

## COPORATE PARENTING BOARD

**A meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board was held on 7 August 2018.**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Carr (Chair), Councillor Brunton Dobson (Vice Chair); Councillors Higgins (substitute for Councillor Hellaoui), McGloin, Lewis (substitute for Councillor Walters), C Rooney and J Walker.

**OFFICERS:** H Clark, A Coulson, C Coxon, J Dixon, K Flynn, L McLaughlin and J Wilson.

**PRESENT BY INVITATION:** B Bradshaw – Children’s Services; L Cook – Public Health; T Parkinson – Chief Executive.

**PRESENT AS AN OBSERVER:** J Cain (Press)

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were submitted on behalf of Councillors Hellaoui, Uddin and Walters.

### **\*\* DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS’ INTERESTS**

There were no Declarations of Interest made by Members at this point in the meeting.

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

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board held on 22 May 2018 were submitted and approved as a correct record, subject to the amendments identified at the meeting being incorporated.

The Chair updated the Board that the item at agenda item 5) – Sufficiency Strategy Needs Assessment – would be presented to a future meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board.

The Chair advised that H Watson, Executive Director of Children’s Services, and A Brown, Director of Children’s Care, were both unable to attend the meeting due to a focussed visit being undertaken by OFSTED, therefore, agenda items 7 and 8 would be deferred.

### **CARE LEAVERS’ ENGAGEMENT IN EDUCATION, TRAINING OR EMPLOYMENT**

A Coulson, Pathways Team Manager, was in attendance at the meeting to provide Members with an update on the current position in relation to care leavers’ engagement in education, training or employment (ETE). A report had been circulated to the Corporate Parenting Board prior to the meeting.

The report explained that that the Pathways Team was dedicated to care leavers and that the Transitions Team, managed by Adult Social Care with input from Children’s Safeguarding, was dedicated to young people, with additional needs, leaving care.

The Pathways and Transitions Teams worked directly with young people to assess need and plan for their individual transition to adulthood, ensuring that each young person had the maximum opportunity to lead a happy, healthy, fulfilling life.

The Pathways (Leaving Care) Team was currently working with 138 care leavers. Current performance data indicated that 58% of care leavers (aged 16-25) were engaged in education, training or employment.

The national average for care leavers (aged 19 – 21) engaging in education, training and employment was 55%. However, when the same parameters were applied to the care leavers’ performance dashboard for Pathways (Leaving Care) Team in Middlesbrough, the percentage of care leavers engaging in ETE dropped to 52%. It was concerning, therefore, that 48% of care leavers were not engaged in employment, education or training (NEET).

In Middlesbrough, of the cohort of 58 care leavers (42%), 12 care leavers were attending higher education. This equated to 8% of care leavers attending higher education - slightly higher than the national average of 7%. 21 care leavers were NEET due to parenting or pregnancy and 8 were NEET due to illness or disability.

The information provided was based on Middlesbrough's 903 return requested by the DfE as a snapshot of young people in a particular cohort as at their 18th, 19th, 20th and 21<sup>st</sup> birthdays. In future the Pathways Team would report on all young people aged 16-25 and show their actual involvement in education, training or employment.

As the number of young people in education, training or employment in Middlesbrough was below the national average, measures needed to be implemented to raise aspirations and increase engagement levels of care leavers in education, training or employment. The Pathways Team and Stronger Families Team planned to implement the following:-

- Work Readiness Practitioner (Stronger Families) to work with the Personal Advisers and Social Workers to encourage young people to access learning.
- Training to be delivered to Personal Advisers and Social Workers regarding the role of the Work Readiness Practitioner.
- Personal Advisers and Social Workers to be more involved in implementing actions from careers information, advice and guidance provided by the Work Readiness Practitioner.
- Work Readiness Practitioner to continue to encourage young people to engage in ETE by delivering 'taster events' and one to one support.
- Work Readiness Practitioner to continue to meet with Personal Advisers and Social Workers on a monthly basis to ensure that young people are identified when they need support.
- Middlesbrough Community Learning to be invited to provide training to Pathways staff to improve retention on programmes.
- Mock interviews – explore the possibility of involving all Council departments in providing mock interviews for Looked After Children/care leavers.
- NEET event – September 2018 – Co-ordinate a NEET event specifically for care leavers and involve young people in the planning and style of the event.
- Work Readiness Practitioner and nominated Personal Adviser to become champions for apprenticeships.
- Promote the new National Apprenticeship Bursary for care leavers (launched in August 2018).
- Continuation of the Care2Work meeting to raise the profile and opportunities for Looked After Children/care leavers.
- Pathways Team to work closely with Virtual School to create a Personal Education Plan for young people not engaging in education, training or employment.
- Pathway Plans to be 'SMART' in relation to actions to engage care leavers in education, training or employment.

H Clark, Work Readiness Manager, and L McLaughlin, Work Readiness Practitioner, were in attendance at the meeting and provided information on how the Work Readiness Team was working closely with the Pathways Team to provide careers guidance to young people leaving care. The Teams were also working to identify what was not working well, ensuring that data returns were accurate and were working with looked after young people who were placed outside of Middlesbrough. The voice of the child was at the heart of all the work being undertaken and the experiences of care leavers. One of the next steps was to focus on how young people could be supported in sustaining education, training or employment.

The Corporate Parenting Board was informed that working together, the Pathways Team and Work Readiness Team planned to co-ordinate a series of NEET events. The first event was scheduled to take place at Teesside University on 11 September 2018 and would be attended by a range of education providers, personal advisers, social workers and Middlesbrough Community Learning. The organisations involved in delivering the event had been identified through the views of the young people and aimed to provide them with information and 'taster sessions' regarding the employment, training or education available to them. The young people's views on the types of things they would like to do would be sought.

During the course of discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- In response to a query, it was clarified that the activities outlined were primarily aimed at supporting young people leaving care aged 16-25.
- It was queried whether the proportion of care leavers aged 19 plus that were NEET was the reason for the high NEET figures. The Pathways Manager referred to the comparison table at page 4 of the report. It provided figures relating to care leavers aged 19, 20 and 21 who were looked after for at least 13 weeks after their fourteenth birthday. Of the 120 care leavers in Middlesbrough, 40 (or 33.3%) were in education, training or employment. The national figure was 49.6% and the statistical neighbours figure was 51.2%. However, 42 young people up to the age of 18 were in education, training or employment within Pathways.
- A Member of the Board asked what the more successful authorities were doing that Middlesbrough was not. The Pathways Manager stated that Middlesbrough was currently exploring replicating the same model as Derbyshire where a learning offer was made to all care leavers with agencies providing a commitment to care leavers. This would assist in reducing the NEET figures. In addition, the closer working between Pathways and Work Readiness would help support care leavers in Middlesbrough.
- It was queried whether, as part of the education, training or employment offer, young people were supported into apprenticeships. The Work Readiness Practitioner advised that she was an apprenticeship champion and her role was around providing careers guidance for young people and advising them of the options available, including education, employment, training and apprenticeships.
- A question was asked as to what level of discussion had taken place with the 80 young people who were NEET so that a better understanding of the barriers into education, training or employment could be gained. The Work Readiness Manager responded that the NEET event was just a small part of the needs of those young people and that further discussion with the young people was required. The discussion needed to be widened to those post-25 to find out what would have been good for them and also a discussion with the cohort coming through to the post-16 group. In addition, it was acknowledged that a better understanding of the needs of care leavers with disabilities and other vulnerable groups was required.
- In response to a query as to whether each of the 80 young people who were NEET had a personal plan to help them engage in education, training or employment, it was explained that all care leavers had a Pathways Plan which included pathways into education, training or employment.
- A Member queried whether all looked after children were aware of where to go/who to go to for support into education, training or employment and whether each member of staff had a certain number of young people that were their responsibility. The Pathways Manager confirmed that all Leaving Care staff had individual caseloads and each young person was aware of who their worker was.

**AGREED** as follows:-

1. That the information provided be noted.
2. That the range of measures to be delivered by the Pathways Team and Stronger Families to raise aspirations and increase engagement of care leavers in education, training or employment, be supported.
3. That the Pathways Team continue to monitor the number of care leavers engaging in education, training or employment and that the Corporate Parenting Board be provided with regular updates.

## **UPDATE ON THE LOCAL OFFER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE**

A Coulson, Pathways Manager, was invited to provide the Corporate Parenting Board with a verbal presentation to update Members on the local offer for young people leaving care.

C Coxon, Personal Adviser, Pathways Team, was also in attendance at the meeting and explained that local authorities must provide young people leaving care with specific support. As part of the support offered in Middlesbrough, the Personal Adviser held a consultation workshop with young people leaving care in relation to the local offer - an online document that would be reviewed every six months.

A survey was conducted amongst Middlesbrough's young people leaving care. The survey included questions on what the young people liked about the current offer in Middlesbrough; what they would like to see offered; housing, finance, health, training, mental health support, and education. All care leavers were asked to complete the survey within one month and the answers and thoughts they had shared were collated.

Various stakeholders had also been consulted and asked to make a range of commitments to care leavers, including:

- Council Tax – exemption from Council Tax for care leavers up to the age of 21.
- Revenue and Benefits – to pay the removal costs of moving into independent living; making a discretionary housing payment to a young person (when in receipt of housing benefit) moving into independent living/alternative accommodation to cover any shortfall in rent.
- CGL drug and alcohol treatment and care service – the recovery team to extend its work to all young people up to the age of 25.
- Community Campus – to provide a second 'crash pad' emergency accommodation for young people to stay for up to four weeks whilst working with them towards securing accommodation.
- Job Centre – looking at 'guaranteed interviews' for care leavers with the appropriate skills.

The local offer document was currently in draft form and would be designed by the Marketing and Communications Team once the content had been approved. The Children in Care Council (CiCC) would be consulted and decide upon the final design for the document.

In response to a query in relation to how many care leavers had engaged in the consultation workshop, the Board was informed that eight care leavers of the 135 invited had attended, however, approximately 60 had completed and returned the survey. It was highlighted that not all of the young people lived in Middlesbrough.

**AGREED** as follows:-

1. That the information provided be noted.
2. That the Draft Local Offer document be presented to the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board on 12 September 2018.

## **FOSTERING MARKETING STRATEGY**

J Wilson, Head of Placements and Looked After Children, informed the Corporate Parenting Board that her service had worked with Marketing and Communications to produce a Fostering Marketing Strategy aimed at increasing the number of foster carers in Middlesbrough. There were currently around 121 Middlesbrough Council foster carers, however, it was recognised that more were needed to provide Middlesbrough looked after children with placements in the area.

K Flynn, Marketing and Communications Manager, was in attendance at the meeting to provide the Board with a presentation in relation to the Fostering Marketing Strategy.

Market research and analysis was undertaken as a starting point to gain an understanding of current recruitment patterns in Middlesbrough. Further research to examine good recruitment practices across the country within local authorities and Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs)

was undertaken which highlighted that foster carers were predominately white females. The approach to recruitment needed to be broadened. National research on foster carers' motivations – a report produced by Sir Martine Narey and Mark Owers – indicated that finance was not the primary motivation for fostering.

With this research in mind, the Team had built Middlesbrough's objectives by looking at recruiting carers from a different angle, and had created the following objectives:-

- To raise awareness of the need for foster care placements in Middlesbrough.
- To create interest in becoming a foster carer in Middlesbrough.
- To increase the number and range of foster care placements in Middlesbrough, with an emphasis on:-
  - Emergency placements;
  - Teenagers 11-16 years;
  - Sibling groups; and
  - Mother and child placements.

The Marketing Strategy was innovative and aimed to create a new look and feel and was developed with foster carers to generate leads that would convert into Middlesbrough foster carers. It used a question and answer model to promote audience engagement and response. For example, "Could you be a Middlesbrough Foster Carer?" "Can you make a difference?"

The Strategy included a multi-platform digital media campaign consisting of a new website and all relevant social media channels as 80% of people under the age of 50 used one or more social media platform.

In addition, the campaign centred around the voice of the child – featuring real case studies - rather than the traditional carer model used by all local Councils.

The marketing campaign would include traditional methods of advertising, such as posters and leaflets, and literature would be displayed in doctor's surgeries, hospitals, libraries and other public buildings depending on the target group.

The new website, Fostering for Middlesbrough, <https://fosteringformiddlesbrough.org.uk/> was now in existence and being tested. Members were provided with a demonstration of the website.

The actual recruitment campaign would consist of the following:-

- Targeted digital marketing campaign
- Activity concentrated on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn
- Each enquiry would be responded to within 48 hours by the fostering team
- Weekly analytics and redirection

The website would be analysed to identify various factors including how long people were staying on a particular page, repeat user visits and whether people were leaving the site at a certain point. Social media would also be analysed for content and messaging receiving the most engagement. And finally, enquiries would be monitored and cross-referenced against time sensitive activity. This monitoring and analysis would allow for adjustments to be made as and when necessary.

During the course of discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- Reference was made to the new website and it was commented upon that it was not immediately clear that the site was intended to attract people to become Middlesbrough Council foster carers, as opposed to foster carers in Middlesbrough. It was also queried what Middlesbrough Council's unique selling point was, for example, better levels of social worker support, as it was not apparent on the website, and that the advantages of being a Middlesbrough Council foster carer should be central to the website and campaign.

- The Marketing and Communications Manager advised that many independent foster carers were transferring to local authorities, with the major reason for this being that they did not feel they were receiving sufficient support from the IFA and that many IFAs used national call centres. It was considered that support offered by Middlesbrough needed to be a key selling point to the campaign. There was a section on the website, 'what is fostering?' that outlined the benefits of becoming a Middlesbrough Council foster carer. It was suggested that a 'local offer' open to foster carers should be considered and that this could be included on the website.
- It was highlighted that the Middlesbrough Council branding appeared at the top and bottom of each page on the website.
- The Head of Placements and Looked After Children added that with investment in services, teams would have additional support element posts in place in the near future. There had been several IFA foster carers that had made the transition to become Middlesbrough Council foster carers and the fees offered to carers were now very comparable with IFAs.
- In response to a query, it was stated that the number of children in Middlesbrough placed in IFA placements was greater than those placed in Middlesbrough Council foster placements and that the gap had increased. Part of the campaign was to recruit more Middlesbrough Council carers in order to redress the balance.
- In response to a question regarding the age range of foster carers, it was clarified that there were no limitations on age and that assessments were based on fitness and readiness to take on the fostering role. Some children often responded better to a 'grandma or grandfather' figure.

**AGREED** as follows:-

1. That the presentation and information provided on the Fostering Marketing Strategy be noted.
2. That any comments regarding the new Fostering for Middlesbrough website be forwarded to the Marketing and Communications Manager.

#### **CARE CRISIS REVIEW**

**AGREED** that the item be deferred to the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board.

#### **SAFEGUARDING REVIEW UPDATE**

**AGREED** that the item be deferred to the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board.

#### **DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

The Chair proposed that the times of the future meetings be moved to 3.00pm on the following dates:-

- Wednesday, 12 September 2018
- Wednesday, 7 November 2018
- Wednesday, 9 January 2019
- Wednesday, 13 March 2019

**AGREED** that the dates and times as outlined above be approved.