



Children, Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee

Report of the Director of Children's Social Care

Corporate Parenting Annual Report

1. Purpose of Report

To provide a report to the Committee on the previous 12 months functioning of the Corporate Parenting Board.

2. Current Position since the last report to the Scrutiny Committee

Change Council Update

At the Corporate Parenting Board held in January 2018 Members were advised that the second Regional Children in Care Conference had been held on 3rd November and had been a very successful event. Sunderland's Young People had led a workshop on mental health and the care system which had been well received. The Regional Children in Care Council had also been nominated for the Children and Young People Award and a member of our young people travelled to London to attend the Ceremony. Although not successful the young people were pleased to have attended the event.

The second LAC Celebration Event had been held on 8th December 2017 and had been another great success. Over 200 had attended and there was excellent feedback from carers, young people and social care staff.

A representative from Washington Mind has been invited to attend the Change Council and has visited the Next Steps building for young people to be available for those who wanted to talk or if they were on a waiting list for CAHMS/CYPS.

A Mental Health Conference had been held at the Stadium of Light on 16th January and during the event the Mental Health Charter Mark which had been supported and designed by Sunderland Youth Parliament was launched. Two of Sunderland's care leavers presented the mental health workshop which had previously formed part of the Regional Children in Care Conference.

The Change Council was pleased to welcome some new members to its January meeting which had focused on revisiting the Change Council

Agreement and working on the annual action plan. Themes and actions to focus on included:-

- Finance
- Accommodation
- Storage Units
- Mental Health Services
- Training for newly qualified social workers
- Apprenticeships for care leavers
- Fostering training
- Access to files
- Local offer for care leavers
- Promises/commitments (formerly known as the Pledge)

At the July Corporate Parenting Board Members were advised that after a lot of hard work the pledges had 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. The commitments were:-

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

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

The Change Council had looked at a draft local offer in February and identified areas which they thought should be included.

The Board were informed that five looked after/care leavers had won awards at the Sunderland Young Achievers 2018.

Sunderland had joined in on a 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 on 16th 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 informed Members about 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.

It was confirmed to Members that all SENDCOS in primary and secondary schools have been trained.

The Change Council Young People discussed pets and that a number of young people – children's homes are missing out on having their own pet. It was agreed that a report should be presented to the Board around this issue.

At the Board on 2nd July 2018 members were advised that the Change Council had recently had the Annual Away Day at Moor House Adventure Centre to review the work plan for the year and also have fun. Simon Marshall, Director of Education and Sue Carty, Director of Quality and Performance also attended the day.

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 spent time discussing the Children Looked after Celebration and Awards Evening which would take place on Friday 14th December with the young people wanting to plan the event to mirror the success of last year's event.

The Regional Children in Care Conference was discussed at the away day. This was scheduled to take place on Friday 2nd November and tickets were already available at a cost of £80. The focus of the Conference was to be 'entitlements' and 'family visits'.

The Local Offer is now complete and available in hard copy or on the Together for Children website.

At the Board meeting in October the Change Council advised that Sunderland and South Tyneside have chosen the topic of Life Story Work and it is the intention that a number of workshops will take place on 2nd November 2018:-

- It's a family affair
- It's my life
- Right here, right now
- Who cares

The Change Council advised that they played 'The Change Game' with TfC Board members in August. Members at the Change Council have recently been involved in the recruitment for a new Director of Social Care and the Virtual Head Teacher.

Young people met with HR and developed questions for the young person's panel.

CYPS Data Dashboard

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

In relation to the referrals received the report also highlighted that referrals which were not accepted to the service. Board members felt it would be useful to have more information about what each pathway was and that further information about diagnosis and treatment offered would also help the Board to understand issues. Members requested further information about trigger points, for an urgent referral and representative from CYPS were asked to provide this information at future board meetings.

The Board were provided with a breakdown of the age groups accessing CYPS and it was noted that the greatest proportion of Children – Young People were aged 6–13 years of age. It was reported that there have been an increase in young people waiting between 18-30 week from referral to Treatment. CYPS advised they have appointed two new Clinical Psychologists, recruited purely for children looked after.

At the April Board Meeting data for children looked after currently accessing services from CYPS was shared.

The report 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.

CYPS advised that there continues to be concern in relation to the waiting list but some improvements were being noted with the service. The Board were updated about the Intensive Care Treatment Service which was equivalent to the Adult Crisis Team and operated to someone quickly. It was suggested that TfC together with NTW could bring some anonymised case studies to a Board Meeting to promote learning on both sides. Board members felt this would be useful. Dr Sarah Mills, Designated Doctor for Children Looked After is looking at improving working relationships with CYPS and the LAC Nurse advised she was hoping to link with a psychologist currently working with staff in the children's homes offering support and guidance.

At the Board on 7th July a report was presented showing the data for looked after children currently accessing services from CYPS.

Referrals received from March and May showed a total of 30 referrals with five not being accepted. The reasons for the referrals not being accepted were set out and included:-

- Not enough information with the referral
- Service users not ready to engage

The majority of the referrals were from social care. Between March and May there were 20 discharges. There was a slight improvement in relation to waiting lists and NTW advised that a Service Review is 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.

Health of Looked After Children

In January the Board were advised there has been a steady improvement in compliance with the initial health assessment to be completed within 20 days of a child becoming looked after. Compliance had been 80% in Quarter 1, 90% in Quarter 2 and 98% in Quarter 3. Compliance with Review Health Assessments had dropped from 94% in Quarter 2 to 87% in Quarter 3. This was due to children who had been placed out the area not having their health assessment completed within timescale by the host LAC health team.

The first 2 quarters of 2017/2018 had shown 100% compliance for the issuing of health passports however this had dropped to 73% in Quarter 3. There had been a total of 11 health passports due to re-issues, eight had been completed but three were due to young people refusing to attend appointments. A Consultant Child Psychologist was providing half day weekly sessions for professionals in residential care homes.

At the July Board the Board was reminded that local authorities were responsible for making sure that a health assessment of physical emotion and mental health issues was carried out for every child looked after.

Compliance in relation to IHA had dropped in Quarter 4 and this has been due to late notifications as a result of the migration of data from CCM to Liquid Logic. The compliance for health passports stood at 100% with the exception of Quarter 3, this had been the case for the whole year.

At the Board in October the Board members were advised there was an average of 630 children looked after, this has increased from the previous quarter. 41 were recorded as being placed outside of the North East this has reduced slightly. The compliance reduced in the Summer because of disruption to the process. A new more efficient system was to be implemented using the placing social worker notifying the looked after team.

The RHA must happen at least every six months before a child's 5th birthday and at least once every 12 months after the child's 5th birthday.

Review Health Assessment – Quarter 2

Number – 165

Compliance target 100% / 95%

Health passport issued - Quarter 1

Number compliance - 100%

The Looked After health team met with Sheila Lough to discuss improving the onset process. A leaflet for young people which will explain the health assessment is in development.

Dr Mills, Sheila Lough, Agnus Physic, Looked After Lead, CYPS Kelly Haslem met to begin working together on improving mental health support for Looked After Children and Young People.

Supported Accommodation for Care Leavers

The Strategic Service Manager submitted a report providing the Board with an update on supported accommodation for Care Leavers.

The range of accommodation available had remained unchanged since the last report and in January there were 11 vacancies across all provisions. The Board were advised that commissioned provision at Harbour View, Holmewood and Lewis Crescent had previously been funded by Adult Services as part of the housing contract but this had ended in July 2017. TfC had agreed to continue to commission this provision for a further 12 months and all of the current commissioning arrangements were due to review in July 2018.

In addition to the available accommodation spot purchase could be made from the YMCA and Centre Point and at the present time there were 2 young people who had chosen to access YMCA provision due to its locality. The commissioning officer undertook monthly monitoring visits to all commissioned providers and the service manager for accommodation advised that she chaired a weekly panel to consider all the referrals.

Virtual School Performance

The Board were provided with a summary of the Virtual Schools Performance January 2018. The Board were advised that during the previous academic year it has been agreed to implement a Governing Body Management Structure for the Virtual School. It had been felt that governance arrangements needed to be strengthened.

Of the population CLA it was highlighted 540 had been in the care of the local authority during the academic year. However 220 children and young people in the cohort were in care for at least one year as of 31st May 2017 and between ages 5 and 16 years.

In March 2017 58% of Sunderland's looked after children attended school in the city. 24% of the cohort had special education needs which was significant in terms of challenges to services in schools in terms of educational infrastructure and progress. 11.5% of the primary school cohort attended a

special school and 26.8% of secondary school age children were attending specialist provision.

Turning to attainment and progress six out of seven children in the Early Years Foundation Stage had achieved a good level of development and the phonics screen had showed a three year improving trend.

At Key Stage 1 the expected standard in reading had dropped but there was an increase in pupils achieving greater depth. Work was taking place to identify, analyse and create priorities for every Year 2, Year 6 and Year 7 child and the virtual school staff were receiving a lot of training looking at raising expectations of what children should be doing.

Improvements were being seen in Key Stage 2 and attainment had risen in reading and maths. Key Stage 4 was a significant issue for the Virtual School and the local authority of year 11 cohort 58% had special education needs of the young people currently in Years 12 and 13 13.5% were identified as not being in employment, education or training, this was in comparison with the estimated Northern Average of 33%. All of the NEET young people are encouraged to re-engage in education and training in collaboration with social workers, foster carers and care home staff

The Board were informed that in 2016-17 39 looked after children had been subject to fixed term exclusions (82) but that related to an increase in days lost (219). Protocols should be reviewed in order to support young people and the Virtual School had intervened to prevent exclusions.

The recommendations given to the Board in January were:-

- Refresher training to be arranged for designated teachers
- To further refine the quality of PEPS
- To make more effective use of data collated on a termly basis
- The Virtual head teacher would continue to work closely with local organisations to raise awareness of the value of PEPS
- Refine attendance management with the implementation of Welfare Call
- Close the attainment gap with peers of children looked after and young people within Sunderland
- Ensure the new established Virtual School Governing Body provides great support and challenge to Virtual school head
- Ensure the effective use of the pupil premium in raising standards if attainment and progress of all looked after children

Children Independent Reviewing Team Annual Report

The Board were given a copy of the Annual Report of the Children Independent Review Team in October 2018.

The report highlighted the roles and functions of the team:-

- Chairing initial child protection conferences and reviews.

- Chairing of placement order and adoption placements
- Chairing foster carer reviews
- The completion of monthly Regulation 44 visits to TfC Registered Children's Homes chairing and management of allegations against adults working with children.
- The chairing of management of allegations against adults who work with children
- The chairing of children's looked after reviews

The report identified areas of service improvement, emergency themes, examples of good practice and the CIRT priorities for next 12 months.

- That prior to every conference every child over the age of 4 years has the opportunity to communicate with ICPC chairperson.
- Every child looked after has a mid-way review, IRO to record every time they have seen the child thus evidencing the IRO footprint.
- Pre CLA visits to be completed in 5 days prior to capture the voice of the child.
- Increase use of MOMO and view point
- Work effectively with Change Council
- IRO Admin to support the service.
- Appoint Business Manager CIRT to maintain and develop links with Social Work Team.
- IRO Manager to meet with Service Managers to progress discussions around case themes.
- All IRO's to be registered on the hub
- IRO Management to undertake case audits
- Peer observation.
- All IRO's to identify a lead in key areas or work with Together for Children and Agencies.
- To ensure staff team afforded regular reflective supervision.
- All new staff to have an induction
- Every child subject to a CP Plan or Care Plan has a midway wait.
- Pre Looked After visits to take place
- Children to be supported to chair their own meetings
- To nominate children for awards
- Arrange annual open day

Sufficiency Strategy

The Sufficiency Strategy for the accommodation of Children Looked After and Care Leavers 2017/20 was submitted to the Board. The strategy outlined how Sunderland intend to meet the sufficiency of duty as laid out in 22G of the Children Act 1989.

The principles of the sufficiency strategy were:-

- Vision of children and young people is centre to our strategy and delivery
- As ambitious corporate parents we will only look at children who need to be looked after and to achieve this we will provide a range of support

services as a company and as a partnership to support children and young people to stay with the family when it is appropriate to do so

- 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.
- We want to ensure that children are cared for in family settings where possible.
- We will ensure that we have high quality services and a range of placement for all our children and young people in Sunderland to ensure sufficient choice – local area. We will work with all services and providers to ensure that services are child focus and high quality and represent value for money.

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

Annual Adoption Report

The Board received the TFC annual adoption report for 2017/2018. The Voluntary Adoption Agency has been in operation since 1st April 2017 and the main priorities of TFC Adoption Sunderland are:-

- To achieve the placement of children in care for when adoption is the care plan with appropriate adopters, matched accordingly to the children's specific needs and circumstances and within appropriate timescales.
- To recruit people and assess adoptive applicants who are likely able to meet the placement needs of the children waiting for families both locally and nationally.
- To provide post placement and post order support adoptive families.
- Birth record counselling for adopted adults.
- Both family support for families whose children are adopted.

The Board were advised that TFC was moving forward with plans to become a Regional Adoption Agency with Cumbria County Council and Durham. It was envisaged that the Regional Adoption Agencies would speed up matching, improve adopter recruitment and encourage specialisation.

There had been a steady improvement in the timeliness of each stage on the child's journey to adoption and adopter's assessments had also been completed in a timely fashion.

It was highlighted that Together for Children Adoption Sunderland had an enhanced support offer to adopters and had successfully claimed £150,000 from the Adoption Fund which benefited 63 families. The challenges and profiles for the next year are:-

- Sufficiency strategy for the Accommodation of the Children Looked After and Care Leavers 2017-2020.
- To continue to support the development of a Regional Adoption Agency (in line with Government expectations).
- To support TFC with their forthcoming OFSTED inspection with the intention of achieving Good for the company's adoption service.
- To continue to improve their excellent record of service in relation timeliness.
- To continue to see feedback from adopters with where we work regarding all aspects of the service and to establish a survey monitoring to enable adopters to anonymously provide their views.
- To establish a survey monitoring for children who have been adopted and to use the information received to judge and shape the service.
- To embrace the feedback process from birth family members who use services from ARC Adoption where they are spoken to directly and the verbal feedback is recorded 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.

Annual Fostering Report

The Board received the first fostering service annual report since TFC Fostering Sunderland became an Independent Fostering Agency.

The report set out the summary data for foster carers and it was highlighted that the service had looked closely at improving foster carer training. There is to be a planned recruitment campaign when the new fee structure has been agreed to increase the number of in house foster carers.

The Board were advised that there are two fostering panels who meet each month. Panels are very busy and are considering a large number of assessments to be Connected Carers. This pattern may change once the issues around fees are resolved although there is a duty to look at family members if a child is to become looked after to see if they can provide appropriate care.

All complaints and compliments were recorded and the IFA has worked closely with the Designated Officer if concerns need to be referred. Work has been undertaken to increase the engagement with foster carers and a number of foster carers were nominated for Together for Children Spotlight Awards. An online survey has been rolled out to foster carers and a support group for children established which will feed into the Change Council.

Reg 44 Visits

The Board has received a report providing an update on the monthly Reg 44 unannounced visits from December 2017-April 2018 to each of the Together for

Children's children's homes in accordance with Regulation 44 children's home's regulations. There are also 2 foster care review officers who take responsibility for chairing foster carer reviews.

Colombo Road was found to have sustained effectiveness and young people had been encouraged to give their views as had parents.

Monument View was also judged to have sustained effectiveness and each of the six residents were attending education or training provisions. There was a reduction in missing incidents from the home and the views of the young people and parents were taken into account.

Grasswell House currently had four young people in the home but had six at the time of inspection. The home had been judged as inadequate by OFSTED in November 2017 but had shown improvement by January. The Regulation 44 visit found that young people and parents were consulted and positive recommendations were made.

There had been five young people resident in Revelstoke Road at the time of re-visit and the home had been found to have improved effectiveness. One of the young people was not attending school regularly and the staff at the home were working with him, the school and the Virtual School to improve on this situation.

Housing Officer

The Board were 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 young people to access and maintain housing; within this priority there was a key action to develop a joint protocol with TFC and Housing Services to ensure that homeless young people and those leaving care were supported to find suitable accommodation. The Board were advised that the Government's Homeless Advice Service Team was visiting later in the month to meet with others from Housing and TFC. The purpose of the visit was to give advice and make recommendations in the context of homelessness. The Board were advised of the next steps to progress key actions.

- 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 following their visit to the city.

Recommendation

That the Committee consider the contents of the Annual Corporate Parenting Report.