not aware, that Liquid Logic was the new system being used by Together for Children and when the data had been transferred there had been two weeks downtime and manual records had to be used. Anne Brock advised that the admin staff from the health team were being trained on the Liquid Logic system.

Councillor Williams queried if it was the entire cohort who had to be seen within 20 days and Anne confirmed that this was the case but numbers in the cohort would fluctuate each quarter. Members felt that it would be useful to have the actual numbers included within the data and it was suggested that some targeted narrative could be used to expand on key themes. The Chair said that it would also be interesting to know if there were particular common health needs being flagged up which needed to be addressed.

Review Health Assessments (RHAs) had to take place at least every six months before a child's fifth birthday and at least once every 12 months after that time. Compliance in quarter 4 was the highest for the year at 96% with the 4% non-compliance being due to children placed out of the area not having their health assessments on time.

The compliance for health passports stood at 100% and, with the exception of Quarter 3, this had been the case for the whole year.

The Board were advised of staffing changes within the LAC Health Team and that the Designated Doctor had stepped down from the role and the Designated Nurse would be leaving in June 2018.

21. RESOLVED that the content of the report 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.

Margaret Clouston introduced the report and explained that NTW were in the process of agreeing reporting mechanisms with the CCG and would produce a more narrative report once these were aligned. The figures quoted in the report were up to the end of February 2018 and the referrals were similar to the last report to the Board. Margaret added that the service was also looking at the specification for what CYPS would provide and it was a part of a national discussion about whether all children looked after should have a mental health assessment.

The Chair noted that it was the referrals which were not accepted which were of most concern and Margaret advised that this was often when a young person was not in a stable environment and ready to accept treatment. Anne Brock commented that she understood that wraparound services were offered even if a placement was not stable.

The Chair also highlighted the difference between young people being assessed and actually receiving treatment. Margaret stated that it tended to be the service user who fell out of treatment. She noted that in January and February there were increased numbers of referrals into neuro development treatment services and this was a trend which needed to be understood. One area which would be split in future in the data would be routine and priority referrals and it would also show children from out of the area who were receiving services in Sunderland.

Margaret went on to say that the waiting list was the area of largest concern and the service was not seeing children as quickly as it would like but there was some improvement work being developed within the service.

Councillor Kay asked how long children and young people were typically in treatment for and how their progress was monitored. He noted that the narrative around this would give the Board a picture of where investment was required.

Margaret said that Board Members would see a different scenario depending on the referral and treatment pathway taken by a young person. In response to a question about the clinical pathways, the Board were informed that the Intensive Care Treatment Service (ICTS) was equivalent to the adult crisis team and operated to see someone quickly. The neuro development pathway reviewed medication for young people with ADHD but also included referrals for Autism Spectrum Disorders. Those classed as 'no secondary referral' meant that at the time of the referral a triage process had not been undertaken to identify a secondary pathway for the client.

Councillor Williams referred to the large numbers in relation to some categories on the waiting list and Janet Thomson said that NTW would like to provide context on some of these cases. Jane Ivory suggested that Together for Children and NTW could jointly consider these cases and bring something back to the Board which might add value to the discussion. The Chair agreed that this would help promote learning on both sides and from a corporate parenting point of view, this needed to be right the first time as placements could be disrupted due to delays in treatment.

Councillor Williams went on to ask if there was a quick route for children looked after to access treatment, as she was aware of the waiting list for the general public and queried if this was comparable. The Chair commented that at the last Health and Wellbeing Board meeting, a report showed that only one third of young people in the general population got the treatment they needed. She noted that the Board focused on children looked after but comparing with the entire population was a valid point.

The Chair stated that her view was that a young person in a placement with scaffolding in place was preferable, although there was a long way to go to get this right, looking at case studies would help to identify what was going wrong and what was right.

Dr Sarah Mills advised that a priority for the LAC Health Team was to improve their working relationships with CYPS and getting something in place to support a young person while they were waiting to see a professional. The LAC Nurse was hoping to link with a psychologist at a residential home to develop joint learning. It was noted

that there were new psychologists starting in the CYPS team which would make a positive impact on the service.

22. RESOLVED that the information be noted.

Leisure and Cultural Offer for Looked After Children and Care Leavers

The Board received a report advising of the Local Leisure and Cultural Offer for Looked After Children and Care Leavers drafted in April 2018.

The aim of the leisure offer was to promote healthy and active lifestyles for children and young people in care and the offer from Everyone Active included discounted gym memberships, free gym passes, discounted holiday activities and coaching sessions. Free swim passes were also available for children looked after under the age of 18 years but data showed that this offer was not actually taken up very often.

The Next Steps service offered a maximum of £10 per week for social and leisure activities and where appropriate, Children's Services would pay for the membership of a hobby or leisure club and contribute towards the cost of equipment or special clothing and fees.

It was noted that it would be useful to have the detail of the take up of Next Steps monies and the Chair stated that all looked after children had a Personal Education Plan (PEP) which should include leisure activities and it would be a relatively easy exercise to analyse this information.

Young people had identified the following areas of activity in addition to gym passes or swimming: -

- Cinema
- Bowling
- Football Clubs
- Rugby Clubs
- Arts and Craft sessions
- Martial Arts
- Boxing
- Quaser Lazer
- Pool
- Climbing Wall

The Participation and Engagement Offer was focused on supporting the personal, social and emotional development of young people, raising their aspirations and building their resilience to prepare them for a better transition to adulthood. This was achieved through a range of group based positive activities and using groups such as the Change Council, LGBT+, Youth Parliament, Sunderland Young Inspectors, the Children and Young People's Advisory Network and the Takeover Challenge. There were also opportunities for young people to access arts, culture and music; parks and open spaces; and libraries.

The Max Card was also still available and offered discounts for foster families or families of children with additional needs. Together for Children bought 350 cards in May 2017 and 316 had been issued to date, however the activities where discounts were available did tend to be further afield.

The Board were also informed that Together for Children had sponsored three looked after young people to act as ambassadors for the Tall Ships with the aim of raising the profile of looked after children and dismissing the stigma associated with being looked after.

Maurice Dixon commented that some of the existing offer was pretty good. He had used the Max Card but not all attractions accepted it. Councillor Kay was conscious that discounted entry was a good thing but the costs ramped up once you were through the doors of the establishment.

The Chair referred to regional discussions about the offer and Jane Wheeler advised that all 12 of the North East authorities had different offers which were paid for by various services.

The Chair suggested that a promotions company would maybe push this forward and there were two different markets in relation to children looked after and care leavers and that the children's homes supported a lot of these activities.

Dr Mills referred to the 'Curious Monkey' charity in Newcastle which provided monthly theatre activities and was open to children across the region, which might be of interest as part of the offer. Maurice suggested that the Empire Theatre would also be a good institution to link up with.

Jane Ivory noted that the IRO service could ask carers and young people which activities they were interested in. Jane Wheeler said the Participation and Engagement team was often asked about young people who had an interest in a particular activity and how this could be supported.

Having considered the report it was: -

23. RESOLVED that the information be noted.

Local Offer to Care Leavers

The Board were advised that the DfE had issued guidance to local authorities in February 2018 which required them to consult on, and publish, a local offer for its care leavers. This offer should provide information about all the services and support available to care leavers from the local authority, including their statutory entitlement as well as any discretionary support offered. The following services provided by the local authority should be included: -

- Health and Wellbeing
- Relationships
- Education and Training

- Employment
- Accommodation
- Participation in Society.

Once published the local offer should be reviewed regularly to ensure that the services on offer reflect what care leavers needed most. The local offer should be easily available and accessible to all care leavers in the local authority area.

As reported earlier, the local offer had been discussed at the Change Council in February and it had been suggested that an app could be used and this was being pursued. There was a lot of information contained within the offer and the Personal Advisors from Next Steps would discuss it with care leavers.

The local offer had been drafted with the Communications Team and was available in hard copy and on the Together for Children website. The text of the local offer was attached as an appendix to the report.

Jane Ivory asked if there was requirement to provide a young person with a passport as this was essential for ID purposes. Jane Wheeler advised that this was the case and young people were also supported to obtain bank accounts.

The Board therefore: -

24. RESOLVED that the information about the local offer be noted.

Sufficiency Strategy for the Accommodation of Children Looked After and Care Leavers 2017-2020

The Sufficiency Strategy for the Accommodation of Children Looked After and Care Leavers for 2017/2020 was submitted to the Board. Jane Ivory advised that the local authority was required to have a strategy which outlined how Sunderland intended to meet the Sufficiency Duty as laid out in section 22G of the Children Act 1989 and it had been worked on by all areas of the service to consider whether there were sufficient placements in the right locations.

The principles of the Sufficiency Strategy were: -

1. The voice of children and young people is central to our strategy and delivery.
2. As ambitious Corporate Parents, we will only look after children who need to be looked after and will expect the best for them. To achieve this we will provide a range of support services as a Company and as partnership to support children and young people to stay with their family when it is appropriate to do so.
3. We aspire to a 'no disruption' principle, and will ensure that placement stability is at the centre of our planning for children, including stability of placement, education provision and consistent health services.
4. We want to ensure that children are cared for in family setting wherever possible.
5. We will ensure that we have high quality services and a range of placements for all our children and young people in Sunderland to ensure sufficient choice in the local area.

6. We will work with all our services and providers to ensure that services are child focused, high quality and represent value for money.

The strategy had been developed alongside an action plan and also included a commitment to support children in staying with their own families and preventing them coming into care in the first place. Together for Children was also investing in foster care and making sure that children's homes had appropriate facilities.

Jane Ivory stated that there was more work to be done on the action plan, but officers were happy with where they had got to so far.

Councillor Williams asked about the action to open a new children's home and Jane Ivory stated that the homes which existed in Sunderland were registered for children aged 12 and over and there were children under this age who were in residential care outside of Sunderland. It was proposed that a small unit be established to provide intensive support for these young people closer to home. It was also planned to work towards getting the younger children into a family setting and this was also a principle of the strategy.

Councillor Williams went on to ask if the mix of children was considered and Jane said that matching was absolutely crucial and was carried out in children's homes at the moment.

With regard to the timing of the new home's development, the Chair commented that this was not really starting until June 2018 and expressed a wish that recruitment of staff take place as soon as possible and be moved forward quickly. She added that the Virtual School Head had looked at the current external placements for children and said that all of this could be done in Sunderland and queried whether there would be more new facilities developed in the city.

Councillor Kay made reference to leaving care provision and that he had been involved in the phasing out of Chester Road. He stated that he had been encouraged about the clear view from staff about what was good accommodation and hoped that a bigger and more appropriate facility would be found soon.

The Chair highlighted that when a young person secured paid employment they could not then always afford to pay for their accommodation and suggested that this could be a future agenda item for the Board, how young people could afford to live in supported accommodation.

With reference to the strategy for foster carer recruitment, Maurice asked if there was anything definitive in mind and noted that fees had been discussed for quite a while.

The Chair agreed that this was important as foster care was effectively a paid occupation, however at the regional conference it had been felt that local authorities wanted to recruit people whose first motivation was to look after children and that a 'care first' approach should be adopted.

Catherine Witt advised that the work to simplify fees had almost concluded and Maurice noted that these had to be competitive if someone had to give up paid employment to be a foster carer.

25. RESOLVED that the Sufficiency Strategy be noted.

Sunderland's Guide to Corporate Parenting

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 introduced Corporate Parenting Principles which comprised seven needs that local authorities in England must have regard to whenever they exercised a function in relation to children looked after or care leavers. The principles were intended to secure a better approach to fulfilling existing functions in relation to children looked after and care leavers and for the local authority to facilitate as far as possible, nurturing and positive experiences for these children.

The Corporate Parenting Principles were as follows: -

- To act in the best interests and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing of those children and young people.
- To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings.
- To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people.
- To help those children and young people gain access to and make the best use of services provided by the Local Authority and its relevant partners.
- To promote high aspirations and seek to secure the best outcomes for those children and young people.
- For those children and young people to be safe and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work.
- To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

The Corporate Parenting Principles did not replace or change existing legal duties but were intended to inform how a local authority carried out those existing responsibilities, whether that was about assessing a child looked after's needs or listening to, and taking account of, the wishes and feelings of care leavers. The principles were intended to encourage local authorities to be ambitious and aspirational for their children looked after and care leavers.

26. RESOLVED that the information be noted.

(Signed) L FARTHING
Chair