

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

A meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board was held on 7 November 2019.

PRESENT: Councillors A Hellaoui, T Higgins, A High, J Platt and M Saunders

OFFICIALS: V Banks, S Blood, B Bradshaw, J Bromiley, T Dunn, S Davies, A Ferguson, S Kitching, P Rudd, R Scott, H Watson, J Watson, A Williams and S Williams.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor B Cooper, Councillor L Garvey, Councillor Z Uddin, Councillor J Thompson, Councillor C Wright

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None declared

1 SUSPENSION OF COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 5 - ORDER OF BUSINESS

AGREED - in accordance with Council Procedure Rule No. 5, the Board agreed to vary the order of business as follows: 1, 2, 3, 4, 10, 5, 6,7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13 and 14.

2 MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 11 SEPTEMBER 2019.

AGREED: The minutes of the Corporate Parenting Board held on 11 September 2019 were submitted and accepted as true record.

Attendance list

The Chair requested that the officers usually in attendance at Corporate Parenting Board be added to the agenda for information.

3 ACTION PLAN- 11 SEPTEMBER 2019

The Democratic Services officer presented an action plan from action arisen from the Corporate Parenting Board on 11 September 2019.

The key issues highlighted were as follows:

- MALAP sub groups- Councillor Copper, Hellaoui and Higgins have volunteered to act as Member Champions in the sub groups.
- Adoption Tees Valley- visit has been arranged to attend Adoption Tees Valley on 15 November 2019.
- Schedule of meetings- these have been scheduled for the rest of the municipal year.

A board member queried the time frame in relation to the video from the Mini Children in Care Council on 'what is means to be a Corporate parent?'. In response, the Voice of the Child participation coordinator advised that this would be available for the January meeting.

The Executive Director of Children's services also advised the Board that the Foster Carers Celebration event was taking place on Friday 15 November 2019. The Board would be represented by Chair and Vice Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board at the event.

The Deputy Mayor and Thematic Drugs Lead also commended the Chair on her speech at the recent Looked After Children celebration event.

Agreed- that the action plan be noted.

4 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Chair read out the following statement to the Board and proposed that a vote be taken on the matter:

'I understand that there may be confidential information released as part of the next item, therefore under Paragraph 1 of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, I feel it would be prudent to exclude any press and public from the meeting.'

AGREED unanimously that the item be considered as confidential.

5 REPORT ON MISSING CHILDREN

The Risk and Resilience Manager provided a presentation to the Board in relation to missing children of care.

The board formally thanked the Risk and Resilience Manager and the team for their continued hard work and contribution.

Agreed- That the presentation be noted.

6 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was proposed, seconded and agreed that a resolution be passed to re-open the meeting to the press and public.

AGREED that the exclusion of the press and public be lifted.

7 INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICERS (IRO) ANNUAL REPORT

The Service Manager provided a report to the Board in respect to the Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) annual report.

The purpose of the report was to provide information on the Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) and their contribution to improving the outcomes for children in care and children subject to a protection plan during the reporting year April 2018 to March 2019. The Board were advised that the report was in line with statutory requirements.

The report covered the following areas:

- Legal context and statutory function of IROs
- IRO performance and caseload
- Review of priorities 2018-19
- participation and feedback
- summary, and
- priorities for 2019/20

The Service Manager outlined that the IRO team was fully staffed during the reporting period and the performance of the team had improved. There had been significant challenges to contend with including the increase in the numbers of looked after children.

Key points in relation to the review of priorities for 2018-19 were as follows:

- *strengthening the partnership commitment to the ownership of risk:* the reviewing officers have all been trained on signs of safety with an additional session held to

complement their role as independent child protection conference chairs. Training has been delivered on a regional basis. The training continues to be developed and the RAD unit tested the quality of practice through an audit in November 2018. The recommendations as displayed at page 6 of the report have now been embedded.

- *Ensuring the appropriate categories of abuse are used in child protection conference:* as a result of an audit, child protection minutes have been strengthened to ensure categories for child protection plans are clear.
- *Quality assure partners contributions to child protection processes-* a group has been established to audit the quality of GP contributions at initial child protection conferences. A working group had also been established to address issues and implement an action plan.
- *ensure quality assurances drives good practice-* IRO's have embedded the use of the IRO and conference chair monitoring tool before looked after reviews and child protection conferences. This allows the team to review and embed new practices for service delivery.
- *Strengthen the role of the IRO in care proceedings-* during 2018/19 IROs have received positive feedback from court in Middlesbrough in relation to their contribution in care proceedings. There have been instances whereby IRO's have been asked to remain involved in the post -proceedings to oversee a rehabilitation plan. There is now an IRO court statement which goes into Court with every child and the IRO's are fully embedded in this process.
- *Challenge clients-* these take place throughout the year and are now embedded as part of the quality assurance and challenge processes. At these clients, the officers go through cases by case to identify key themes (page 11 of the report). Two audits have been carried out on the challenge clients.
- *How we engage with young people?-* good work has been embedded including refreshed consultation forms for children/young people with support from the Children in Care Council and visits to children in care.

The Service Manager also outlined the priorities for 2019/2020 being:

- To ensure that children and young people are given the opportunity to share their views and that they are respected, listened to and involved.
- The RAD unit will ensure children and young people are aware of their rights
- That RAD unit will ensure that the child/young person's family are involved either through attendance at statutory reviews and conferences or by consultation as part of a series of meetings.
- Improve on the multi-agency contribution to the Looked after and child protection processes.
- improve on the timeliness of child protection conferences and reviews taking place
- The RAD unit needs to continue to raise challenge on an individual and service level in relation to practice issues and ensure robust mechanisms are put in place.
- That RAD unit will strengthen working relationships with CAFCASS by facilitating regular networking and training sessions for Family Court advisors.
- The RAD unit needs to improve on the quality assurance of children and young people's files to ensure practice is compliant and of a consistently good quality.

The Manager was thanked for her excellent presentation of the report.

AGREED- that the report be noted.

8

CHILDREN'S HOME- OFSTED INSPECTION REPORT- HOLLY LODGE

While the full details of the inspection was contained within the report, the Residential Care Services Manager provided the Board with an update on the Ofsted inspection carried out at Holly Lodge.

The Board were advised that this was the last of the children's homes to be inspected in

Middlesbrough. The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four children and young people who may have physical disabilities and/or learning disabilities.

The home was opened in August 2019 and received its first Ofsted inspection in October 2019. Previous to this, the home has always received requires improvement, however Ofsted rated the home as 'good'.

The Manager advised that in terms of children looked after being placed outside of the area, the home had allowed a young person to be brought back to the area.

Ofsted reviewed the home for the quality of care, needs of the children, staff and overview effectiveness of the home. One comment which was taken from the inspector was that the children were happy and the way that the children were moved into the home were exceptional.

The Chair thanked all the staff involved.

Agreed- that the Ofsted report be noted.

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

The Executive Director Children's services provided a verbal update on the MALAP. The Director advised that the MALAP had met on 5 November 2019 and was very well attended with a number of partner agencies, including the CCG and Thirteen group.

There was an update from each of the sub groups and it was pleasing to hear of elected members championing the sub groups. There was still an opening for an elected member to join the participation group, which was the interface with the children in care council, mini CICC and demonstrating that members are also engaging with other work associated outside of the Board.

Agreed-

1. That the updated be noted
2. That Councillor Saunders be provided with further information and sit as the elected member to the participation sub group.

10 **NO WRONG DOOR TRAILBLAZER- UPDATE**

The Executive Director of Children's Services provided a verbal update in respect to the No Wrong Door Trailblazer.

The Executive Director advised that since the meeting in September, the Council has made headway and now had a Board in place chaired by the Executive Director.

The Board were made aware of the progress made to date, including:

- progress on gaining planning permission for the 6 bed children's home
- recruitment for the key roles (police, speech and language specialist, life coach)
- DFE are satisfied with the progress made to date
- Neighbouring authorities, including Redcar and Cleveland will not be a trailblazer but have shown interest in adopting the North Yorkshire model, although they will not be going live until next year.

Since the last Corporate Parenting Board, officers had met with officers from Salford Council and a series of change workshops will be run before Christmas to engage with councillors and partners on the way Middlesbrough will operate.

The Executive Director advised that there had been recent media attention on unregulated placements and to reassure members that the Council was taking part in a survey at the request of the National Children's Commissioner. The Council had further received a letter

from the Secretary of State to ensure Middlesbrough wherever possible does not use unregulated placements.

The Board were made aware that unregulated provision can provide support to young people aged 16+ who require support rather than care. Middlesbrough does have unregulated provision in Middlesbrough and across the region but we ensure these are monitored and assessed to ensure the needs and care of the young people are met.

Placements were a key discussion point and therefore No Wrong Door was a positive step to ensuring more registered placements. The Board were also made aware that Middlesbrough's No wrong door would be called 'Futures for Families' and would tie with fostering campaigns.

There was a general discussion surrounding the placements of children and ensuring they are placed in the correct placement and area according to their needs.

Agreed- That the progress be noted.

11

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF SOCIAL WORKERS

The Principal Social Worker provided a presentation to the Board regarding the recruitment and retention of social workers.

The Board were made aware that in Middlesbrough and nationally there is a challenge to recruit and retain social workers, particularly experienced workers. The North East is unique due to the geographic area with 12 neighbouring local authorities so that social workers can move from one local authority to another without necessarily having to move.

It is a key part of the Strategic workforce plan to strengthen and promote the recruitment and retention of children's social workers and stabilise Middlesbrough's workforce. There was evidence to show that social workers leave the authority due to dissatisfaction over salary and therefore Middlesbrough has looked at ways of attracting social workers to come and work and stay in Middlesbrough.

The Principal Social Worker outlined to the Board that Middlesbrough offer a recruitment and retention offer which is a one off payment to social workers sign up to stay in an eligible post for 3 years. The offer is 15% of current salary ranging from £4,706 - £6,696 and is subject to normal deductions (tax and national insurance) and will not be counted for pension purposes or any pay calculations in relation to overview, sick pay or holiday pay. If the social worker leaves during that time, they would need to pay back a reducing %.

The offer applied to:

Recruitment- this applies to eligible social workers and forms part of Middlesbrough's advertised offer. The offer was for experienced social workers Grade K,L, Assistant Team Managers and Team Managers

Retention- eligible children's social workers Grade K, L, Assistant Team Managers and Team Managers.

The Board were advised of the progress to date, including:

- 83% of eligible social workers have signed up
- 68/82 eligible social workers
- offer continues
- review and analyse employee metrics to measure success
- in September 2019 turnover improving: 1.8%
- sickness 4.6%
- current vacancy rate 3% (workforce 158)

Middlesbrough continually review and analyse feedback from staff and want to improve morale for all staff and strengthen our offer for more experienced staff.

In terms of recruiting more social workers, a number of steps have been taken;

- Middlesbrough has partnered with 'frontline' and 'step up' programmes to attract a high calibre of students/recruits
- We have a strong first year Assessed and Supported year in Employment programme (ASYE) currently 31% of the social workers workforce.
- We offer high quality training and learning programmes
- Support career progression and continuous professional development , this will support staff to meet Social Work England regulations (Social work is a regulated role)
- We are part of phase 2 of the DfE National Assessment and Accreditation of social workers (Naas) implementation
- We offer access to up to date research and evidence to support practice.

The Board were also told about Practice week (theme trauma) running from 11-15 November 2019 and the Practice Conference running on 14 November 2019 which is open to all staff and Board members, foster carers are attending. There is also a wellbeing workshop as a way of saying thank you for their hard work and determination and to raise awareness of self-care.

Agreed

- That the presentation to noted
- That the information on the practice conference be circulated to Board members.

12

ATTAINMENT OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

The Head of the Virtual School and Head of Access to Education and Alternative provision provided the Board with a presentation on the education attainment of looked after children /virtual school.

The aim of the Virtual School is to challenge schools, provide financial support if necessary and to hold schools to account to ensure the needs of looked after children are met. It was important that looked after children are treated with extra care and provided with extra support to ensure they are able to reach their educational goals.

The Head of Access to Education and Alternative Provision provided information on the attainment of looked after children in Key stage 1 (KS1), Key stage 2 (KS2) and Key stage 4 (KS4). KS1 and KS2 data was validated and published on the Nexus data portal. The data presented was taken from that data source.

Key Stage 1:

- There were 15 students in the qualifying cohort spread over 12 different schools
- Generally we were pleased with the overall performance of this age cohort, however at KS1 Middlesbrough children did not achieve as well as their peers; Working at greater depth' (GDS) outcomes were below national and regional across the piece, as was the number of children; working at expected standard' (EXS) where performance was around 10 to 12% lower than the regional benchmark in reading, writing and maths.
- Schools reported there were significant issues with attachment and trauma, and therefore training was now being provided to teachers to ensure they were upskilled to deal with these issues.
- 6.7% had an Educational Health Care Plan which is about the half the level of regional and national peers.

The Board acknowledged that the statistics referred to a very small number of children and therefore for future analysis, it would be useful to view numbers rather than percentages.

Key Stage 2:

- There were 20 students in the cohort.
- These children have come out exceptionally well, which is pleasing as this is a good start for their move to secondary school.
- Reading performance was strong
- Writing scores were good at EXS though less strong at GDS
- 15% had an Educational Health and Care Plan which was lower than both regional and national comparators.
- The proportion of children with SEND support was broadly in line with regional and national.

Key Stage 4 (GCSE)

- There were 27 students in the cohort.
- We have seen some improvement in attainment since last year, and a good improvement in progress (based on KS2 results). It was noted that Progress 8 is Key performance measure and that a score of -0.75 is a substantial improvement on last year's progress 8 figure of -1.32
- A third of the students were not educated in a mainstream school; 5 students were educated in an AP setting, 4 in a special school and 1 in secure.
- 18 students were educated in Middlesbrough and 9 were educated out of area.
- Students were educated in 19 different schools and settings.

The Board were made aware that although attainment has improved marginally, it was still a concern. Only 1 student out of the cohort achieved 5+ passes including English and Maths at grades 5 or better.

The failure of students to achieve grades of 5+ needs to be a focus for further investigation, and appropriate action needs to be taken to address this going forward.

There was a clear issue with the English / Maths match. 8 students gained a 4+ in English, and 7 achieved this in maths. However only 4 achieved both. Further, of these 4 students, only 2 achieved another 3 further passes in other subjects. Targeting these students to ensure they and their schools are supported well will be an important strategy for the Virtual School.

The Chair queried whether the Pupil Premium was being spent on Looked after children. The PEP outlines what support is required and the Virtual School hold the schools to account, however there was pleasing reports that Middlesbrough schools do use this money for support of looked after children, and the PEPs ensure that the Pupil Premium is mapped to the need for the individual child.

The Officers outlined that when the National data was released, this would be brought to the Board.

AGREED: That the presentation be noted

13

EVALUATION OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN CELEBRATION EVENT- 31 OCTOBER 2019

The Head of the Virtual Schools provided the Board with a video of the Looked after Children event on 31 October 2019 to celebrate their achievement.

The event was attended by the Chair of the Board, the Executive Director of Children's Services amongst other officers of the Council.

The Head of Virtual Schools outlined that:

- The event took place at the Riverside Stadium and was open to Looked after children and their families
- It was a red carpet event
- The Chair of the Board and the Mayor both made inspirational addresses at the event
- 186 certificates of achievement were awarded
- As it was Halloween, most of the children were dressed up and all the children were very confident
- There was a surprise visit of Elsa and Olaf (Virtual schools staff) which made fantastic photo opportunities
- 6 special trophies and 2 outstanding achievement trophies were awarded
- Every child was awarded with a certificate to celebrate their achievements
- The feedback from the Foster Carers has been excellent
- There was a celebration with activities, a disco and live music, which was a welcome addition for the older children.

The Chair thanked all of the organisers of the event for making it so successful.

AGREED- that the organisers of the event be formally thanked and that the feedback be noted.

14

CHILDREN IN CARE/ CARE LEAVERS FORUM- PARTICIPATION WORK

The Voice of the Child Coordinator provided the Board with an update surrounding children in care/ voice of the child.

The key aspects raised were as follows:

- Middlesbrough is planning on holding a Voice and Influence conference next year, potential date is 18 March 2020, which will be multi agency event and will be asking the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers groups to plan and run the event.
- Managed to secure the Jury's Inn on 28 January 2020 for our Care Leavers celebration event, 5pm-10pm. Save the dates will be issued in due course.
- The Young Commissioners group is launching on 21st November 2019. This group will be working with Stuart Williams, Head of Looked after Children on the recommissioning of our advocacy service.
- Stuart Williams met with Mini CICC and explained his job role and how we can work together. Stuart discussed their expectation of Foster carers and why they are important.
- Mini CICC had also had a brief discussion with Helen Watson and Stuart Williams about the design of the new HUB in relation to 'Futures for families' and how this can be young person and family friendly.
- As a thank you to the Mini CIC we visited Alton Towers during half term.

AGREED- That the update be noted