

## CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

A meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board was held on 29 September 2011.

**PRESENT:** Councillor Carr (Chair), Councillors Brunton, G Purvis, P Purvis, Rooney, Thompson and J A Walker.

**OFFICERS:** K Douglas-Weir, S Harker, P Miller and J Wilson.

**\*\*APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were submitted on behalf of Councillors Harvey and C Hobson.

### **\*\*DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Name of Member	Type of Interest	Item / Nature of Interest
Councillor Brunton.	Personal/Non Prejudicial.	Agenda Item 4 – Virtual School Headteacher’s Report – School Governor, Complementary Management Board.

### **\*\* MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board held on 18 August 2011 were taken as read and approved as a correct record.

It was reported that the South Tees Acute Trust had discussed the OFSTED Inspection Report on Safeguarding and Looked After Children Services in Middlesbrough at a recent meeting. Trust Members had expressed surprise that the overall grading had been adequate, as they had received very good feedback from the Inspectors from a health perspective.

### **WELCOME**

The Chair welcomed members of the Children in Care Council to the meeting. Members of the Corporate Parenting Board had recently attended a Children in Care Council meeting and received a very impressive presentation.

### **VIRTUAL SCHOOL HEADTEACHER’S ANNUAL REPORT**

The Virtual School Headteacher presented a report to inform the Corporate Parenting Board of the progress of the Virtual School for Looked After Children. The Corporate Parenting Board had a responsibility to look after the interests of pupils in the Virtual School. The Local Authority had an obligation to report on educational outcomes for all those continuously looked after for a period of 12 months.

Appendix 1 to the submitted report summarised the key outcomes for Looked After Children in Middlesbrough in the academic year to 31 August 2011 and the priorities for development of the Virtual School for Looked After Children in the year ahead.

Outcomes for Looked After Children at the end of Key Stage 4 remained below the school population in general. Of the 28 Year 11 students eligible to sit GCSEs in 2011, 32% attained five A\*-C grades with half of those including English and mathematics. Outcomes for Middlesbrough Looked After Children remained in line with, or in some cases ahead of, Looked After Children nationally, based on the figures available for national outcomes. It was noted that where there were only a few pupils in a cohort, percentages could be misleading and could underplay the achievements of some young people. Nine pupils who attained 5 A\*-C grades achieved this level in more than ten subjects with one pupil achieving 16 A\*-C grades.

The outcomes for younger pupils showed results in line with, or ahead of national outcomes. However the gap between Looked After Children and the population as a whole remained.

Attendance of Looked After Children remained slightly better than for the population as a whole across all key stages.

At the start of the current academic year there were 338 Looked After Children on the Virtual School roll. Between them, pupils attended approximately 100 educational establishments of which a substantial proportion were outside of Middlesbrough, although within the Tees Valley.

The Virtual School roll was constantly changing and this affected statistical information as the Local Authority was required to report on those children continuously looked after for 12 months, as at the 31 March of the current year. However, the monitoring and support provided by the Virtual School began as soon as a child became Looked After and hence the roll of the Virtual School was always much larger than the group whose outcomes were reported.

A list of schools where Elected Members were Members of the Governing Body, with a breakdown of Looked After Children in all key stages in those schools, was available from the Virtual Headteacher.

A system had been developed to promote the exchange of data and allow the Virtual School Headteacher to monitor the progress of each individual pupil. This would alert the Virtual School Headteacher to any issues for Looked After Children wherever they were placed and inform the appropriate dialogue with Designated Teachers in their schools. Designated Teachers were an essential support to individual pupils as well as a point of contact for the Virtual School Headteacher.

All schools within, and out of, the Local Authority were asked to provide information on a termly basis about the progress, attitude and attendance of each Looked After Child. Where there was a concern, the exchange of information would be more frequent, and where appropriate there would be monthly meetings of school staff, the Virtual Headteacher, the social worker, carers and other professionals to discuss progress and plan ahead.

In addition to those pupils who were being closely monitored, a scheme was being piloted to provide additional mentoring. The Mentors would have skills and experience relevant to the pupil's age and stage of education. The Mentor would be an additional support to the pupil, their carers and social workers for any issues concerned with educational progress. The pilot would initially be for Y11 pupils in Middlesbrough Schools and the Mentors would be Officers from the Children Families and Learning Achievement Service.

A new Virtual Learning Environment was being developed for the Complementary Education Service and a section of this would be devoted to the Virtual School. This would provide a means of sharing information between designated teachers and social workers, provide revision and support materials for pupils to use outside of school, provide a secure mediated blog as a means of communication between pupils and appropriate adults and eventually extend the mentoring programme to all pupils regardless of the location of their actual school.

A protocol was being developed and agreed with schools not to permanently exclude Looked After Children. A means of supporting carers by providing educational support for Looked After Children from the first day of a full-time exclusion for those in Middlesbrough schools was being developed with the Complementary Education Service. It was anticipated that this time would be used to assess support needs to avoid any risk of future exclusions

The main focus of the Virtual School for the next year was to remove whatever barriers to learning existed so that Looked After Children left school with the same successes and opportunities as everyone else.

The Virtual Headteacher agreed to provide further updates on the development of the Virtual School throughout the year.

**RECOMMENDED** that the Corporate Parenting Board advise the Executive to note the information provided regarding the Virtual School Headteacher's Annual Report.

**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Following Members' previous agreement to re-schedule future meetings to commence at 1.30 pm, it was agreed that the next meeting would revert to a 4.30 pm start to accommodate the attendance of young people from the Children in Care Council.

**AGREED** that the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board on 10 November 2011 would commence at 4.30 pm.