

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

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

PRESENT: Councillors M Carr (Chair), J Brunton Dobson (Vice Chair), Councillors Hellaoui, McGloin, C M Rooney, Sharrocks, Uddin and J A Walker and Walters.

PRESENT AS OBSERVERS: D Johnson - Labour Political Assistant
K Whitmore - MICA Political Assistant

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: L Cook – Public Health; T Dunn – Head of Access to Education; A Ferguson – NHS; M Hackett – Head of Resource and Review; E Scollay – Director of Adult Social Care and Integrated Health; T Parkinson – Chief Executive.

OFFICIALS: A Coulson, C Coxon, J Dixon, S Mansell, H Watson and J Wilson.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

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

1 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD HELD ON 12 SEPTEMBER 2018.

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board held on 12 September 2018 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

2 DRAFT LOCAL OFFER FOR CARE LEAVERS (E-BROCHURE).

A Coulson, Leaving Care (Pathways) Team Manager and C Coxon, Personal Adviser, were in attendance at the meeting to provide the Board with information regarding the Local Offer for Middlesbrough Care Leavers.

A copy of the E-Brochure was circulated to Members prior to the meeting for information and was available on the Council's website.

Members were advised that the Children and Social Work Act 2017 required local authorities to publish information about the services it offered to care leavers to help them during the transition to adulthood and independent living.

Middlesbrough Council had developed the document 'Local Offer for Middlesbrough Care Leavers' which informed young people of their entitlements and signposted them to advice, support, and guidance, during the transition into adulthood and independence.

The Local Offer was created following consultation with Middlesbrough's care leavers and would be reviewed every six months to ensure all information was up to date and that the support offered was relevant to the needs of Middlesbrough's young people. The Local Offer could be accessed via the Council's website.

The Local Offer advised that to access the support, young people must have been in care for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14, including some point at their 16th or 17th birthday and also that young people were able to receive support from a Personal Adviser until the age of 25.

The Local Offer provided information in relation to:-

- Relationships
- Education and Training
- Employment
- Emotional Wellbeing
- Health and Wellbeing

- Accommodation
- Finances
- Participation
- Useful Contacts

It was highlighted that, in relation to employment, James Cook University Hospital had agreed to help care leavers to access voluntary work within James Cook and other voluntary organisations. This was also the case for Middlesbrough Council with departments willing to offer volunteering opportunities to gain experience. Middlesbrough Council would also provide a guaranteed interview for their apprenticeships and jobs for care leavers who met the essential criteria.

The Board was informed that within the Pathways Leaving Care Team, there was a dedicated mental health worker from CAMHS and a LAC nurse so that young people could access support directly from the Pathways Team. The C-Card scheme was also available through Pathways which provided young people with contraception and advice in relation to sexual health.

The Local Offer document had been shared with the Children in Care Council (CiCC) and they would continue to be consulted each time the document was due to be updated. In addition the document had been circulated to support workers and partners to ensure awareness of care leavers' entitlements.

The Chair commended those involved in producing the document and thanked the Officers for their presentation.

AGREED that the content of the Local Offer for Middlesbrough Care Leavers document be noted.

3 OFSTED FOCUSED VISIT AUGUST 2018 - FINDINGS AND ACTION PLAN.

H Watson, Executive Director of Children's Care, provided the Board with an update in relation to the Focused Visit undertaken by Ofsted on 7 and 8 August 2018.

The letter from the Ofsted Inspector, dated 31 August 2018, summarising the findings of the visit was circulated to the Board prior to the meeting.

In summary, there were no areas requiring priority action and no children were found to be at risk. In response to the findings from the visit, a Practice Improvement Action Plan and a Quality of Practice Action Plan had been produced. Both Action Plans had been circulated to the Board prior to the meeting and it was acknowledged that work to complete all of the actions was moving at pace and that all outstanding actions were on target for completion.

During the ensuing discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- In response to a query as to whether the findings from the focused visit appeared to be a fair evaluation, the Executive Director stated that it had been a rigorous but fair process. It was highlighted that, since the inspection, work with partner agencies had significantly progressed and a Strategic Partnership Board, chaired by the Council's Chief Executive, had been established. In addition, plans were well underway to establish a South Tees Children's Hub which would use a joint operating model with Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland, and relevant partners at 'the front door' of Children's Services.
- It was highlighted that, in relation to the use of the Signs of Safety model for all assessments and plans, more than 200 staff had now completed Signs of Safety training. It was acknowledged that this was a big culture change and would involve changing working systems and practices and the way in which staff worked with families. Progress to date was very positive.

- It was queried how staff had felt upon receiving the findings of the focused visit inspection letter and what impact the Signs of Safety training had on staff. The Executive Director responded that 'front door' staff were extremely positive regarding the Signs of Safety training. A specialist consultant had been used to ensure that training was bespoke to each of the teams within Children's Services in order to equip staff with the skills and tools needed to use the model effectively within their own areas. The Chief Executive added that the areas for improvement identified within the inspection letter were not a criticism of staff but related to the operating systems which placed undue demands on staff. The Action Plans addressed those areas and progress was being made, particularly in relation to improved partnership working.
- The Chair acknowledged that change was always difficult, however, it was recognised during the focused visit that staff remained positive whilst working under pressure and were on board with the improvement actions.

AGREED that the update information provided and the content of the Ofsted Focused Visit (August 2018) letter and subsequent Action Plans be noted.

4

BRIGHT SPOTS PROGRAMME/VOICE OF THE CHILD.

J Wilson, Head of Looked After Children and Corporate Parenting, updated the Board in relation to the Bright Spots Programme, developed by Coram Voice with the University of Bristol, aimed at improving the wellbeing of children and young people in care.

Two surveys - 'Your Life, Your Care' and 'Your Life Beyond Care' - had been developed with children and young people and aimed to gain an insight into the lives of Middlesbrough's Care Leavers.

The surveys had been completed throughout October, however, the deadline for completion of the surveys had been extended to 9 November 2018. There had been a very high response rate, particularly from the older age group, which currently stood at around 75% return which accounted for a large proportion of Middlesbrough's care leavers.

The findings of the surveys would be shared with the Children in Care Council who would develop a report and action plan to be presented at the Voice of the Child Participation Conference on 28 January 2019. It was proposed that the report findings and feedback following the conference should be presented to the Corporate Parenting Board.

Members were informed that relevant Officers had attended the Regional Children in Care Council on 2 November 2018 which had included a workshop run by a group of Middlesbrough's care leavers. The young people had shared their very powerful and emotional stories and experiences and how they had dealt with grief and loss. The young people were keen to present a similar version of the workshop to the Corporate Parenting Board.

AGREED as follows:-

1. **That the update information in relation to the Bright Spots Programme be noted.**
2. **That the Pathways Team be congratulated on their work in achieving a 75% response rate from Middlesbrough's care leavers.**
3. **That arrangements be made for the Children in Care Council to replicate the workshop of their experiences in care/leaving care for the Corporate Parenting Board, on a date to be determined, and that members of the Council's Leadership Management Team (LMT) also be invited.**
4. **That feedback on the findings of the surveys be presented to a future meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board, following the Participation Conference on 28 January 2019.**

5 SOUTH TEES MULTI AGENCY CHILDREN'S HUB - OUTLINE BUSINESS PLAN.

The Executive Director of Children's Services provided the Corporate Parenting Board with an update in relation to the establishment of a South Tees Multi Agency Children's Hub which would operate across the Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland geographical areas. It would provide a single point of access ensuring appropriate and timely sharing of information, risk assessment and decision making for vulnerable children and their families.

The South Tees Multi Agency Children's Hub addressed some of the issues raised within the Ofsted Focused Visit letter and would deliver integrated partnership working between the two local authorities and partner agencies including Police and Health.

A Project Board had been established and significant work-streams were in place. An Outline Business Case had been produced and work on a full Business Case was ongoing, with a view to moving to the new operating model by April 2019. The Business Case would be presented to a future meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board.

AGREED as follows:-

1. **That the information provided be noted.**
2. **That the Business Case for the South Tees Multi Agency Children's Hub be presented to a future meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board.**

6 FOSTERING MARKETING PLAN - UPDATE ON IMPACT.

S Mansell, Fostering Team Manager, was in attendance at the meeting to provide Members of the Board with an update regarding the impact of the fostering marketing plan.

All fostering information literature and website/social media content had now been refreshed and updated to reflect the new fostering marketing plan. Initial feedback had been very positive and the conversion rate was good. There had been 118 expressions of interest since the introduction of the new marketing material and the social media campaign would give the opportunity to analyse responses from specific groups.

It was highlighted that Middlesbrough currently had 127 approved foster carers. In addition there were currently: 15 initial expressions of interest; seven potential foster carers at the assessment stage (stage 1) and eight potential foster carers in the preparation for Family Placement Panel stage (stage 2).

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

- In response to a query from a Member of the Board, it was explained that Middlesbrough had lost some of its foster carers due to demographics, predominantly the age of the carers or carers going on to provide permanent placements and no longer being able to offer foster care placements. However, it was noted that Middlesbrough had attracted a number of transfers from Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) which was positive. Carers had indicated that they very much valued the support and continuity offered by Middlesbrough Council in terms of having a named supervising social worker and named social worker for the child in placement.
- In relation to a query regarding the number of Connected Persons Carers (Kinship/family and friends carers) it was explained that numbers were counted separately to foster carers and there were currently 17 fully approved connected person's carers. It was worth noting that there were significantly more than 17 connected persons carers that had been assessed but did not meet the threshold to become approved foster carers and a high proportion were temporarily approved before moving on to gain Special Guardianship Orders.
- Middlesbrough particularly wanted to attract foster carers able to care for older children (11+), large sibling groups, children with complex needs and parent and child

placements. The fostering campaign material was flexible and could be changed to target specific groups.

AGREED that the information provided be noted and that a further update be provided to the Corporate Parenting Board in six months' time.

7 LEAVING CARE PEER CHALLENGE.

The Executive Director of Children's Social Care advised the Corporate Parenting Board that the Pathways (Leaving Care) Team was the subject of a peer challenge between 12 and 14 November 2018.

It was explained that peer challenges were sector-led, voluntary visits from a team of peers designed to help local authorities assess their progress and provide feedback for further development and improvement.

The Peer Challenge Team would include the Director and Assistant Director of Redcar and Cleveland's Children's Services and LGA associates who would require sight of a range of documents. As part of the peer challenge, the Pathways Team Manager was asked to complete a self-assessment of the service and copies of the document were made available at the meeting for Members of the Board.

The Peer Challenge Team would look at:-

- The Council's strategic approach to care leavers, particularly around the commissioning of services and its role as a corporate parent.
- The support provided to care leavers who were not in employment, education and training (NEET).
- Participation of care leavers in service development and the voice of the young person.
- Role of partners in supporting care leavers.
- Pathway planning and links with Personal Education Plans.
- Quality of practice, in particular around challenging cases and evidencing improved outcomes.

A Member of the Board commented that Children's Services should be commended for its commitment to the peer challenge process in order to drive service improvement.

The Executive Director hoped that feedback on the peer challenge would be available to report back to the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board on 9 January 2018.

AGREED as follows:-

1. **That the information provided be noted.**
2. **That feedback from the Peer Challenge review of the Pathways (Leaving Care) Team be presented to a future meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board.**

8 CHILDREN'S SERVICES PERFORMANCE DATA.

The Head of Service for Looked After Children and Corporate Parenting advised the Board that significant advances had been made in relation to the recording of performance data in Children's Services through the use of QlikView Performance Dashboard.

The performance dashboard captured information relating to all open cases within Children's Services and allowed Managers to quickly identify and monitor critical issues within children's services' cases, including key partner information such as health checks and dental checks,

etc. It also provided Managers with the opportunity to report key issues for their Team to Heads of Service who then subsequently reported to the Director of Children's Care and the Executive Director of Children's Services, driving improved performance within the service.

It was suggested that the Corporate Parenting Board be provided with a demonstration of the Performance Dashboard at a future meeting. The Board was also asked to consider whether it wished to receive regular performance reports and, if so, the types of information it would be interested to receive, for example, the numbers of Children in Need, Child Protection cases and Children Looked After, any particular emerging trends or patterns, information in relation to particular age groups, ethnicity, education, etc.

AGREED as follows:-

1. **That the Corporate Parenting Board be provided with a demonstration of the performance dashboard, at a future meeting.**
2. **That, following a demonstration of the performance dashboard, the Board determines the types of information it wished to receive in a regular performance report submitted to the Board.**
3. **Any suggestions in relation to the types of information for inclusion within the regular performance report should be forwarded to the Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board or the Head of Looked After Children and Corporate Parenting.**

9 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS.**

Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) - Safeguarding Pressures.

The Executive Director of Children's Services advised the Board that research undertaken by the ADCS into safeguarding pressures had been released.

The sixth phase of the study pulled together survey responses from 92% (140) of all local authorities in England, the highest ever response rate, covering 11.3 million (95%) children and young people under the age of 18. This data and existing data provided an insight into the safeguarding related pressures facing children's services across the country.

Two documents, released by the ADCS - An Executive Summary of Safeguarding Pressures Phase 6 and the accompanying press release - would be circulated via email to Members of the Board and invitees.

AGREED that the Executive Summary of Safeguarding Pressures Phase 6, and associated press release, be circulated to Members of the Corporate Parenting Board, and its invitees, following the meeting.