

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

A meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board was held on 17 April 2019.

PRESENT: Councillors M Carr (Chair); Brunton-Dobson; Councillors; Hellaoui, McGloin and Uddin and Walters.

PRESENT AS OBSERVERS: J. Cain (Local Democracy Reporter).

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: V. Boyd (Adoption Tees Valley) and A. Ferguson (CCG).

OFFICIALS: S. Bonner, V. Davidson, S. Dorchell, P. Rudd, R. Scott, A. Williams.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors, Rooney, Sharrocks and J A Walker.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None were declared at this point in the meeting.

1 MINUTES - CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD - 9 JANUARY 2019

The Chair commented that the South Tees Multi Agency Hub was still on course to begin operations on 1 June 2019.

The Minutes of 9 January 2019 were accepted as a true record.

2 ADOPTION TEES VALLEY BI-ANNUAL REPORT 2018

The Service Manager for Adoption Tees Valley presented the Bi-Annual report to the Board. As part of the presentation the following points were included:

- The report had been presented to all other Tees Valley Authorities.
- The government's aims to regionalise services was to improve adoption placements for Children, especially with regard to timeliness and for adopters.
- The government also wanted to stimulate partnership working with appropriate agencies.
- Adoption Tees Valley had carried out a number of actions to try and achieve these goals.
- An Early Notification Process had been developed that enabled social workers to notify the adoption agency early.
- When an early notification was received the Adoption Agency could then track and monitor those children.
- Early Notification was working well.
- Early Notification also led to the creation of Permanence Champion roles. There were five such roles across all authorities and were senior social workers that could monitor referrals closely.
- Permanence Champions worked closely with individual social work teams and attended key meetings, as required.
- With regard to the creation of an Adoption Support Offer; this had previously been fragmented across all five authorities and there was no 'core offer'. As such, the Regional Adoption Agency was created.
- There was a dedicated Team for this service which was the most efficient way to approach the work.
- A great deal of collaborative work was being carried out with partner agencies.
- It was recognised that children with specific educational needs continued to need them even after they have been adopted.
- Adoption Tees Valley was placing itself as a resource for adopters.
- Adoption Tees Valley was trying to provide a three tier offer; Tier 1 was to introduce the service to adopters; Tier 2 was a targeted intervention offer and this included

training opportunities. There were 26 adopters attending a training course that was funded by the Adoption Support Fund, Tier three was for adopters to report problems or issues and adopter support assessments would be carried out.

- The Adoption Support Fund could be applied for by Councils who could apply for up to £5,000 per child, per year. £100m had been spent nationally.
- The fund was only guaranteed until 2020 and lots of bids had been submitted as at the end of Q3.
- Adoption Tees Valley was about to go out to tender to ensure that providers were accredited.
- There was an aim to meet sufficiency needs from a strategic perspective.
- There were challenges that needed to be faced, such as sufficiency gaps, however these were being worked on in a collaborative way.
- The amount of money spent by Adoption Tees Valley on the inter-agency budget had been far less than in previous years.
- Life story work was a challenge as there was insufficient staffing in place to undertake this work. However, there was now a clear plan in place.
- A further challenge was integrated working, however this was being encouraged with all partners including Virtual Schools, Health Partners and so on.
- Data transfer was a challenge for every Regional Adoption Agency and work was continuing with various partners.
- In Middlesbrough, the medical advisor's availability was a challenge as they were under pressure due to all Looked-After Children in the town approaching them for assistance.
- Statistically, Middlesbrough had seen some good news stories with specific children being placed regionally. However, with regard to adopters it was found that ethnicity and age were multipliers, for example if children were from Black and Minority Ethnic Groups (BAME) and older this meant it took much longer to find a placement.
- There had been 45 Early Notifications in Middlesbrough since the service opened on 1 May. Therefore, those notifications can be monitored.
- Up to the end of Quarter 3 15 Children had been adopted.
- Generally the service was performing very well.

A Member queried about the progress of placing children in the Tees Valley. It was confirmed that children had not been placed within the Tees Valley region but had placed within the North East. Given that the Adoption Service was regionalised it was more likely that if children could not be placed within their own locality it was easier for Children to be placed in locations within the Regional Adoption Agency resource.

A question was raised about schools awareness of the Regional Adoption Agency, and was there anything the Council could do to support this. It was confirmed that the agency attended designated teachers meetings and worked closely with the Head of the Virtual School. There was also a proposal to create a designated education officer within the adoption agency, but this was still being discussed.

A Member queried about the general proportion of children from BAME communities that required adopted places and if this was matched by the number of families from minority groups. It was also queried if there were specific mechanisms for tapping into the BAME community.

It was confirmed that there were a relatively small number of children from BAME communities accessing the agency, although families from BAME communities had been recruited from across all Tees authorities. There was no strategic plan to network into BAME communities, but this could be looked at going forward.

A Member queried what real time delays were being experienced finding BAME families for children. It was confirmed that a national search would be undertaken but should a lack of response be experienced this would not cause a delay to placing children as staff were proactive in finding solutions. However, it was recognised that work needed to be done in this area.

It was also commented that Middlesbrough had a Parenting Strategy and a Parenting Delivery Board and that links could be made with this.

A Member queried if Adoption Match was still live and it confirmed it was closed. However, the Government and other agencies were examining if this should be renewed. It was also confirmed that Link Maker was a commercial Service that the Council had bought in to and intended to renew it for the second year. It was also confirmed that families had access to Link Maker, and that families were encouraged to take children from the Tees Valley.

ORDERED: That the information presented be noted.

3 VIRTUAL SCHOOL ANNUAL REPORT

The Virtual Head of Schools presented the annual report to the Board but commented that some information presented was not contained within the report as new data sets had been made available recently.

As part of the presentation, the following points were made:

- The new figures showed that in English, Middlesbrough's Looked After Children performed 5% better than the national average. In Maths it was 12% better.
- In Maths and English combined it was a smaller improvement but still positive.
- The results were not as good when looking at other subjects such as Geography and History.
- Nationally the statistics had fluctuated, with 2016 being positive but 2017 having dipped.
- It was commented the assessment system was quite new so it was difficult to provide full and accurate information.
- Middlesbrough children had been quite well protected from the changes in how they were assessed.
- Key Stage 2 children were performing extremely well.
- There was no significant difference between Looked-After Key Stage 2 and their national peers.
- Grammar, Spelling and Punctuation was an area for development.
- Attendance for Looked-After children was 95% in 2018 which was in line with national trends. The most up to date figures showed attendance was 90%.
- 10% of Middlesbrough Looked After Children were persistent absentees, and in response a new system was introduced called Welfare Call.
- The creation of a Virtual School attendance officer was being planned that would support children and monitor attendance levels.
- Teacher training was being planned to show that Looked-After Children were a vulnerable group and the impact it could have should they miss out on their education.
- In terms of Personal Educational Plans (PEP); in 2017/18 only 44% of PEPs were classed as good or better. This resulted in the Electronic PEP system, which was accessible by Social Workers and dedicated teachers.
- PEPs underwent quality assurance by PEP advisors.
- As a consequence, quality of PEPs had increased from 44% to 75%.
- Pupil premium spend would be correlated with impact to determine what interventions were working.
- In terms of improvements; early years saw a notable improvement and data was being collated to establish why this was the case.
- Work was being undertaken with Teesside University targeted at Key Stage 4 Looked-After Children on a one-to-one tuition pilot scheme. This scheme was intended to give those Children an insight into University life.

A Member queried if training was provided to students that were involved in this scheme. It was confirmed that it was and was done on a voluntary basis.

- 20 schools had taken part in therapy which was attachment-aware therapies that happened in school on a daily basis to help young people.
- Virtual Schools were looking to fund an education support worker for adoption.
- Work would continue with the North East Association of School Heads to continue collaborative working. Some of the work undertaken in this regard was pupil premium for post 16 year olds.

The Chair praised the Service Area for their approach to improvements and work being carried out.

It was commented that after meeting with older children from the Children in Care Council (CiCC), some of their concerns included difficulties in how they interacted with their peers. As a consequence future work was planned with designated teachers about how to support those children socially.

The Director of Education had been asked to participate in a national advisory board, led by Queen's University, Belfast, that would explore reading in Children in Care and reading for life.

A Member queried if there were national models of best practice that Children's Services was aspiring to in order to realise its goals or were Children's Services a model of best practice. It was confirmed that some of Children's Services practices could be seen as best practice, such as the intervention centre run by the Virtual School. However, it was difficult to accurately gauge this as challenges experienced in Middlesbrough were different to other parts of the country.

A Member raised a query about children with low attendance, and what percentage this equated to and what support the schools were offering to alleviate this.

It was confirmed that schools were supportive and would contact the Virtual School should absences be detected. The role of the intervention centre was important in this regard which worked to support children at all levels including at home.

A Member queried at what ages PEPs became effective. It was confirmed that PEPs were initiated when a child entered education, namely two years old. After leaving statutory education a NEET plan was developed, which was something Children's Services undertook as a matter of best practice.

It was commented that Middlesbrough did not have the highest attendance levels and that this was a strategic priority going forward.

ORDERED: That the information presented be noted.

4 **NATIONAL ADVISOR FOR CARE LEAVERS**

In the absence of the Leaving Care Manager, the Director of Education stated that a report had been created and that an action plan had been developed in relation to this issue.

The Chair commented that this issue should be brought to the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board.

ORDERED: That the report and action plan be brought to the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board.

5 **HEALTH OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS**

The designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children for South Tees Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) made a presentation to the Board and made the following points:

- When a child became Looked-After the Local Authority had to arrange for a health assessment for that child. Most Children, when they became Looked-After, had some kind of additional health need.
- CCGs had to ensure they had designated professionals in post, including a designated Doctor for Looked-After Children. This post had been recently recruited to. The time commitment this post could commit to each Local Authority equated to half a day.
- With regard to the Health Assessment for Looked After Children; the initial consultation must be carried out by a medical professional, and the CCG commissioned South Tees Foundation Trust Paediatricians to undertake this work. This resulted in a Health Plan after which review Health Assessments were ordinarily undertaken by a registered nurse.
- Any health visits or consultations were taken with the child's circumstances in mind, such as their geographic location and existing relationships with medical professionals.
- For Care Leavers, health passports were issued that described their health issues so they had a record regardless of their movements within the care system.
- Health Assessments should be age appropriate and tend to be split 0-5 years, 5-10 and 11-18. This was further broken down by the state of health needs, such as physical or mental health and their health history.

ORDERED: That the information presented to the Board be noted.

6 CHILDREN'S HOMES - OFSTED REPORTS

While the full details of the inspections were contained within the reports, the Residential Care Services Manager provided the Board with updates on Ofsted inspections carried out at Gleneagles, Fir Tree House, Holly Lodge and Rosecroft residential homes. The full reports were issued to the Board as part of the papers.

Ofsted carried out inspections every nine days over the course of inspecting the homes.

The first home inspected was Fir Tree House, and received an overall rating of 'Good'. It was commented that the inspection examined Schedule 5 challenge, due to a resident with complex needs. This expected Managers to be as proactive as Parents in challenging the Local Authority about a child's welfare. During the inspection it was found that Managers could have been more challenging.

Another lesson learned from the inspection was the need for County-Lines training.

The second home to be inspected was Gleneagles which maintained an overall rating of 'Outstanding'. There was only one requirement as a result of the inspection and that was County-Lines training. The dedication of the staff at Gleneagles was noted by the Board, owing to the home catering for 36 children.

The third home to be inspected was Rosecroft which had already carried out County-Line training and so this was not a requirement of the inspection. The homes received an overall rating of 'Outstanding' for the areas of inspection.

The final home to be inspected was Holly Lodge, which received a 'Requires Improvement'. However, during the inspection the Home had to accommodate children as matter of emergency, contrary to its Statement of Purpose. Consequently, this affected the Home's Ofsted rating.

It was commented that only the most recent Ofsted inspection was carried out by the same inspector for all four homes. This had previously not been the case, and this would help going forward.

A Member expressed concern that, despite the Home having a moral imperative to accommodate children in need, the Home down-graded as a result. It was confirmed that as part of the inspection criteria, Ofsted examined how a child with complex needs being placed into an environment with other children with complex needs would react and the Home's Statement of Purpose did not allow for that.

It was confirmed that, in accordance with the Minutes of the last meeting, should Members wish to visit homes and gather information about their workings they could arrange this through the Homes directly.

ORDERED:

1. **That should Members wish to attend Homes to further understand how they operate, they contact the home Mangers directly.**
2. **That the information presented to the Board be noted.**

7

VOICE AND INFLUENCE CONFERENCE - FEEDBACK

The Director of Education provided feedback on the conference and made the following points:

- The conference was held on 6 March in the Crypt of the Town Hall and was led by the Children in Care Council.
- Updates on were provided by quorum voice and the data they had collected, as well as the Inclusion Strategy for which an Inclusion Apprentice was appointed to assist with contacting young people to establish what their difficulties were.
- An update was provided on SEND and the Mind of My Own App.
- There was a Call to Action for Voice and Influence Champions and would be at their first Networking meeting.
- As a result of the conference, one of the CiCC children was asked to be to be an inspirational speaker at Hemlington Links.
- Other members of CiCC sat on the CAHMS Steering Group and were asked to participate in a Health and Wellbeing event.
- There was the development of 'You said, we will' statements seven key themes for Looked-After Children were developed as well as five key themes for Care Leavers.
- It was hoped that the event could be an annual process.

The Chair commented that it was important that the CiCC play an appropriate role in the Corporate Parenting Board. The Director of Education agreed to be a conduit between the Corporate Parenting Board and the CiCC.

ORDERED: That the information presented to the Board be noted.