

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 8 October 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 C Marshall	Doxford Ward
Councillor S O'Brien	Sandhill Ward

Young People

Michael McBride

Also in Attendance

Councillor P Gibson	Silksworth Ward
Councillor D MacKnight	Castle Ward
Councillor A Lawson	Shiney Row Ward
Councillor L Williams	Washington Central Ward

All Supporting Officers

Jill Colbert	Chief Executive, TfC
Simon Marshall	Director of Education, TfC
Martin Birch	Director of Social Care, TfC
Gavin Taylor	IRO Service, Together for Children
Maggie Murphy	IRO Service, Together for Children
Jane Wheeler	Participation and Complaints Manager, TfC
Dr Sarah Mills	Designated Doctor for Looked After Health
Maurice Davis	Foster Carer
Chris Binding	Sunderland Echo
Gillian Kelly	Governance Services

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Smith and Johnston, together with Kay Dixon, Councillors McClennan and Beck.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes

12. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 2 July 2018 be agreed as a correct record.

Training

The Chair asked about the Regulation 44 training which had been referred to at the last meeting and Gavin Taylor advised that ten elected members had attended the training and the next stage would be to ensure that all of the relevant checks were in place so they could take part in visits.

It was intended to hold Board training sessions for half an hour prior to each Board meeting and this arrangement would begin in January 2019.

Together for Children Chief Executive

Jill Colbert, Together for Children Chief Executive was welcomed to her first meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board. Jill stated that being a corporate parent was a tremendous responsibility and she and Martin Birch, Director of Children's Social Care, had had the pleasure of spending time with the Change Council. This had been a positive and creative conversation with the young people and it was clear that they wanted to see Together for Children deliver on their promises. She hoped that moving forward, the Board would have a membership which reflected the diversity of partners involved with the city's young people.

The Chair commented that she had just attended a meeting on the Council's Apprenticeship Scheme and care leavers had been suggested as a target group and she advised that the new Council Chief Executive was also keen to take this approach.

Change Council Update

Michael McBride presented the report of the Change Council and advised that the children in care council had held their annual residential on 13 July to plan for this year's regional conference taking place on Friday 2 November at St James' Park. Sunderland were working with South Tyneside on a workshop called 'It's my life'. The other workshops which would be part of the conference were; It's a family affair, Right here, right now and Who cares?

The Change Council had designed a game in 2016 called the 'Change Game' which was designed to help professionals understand what life can be like as a child looked after or leaving care. The Change Council had played the game with corporate

parents and most recently with the Together for Children Board Members in August 2018.

The members of the Change Council had been involved in the recruitment process for a new director of Social Care and the Virtual Headteacher, and as part of this the young people had developed questions for a young person's panel. They had enjoyed being part of the process and had been empowered by it.

The Change Council had been working hard planning their annual Children Looked After Celebration Event and Christmas Party; there were lots of activities booked and nominations had started to come in for the awards part of the evening. The Change Council were looking for donations for the event and anyone who had ideas for the evening were asked to contact Loren Nergaard.

Regionally there had been discussions about using the term 'contact' to refer to when children have time with their family members, previous carers and friends and it has been felt that the term was too formal and not 'normal'. It has been proposed that 'contact' be changed to 'family time' and that the Change Council take this further and support Children's Social Care in developing family time spaces.

13. 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.

There was an increase in looked after children in the quarter with an average of 630 being looked after and 41 being placed outside of the North East, which was a reduction on previous figures.

There was a new notification system in place and the Looked After Health team were finding out about children coming into a care a lot more quickly and this helped to be able to plan appointments. The Initial Health Assessments (IHAs) must happen within 20 working days of a child coming into care and there had been 62 children seen by the end of the quarter with a compliance level of 76%.

There had been some disruption to the process over the summer so the level of compliance had reduced, however these issues would be addressed through the continued use of the new system. One child was not brought to their arranged appointment and one assessment required from outside of the North East had not been performed in a timely manner. There was a pathway in place to address this issue.

165 Review Health Assessments (RHAs) had been carried out and this demonstrated a compliance level of 95%. Seven children had not been brought for their arranged appointment and two children placed outside of the area did not have their assessments completed on time; this was an improvement from the previous quarter.

The pathway for providing Health Passports was working well and 11 had been issued in the last quarter, representing 100% compliance.

The Board were advised that Claire Elwell had been appointed as the Named Nurse for Looked After Health and an appointment had been made to the post of Children and Young People's Nurse and the individual would take up the role in December 2018. Victoria Smith would take up the role of Designated Nurse for Looked After Health from November 2018, taking over from Anne Brock.

The team had met with Sheila Lough and Martin Birch to discuss the consent process and the form had been redesigned so that enduring consent was able to be obtained from birth parents. A meeting had also taken place with the Consultant Psychologist and CYPS to discuss improving mental health support for looked after children and young people. An action plan was being produced to take this forward and a weekly meeting was taking place to discuss referrals to CYPS.

Data was being collected for health outcomes and this would be presented to the Corporate Parenting Board in the future once information sharing agreements were in place.

In relation to the seven children who had not attended RHAs, Councillor Lawson asked how quickly this non-attendance would be picked up. Dr Mills advised that sometimes a child was unwell and sometimes connected carers did not understand the importance of the appointment. Older children might refuse to attend the appointment and go to school instead, however the LAC Nurse would go out to see a young person who did not attend.

Councillor Lawson went on to ask if older children were accompanied to appointments and the Board were informed that this was usually the case, but young people were always offered the opportunity to be seen alone.

Councillor Francis was concerned that some carers did not see the importance of the appointment and Dr Mills said that this applied more to connected carers who had perhaps taken a child at short notice and had other commitments and appointments to manage. The information leaflet which had been produced by the team would seek to address these issues.

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

Pocket Money, Savings, Allowances and Personal Items for Children in Care

This item was deferred to a future meeting of the Board.

IRO Annual Report

The Board received the Independent Reviewing Team Annual Report 2017/2018 and Gavin Taylor from the IRO Service advised that it had been another busy year for the

team with a total of 1,630 child protection conferences being held during the year; 814 were initial and 816 were review conferences. The report covered the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018 and during that time a total of 715 Child Protection Plans had ended.

Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPCs) should be held within 15 days from the date of a strategy where a child protection investigation has been carried out and the timeliness of ICPCs had improved with 87% being held within timescale. This was 10% above the national average.

A Child Protection Review Conferences (RCPC) should be held within three months of the ICPC and at intervals of no more than six months afterwards. 98% of RCPCs had been held within the timescale, an increase of 1% on last year and 6% above the national average. Sunderland was also 3% above the North East average in relation to the timeliness of RCPCs. The Chair commented that the target had been set rather high but she was pleased to see how Sunderland was performing, particularly in relation to the other agencies in the North East.

Gavin advised that a total of 1,552 looked after reviews had been completed during the year; 94% of these had been within timescale and young people participated in the review in 94% of cases. MOMO and Viewpoint were used as a means of engagement for young people and the introduction of Liquid Logic had led to ongoing improvements in understanding and interpreting data.

The Dispute Resolution Procedure (DRP) was the means by which Children's Services was held to account and there had been 193 DRPs raised and resolved within the reporting year. The process also highlighted strengths and 15 positive practice examples had been noted.

The Chair noted that the chart showing the DRP themes was not complete and Gavin clarified which themes were missing.

It had been a busy year for the Designated Officer with enquiries having risen to 406 from 302 in the previous year. 180 of the 406 referrals had met the threshold for referral to an Allegation Management Meeting and a total of 158 cases had been concluded within the year.

There had been a total of 212 Foster Carer Reviews during the year, 189 had been completed within the timescale. Work had been undertaken during 2017/2018 to improve the timeliness of Foster Carer reviews and improve upon the quality and increase of other professional output.

The caseloads within the IRO service had come under pressure at various times during the year, however there were strategies in place to manage this.

Councillor Davison referred to a DRP example where a fifteen year old child was placed outside of the area in an unregulated placement. Gavin said that sometimes a placement was not available in the city and the outcome of the concerns raised was that the child was brought back into the Sunderland area and a positive educational outcome was able to be achieved. Martin Birch added that on this occasion a young

person had been identified for secure accommodation and a package had been put in place to provide an element of this but it was not 'secure' and this was why it was classed as unregulated.

In relation to caseloads, Councillor Davison noted that unforeseen staff absences was mentioned and asked if the absence rate was high in the team. Gavin stated that the IRO team was quite stable, a lot of work was planned, however IROs were generally in meetings and there was not a backfill resource. Jill Colbert added that with the volume of cases dealt with by the service, one person being absent would take out a number of meetings on any given day. Gavin said that from the IRO perspective, when a need for support had been highlighted, they had been able to act on that.

Upon consideration of the report, it was: -

15. RESOLVED that the Children Independent Reviewing Team Annual Report 2017-2018 be noted.

Virtual Headteacher Report

The Board received the report of the Virtual Headteacher and as part of the agenda item, Simon Marshall provided some examples of Personal Education Plans which had been completed for children who were part of the Virtual School.

The Board had the opportunity to look at good, and not so good, PEPs for both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 3 and Simon advised that the completion of PEPs within timescales was excellent but the challenge was to address the variance in the quality of what was being submitted. The Board were informed that every PEP went through a quality assurance process and money was not released to the school until the PEP was deemed to be satisfactory. It was recognised that in those schools where the PEP was satisfactorily completed, it was used to drive the attainment and progress for the child. PEPs would continue to be challenged and their importance could not be underestimated.

Councillor Williams asked if schools had seen examples of good practice in completing PEPs and Simon said that this was a training issue. Schools were supported to reach the expected standards and it would be preferable to have joint training with the SENDCo and Designated Safeguarding Leads so that there could be a rolling programme of joint training for everyone.

Councillor O'Brien asked how many PEPs were returned to schools due to being unsatisfactory. Simon stated that it was not as many as might be envisaged and the individual context of the school needed to be understood. There was not a specific data set at the moment but this could be looked at for the next meeting.

Councillor Lawson asked if this version of the PEP was new or if it had been in use for some time. Simon said that there had only been very small changes to the document and the requirements were clearly set out. The drive around finance would

often get people to think differently and schools and academies had to engage when a student was looked after.

The Chair asked if a child's social worker had any responsibility with regard to the PEP and it was confirmed that the PEP went to the school first and then the social worker. Ideally all of those involved in the child's care should be involved in the completion of the PEP, however it could be done without the social worker being present.

Turning to the report of the Virtual School, Simon advised that the interviews for the Virtual School Headteacher had taken place and the post had been offered to Linda Mason. Linda was a highly experienced individual who had worked across the required remit, and also in SEN and school improvement, which it was felt would bring another dimension to the role.

It was noted that there had been a number of high quality applicants for the position which was an indication of the reputational repair which Sunderland was undergoing.

Simon commended the team for their commitment and hard work under challenging circumstances and reduced capacity and confirmed that the Virtual School had now moved into a demountable classroom at Tudor Grove.

As members of the Board were aware, the recent Ofsted inspection had found that Children's Safeguarding Services required improvement. The Virtual School had been involved in interviews at several times during the process and the report highlighted the comments which had been made during the inspection regarding the action which had been taken on recommendations since the previous inspection. There were positive improvements and the Virtual School had benefitted from strong leadership in recent years.

The Virtual School was also developing an online program for some virtual teaching as some children looked after liked the idea of having this flexibility. Ways of using IT to support young people were also being investigated and there was a focus on collecting the pupil voice in innovative ways as quite often, children looked after did not have the language to say what they wanted.

The report included some attainment figures which generally showed that children looked after did well at Key Stages 1 and 2 but attainment began to drop off at Key Stage 3 and 4. With regard to attendance and exclusions, attendance was good and there had been no permanent exclusions for children looked after, however fixed term exclusions had increased. All schools had been asked to talk to the Virtual School if they were considering exclusion so that other options could be explored.

Sunderland was high performing in relation to post 16 provision and young people not in education, employment and training and there was excellent work being done in linking young people with employment opportunities.

The Virtual School had been invited to pilot 'O Gravity' which was an exciting project based around learning coding and building a Minecraft Universe. The Virtual School was also to be part of the Local Cultural Education Partnership which was to be a

cross sector group aimed at improving cultural education for children and young people in their local area. It was planned to explore bursaries for children looked after to have cultural opportunities and was also incentivising young people to reach targets with a pilot taking place for Year 11 children this year.

Councillor Francis asked if the virtual learning format allowed immediate feedback to young people and Simon advised that this would be provide in different formats. Skype allowed a conversation with a young person's mentor and this model was being explored.

Councillor Francis also said that he would be interested to hear from young people in receipt of post-16 education about their experience of what was being delivered. It was noted that the commissioning of the service was the responsibility of the Council but once a young person was placed then the Virtual School provided the opportunity for ongoing support and contact. The Chair added that she understood that the Council's provision was being restructured so that an engagement officer would liaise with young people and the employer.

With regard to attendance and exclusion, Councillor Francis asked if any support was given to school staff and Simon said that this was provided through the Virtual School. Part of the PEP process was that if the school was having difficulty then bespoke training could be provided around the child and planning. There was wider general training given to SENDCos and safeguarding leads.

Councillor O'Brien asked how long it took to put alternative arrangements in place for a young person's education if they were excluded and Simon advised that this was done straight away, on the same day if possible. The partnership arrangements mean that a plan is in place before anything happens.

Councillor Marshall commented that there seemed to a gap in recording between PEPs and Liquid Logic. Simon explained that the Virtual School currently ran the same system which it always had; there were some technical issues but reporting was done through Liquid Logic. All staff had been trained on this but there were issues about how data was drawn through. Jill Colbert added that this was a detailed programme of work and TfC was in the process of migrating more services over to the new system. Better processes were being implemented through Liquid Logic but there were issues to be taken away and resolved.

Having fully considered the report, the Board: -

16. RESOLVED that Virtual Headteacher Report be noted.

Regionalisation of Adoption

This item was deferred to a future meeting of the Board.

(Signed) L FARTHING
Chair