

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

A meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board was held on Monday 14 December 2020.

PRESENT: Councillors A Hellaoui (Chair), T Higgins (Vice-Chair), A High, J McTigue, J Platt, M Smiles and Z Uddin

PRESENT BY INVITATION: Councillors B Cooper, C Dodds, L Mason, D McCabe and J Rathmell

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

OFFICERS: S Butcher, S Davies, R Farnham, R Hamer, P Jemson, Rowan, P Rudd, Bradshaw, Hunter and Robinson

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors L Garvey, M Nugent, J Thompson, C Wright and J Walker

20/39 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

20/40 **MINUTES- CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD- 28 OCTOBER 2020**

The minutes of the Corporate Parenting Board held on 28 October 2020 were read and agreed as a true record.

20/41 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received at this point in the meeting.

20/42 **I LAC NOTHING**

The Chair shared a video of a poem entitled ' I LAC nothing', which was to set the scene and remind members their role as corporate parents.

AGREED- That the poem be noted.

20/43 **ACTION PLAN- 28 OCTOBER 2020**

The Democratic Services Officer presented the action plan from the meeting held on 28 October 2020.

AGREED- That the actions be noted.

20/44 **SUSPENSION OF COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO.5- ORDER OF BUSINESS**

AGREED - in accordance with Council Procedure Rule No. 5, the Chair agreed to vary the order of business as follows; item 9, 6, 7,8,9,10,11, 12,13,14.

20/45 **VOICE OF THE CHILD/ PARTICIPATION UPDATE**

The Chair welcome the Beth Bradshaw, Voice of the Child Coordinator and Laurie Hunter, support officer for the Member of Youth Parliament (MYP)for Middlesbrough to the meeting.

The Support officer firstly shared an online blog which had been produced by the member of youth Parliament for Middlesbrough and Deputy Member of Youth Parliament. The representatives had had graphic made to be used on their blog.

The Support officer read out the blog from the Deputy Member of Youth Parliament from Middlesbrough, which was as follows:

Hi everyone!

Recently, myself (Batool the Deputy Member of Youth Parliament) and Muskaan (the Member of Youth Parliament) have aimed to finalise the details of the Middlesbrough Youth Council along with Laurie our support officer. So far we have:

- Created a video to be sent to Schools/Youth Providers and shared on Social Media*
- Created a leaflet for schools to put on display*
- Created a graphic to be shared on social media*
- Created our letter to send to headteachers*
- Created an expression of interest form for young people*
- Two letters from Deputy mayor Antony High to be sent to schools and Youth Providers*

Our support officer (Laurie Hunter) and Beth Bradshaw have met with the Deputy Mayor to converse about the Youth Council and to think about the dates we would like to launch everything. The launch is being worked on at the moment, but hopefully we will be able to share very soon!

The Support officer further advised that the launch of the Youth Council would be taking place in the New Year, and final plans were being discussed with the Mayor. It was a very exciting opportunity and the representative has outlined that for every Corporate Parenting Board meeting, they will provide a blog update.

The Chair asked the Support Officer to convey the Board thanks to the MYP and DMYP.

The Voice of the Children Coordinator went on to provide an update to the Board in relation to Participation. Her presentation covered:

- The Middlesbrough Children Matter website demonstration*
- An Update on Participation*
- An update on wider Children's services communications*
- The Tell us More Survey at a glance*

The Board were impressed with the Middlesbrough Children Matter website, which was designed with young people and thanked all staff for their support and work in ensuring this went live.

The Coordinator outlined that she had been working in partnership with the centre for practice excellence (Charlotte) to embed the voice of the child on the front line. This has been done by:

- To ensure that team plans are focused on voice of the child*
- To clearly evidence voice of the child and the impact*
- To improve compliance and recording*
- Identify a voice of the child lead in each team who is responsible for sharing the pro-forma with the team*
- Identify any barriers to visiting children alone or in time*
- Exploring meaningful direct work*

- Sharing the Middlesbrough Children Matter Mission and Vision with staff teams.
- 13 teams started working with the Practice lead in December 2020.

In terms of future plans the Coordinator outlined that the advert was out for the Participation officer and plan was for this officer to work alongside the Practice lead to be present in Teams and also work alongside the teams to meet children and young people at point of referral.

In terms of other work, 2 of our Care Leavers are to be employed as Apprentices and their roles include working in our Futures for Families team, working with the Principle Social worker to support the training and development of the workforce and supporting the Participation team with their work.

- Pathways are running a Care Leavers drop in on a Friday morning with their allocated CAMHS worker as a result of feedback from the Care Leavers forum.
- The Participation Officer role is now live for recruitment. The Care Leavers forum are planning the interviews that will take place in January 2021.
- Xavier has designed the Christmas card that will be sent to all looked after children, Care Leavers and staff.
- The launch of Middlesbrough Virtual Youth Council will take place on Thursday 14th January 2021
- They had been a fantastic response to the Christmas hamper and all Care Leavers who are living independently or in semi-independent living will receive a Christmas Gift Hamper

The Board were also made aware that the Participation team had run Middlesbrough Children Matter value and behaviour campaign and provided an example to the Board. This has been shared with the workforce and on social media.

In terms of wider children services communication, the service does the following:

- Fortnightly newsletters sent to the workforce from Rachel Farnham (Director of Children's Care) and Rob Brown

(Director of Education and Partnerships)

- Fortnightly newsletters from the Children with Disabilities team and Pathways are added to the website
- Ran a Middlesbrough Children Matter values and behavior campaign which was shared with the workforce & social media.
- Middlesbrough Mindfulness month – our Care Leavers forum wanted to run a month of mindfulness to cheer people up during lockdown. 1 Mindfulness quote a day was circulated using social media, email and the text service
- Rebranded Twitter - #Middlesbrough Children Matter 370 followers – 250 impressions
- Middlesbrough Children matters website launch tweet got 6,123 impressions and 300 engagements and 76 clicks on the website.
- The service team created a Middlesbrough Children Matter Instagram which has 50 followers

- BoroMYP has 158 followers
- BoroDeputyMYP has 135 followers

Planned a service specific roadshow to discuss progress on the Improvement Journey with each service

The Coordinator also exemplified about the work within the Engagement groups:

Mini Children in Care Council - 5 members - *An internal email has gone out to all resource workers and social workers to encourage engagement of children and young people in this group. Sue Butcher has also encouraged staff to have conversations with young people about attending this group.*

Children in Care Council -A virtual Children in Care Council meeting planned for Monday 21st December. A full communications plan is in place to encourage Social Workers and Independent Reviewing Officers to encourage their young people to attend.

Care Leavers forum- We have 6 active members of the group. We meet weekly and speak regularly via the Care Leavers forum Whatsapp group. A CAMHS worker attends every session to support any mental health needs and a socially distance Christmas walk has been organised.

Recent tasks:

- The recruitment of the Participation Officer, planning the interviews
- The development of the Tell Us More Survey questions to ensure the tone is right
- Planning the Care Leavers Christmas card competition.
- Attending the Life Story work task and finish group. This was a new group headed by Siobhan Davies. The task and finish group membership is multi agency and involves for example, a care leaver, CAHMS, Future for families, social workers etc.

At the last meeting of the Board, the members had asked for some further information on the Tell us more survey. It was reported that there were:

- 150 responses
- 80 where completed by a parent/carer
- 67 completed by child/young person
- 3 did not specify.

Key themes from the survey were:

- Young people felt involved in decisions
- Young people feel safe with their worker

The Coordinator outlined that as the survey was carried out some time ago (2019), she will be working with the officers involved to go through a new process and will update the Board at the next meeting.

The Chair and Board thanked the Coordinator and team for all their support and hard work.

Agreed-

- That the information be noted.

- That an update on the Tell Us More Survey be provided at the next meeting.

MALAP

The Chair provided an update to the Board in relation to the MALAP spot light. The first issue was to gather information from other Local Authorities in relation to their good practice arrangements for Corporate Parenting Board.

There were 8 local authorities identified and questions were submitted in relation to their practice arrangements. 5 interviews have been completed and once all have been completed, the information will be formulated and circulated to the Board.

The Chair further outlined that the second spotlight would examine the Voice of the Child and work would commence in the New Year.

AGREED-

- To note the work undertaken within the spotlight report.

Regulation 44

The Head of service provided an update on Children's Home Regulations 2015. Regulation 44 visits are when an Independent Person visits a children's residential home on a monthly basis. It is the role of the Regulation 44 Visitor to write a report that talks about how the home is being run. The person checks that the children are being kept safe and how well their wellbeing is being promoted. This means that they need to check that the rules that the children's homes have to follow (The Children's Homes Regulations) are being done. This includes making sure that the wishes and feelings of the children in the home are being listened to and that there are meetings happening in the home for them to have their say.

The Regulation

44 visitor does not have to say if they are visiting and may come "unannounced"

They will look at the files of the children who live in the home. They will need to check they have the child's permission to do this as well as the permission from the social worker.

The visitor will also look around the home to check that it is a safe place to live and that there are fire alarms and extinguishers in place. They will also make sure it is decorated well and that the children and young people have comfortable bedrooms and places to relax. The visitor will also ask to speak to the children and young people, on their own if they want to find out if they are happy living in the home and the things that are written in their files are happening. Since Covid the visits have been a virtual tour of the homes.

The Head of Service advised that there is a focus and the Regulation 44 visitor will look at 9 aspects:

- The quality and purpose of care standard (see regulation 6)
- The children's views, wishes and feelings standard (see regulation 7)
- The education standard (see regulation 8)
- The enjoyment and achievement standard (see regulation 9)
- The health and well-being standard (see regulation 10)
- The positive relationships standard (see regulation 11)
- The protection of children standard (see regulation 12)
- The leadership and management standard (see regulation 13)
- The care planning standard (see regulation 14)

There are very few recommendations from Regulation 44, however since April 2020 there have been two recommendations which related to a young person with behavioural issues and the other with substance misuse issues:

Recommendation - Care team meeting to explore D2 and the approach in relation to police involvement.

Recommendation - consider how often staff should discuss the option of CAMHS and substance misuse support with D1 and to evidence these discussions.

The Head of Service further went on to explain some of the positive feedback received from social workers and young people. One that the Board noted was that from a Child who outlined: "I feel safe and enjoy the activities that we do".

The Manager finally outlined that the presentation did not fully capture the essence of Regulation 44 reports, which are 24 pages long and go into depth about the services offered to young people. It was therefore recommended that Regulation 44 reports are presented to Corporate Parenting Panel on a Monthly basis. This would allow for scrutiny and discussions to be held surrounding recommendations and good practice examples.

Agreed-

That the information be noted

That the Regulation 44 reports are presented to Corporate Parenting Panel on a Monthly basis. This will allow for scrutiny and discussions to be held surrounding recommendations and good practice examples.

Future for Families

The Service Manager for Future for Families provided the Board with an update on the progress of Future for Families (FFF).

The Manager outlined that when FFF first opened in September 2020 and this presentation provided the journey since September- November 2020. In September FFF were working with 14 young people on the Edge of care and in fragile placements, meaning their foster placements were on the verge of breaking down. They had a regular in-reach support from the hub, which supported 3 young people

By October, FFF were supporting 38 young people on the Edge of care /fragile placements and were supporting 4 young people in the regular in-reach support from the hub and by November 2020, FFF were supporting 39 young on the Edge of Care/ Fragile placements and supported 5 young people in the regular in-reach support from the hub.

The Manager advised that in terms of direct contact support, the hours from September 2020 were 99.10 and increased to 177.35 in November 2020. Covid has had a direct impact on that contact time due to young people/ support workers isolating or staff being contacted through track and trace, however staff have remained to work hard to ensure young people receive the best possible support.

Some of the interventions provided by FFF were discussed, including for example, education, substance misuse, parenting and families and emotional and mental health. The Manager advised that in terms of activities with young people, covid has had a significant impact on this, however we could expect to see a decline in activities once a focus on a specific intervention was identified.

The Board were presented with some of the impacts of FFF:

- FFF have adopted a project from North Yorkshire County Council called Deep dives, which tracks a story/care experience of the young people. 40 young peoples' care experiences have been analysed and the outcomes have been shared with the social work teams and principle social worker to improve practice
- 75% of all young people accessing FFF are receiving support (either direct or indirect) from the Life Coach and of those accessing support 92% had no previous identified need.
- Previously 32.5% of young people had an undiagnosed Speech and Language communication difficulty ,of those 92% are male
- In the past 12 months 11 individuals had a total of 94 missing episodes.
- Due to targeted outreach 100% of those children have seen a reduction in their missing episodes of between 50-100%
- 36% of those young people have not had any missing episodes since receiving support from FFF
- Currently FFF and supporting 9 young people to return to their families or to their community from expensive residential placements.

The Manager finally spoke about cost avoidance, advising that FFF breakdown all the costs for the young people as FFF support young people until the age of 18.

The Chair thanked the Manager for his presentation and looked forward to future updates.

AGREED- That the presentation be noted

20/46 **MALAP SPOTLIGHT- UPDATE**

20/47 **THE POLICE AND THEIR SUPPORT TOWARDS CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER - FURTHER UPDATE**

The Chair welcomed Shaun Page, DCI from the Exploitation Team at Cleveland Police and Chief Inspector Deb Fenny, to provide a further insight into the work that is carried out by their team.

S Page outlined that the complex exploitation team was a team within the safeguarding department in Cleveland. It evolved which was the VEMP team and there are approximately 23 officers within the team and duties are split between formal criminal investigations into child exploitation, criminal exploitation, child sexual exploitation and human trafficking as well as problem solving group within children's social care. This involves supporting the children who have been identified through Vulnerable, Exploited, practitioners Group (VEPG).

S Page outlined that the police receive a lot of intelligence, be that through members of the public, police control room or from third parties (Barnados). There is an emphasis on organisations to work together to identify those at risk of these crimes, which quite often lead to reactive or proactive investigations.

Problem solving – we support those children who are at high risk of exploitation (criminal or sexual) and try and best complement the existing arrangements and whether police powers can support that.

The officer also advised that there has been a refresh in the Philomena protocol, was developed by Durham Constabulary which encouraged carers, staff, families and friends to compile useful information (like a passport) which could be used in the event of a young person going missing from care.

The protocol was first launched in 2018, however work was underway to ensure staff within the Cleveland police control room were trained on the protocol and officers had visited a number of Care homes across the Tees Valley discuss the protocol. The refresh

was set to take place in January 2021, and therefore the Board requested an update on the protocol at the next meeting.

The Board heard that in the future, the team would like to push the contextual safeguarding arrangement, by addressing concerns earlier (whether that be lower or higher level depending on the child).

S Page also outlined that the force had recently commissioned an Exploitation profile regarding Exploitation across Cleveland which has just been published and would be circulated round partners. The recommendations from this work would feed into the VEMP strategy meeting and work streams within the VEMP.

AGREED-

- That the information be noted.
- That an update on the refresh of the Philomena protocol be brought back to the next meeting.

20/48

RESIDENTIAL SERVICES- APRIL 2020 – PRESENT- REGULATION 44 REPORT

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The Chair thanked the Manager for his presentation and looked forward to future updates.

AGREED- That the presentation be noted

20/50

FOSTERING SERVICE UPDATE

The Chair welcomed the Team Manager from the Fostering Team to the meeting, to provide the Board with an update on the dataset 2019-2020 (1 April 2019-31 March 2020) since the last meeting the figures were reported to the Board.

Number of Carers and placement

Quarter	Carers	Places
Annual Return –2019/20	141	267
Quarter 1	149	243
Quarter 2	159	263
Quarter 3		
Quarter 4		

Whilst the Team Manager advised that there had been a net increase in foster carers this had not equated to a direct increase in placements and this was due to a variety of reasons e.g lined to connected carer arrangements and those new to fostering. The service was undertaking a targeted

recruitment campaign which was looking for foster carers of siblings.

Number of Carers by Primary Care Type

Primary Care Type:	2019/20	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
Long-Term	21	19	17		
Short-Term	74	85	89		
Fully Approved Connected Persons	27	33	38		
Fostering to Adopt	1	1	1		
Respite	18	11	11		
Total:	141	149	156		

The figures are based on the number on the children within the placement and the Board explained that there are a number of foster carers who have dual type e.g. registered to to be a short-term. Long – term or short-term/ respite. The number for short-term carers remained to be high as this was often when there were newly approved foster carers who registered for short-term to ensure fostered was the right path for them.

In terms of fully approved connected persons, the numbers have increased in quarter 2, however the Team Manager outlined that this number would be reported lower for quarter 3. This was a good step as it meant children were on their journey for their final permanency.

Number of Carer Approved

Approved Carers:	2019/20	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
Mainstream	22	5	5		
Fully Approved Connected Persons	19	5	7		
Total:	41	10	12		

The Team Manager advised that the service was on target to increase for mainstream carers and in terms of fully approved connected persons, there was an increase in those going to family placement panel.

Number of Carers De-Registrations

De-Registrations	2019/20	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
Mainstream	16	2	0		
Fully Approved Connected Persons	8	2	2		
Total:	24	4	2		

The Board were advised that typically, deregistration was when the fully approved connected persons had been granted an legal order, and in terms of mainstream, a foster carer is retiring and another is anticipated in Quarter 3 to move to an independent foster agency (Ifa).

Placements

	2019/20	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
Age Group:					
Number of Children	163	145	174		
Number of vacant places	15	5	15		
Number of not available places	54	55	56		
Number of places used for Respite Care	35	16	16		

The Service Manager outlined that in terms of In house provision this was a success story.

The Manager broke down the number of not available placements by the following data:

Not available reason:	2019/20	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
Carer taking a break/pending resignation	19	20	18		
Needs of child currently in placement	26	26	29		

INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICERS' (IRO) ANNUAL REPORT- APRIL 2019- MARCH 2020

The Chair welcomed the Review & Development Service Manager to the meeting to provide an overview of the Independent Reviewing officers (IROs) annual report April 2019-March 2020.

The Manager outlined that the report outlined the contribution of Independent Reviewing officers (IROs) on the outcomes for children in care and care Leavers. The Board were made aware that in Middlesbrough the IRO's have a dual role whereby they challenge, review and scrutinize those children who are subject to a protection plan.

At the time of the report, the Team structure was 14 IROs, 1 Manager reporting to the Director of Prevention and Partnerships. The structure has since changed due to the demand for more IROs and the structure is now as follows:

14 IROs

2 Team Leaders

1 Manager

All direct to the Director of Children's Care.

IROs caseloads

The Board were advised that in terms of caseloads, for IROs in Middlesbrough this has been above the government guidance set out in the IRO handbook as 50-70, and above the local target of 80. IRO caseloads at times have exceeded 100, which was the mean caseload average at the end of March 2020. For children in Middlesbrough this means that their IRO has less time to dedicate to the continuous oversight of their plan or to raise concerns that they have about care planning, drift and delay. In response to the increasing caseloads and the outcome of the Ofsted inspection in 2019 it was agreed that additional IROs were needed and those posts have since been approved and advertised but the impact is not yet seen.

Feedback from Ofsted

The Ofsted concluded the following:

1. The effectiveness of oversight from independent reviewing officers needs to improve
2. Independent reviewing officers provide inadequate scrutiny to ensure that children's planning is proportionate and that they are not subject to social work involvement unnecessarily. Some children, particularly those affected by long-term neglect, have waited too long for protective action.
3. Children benefit from opportunities to meet with their independent reviewing officers, with whom they develop good relationships over time. Their care planning and review meetings are well attended by professionals, but delays in achieving permanence are not sufficiently challenged by these professionals.

The Manager advised some of the findings from Ofsted in relation to the performance data from 2019/20 e.g the number of children in care increased, which lead to higher caseloads for IROs. This lead to a slight decrease in Children in Care Reviews taking place in timescales from 90 to 89%. However in April 2020, the number of children in care reviews increased from 1254 to 1434 and 89% remained in timescales.

Following the inspection, the IROs have:

1. Increase the workforce so each child has more time dedicated to them by their IRO
2. Review and re-launch policies, procedures and practice standards for IROs
3. Provide more training and safe reflective space for IROs to learn and develop their practice
4. Increase management capacity to improve management oversight of IROs
5. Strengthen audit and ensure learning is used to improve practice
6. Actively engage young people to support us to improve service delivery

Feedback from the children is positive and some are outlined below:

"I get a boost of confidence from my IRO, social workers and foster carers"

“What helps me is that I am updated throughout, I know what is happening, keeping the same IRO from the start”

In terms of children in Middlesbrough’s care, the service identified that there was a concern in relation to drift and delay (much like what Ofsted had picked up in relation to permanency). Service level challenges in the past had been sometimes extensive, however last year there were a reduced number of challenges (3) and these were all responded too and led to better outcomes for children and young people.

The Service Manager further discussed the Tell Us more survey which the IRO’s were part of. The feedback from the survey was positive and further heightened about the relationships between the young people and the IROs. The feedback was as follows:

- 89% felt that their IRO does what they say they will
- 91% said that their IRO helps them to understand what is happening
- 93% said that their worker explained why they were working with them and their family
- 80% said that they had been involved in making plans about what needs to happen to make things better
 - 93% said that their IRO spent time with them and listened to what they have to say
- 83% said they felt their IRO had helped them to feel safe
- 93% felt able to talk to their IRO

We did ask what we could improve on, however feedback was not forecoming, however some comments were as follows:

- *“To be told when my IRO is coming”*
- *“I wish my IRO wasn’t going on maternity leave”*
- *“If she gave us sweets”*

Child Protection

In terms of child protection, the Manger outlined that 528 children were subject of protection plan, which was 169 more than last year. 379 children were subject of a protection plan on 31.03.2020.

The Manager advised that we want to have good oversight of those children subject to protection plans. They held challenge clinics to look at these and hold them to account.

The Manager finally outlined the priorities which had been set for 2020/21, most of which have been met:

1. Review the capacity and structure of the RAD unit to ensure that it can meet the current demand and enable IROs to have increased, effective oversight of children and young people’s plans. This will lead to better oversight and improvement in the timeliness of statutory meetings (both child protection and looked after reviews)
2. Improve the quality and effectiveness of IRO challenge. This will include a review and re-launch of the current Issues Resolution Procedure. Resolving challenge at a lower level, which will demonstrate management grip of plans for children and young people.
3. Strengthen the quality assurance of children who are subject of a child protection plan. This will include strengthening the child protection conference through re-launching a good practice guide for Social Workers and partner agencies. Increasing the level of oversight from the Independent Chairs between reviews. More targeted challenge of children who have multiple CP plans, or those that exceed 15-months
4. Engage with young people at all levels. This includes increasing visits to children before their review, more children attending their meetings (both child protection conferences and looked after reviews) and enabling children to provide feedback that will be used to improve service delivery.
5. Provide Training to IROs to build on the skills, knowledge and experience that exists within the Service. Ensure that IROs are best equipped to provide strong independent

challenge to the Local Authority and ensure that plans are driven forward without delay. We will know this has worked when IRO's effectively challenge if children are not receiving the right support at the right time, they are experience delay and subject to cumulative neglect so that children do reach their plan of permanence in a timely way.

6. Develop Team profile and plans based on focussed auditing of the IRO service as part of audit to excellence programme.

The Chair thanked the Manager for her excellence report and presentation of the annual report.

20/52 **ADOPTION TEES VALLEY- BI-ANNUAL REPORT**

Item deferred.

20/53 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Corporate Parenting Board Strategy

The Director of Children Social Care outlined that this was an opportunity for the Board to sign off the Strategy, which was extremely important in terms of the Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy.

The Board and members had had many opportunities to view the Strategy and ask questions. The next steps would be to develop a young person friendly strategy and the Board would be provided with information as it was available.

A Board member queries about strategy changes over the past few years which came to the development of the new strategy.

The Foster Carer also made a comment in relation to the figures and how it was slightly ambiguous and therefore asked for clarity.

Agreed-

- **That the Strategy be signed off**
- **That an audit of strategy changes be provided at a future meeting.**

Covid-19 update

The Director of Children Services advised that as part of the improvement plan and the recovery plan, the Director would be providing an update to the Board at every meeting.