

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

A meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board was held on Wednesday 30 March 2022.

PRESENT: Councillors , A Hellaoui, T Higgins, Z Uddin and M Saunders

PRESENT BY INVITATION: Councillors

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: CSnowball, Peacock (Participation People), Boyd (Adoption Tees Valley), Hennessey (Research Associate) (What works), Glew (Thirteen Group) and Collins (Cleveland Police)

OFFICERS: S Blood, R Brown, S Butcher, T Dunn, R Farnham, Davies, James, S Davies, B Short and C Breheny

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors V Banks, R Hamer, P Jemson, T Parkinson, D fenny, N Ayres, R Scott, Dunning, J Walker, M Smiles and Jefferson

21/1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

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21/2 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

21/3 **MINUTES- CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD- 15 FEBRUARY 2022**

The minutes of the Corporate Parenting Board held on 15 February 2022 were submitted and approved as a true record.

Agreed- That the minutes be approved.

21/4 **PERFORMANCE AGAINST CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD STRATEGY**

Item deferred.

21/5 **REVIEW OF PERMANENCE ACTION PLAN**

The Chair welcomed the Specialist Commissioning & Procurement Senior Manager to the meeting to provide an update of the highlight report of the Sufficiency action plan which was devised out the Corporate Parenting Board Strategy.

The Sufficiency Action Plan would be reviewed and updated as actions were completed or as new work was identified in the event of any changes to our sufficiency needs over the 3-year cycle of our plan. The Board last received an update in January 2022.

As with the Permanency action plan, the Sufficiency action plan was broken up into 6 themed areas, with a key accountable officer who works closely with the Manager.

The themes were as follows:

- Theme 1 - Strengthening Commissioning for Children and Young People
- Theme 2 – Increasing Placements Close to where Children and Young People live and learn
- Theme 3 – Growing Early Intervention & Prevention
- Theme 4 – Improving Placements & Support for Care Leavers
- Theme 5 – Enhancing Learning Outcomes for Children & Young People
- Theme 6 – Building Our Fostering Capacity and Adoption Outcomes

The Manager went through each of the priorities and identified what has been achieved since

the action plan had been last updated. Full details of these were outlined in the report which had been circulated to the Board prior to the meeting. The Manager did advise that she had hoped to take the Market Engagement Plan in March 2022 to children's services departmental management team (DMT), however there had been a slight delay and it would now be submitted in April 2022.

The Manager outlined the impact/ data and performance; these being:

- Weekly reporting on all residential placements activity continues and is providing greater level of data on placement changes and needs.
- In terms of risks: Staffing levels in all provisions continues to be challenging but this is being monitored and in the event that issues are identified we will work closely with providers and the service area to provide as much support and resilience as possible.

In terms of next steps, the Manager advised that they were as follows:

- Undertake a refresh of the Action Plan at the April 2022 meeting in order to ensure we have all actions included
- Ensure change controls are secured where any changes to deadlines are identified.

After the presentation, the Chair sought clarification as to whether the new homes were private. The Manager advised that they were, and although the Council have no control of them entering the area and opening, they ensure they know they are, what they deliver and have meetings with the services to make sure they are on board with regulations. The Council were aware that these beds may be filled with children from outside the area but ensure the council work within the sufficiency action plan and continue to have conversations were providers.

The Manager was thanked for her presentation.

AGREED- That the action plan be noted.

21/6

REVIEW OF SUFFICIENCY ACTION PLAN

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The Manager was thanked for her presentation.

AGREED- That the action plan be noted.

21/7

ADOPTION TEES VALLEY- BI -ANNUAL REPORT

The Chair welcome Vicky Davison- Boyd, Service Manager for Adoption Tees Valley (ATV) to the meeting, who provided an overview of the ATV bi-annual report 2021-22 which was from the period 1.4.2021- 30.09.2021.

The Manager provided the Board with data, however advised that she had been able to share figures up until 31.12.21 as quarter 3 data was available.

ATV went through a review in 2021 as at that time the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) was 3 years in to their implementation. ATV had an independent review which was facilitated by someone independent from RAA and he was part of the transformation team in Stockton Borough Council. He looked at the original objectives and looked at ATV progress. The findings were highlighted in the report, but they key areas were as follows:

Positives- more adoption for children in care than the proceeding five years

Pleased to review and identify that a broader range of children have been adopted from care. 20% of children over 5 years had been adopted from care and there had been a significant increase in placement of sibling groups.

Timeliness hadn't improved overall, however this has been a priority within ATV and with our partners. A number of children had waited a considerable amount of time to be adopted and their timelines have impacted on average timescales for children overall. It is positive that some children who have waited a long time, have now been adopted.

Peer to peer work has been undertaken with Adoption in Merseyside to understand our processes and strengthen both agencies.

Financial analysis of ATV- provided good value for money and operating below average unit cost for adoption, but we need to ensure we have staffing resource to meet the demand of assessment of adopters and to look at the sufficiency of our adoption placements.

The Service Manager provided a presentation with key information on the following:
Adoption orders- this was drawn from the scorecard used. The grey areas of the bar charts were Middlesbrough. There have been fewer adoption orders granted this year than expected due to the Somerset Ruling, however work done on permanence and through PMG had increased the adoption orders for MBC. There have been 20 adoption orders for MBC in the 9 month period, compared with 19 in the previous year.

Children placed for adoption- within the first 9 months of this year, there have been 24 children placed for adoption, compared with 22 in the same period previous year which shows that the work through PMG and permanence planning is being achieved.

Early permanence- ATV has been working more strategically and it is a strategic priority on a national and regional level. ATV work with the 5 local authorities and look at children who are able to have an early permanence plan.

There has been challenges with early permanence over the past 9 months, due to a number of reasons e.g. children returning to their birth parents in difficult circumstances. ATV are looking at these and working on strategies for early permanence, along with the national adoption agenda. There has been new funding to the area and ATV have been working with Adopt North East and Coast to Coast to secure an early permanence co-ordinator in the region and there is also work being undertaken to undertake a concurrent planning project, however this is in its early stages. In terms of outcomes, Middlesbrough have been achieving early permanence and have 2 children placed for early permanence to date.

Children currently progression- ATV look at placement orders and Agency decisions that adoption is the LA plan for the child –ADM. Last year there were 28 children placement orders for MBC children, which is around the same rate as previous year. There have been a decrease in the agency decisions that adoption is the LA plan for the child –ADM.

In terms of Middlesbrough, what was going well?

- Numbers of adoptions from care increasing

- Number of children placed for adoption increasing

- Early permanence increasing

- Timeliness of adoption improving

- Almost every child finds a family, where adoption is the plan

Challenges

Somerset ruling has impacted on placements – this related to the receipt of medical information from the agency medical advisor, which should be provided to the Agency Decision Maker at the time of making their decision adoption is the Local Authority plan for the child. Many LA's, including MBC, have not always complied with the regulatory requirement. This has resulted in a full scale review across many regional adoption agencies. Local authorities have had to review their cases to ensure they were compliant with the advice given from the medical advisor. It has created delay for children. We have had children where the decision was compliant with the regulation but we have had others where it wasn't and this is across the national and regional picture. At the moment, we are awaiting the outcome of the somerset ruling. As a consequence, ATV have been working closely with the Director of children's services and other officers to see whether there are cases where a child could progress via early permanence so that children are not delayed from achieving their planned placement.

Recruitment adopters lower this year - they believe this is a response to the pandemic, however ATV are not alone and this is also the case within the national adoption picture and in fostering.

In terms of development, ATV are working on:

- Early Permanence

- Work with Fostering Services – strengthening practice

- Moving on to Adoption – UEA Model , using this model to move children in a planned away, with increasing relations with foster and adoption parents.

- Strengthening the assessment pathway

Life Story books- transfer back to Child's Social Worker . there has been some guidance provided by ATV

Adoption Support – celebrating education support to adopted children, and working with Virtual Schools

Child's Voice - brought a group of young people together and they have put together a video of what it is like to be in school and adopted. Further updates on the Child's voice would be updated to the board in future meetings.

Following the presentation, a Board member queried how many teenagers would like to be adopted/ have been adopted. In response, the Service Manager advised that ATV were currently undertaking the process for a foster family in another local authority to formally adopt a teenager who was in their care and this was a point of great celebration. Adoption is typically seen as something for younger children, however as seen from earlier data, there are more children over 5 years old being adopted. In terms of adopting teenagers, it is national progress and there is a lot of discussion surrounding this.

Another board queried whether the somerset ruling would have an elongated process for children. In short the Service Manager advised she hoped not, but no child would be placed without the prospective parents seeing the medical assessment and full adoption medical. In terms of early permanence, it has allowed ATV to progress with children's' plans, whilst we await the ruling of the somerset ruling.

The Service Manager was thanked for her presentation.

AGREED- That the bi-annual report be noted.

21/8

NO WRONG DOOR (FUTURE FOR FAMILIES) PILOT- EVALUATION

The Chair welcomed Abby Hennessey, Research Associate, from What Works for Children's Social Care, who was in attendance to provide the pilot evaluation from no wrong door (Future for families) in Middlesbrough.

The Research Associate advised that the aim was to study rollout of NWD in a local authority outside of where it was developed, whether it can be delivered, what are the challenges, what do staff and families think.

The study was not designed to understand whether No Wrong Door had made a difference to outcomes as this would be asked during the next phases of evaluation.

Before and six months after Future for families (FFF) opened, Interviews and Focus Groups were carried out with staff and families, a staff survey, and observations of meetings in the FFF service. Data was collected about recruitment, training and young people supported by the service.

How was No Wrong Door implemented in the Middlesbrough Futures for Families service?

- Provision of intended placement types and recruitment of almost all intended staff
- Staff received comprehensive training and regular development days
- Staff observed to work restoratively (doing 'with' rather than 'to' or 'for'), making decisions with families, listening to young people's voice and aspirations to drive practice. Families strengths were also highlighted.
- Support offered was flexible, creative and tailored
- The provocations, non-negotiables, paperwork and processes were tailored to Middlesbrough's local context and priorities, in partnership with NYCC
- Age range adapted to 11-18 in Middlesbrough

Findings: What were some of the challenges?

The pilot evaluation resulted that:

- Most FFF staff (88%) reported feeling confident to use the model, but only 56% of staff reported feeling they had enough time to take full advantage of the model
- Competing demands between the outreach and residential work was one area of challenge
- Some confusion over whether to continue to use Signs of Safety and some uncertainty over referral criteria
- It was sometimes hard to find a suitable local foster care placement
- Changes in keyworker due to staff turnover, and transitioning out of the FFF service needed to be carefully managed to avoid further disruption

Comments from officers and service users were shared with the Board.

Findings: What did staff and families think about the model?

- Most staff felt positive about the model and the training. The life coach and communication support worker were particularly seen as helpful, and overcame external waiting lists. The police analyst was also beneficial to address issues such as missing episodes.
- There appeared to be a high level of support for the model from senior management and leadership, and staff reported good relationships with partners and social work teams
- Providing a flexible service, accessible outside of usual working hours, and responding quickly to crises on evenings and weekends, was a unique and valued feature for families. Some young people who had previous lack of trust in adults developed positive relationships with FFF staff.
- Staff changes and COVID-19 could be barriers to engaging some young people, and not all young people were clear about their plan or goals.
- Staff and families identified that NWD had the potential to improve the quality of support, reduce risk and increase safety, and improve outcomes for young people.

Some of the comments made are shown below:

“Well [young person] can talk to her so there must be something there because [young person] doesn’t talk to anybody. [Young person] tells [key worker] more things than [young person] actually tells me.” [Parent]

Following on from the pilot evaluation, a number of recommendations were made:

It was noted that the report was available on our [website](#), and a summary is in the SFPC [newsletter](#). Recommendations include:

- The importance of ensuring staffing capacity for placements and outreach support
- Clear guidance on using NWD alongside any existing practice model, as well as comprehensive training and guidance for partners and referring practitioners
- Based on good practice in FFF, we recommend regular opportunities for NWD teams to revisit the NWD principles (the non-negotiables, distinguishers and provocations)

What works next steps were as follows:

- A podcast about the findings
- Evaluating the impact of No Wrong Door on the likelihood of children and young people becoming looked after, placement length and changes, education and employment

- This is in Rochdale, Norfolk, Warrington, Redcar & Cleveland.

The Research Associate was thanked for her presentation.

AGREED- That the pilot evaluation be noted.

21/9

PRIVATE FOSTERING

The Chair welcome Ben Short, Interim for Safeguarding. The officer advised that the safeguarding for private fostering sat under the South Tees Safeguarding Partnership and the annual report was submitted to the Partnership on 21 June 2021. The annual The officer was in attendance to explain what private fostering was, and to provide an overview of activity in relation to provide fostering so far in the 21/22 year. The Board were also asked for help, in a way of raising awareness of private fostering.

In 2005, legislation changed and Middlesbrough must keep a record of children who are known by the local authority to be privately fostered and to provide assessment and support.

The Board were made aware that a privately fostered child is a child under 16 years of age (or 18 if disabled) who is cared for by an adult who is not a parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, step parent by marriage, sister or brother where the child is to be cared for in that person's home for 28 days or more and has been arranged without the involvement of the local authority.

A private foster carer may be a friend of the family, the parent of a friend of the child, or someone previously unknown to the child's family who is willing to privately foster the child. The private foster carer becomes responsible for providing the day to day care of the child in a way which will promote and safeguard the child's welfare. Overarching responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the privately fostered child remains with the parent or other person with parental responsibility.

Children who are privately fostered are not looked after children but are supported under Section 17 as Children in Need.

As of 29/12/21 Middlesbrough support

- 1446 children through Child In Need
- 420 children who have a child protection plan
- 513 children who we look after
- 4 children privately fostered

Local authorities have difficulties and challenges in relation to the reporting of private fostering arrangements and it is therefore likely that there are arrangements in place which are not recognised within communities or by professionals and are not therefore reported.

Middlesbrough have therefore focused on awareness raising activity across the area, in conjunction with Redcar. This includes:

- Social media awareness – Twitter, LinkedIn, Middlesbrough Children Matters, etc. on a regular basis.
- New poster campaign – schools briefed via Designated Safeguarding Lead forum and through the Safeguarding Information Officer
- Private Fostering Steering Group members have been sending the message out within their own organisations – police and health

The officer did state that they would like to raise awareness in communities and therefore any help/advice that elected members could advise to promote private fostering would be welcomed.

In response, the Board outlined that most local councilors have a facebook page and would be happy to share any information.

A board member queried where information was obtained from in relation to private fostering cases and in response the officer outlined that in most cases they are reported to the local

authority through schools.

The Chair finally advised that it was importance to be able to identify these cases so that the correct support was in place.

The officer was thanked for his report.

AGREED- That the report be noted.

21/10

COMPLAINTS MADE BY CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER

Siobhan Davies, Principle Social Worker was in attendance to provide the Board with information in relation to complaints made by children looked after.

The report completed contained any complaint made about a child in care, as there were very low numbers made by children themselves or by an advocate.

Within the Principle social workers team, they hold a monthly learning meeting where they pull together any learning from complaints made.

The report reviewed the last 6 months:

72 complaints were raised between September 2021 and February 2022.

14 of these were in relation to children in our care

- 9 were not upheld
- 3 are being investigated
- 2 were upheld
- 1 partially upheld

Of those partially or fully upheld, 2 were open to Safeguarding Care Planning Teams and 1 CLA Services.

All complaints received for children in our care, in the past 6-months, were completed within timescales

1 ongoing complaint is overdue (623963)

All 3 upheld/partially upheld complaints were made by parents/guardians

All 3 complaints were resolved at Stage 1

Further information in relation to the complaints were included within the report. The principle social worker outlined that as the numbers of complaints in relation to children in our care was low, drawing themes and learning from these alone was not possible. However, when comparing overall themes from complaints 2018-21 and lessons learned, the themes from that report were;

- Poor communication from a social worker;
- Perceived lack of financial support for a child or young person; and
- Accuracy of recorded information about a customer.

Each Month the Children & Families Principal Social Worker chairs a Learning meeting.

The purpose of the Learning Meeting:

- To pull together and analyse learning from practice. There will be a focus on learning from complaints, thematic overview of IRO challenge/audit, and audit to excellence findings, Future for Families Deep Dives and any reviews ongoing within the South Tees Safeguarding Partnership, Subject Access Requests and Participation People to represent the voice of

children in care. The Organisational Development's business partner for Children's Services will attend to consider what training has taken place.

- To ensure that where there are themes emerging about quality of practice that we can be responsive and target resource (such as training, practice lead interventions and audit) to support social work practice to flourish.
- To assess impact of those interventions and consider whether there is any evidence of the quality of practice improving, month on month, against the priorities where intervention has been targeted.
- The group will identify 1 key priority for each month which will result in targeted Hot Topics session, PSW and Practice Lead support for the month ahead. The recommendation will be sent to Rachel Farnham, Director for approval.

Action undertaken in response to complaints from September 2021 – February 2022:

- Audit undertaken whereby children have made complaints and participation people are invited to attend the meetings.
- Mystery Shopper quality assurance piloted in MACH – outcome of this was very positive.
- Hot Topics- every Monday
- Practice Week with a focus on language, communication and identity.
- Participation People now attend and contribute to Learning Meetings ensuring we can respond to issues raised directly from children and young people in our care

The Board were advised that 1 complaint had been made in the last 12 months by a teenager and if the child was younger, an advocate would be there to express their views, However the service want to ensure that there are other mechanisms in place for young people to raise complaints and this is addressed through the audit and through participation people.

The Principle social worker was thanked for her report.

AGREED- That the report be noted.

21/11

PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Kathy Peacock, Youth Voice & Influence Contractor from Participation People and Xavier Davies, Apprentice Youth Training & Development Officer were in attendance to provide an update in relation to children and young people's participation.

Kathy advised that to date they had re-established two care experienced groups –

- Middlesbrough Children in care council- the age of the young people has now changed and now is welcome to young people aged 10-17 years.
- Middlesbrough Care Leavers Forum- for young people aged 18-25.

The groups run on a weekly basis.

Xavier provided the board with an update in relation to #Youthvoice update- children in care council

#YouthVoice Update March 2022



Children In Care Council (currently six members) has

- Designed, delivered a celebration/fun event - 24th February. Six young people attended. We got to know each other, played games and a music tutor delivered a session and they got to write and sing their own song.
- Worked on what they want when they get a new social worker.
- Working on what they need to reach their education, training and employment goals.
- Worked on what questions should be included within the 'Your Voice' Survey.
- Three members of the group went on a Participation People organised residential to Doncaster, joining young people from Hounslow, Wandsworth and Greenwich. Everyone had an amazing time, made new friends, learnt new skills and heard about the great things all the areas are working on.
- Had a virtual meeting with the Children's Commissioner Office to help them understand what care experienced young people want from their 'Help at Hand' website.
- Wrote some questions to ask Corporate Parents.
- Designing a fun engagement event that will take place in April.

2 / 6



Xavier noted that at the residential, one of the young people was awarded for making the most friends which was a real positive. The engagement event that would take place in April which would focus on football.

Kathy also advised that they had received a visit from ofsted and they had received some really good feedback.

In terms of the #youthvoice update, Xavier advised that the Care leavers forum had:

#YouthVoice Update March 2022



Care Leavers Forum (Currently five members)

- All members came to Care Leavers Celebration event on the 23rd February.
- Worked on what they want when they get a new social worker.
- Working on what they need to reach their education, training and employment goals.
- Worked on what questions should be included within the 'Your Voice' Survey.
- Had a meeting with the Corporate Parents telling them their life story of growing up in Middlesbrough.
- Had a virtual meeting with the Children's Commissioner Office to help them understand what care experienced young people want from their 'Help at Hand' website.
- Wrote some questions to put to Corporate Parents.
- Delivered a session during Social Work Practice week on 'Language that Cares'.

3 / 6



Kathy stated that the event took place at the Fork in the road and the young people really enjoyed themselves.

The Board were also made aware that a piece of work is taken to the children in care council and it is then taken to the care leavers forum to work further on this and to identify areas of improvement.

Three care leavers spoke to the corporate parenting board about their life growing up in Middlesbrough and this was very well received by councilors. The young people have some wrote some questions for corporate parents and would very much like to be involved with the Board. This would be addressed and arranged.

Kathy finally outlined that participation have:

#YouthVoice Update March 2022

The Participation People team have:-

- Regular weekly meetings with the CiCC and CLF
- Attended the Designated Teacher Conference, ran a workshop on Neuro Diversity and had a stall at the Market place to promote participation
- Co delivered the Care Leavers Celebration event, promoting the Care Leavers Forum throughout
- Designed and ran a session to all delegates at the Parent's 4 Change Conference on Co-Production
- Co produced and will deliver sessions at the SEND Youth Voice Conference 21 - 23rd March
- Met with the Foster Care Association to discuss collaborating to put on fun engagement events throughout the year
- Used the information gained from the CiCC and CLF and created the 'Your Voice Survey - Now LIVE



4 / 6



Finally, the board were shown the roadmap, which were for their own reference. The officers were thanked for their presentation.

AGREED- that the information be noted.

21/12

ANY OTHER URGENT ITEMS WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, MAY BE CONSIDERED.

Role of a corporate parent- video

The Chair shared a video which had been shared on Middlesbrough facebook page regarding Councillors' role as corporate parents.