

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

A meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board was held on 11 September 2019.

PRESENT: Councillors L Garvey, A Hellaoui, T Higgins, J Platt and M Nugent(As Substitute)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: V Bond, Service Manager for Adoption Tees Valley.

No Wrong Door Officers- J Nicholson, Strategic Lead,G Carlton, Group Manager,M Garland-Collins , D/Sergeant and K Basnett, Communications Support Worker

OFFICIALS: V Banks, S Blood, B Bradshaw, A Brown, J Bromiley, T Dunn, A Ferguson, J Russell, H Watson and A Williams,

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor M Saunders, Councillor Z Uddin, Councillor C Wright T Parkinson , R Scott , S Williams and A Ferguson (CCG)

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None declared

1 ELECTION OF CHAIR PRO-TEM

Nominations were sought for the appointment of a Chair Pro Tem of Corporate Parenting Board.

Councillor Higgins was nominated and seconded and, following a vote, appointed as Chair Pro Tem of Corporate Parenting Board.

AGREED that Councillor Higgins was appointed Chair Pro Tem Corporate Parenting Board, until amended by the Board.

2 ELECTION OF CHAIR

Nominations were sought for the appointment of Corporate Parenting Board.

Councillor Hellaoui was nominated and seconded and, following a vote, appointed as Chair of Corporate Parenting Board.

AGREED that Councillor Hellaoui was appointed as Chair of Corporate Parenting Board and Communities Scrutiny Panel.

After Councillor Hellaoui's appointment as Chair she addressed the Board and thanked the Previous Chair for his dedication and hard work over the years.

The Chair proceeded to read a statement of intent in respect to a Councillor's role as a Corporate Parent.

AGREED- that the statement of intent be circulated to all Councillors for information.

3 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR

Nominations were sought for the appointment of Vice- Chair of Corporate Parenting Board.

Councillor Higgins was nominated and seconded and, following a vote, appointed as Vice -Chair of Corporate Parenting Board.

AGREED that Councillor Higgins was appointed as Vice- Chair of Corporate Parenting Board.

4 **MINUTES - CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD - 17 APRIL 2019**

AGREED- The minutes of the Corporate Parenting Board held on 17 April 2019 were agreed as a true record.

National Advisor of Care Leavers

The Executive Director of Children Services asked the Board to note that the National Advisor for Care Leavers would be revisiting Middlesbrough on 10 December 2019 to undertake a progress check against the work the Care Leavers Team have undertaken since the Advisor's initial visit.

ACTION- that the original report and action plan be recirculated to members of the Board for information.

Children's' Homes- OFSTED reports

It was noted that there were no Children's Homes OFSTED reports on the agenda, however when further inspection reports were received they would be submitted to the Board for information.

ACTION- that the previous Children's' Homes OFSTED Inspection reports be circulated to the Board for information.

5 **MOCKINGBIRD FOSTERING BID - VERBAL UPDATE**

The Director of Children's Social Care provided the Board with an update on the Mockingbird Fostering Model.

The Mockingbird model was an alternative method of delivering foster care with the potential to improve placement stability, safety and permanency for children and young people in care and to improve support for, and retention of, foster carers. It works with 6-10 foster carer family (clusters) to try and create stability for foster children.

There were a number of funding streams through the Mockingbird model , however an opportunity arose and a funding bid was submitted in August 2019.

The Director advised the Board that they had hoped for a decision in September 2019, however there had been a delay in the decision and the Director would notify the Chair as soon as a decision had been reached. The bid was for the total of £681,500.

The Chair queried contingency plans if the bid was unsuccessful. The Director outlined that there were plans in place, including 'no wrong door' and projects which would gain more resource.

AGREED- That the position be noted.

6 **MULTI AGENCY LOOKED AFTER PARTNERSHIP (MALAP) - VERBAL UPDATE**

The Director of Children's Social Care presented a verbal update on the key issues from the last Multi Agency Looked After Partnership (MALAP) on 4 September 2019.

The Partnership discussed each sub group of the MALAP and the key issues that arose from the discussion:

Education

The sub group is delivered by Virtual schools governing body and it has made significant progress on looked after children actions of the Corporate Parenting Strategy. The board were advised that Personal Education Plans (PEPs) have been developed and extended to all

looked after children and the training of social workers on PEPs had been rolled out and continuing.

The Virtual Schools Manager will be presenting at the next Foster Carers Conference in October to discuss the educational impact on looked after children.

The Board were also made aware that the curriculum for looked after children has been extended, this was in line with the OFSTED framework, which had a focus on social aspects, not just academic outcomes.

Care Leaving, training and employment

There had been some reports of issues with care leavers entering training and employment, and therefore a discussion would need to take place with Job Centre Plus.

The Director also referred to wider needs and support for care leavers, for example, housing. There was a dedicated officer within Thirteen Group to provide direction and support for care leavers.

Extensive work had also been undertaken in relation to 'staying put', ensuring foster children remain in their foster home of longer.

Participation and Children's voice

The Bright Start Survey, a questionnaire regarding local authority services completed by looked after children had been completed. An action plan had been produced from the results from the survey. This was evidence based and came as a direct result from the survey.

In terms of engagement and participation, one aspect addressed from the National Advisors feedback letter was the potential for elected members from Corporate Parenting Board to volunteer on the sub groups. Sub groups of MALAP usually meet prior to Corporate Parenting Board, so Board members can be updates accordingly.

ACTION-

1. That expressions of interest to sit on the sub groups be submitted to the Democratic Services Officer/ Director of Children's Services.
2. That the Bright Spot survey be circulated to Board Members for information.

Health and wellbeing

Alison Ferguson, Designated Nurse Safeguarding Children and Looked After Children, NHS South Tees Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) had reported on health needs assessments of looked after children. The Director was pleased to report a significant improvement with June data showing 90% compliance. There was still some barriers, including birth parent consent and issues of attending clinic with large foster families.

Placements and sufficiency (chaired by Ian Wright)

Significant work was being undertaken to ensure looked after children were put in the right placement.

Offending by young people from the looked after system was discussed and an update would be brought to the next meeting of the Board.

Following the updates a general discussion took place around the table. One member queried the retention of social workers and the Director outlined that nationally retention of social workers was a problem.

ACTION- that a report detailing information on the retention of social workers be submitted to

the next Board meeting.

The Board also discussed the issue of 'managing the missing' and a report would be submitted to the next Board meeting for information.

It was also agreed by the Board that a wider seminar on the role of Corporate parenting and work undertaken within children's services should be arranged for all Councillors.

AGREED- that the actions outlined above be progressed and the updates on the MALAP sub groups be noted.

7 **NO WRONG DOOR TRAILBLAZER PRESENTATION**

The Board welcomed officers from North Yorkshire's No Wrong Door model to the meeting. The aim of the presentation was to provide an overview of the No Wrong door (NWD) model, outline the benefits of implementing the NWD model and provide an opportunity for the board to speak directly to the officers about their speciality roles.

Janice Nicolson, Strategic Lead for NWD advised the Board that the Department for Education (DFE), introduced the Strengthening Families Protecting children programme, which invested £84 million over 5 years to support 20 local authorities. There were 3 children's social care innovation programmes (Hertfordshire Family Safeguarding, Leeds Family Valued and North Yorkshire County Council No Wrong Door).

The aim of the programme was to improve work with families and safely reduce the number of children/young people entering care by:

- Strengthening local practice systems
- developing services that build resilience in families
- facilitating a confident social work ethos that manages risk safely within the home.

The Board were made aware that the What Works Centre would be evaluating the impact of all 3 programmes.

All local authorities who met the criteria (have an Ofsted rating of Requires Improvement , have high rates of looked after children (LAC) numbers compared to statistical neighbours and rising rates of LAC in each of the previous 3 years) were invited to apply and be one of the supported local authorities. Middlesbrough was selected to be a Trailblazer authority for no wrong door.

What does it mean for Middlesbrough?

- £2.71 million funding has been allocated, however this is over 3 years, despite it being a 5 year fund project. The funding is set for 3 years in order to make the fundamental differences required within a certain area. It is very much hoped that after 3 years there is an enough core work to make the plans for sustainability and partnership.
- support to have a NWD residential /edge of care Hub in Middlesbrough
- North Yorkshire NWD and Middlesbrough will collaboratively develop a bespoke ad phased implementation plan.
- develop a share vision, language and practice framework
- Be supported to set up the Hub by North Yorkshire County Council's central delivery team
- benefit from building an integrated team with embedded specialists roles

Key aims

- safely reduce looked after children and reduce expensive out of area placements
- keep Middlesbrough young people more safely in their families and communities
- develop a Middlesbrough Restorative Practice Training Academy and,
- have an overall aim of improving outcomes for young people.

What is no wrong door?

'A non traditional approach to working with adolescents experiencing complex journeys- with an innovative residential Hub at the heart of its service'

The Board were informed that NWD provides:

- short term placements for edge of care support (in and out of care)
- a range of services, support and accommodation options
- embedded specialist roles working together (with a shared practice framework)
- An integrated team that sticks with young people on their journey.

NWD has been evaluated and continually builds its data base of impact and learning. This model has also been developed in other local authorities including Sheffield, Wigan and Bradford.

The Strategic Lead also discussed the 8 non negotiables for NWD and also mentioned the distinguishers to ensure NWD stays true to its vision and aims.

The Board were advised that NWD encourages whole children's Service Systematic Change and is a whole system approach to practice, in that, for example, NWD thinks differently about risk management and safeguarding adolescents, strengths based and restorative approaches and practice and is aspirational in that it builds self-esteem, foundations for the future and improving the lives experience of young people.

The NWD Hub model is a physical building but contains within that Hub- high need supported lodgings, bespoke placement options, Hub community families, supported accommodation and edge of care support. Another aim of the project is that the support the young person receives through NWD is streamline.

In terms of contextual safeguarding, the Board heard that North Yorkshire have developed a multi-agency approach to managing and reducing risk of vulnerable young people. This approach is agreed by key partners and is underpinned by a legally based data and intelligence sharing agreement.. The officers outlined that often there is a question of who the risk affects and with adolescents' it's a case of being brave.

In terms of positive evidence that NWD works, the Board were advised that in terms of quantifiable evidence, in the first 18 months of NWD there has been a 92% reduction in hospital admissions and 88% reduction in A & E visits and there were only 2 external placements used since NWD. NWD will work with local authorities and support them through sharing:

- evaluation, evidence, data, narrative, experience, design and delivery and learning and challenges.
- NWD is not just a 'lift and shift', it will be a bespoke model to fit the local authority context.

The officers further discussed the additional support provided to the Local authority and the benefits of partnership working with the police, health, education and housing.

The Board received information from Kirsty Basnett, Communications Support Worker and Matt Garland- Collins Detective Sergeant NWD regarding their specialist roles within the NWD

Hub model.

The aim of the Communications support worker was to screen every young person that's comes through NWD. To date they have screened 245 young people. Of those, 53% were identified as having communication need which was not previously identified. The young people that are screened are not normally those seen by speech and language specialists, however the Board were informed quite often young people will behave differently due to speech and language difficulties.

There are 4 main areas which the support workers identify:

- Comprehension (difficulty following instructions)
- Vocabulary
- Social Interaction
- Memory and Trauma

Kirsty is known as a Communication support worker but all officers must be speech and language specialists, however to the young people in the Hub and outreach she is 'Kirsty'. Relationships are key to the role, as they support not only the young people but the team and families.

The Board lastly heard from Matt, Detective Sergeant for NWD. He advised that there were currently 5 staff embedded within NWD:

- Analyst
- himself (oversee work within the Hub)
- Police officer (West HUB)
- Non-Warranting Officer (East)
- Leaving Care officer

It was stated that NWD was a cultural change within the Police, however from results it is clear that multi agency working has been successful. The police now have more intelligence on young people and that has been direct from NWD. The police have direct access to the support workers within the Hubs, and can tackle a problem head on. The Board were given an example of a young girl who had had multiple arrests, however was continually breaching her bail conditions. After assessment she had difficulty with comprehension so after being shown where is wasn't allowed she kept within her bail conditions. Matt praised the working relationship and partnership working within NWD as it has made a difference to young peoples' lives.

Following the presentation, a board member queried the funding for the trailblazer and its intensions. She was advised that the funding was ring fenced to NWD trailblazer.

A strategic group chaired by the Director of Children's services would be overseeing the Trailblazer and the Board members would be updated regularly on developments. Middlesbrough would be supported by Gaynor Carlton, Group Manager for NWD.

The Board also expressed their upmost support of the trailblazer and asked officers to report if they encountered any partnership issues. Councillor High also expressed his wish to raise the profile of NWD when the Middlesbrough model was launched.

Agreed as follow-

- That the No Wrong Door Trailblazer be fully supported.
- Further updates in relation to NWD be brought back to the Board.

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8 ADOPTION TEES VALLEY ANNUAL REPORT

The Service Manager of Adoption Tees Valley was in attendance to provide the Board with an update on the Bi Annual Report of the period 31 October 2018 - 31 March 2019 (including annual summary of period 1 May 2018- 31 March 2019).

The Service Manager provided a brief overview of the structure of Adoption Tees Valley, advising that the Government had set up a new programme , so that instead of individual adoption services, they have a regional Tees Valley service which covers the five local authorities; Middlesbrough, Stockton, Hartlepool, Darlington and Redcar and Cleveland.

The key drivers of Adoption Tees Valley were to:

1. Reduce the amount of children/ young people waiting for adopters
2. Maintain a larger pool of adopters, allowing faster placements
3. Looking at the journey of adopted children.

The key areas discussed within the annual report were as follows:

- Changes- fundamental change bringing together 5 adoption agencies, however new practices and information sharing have been embedded. One benefit from merging the service was the intake of approved adopters, which meant 47 families were placed with a child/young person.
- Service has increased and updated recruitment of adopters
- Service is now in second year of operation. Practices are deeply embedded and service is currently looking at referring children and finding the right families for them. Recruitment of adopters is getting faster.
- Corporate Parent Board approved budget of £440,000 to Adoption Tees Valley. Due to the pool of adopters in the first year, there was an underspend, however it is likely there will be high number of children looking for adoptive parents this year.
- Targets remain high for recruitment of adopters. Positive news in that a target of recruiting 60 adopters are set for 2019/20 and at present (half way year point) the service has almost achieved this.
- Big push to place children in this region as the flow of children is increasing.
- Sufficiency Strategy means more effective working relationships with Voluntary Adoption Agencies, who recruit and approve adopters. This allows the service to gain better communication and knowledge of the children coming the adoption service. Subject to court agreement, an anonymous profile can be developed and shared with regional adopters. The adoption journey is a long process however the service try and make a placement within 6 months after applying. The profile allows perspective adopters to see the journey of the child which allows links and matches to be made earlier.
- Key strategic priority is trying to place children from the area with regional adopters. Reasons behind this are to identify the best needs of the children and in terms of long term adoption support, the service can offer better support if we know the children and adopters.

Challenges

- Nationally more children up for adoption than approved adopters. This is a strategic priority and we are pushing recruitment.
- Placing sibling groups - Nationally DFE have asked to see if the service can recruit mixed ethnicity adopters, however this is not the main priority within this region. Main challenge is placing mixed sibling groups. The service manager advised they had recently placed 1 sibling groups of 3 with approved adopters and one other sibling group of 3 had been spilt , however the two families were in close proximity and were looking to work together to keep the sibling link.
- Medical advice- Adoption Medical Advisor has been in long term sick, however partner based at James Cook University Hospital has worked incredibly hard to achieve targets but there are immense pressure. There has been discussions with the CCG, however as yet a meeting has yet to be arranged. The health needs of an adoptive child are vital to gain a full profile, however the service is looking at alternative solutions to ease the pressure e.g. utilising adult health care assessments. Service Manager advised she would keep the Director of Children's Care updated on progress.

Changes to infrastructure

- Post Box into Adoption Tees Valley- this is a system whereby birth and adoptive parents write to each other on an annual basis. This is an important communication tool and builds long term life experience about families. Post box service has been brought in-house and the service has employed a Post Box co-ordinator who is a vital member of the team.
- Adoption Support Fund- had allowed service to outsource 10 providers to offer therapeutic support for adopted children. The service is also looking into developing therapeutic parenting sessions.
- Whole system change on fostering to adopt
- Birth Parent support contract- now serviced by Adoption matters.
- National Adoption week- looking at regional campaign and channels
- Virtual schools- new post for officer to work directly with adopted children. Adopted children are 20 times more likely to be excluded from school.

Following the presentation, the Board applauded the work undertaken by Adoption Tees Valley. A new member commented on the possibility of visiting Adoption Tees Valley and this would be explored.

Agreed as follows-

1. That the Bi Annual report be noted.
2. That the Democratic Services Officer arrange a visit for Board Members to visit Adoption Tees Valley.

9 LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (LAC) CELEBRATION EVENT 31 OCTOBER 2019 - VERBAL UPDATE

The Head of Education was in attendance and provided the Board with a verbal update on the Looked After Children (LAC) celebration event on 31 October 2019.

The event, which had been organised by the young people, was to celebrate Halloween but also the achievements of young people.

The Head of Education advised all members of the Corporate Parenting Board would receive an invitation to the event.

AGREED as follows-

1. That an invitation to the event be extended to all members of the Corporate Parenting Board.
2. An evaluation of the event be presented to the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board.

10 **CHILDREN IN CARE/CARE LEAVER FORUM - VERBAL UPDATE**

The Voice of the Child Participation Coordinator provided the Board with a verbal update on the work being undertaken with the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers.

The main points to point were as follows:

Mini Children in Care Council (Mini CICS)

- Mini CICS has now been established and had a membership of 5-6 young people aged 7-15 years.
- the forum meets every 2 weeks at Easterside Hub
- Sessions varied in topic and depended on interest from the young people. Mini CICS recently had a session called 'Chill with Bill' where the Police came to talk to them and undertake activities. Some of the young people were reluctant to engage due to past experiences, however the session broke down barriers and the young people felt more relaxed and more informed.
- The Council was due to have a visit from the Director of Children's Services with respect to 'No Wrong Door' trailblazer and will be preparing questions prior to the session.
- The Voice of the Child Participation Coordinator would discuss with mini CICS what they feel it means to be a Corporate Parent and feedback appropriately to the Board.

Children in Care Council

- In terms of Children in Care Council, the Director of Children's Services reported that they would like to hold their own celebration event and have approached local businesses for sponsorship. The event would likely to take place in December, however in future years it would be beneficial to look at one celebration to cover all looked after children, children in care, care leavers.

Care Leavers

- The Voice of the Child Participation Coordinator advised that two care leavers had met with the Mayor and they found this extremely useful. One aspect they discussed was Christmas and how this can be a lonely time especially for care leavers. The Mayor pledged to hold a Care Leavers Day and make it an annual event.
- The Care Leavers had also been looking at a model in Leeds, which is adopted as 'child friendly'. The young people are developing their own model entitled 'Middlesbrough Youth Initiative' and hope to roll this out across the town. This would involve appointing youth ambassadors to work with local businesses and asking them to provide spaces for 1 work experience pupil, one apprenticeship etc.

AGREED- that the position be noted.

