

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

A meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board was held on Tuesday 15 February 2022.

PRESENT: Councillors C Hobson (Chair), A Hellaoui, T Higgins, Z Uddin, B Cooper and D Davison

PRESENT BY INVITATION: Councillors M Smiles

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Wiseman, Peacock (Participation People) and Steel (HARROGATE AND DISTRICT NHS FOUNDATION TRUST))

OFFICERS: S Blood, R Brown, S Butcher, T Dunn, R Farnham, P Jemson, T Parkinson, R Scott, jordinson, watson, Davies, James, Jefferson and C Breheny

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors M Saunders, V Banks, P Rudd, CSnowball, D fenny, N Ayres, L Garvey, Dunning and J Walker

21/49 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

21/50 **MINUTES- CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD- 18 JANUARY 2022**

The minutes from the Corporate Parenting Board held on 18 January 2022 were read and accepted as a true record.

21/51 **COVID- 19 UPDATE**

The Director of Children's Services provided a verbal update in relation to Covid 19.

The Director advised that in terms of schools, the levels of covid have started to decrease as we are approaching half term and now schools are focusing on understanding the disruption caused to learning caused by the pandemic. Attendance oversight of the most vulnerable children is a key priority to the Council as well as safeguarding, as pointed out by the letter from Indra Morris, Director General for Children's Services, Communications & Strategy Group for the DFE.

The letter which was sent to all DSO's outlines the importance of supporting our most vulnerable children as we move out of the pandemic, so the safeguarding partnership was looking closely at this e.g partners are working with Virtual School Heads to support the attendance of Children Looked After and the extended group of children with a social worker which they support.

In terms of children's social care, it is business as usual.

The Director queried whether the Board would consider looking at the frequency of covid 19 update. The Board agreed that this would be updated at every other meeting, however if the situation changed, this could be reviewed.

AGREED-

1. That the update be noted
2. That the update on Covid-19 be presented at every other meeting.

21/52 **PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN MIDDLESBROUGH**

The Chair welcome, Kathy Peacock, Youth Voice and Influencer Contractor from Participation

People to the meeting, who provided an overview of the work undertaken with children and young people since January 2022. The Board also were pleased to welcome Xavier Davies, Care Leaver / apprentice for Middlebrough Council who was now working directly with Participation on Care to promote in care Councils.

The Board were provided with a quick recap of the role of participation and the key officers assigned to Middlesbrough. Kathy explained she joined Participation People in November 2021, 2 days a week to help Middlesbrough Council re-establish the in care councils. Other than the in care councils, there were other projects, however the Board would be updated on these in due course.

In terms of progress to date, the Board were advised that:

- Over the Christmas period, 135 care leavers were messaged telling them about the Care Leavers Forum. Seven young people joined and actively join on a Thursday evening.
- The In Care councils are being promoted and Kathy has meet with key managers to inform them about the groups. All teams sent invites for their young people to attend the Mini Children in Care Council (CiCC), Children in Care Council (CiCC) and Care Leavers Forum. This is done on a strategic level to help improve and deliver services.
- Mid- January launch of the Care Experienced #YouthVoice groups.
- Mini CiCC - 3 sessions held for children aged 7 to 12 years. Unfortunately there have been no young people at these sessions. The groups were still held and promoted with foster carers/ social workers , however experience, it is harder to get this age range to come out therefore a day of fun activities was planned for 24 February 2022 , as part of a recruitment drive and gain a sense of whether young people wish to attend the group, or whether they want a different type of engagement.
- Children in Care Council - this group meets weekly. 4 sessions have been held and 2 young people participate. These are amazing young people who have helped design events and look at ways to engage further for children in care.
- Care Leaver's Forum - this group meets weekly. 4 sessions have been held and as stated 7 young people have engaged.
- Kathy has attended the Designated Teacher conference, emails to be sent informing them about the groups to share with their young people.
- The officer advised that they were flexible to engage with young people.
- Joined the closed Middlesbrough Fostering Facebook group – and posted regarding the sessions. Kathy received questions regarding these so she was able to promote and explain further about the groups.

The Board further heard from Xavier, who shared the posters which had been designed to promote the groups. The Board were keen for these to be promoted, and these would be circulated to the group after the meeting as well as the Virtual Schools. The posters had been circulated to managers, and to Paul Rudd to promote with independent fostering agencies.

From the care leavers forum, the young people have identifies issues which are important to them, these were as follows:

1. Trust in the people who support us
2. No False promises made
3. An understanding of what makes a positive/negative relationship
4. A trusting relationship with our Social Worker/PA
5. Access to ID - Passport, Birth Certificate, Provisional (and Full) Driving License and National Insurance Number
6. Information about how we can access to our care records / what is the process and who do we go too?
7. More preparation to live independently
8. More support for care leavers who become parents

In terms of future plans for 2022, Xavier advised the Board of the following:

- Celebration/activity sessions for care experienced young people to be held during school holidays - February, April and May
- All Team meetings to be attended to inform them about the groups and ensure they

- have young people attend.
- Older care experienced young people to join young people from Hounslow and Wandsworth on a residential in March 2022.
- Residential Homes to be visited to discuss these groups with staff and their young people
- Rescheduled Care Leavers Celebration event to be held on the 23rd February (delayed due to Covid 19)
- Survey to be sent to all care experienced young people asking them questions about their Health, Education setting, Voice and Support
- Create #YouthVoice on the road- capturing the voice of young people who do not wish to attend a group.

Finally, the Roadmap for 2022 was shared with the Board, and one element which was discussed was training for corporate parents, which would be co-arranged with Xavier and Care leavers.

Following the presentation, a Board member raised concern regarding the access to I.D. In response, the Board were assured that participation people were having discussions with the Principle social worker. The Director of Children's Services further outlined that this would be made a focus going forward.

The young person's views were shared this week and from this a 'YOU SAID, WE WILL DO' document has been created. The Head of Looked after children and Corporate Parenting advised that this has been shared and officers are working on responses. An update would be provided at the next meeting.

In terms of the in care councils, the question of accessibility was raised and this would be considered, as well as looking at when groups should be held e.g school holidays. Events had already been diarised for the Easter and May holidays as well as virtual events.

The Chief Executive addressed the Board and wanted to make sure that any promises / strategies would be agreed by Executive/ Council. This would be discussed. A Board member also wanted to ensure that children and young people were properly supported after an issue was raised. In response, Kathy stated that they have a responsibility for those young people and if issues were identified, there would be a follow up conversation and the correct support would be sources.

The officers were thanked for their presentation.

AGREED:

- 1. That the information be noted**
- 2. That the In care Council posters be circulated to all Board members.**

21/53

FOSTERING IN MIDDLESBROUGH- QUARTER 3 DATA

The Head of Fostering was in attendance to provide the Board with the quarter 3 fostering data. The Board had received previous reports, which had shaped the way the information was to be presented to the Board. This quarterly report was based on the data requirements set out in the Ofsted Fostering Data Set, which was a statutory return compiled using data as of the 31 March each year.

	Quarter 2	Quarter 3
Number of Enquiries	14	10
Number of Initial Visits	3	1
Number of fostering families (mainstream and full approved connected Carers)	130	122

Number of children placed with Middleborough Carers	176	169
<p>Foster placements available for children that are not occupied</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The reduction has been for a number of reasons, for example the quality of our data is improving but in addition, the foster families terms of approval is being reviewed. • The service has reviewed every foster carer and their provision to ensure we are utilising every bed space. • The 15, may also include foster placements that offer respite care to support stability • Number of foster families which are approved only for babies (0-2 years) • We do reach out to neighbouring authorities if Middlesbrough struggle to place a child, however other authorities also struggle within their own area. 	50	15
<p>De – registrations (households)</p> <p>Mainstream</p> <p>Connected Foster to adopt Some of the children secured permanence through the legal order so not all de-registration was negative</p> <p>In terms of de-registration, if the Council know there are difficulties, we ensure we increase supervision, look at support and training need. Once a foster carer decides to de-register, the Council will have in-depth discussions regarding the reasons, and generally they leave to personal health issues. However we do have some families (3 over the last 2 years) who go to an independent fostering agency.</p>	<p>4(7 children provision) 1 (2 children)</p>	<p>5 (5 children)</p> <p>(7 children) 2(2 children)</p>

Panel activity(households)		
Reviews to family placement panel	4	9
Newly approved;		
Mainstream fostering families	1 (1 child 2 if sibs respite only)	1 (1 child)
Connected fostering families	4 (8 children)	6 (6 children)
Matches for children and their long term fostering families	7 (10 children)	1 (child)
Supported Lodgings	0	1 (1 young person)

In terms of what was working well within the fostering service and supporting lodgings, the Team Manager advised the Board that:

- Social workers and Supported Lodgings worker receive monthly reflective supervision
- Workers continue to scale themselves on average 7/8 out of 10 in respect to work satisfaction
- Increased levels of compliance and Management Oversight evidenced within fostering family records
- New policies have been introduced to staff and fostering families
- We have devised a 12 month training program which includes face to face training from BAAF and e-learning from the Training Hub – all specific to the training needs identified within the team. Providing them with clarify of purpose.
- Supported Lodgings Providers are now enjoying monthly formal supervision and the opportunity to attend support groups
- Our first cohort of Fostering Academy carers are being nurtured within our service and are on target to complete their TSD Standards within 12 months of approval. This is a massive achievement and all of the foster carers have provided positive feedback
- A large scale marketing campaign has been developed in close consultation between the fostering service and the marketing team
- Pathways through Fostering training is underway and has been well received by carers.
- A Recruitment Strategy has been devised to sit alongside the wider marketing strategy for the LA
- Social Worker caseloads continue to remain stable and are conducive to improving quality of practice in addition to compliance
- Development of ICT systems to streamline working and provide greater clarity for performance, quality and understanding fostering families journey
- Introduction of peer supervision
- Embedding of early permanence planning meetings and midway reviews for children in connected carer arrangements, supporting permanency being achieved at the right time, this is further supported by close liaison with the court manager. This to develop further to include Family Group Conference service.
- The implementation of the Mockingbird was at formative stages with a scheme of work planned in February 2022

In terms of concerns, the service does have concern regarding:

- Impact of COVID-19 on recruitment of foster carers – lack of enquiries and difficulty in undertaking home visits.
- We do not have enough MBC approved foster carers to place all of our children in

internal provision

- Recruitment of fostering families remains a challenge however this is not unique to MBC, there is a national shortage of fostering families

The Team Manager was thanked for her presentation.

AGREED- That the information be noted.

21/54

NOMINET DIGITAL REACH PROGRAMME- UPDATE

The Chair welcomed Ralph Jordinson – Risk and resilience coordinator and Louisa Jefferson - Digital policy apprentice to the meeting. Nominet REACH – Digiwise.

In March 2021 we were successful in securing in a bid to research, consult and construct a policy document for children looked after and children leaving care regarding online access. This was funding through an online organisation called Nominet, who are the leading organisation and this national programme was in partnership with parentzone, and it covers 9 interlinked projects coving 3 challenges 1) building foster carers skills and confidence, 2) embedding digital skills and support, 3) elevating young people’s voice to influence services that impact their digital safety and opportunity.

Purpose of the report was to develop a policy / best practice document for children looked after and children leaving care online access. It was noted that Care experienced young people have invaluable insight which is currently under-used in relation to digital and online safety policy development.

In terms of progress so far, the following have been undertaken:

- a) Employed an apprentice who has care experience.
- b) Project lead and the apprentice have been trained in Impact Measurement and Management and developed a ‘Theory of Change’ and young person blog. The Apprentice explained that the Theory of Change plan would identify the problems that we see for children in care and the risk for them whilst online ,and to see how we would address these issues and what the overall plan would be. The Theory of change was developed as was a child / young person’s friendly version. Following this, after a meeting with parents (one of the key stakeholders) they suggested that a blog be created by the care leavers, explaining what is good and what improvements could be made.
- c) Consulted with young people and established the survey name: ‘Digiwise’
- d) Formed a Steering Group to advise on key issues
- e) Developed an action plan which drives the project
- f) Hosted a care leavers football match and consultation event at Middlesbrough Football Community Foundation
- g) Designed and implemented a consultation survey for young people with care experience
- h) Designed a consultation survey for Foster Carers, Residential Workers and Social Workers.
- i) Is in the process of undertaking all consultation in g) and h) above

Early indications from the young peoples’ survey (17 young people took part, however the steering group has increased) showed :

- 100% are accessing the internet
- 93% access 1 or more social media account as their main activity
- 60% of the young people surveyed are going online for more than 8 hours per week,
- 87% are using their smartphone as the main device to access the internet, but choosing their own data plans over the residential home internet connection, this is

because they have unlimited access data plans (this potentially poses a risk if there are no filters or controls enabled)

- 60% of young people surveyed reported that they had seen the sale of drugs on their social media
- 33% had requests to send youth produced sexual imagery (Indecent images)
- 73% had seen fake news reports

The Board heard that one of the outcomes of the project was the introduction from the UK Council of Internet Safety. The Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) backed tool, UKCIS Digital Passport was a new innovative communication tool to help children and young people with care experience to explore their online lives and help keep them safe in online spaces (risks outside of the home).

It has three parts which should all be used together:

- Digital Passport: An introduction
- Digital Passport: For adults and carers
- Digital Passport: For children and young people

Talking regularly about their digital lives with a trusted adult is a key way to help keep children and young people safe online. The Passport provides structure and resources to support professionals in having those conversations.

The Foster Carer survey has also been developed, and this project will continue with a survey for Foster Carers, Social Workers and Residential Workers.

The survey will identify key skills gaps in their knowledge and their experiences of young people accessing online spaces in their care.

This professionals survey was with the consultation portal and expected to be live by end of February 2022, the findings will also inform the final policy.

Members were advised that the next update for the Board on Nominet would be in June/July 2022.

The Coordinator and Apprentice were thanked for their presentation.

AGREED- That the project update be noted.

21/55

PERFORMANCE AGAINST CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD STRATEGY

The Head of Looked after Children and Corporate Parenting was in attendance and provided the Board with information relating to the Corporate Parenting Board scorecard.

The Head of Service advised that the scorecard was in place for the Corporate Parenting Board to see how our performance was progressing and have the opportunity to challenge.

The main points to note were as follows:

DEMAND- In February 2021 there were 586 children looked after in the authority. This has reduced to 500 at the end of January 2022. This has been a constant decrease. As of today (15 February 2022) Middlesbrough had 495 children looked after.

- There has been a rapid reduction over the year demonstrating a decrease of 14.6% over the last 12 months and an overall 28.7% reduction since the height of 702 children in September 2020. For every 0.6 children entering

care, one child exits care. This ratio has been maintained for 7 months.

- In February 2021 the gap between Middlesbrough's rate of looked after children per 10,000 of the children population and that of the region was 70.69. This has consistently reduced over the last 12 months and is currently 42.93.
- As of today Middlesbrough's rate per 10,000 is 149. Our statistical neighbor rate is that of 134.

DEMAND- CASELOADS

- Caseloads have consistently reduced since August 2021 and throughout the improvement journey.
- Whilst the average per service area varies slightly, the average caseloads across Children's social care is currently 16.7. This will support the service to drive improvements in the quality of practice.

Permanency

- 22 children ceased to be looked after in January 2022 (CHAT 07.02.22).
- Of the children that ceased to become looked after they had spent an average of 104 weeks in care.
- This is a reduction from December 2021 where it took those children who had secured permanence longer.
- Of the 22 children that ceased to be looked after:
 - 4 were adopted
 - 6 SGO/Residence Orders
 - 8 turned 18 years of age
 - 3 returned to family
 - 1 other
- Children Placed with Parents - The number of children placed with a parent and subject to a Care Order has reduced significantly since February 2021. There are currently 39 children placed with a parent. This was a 60% overall reduction since the height on 99 children in September 2020. This is supported with a plan which is reviewed.
- Connected Carers – There were currently 105 children in connected carers placements. The overall numbers have reduced from 108 in December 2021. This has reduced from a height of 212 in 2020 (50.4%).
- Adoption - The average number of days from entering care to being placed in an adoptive placement was 380. This has reduced from a height of 558 days in 2019/20 to 382 days in October 2021. (Adoption Score Care data for Q2)

PLACEMENT STABILITY

- Less than 5% of the looked after population have experienced a placement breakdown in the last 12 months.
- In January 2021, 9.8% of looked after children had experienced a placement break down in the last 12 months.
- At the end of January 2022 – 37 children looked after by Middlesbrough had experience 3 or more placement moves in the last 12 months. (7.4% of the children looked after population). This has been reduced from 127 in January 2021.

Quality and Impact

Visits

94% of children were visited within January 2022 (2% decrease from last month) and 94% of children were seen by their social worker in January 2022 (2% decrease from

last month). 83% of looked after children have been seen alone.

Supervision/Management Oversight

94% of looked after children have had a supervision within the month of January 2022.

This is a 2% decrease from last month. This has been consistently high at over 90% for the last 12 months.

Personal Education Plans

Performance in relation to PEPs remains high at 98.9%. This is a 0.7% increase from last month when 98.2% of children had a recorded PEP within the last 6 months.

This performance has remained consistently high for the last 12 months.

Health Assessments

92.4% of health checks have been conducted and recorded within the last 12 months.

This is an increase from 93.1% in December 2021. Performance has been consistently high at over 90% for the last 12 months.

Dental checks – 66.8% of children overall have had a dental check in the last 12 months. This has been a 1.5% decrease since last month.

The Head of Service finally shared ‘what our children tell us’, from feedback, the children were asked to scale their lives between 1 and 4:

- 50% of children reported that things had improved for them by 4
- 25% of children reported that things had improved for them by 2
- 12.5% of children reported that things had improved for them by 1
- 12.5% of children reported that things had stayed the same

Children views have been as follows:

‘They take into account my thoughts and feelings’.

‘You do what you say you are going to do. Get things done quickly, I’m not waiting about for things to happen’.

‘There’s not been no false promises. So I feel good’.

A Board Member made a query in relation to the caseload numbers and the reasons for this. In response, the Head of Service advised that the demand was still there but the quality of practice had improved, which meant children are moving through the system quicker and children are securing permanence in a more timely way. On top of this, the Council was working hard to recruit permanent staff and reduce agency staff.

In terms of Corporate Parents, a Board member asked whether all members were invited to attend the meetings. The Democratic Services officer advised all meetings were live streamed and councilors were informed of meetings. The Chair also outlined that she was ensuring that more information sessions were organised for all councilors to inform them of their Corporate Parenting role and inform them of key areas.

The Chair was very thankful for this positive report and thanked all the officers involved in getting this stage.

AGREED- That the information be noted.

21/56 **ANY OTHER URGENT ITEMS WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, MAY BE CONSIDERED.**

21/57 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

ORDERED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items on the grounds that, if present, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

21/58 **CHILDREN MISSING FROM CARE**

The Risk and Reduction Manager provided the Board with a presentation in relation to children missing from Care.

AGREED- That the information be noted.