

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

A meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board was held on Tuesday 18 October 2022.

PRESENT: Councillors C Hobson (Chair), B Cooper, D Coupe, A Hellaoui, T Higgins, M Saunders, Z Uddin and J Walker

PRESENT BY INVITATION: Councillors

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Smallman (Children in Care Specialist Nurse)

OFFICERS: V Banks, S Blood, R Brown, T Dunn, P Jemson, Hart and Peacock

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors D Davison, M Smiles, Davies, R Farnham, Jefferson, T Parkinson, D Fenny, Dunning, G Nicholson and Beevers

22/1 **WELCOME AND EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

The Chair welcomed members and officers to the meeting and discussed the fire evacuation procedure.

22/2 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for Absence

22/3 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

22/4 **MINUTES- CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD- 14 SEPTEMBER 2022**

The minutes of the Corporate Parenting Board meeting held on 14 September 2022 were read and agreed as a true record.

22/5 **HDFT CHILDREN IN CARE PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The Chair welcomed Monica Smallman, Specialist Nurse Children in Care to the meeting to provide the Board with the HDFT Children in Care Performance Report and to share with the Board share with the board the new commissioning arrangements under the Tees Valley Children in Care (CiC) Service and to also update board with progress to date.

The specialist nurse firstly provided the board with some background information, advising the Board that from 01st April 2022 the responsibility of initial health assessments (IHA's) and review health assessments (RHA's) for South Tees NHS Trust was amalgamated into a Tees Valley Children in Care contract.

HDFT is responsible for the timely co-ordination of Initial health assessments (IHA's) which includes gathering consent and pertinent health and social information on a child entering the care system to inform the IHA appointment. The IHA appointment is completed by the acute hospital trust and disseminated to social care.

The Specialist nurse advised that it was the responsibility of the Tees Valley Children in Care (TV CiC) service to co-ordinate and undertake review health assessments for any child in care

in the borough of Middlesbrough. Tees Valley Children in Care practitioners will also undertake RHA's for a child placed out of area within a 30-mile radius of their home address.

The board were made aware that the Tees Valley Children in Care service was made up of the following:

- 0.5 WTE Band 8a Named Nurse Children in Care
- 1.0 WTE Band 7 Specialist Nurse Children in Care
- 4.1 WTE Band 6 Nurse Children in Care
- 4.1 WTE Band 5 Staff Nurse Children in Care
- 0.9 WTE Band 4 Data & Analyst Administrator
- 2.9 WTE Band 3 Administrator

Review health assessments are undertaken with the best interests of the child at the heart of interventions. The service liaise with caseload holders (Health Visitors and School Nurses) prior to and following the review health assessments to ensure that the assessment is informed and is a holistic approach.

Since the transfer of responsibility to HDFT are notified by the Local Authority of a child entering the care system and they collate notification consent and book the child onto the clinic via Cammis. These need to be completed within 20 days. The specialist nurse advised that the only time that there would be a delay in completed the initial health assessment would be if the doctor was on annual leave.

The report provided to the Board advised that there have been significant, ongoing challenges in relation to IHA compliance which HDFT, the local authority and the acute hospital trust recognise and are working in an attempt to rectify the situation.

All three partners meet on a weekly basis and discuss any outstanding IHA appointments, establish if additional clinic appointments are required and liaise in relation to child was not brought. HDFT have also raised with the local authority that a delay in providing notification consents is creating a delay in the child being booked to attend for an IHA.

It remains the responsibility of the social worker to notify the parent / carer of the appointment details and if for whatever reason the appointment is to be cancelled / rearranged then this must be agreed by the service manager.

Review health assessments

The report and specialist nurse provided some statistics surrounding the Review health assessments.

Compliance to Review Health Assessments (RHA) completed within the timeframe of 6 monthly for children under 5 years.

Middlesbrough			
Under 5-Year % in timescales			
Q1 April	Q1 May	Q1 June	Q2 July

70%	83.3%	80%	75.0%
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Compliance to Review Health Assessments (RHA) completed within the timeframe of 12 monthly for children over 5-15 years.

Middlesbrough			
5-15 year % in timescales			
Q1 April	Q1 May	Q1 June	Q2 July
56.3%	73.3%	56.2%	100%

Compliance to Review Health Assessments (RHA) completed within the timeframe of 12 monthly for children over 16+ years.

Middlesbrough			
16+ year % in timescales			
Q1 April	Q1 May	Q1 June	Q2 July
60%	66.7%	55.6%	71.4%

The Specialist nurse advised that challenges that have contributed to the timely compliance being less than desirable were as follows:

- Child living out of area (beyond a 30-mile radius) and the RHA request not being undertaken within timescales.
- Placement changes for Children in care and the Tees Valley Children in care service not being notified of the placement change.
- Staffing capacity throughout the mobilisation of the Tees Valley Children in care service.
- By request of the young person due to exams.

In previous meetings, the board has been made aware of issues of children in care receiving dental care despite some children being subject to care orders.

Prior to HDFT becoming responsible for Children in care in Middlesbrough there was extensive work undertaken in relation to a Dental Health Pathway. This continues to be a work in progress and it is anticipated that it will be embedded in practice by November 2022.

The Specialist Nurse also advised the board of a School Based Immunisation & Children in care Pathway that ensures the immunisation uptake for Children in care is satisfactory. This has been devised and implemented into practice since May 2022 and as a result we have been successful in 3 Children in care having their outstanding immunisations administered.

The Specialist nurse advised that further data on the pathways programme would be able to be provided at the next presentation to the board.

AGREED- That the information provided be noted.

PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The Chair welcomed Kathy Peacock, Voice and Influence Manager and Adam Hart, CAMHS / HeadStart Business Administrator Apprentice who were in attendance to provide the standard item update relating to activities of our care experienced young people 15 September 2022-18 October 2022.

Adam provided further information to the Board on the following activities:

1. Delivered their second communications and language training (four professions attended) and delivered this training online to 32 staff during practice week.
2. First pop up café was held on 21 September 2022 looking at training and employment. The second on 28 September looking at positive relationships-family and friends and the third on 5 October 2022 looking at emotional wellbeing and health.
3. Virtual school took over the Children in care council on 4 October 2022 and played education Jenga. They discussed how to increase attendance at personal education plan (PEP) meetings and suggestions including a voucher or as simple as a cup of tea and biscuit, where young people felt valued and respected.
4. Children in care council met 24 other looked children young people at their Jump 360 engagement event on 5 October 2022. It was fun but very loud!

The Board also heard about the activities that the care experienced people plan over the next few months, including:

1. 4th pop up café will be held on 12 October 2022 focusing on somewhere to call home and finances.
2. 5th pop up café will be held on 19 October 2022 focusing on having a voice and being heard and our rights and responsibilities.
3. The participation team will be planning a celebratory /party for care leavers.
4. Children in Care council have been planning their Christmas party. The Voice and Influence Manager stated that the young people had a dream to have this in Acklam hall and the Board would contact them to see if this could be made possible.

The Manager also outlined that Care leavers week would be taking place between 24- 28 October 2022 and that a programme would be sent round to members of the Corporate parenting board in due course. Any donations of pumpkins would be most welcome.

AGREED

1. That the information be noted.
2. That the Chair of Corporate Parenting Board make contact with Acklam Hall regarding the possibility of hosting the CICC Christmas party.

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.

Key findings September 2022 were as follows:

CP1: Number of children in Care in Middlesbrough- Trend

Number of children and young people open to social care, in particular Children looked after shows a fluctuated trend since September 2021.

Children looked after numbers vastly improved. They dropped down below the 500

mark in January 2022, reaching 522 in August 2022- a 1% decrease prior to last month.

Children looked after are down 2.6% in comparison to 12 month prior.

CP2: gap between Middlesbrough and Regional Children in Care (CiC) per 10,000- trend

The rate of Looked after children per 10,000 shows a fluctuating trend in the last 12 months reaching the lowest rate in January 2022 at 39.91.

The rate increased in recent months, reaching 53.49 in August 2022- thought this had recently decreased in September 2022 to 49.57

Middlesbrough remain above all external benchmarks, and have fallen below our 2020/21 outturn.

CP3: Ration of children entering to leaving care- Trend

The number of children starting a period of care remaining stable, until recent months when the ratio increased. Scorecard shows that in August 2022, for every 09. Children starting care 1 ceased. The ratio still remains below the 2020/21

CP4: Average number of weeks children spend in care (Ceasing care in month) –Trend

The average number of weeks children spend in care has shown a fluctuating trend in the last 12 months. The number of weeks reached a highest in May 2022 at 182.00.

- In September 2022 the average number of weeks increased, exceeded the 2021/22 target (132.40), reaching 139.10.

CP5: FTE caseloads between 15-20 – trend

FTE caseloads between 15-20 reveals the peak caseload % was in July 2022 at 57%. The % has since decreased to 59% in September 2022 and remain above the 2022/21 target (44.70%)

The Head of Service advised of the following in terms of staffing and caseloads:

Looked After teams – There were currently 15 social workers across the three looked after. This equates to an average of 17 cases per social worker. There were 17 posts in the establishment. They have an average of 12 families each. There are two vacant posts in the service that are not covered.

Pathways Social Workers– There were currently 3.5 social workers carrying a combined caseload of 80 children and young people. There were 4 vacant social work posts not recruited to, 3 of which were covered with agency staff. 1 post was not currently covered. This was an average caseload of 120. They have an average of 20 families.

There were 8 Pas currently covering 9 PA posts. They have a current average caseload of 20 young people. Social workers were supporting capacity for PAs and hold 30 young people.

CP7: % of CiC where plan of permanence has been ratified- trend

The % of children in care where a plan of permanence has been agreed has remained above the 2020/21 target for the last 12 months remaining at 100% for the last 9 months.

This highlights that the timescales of permanence agreements are significantly improving.

CP8: % of permanence arrangements resulting in SGO- Trend

The % of permanence arrangements resulting in SGO remains above or meets the 2020-21 target of 20% in the last 12 months. The % reached 21% in September 2022.

This shows great improvements across Children's social care in regards to the reasoning of ceasing.

CP9: % of ciC placed with parents on care orders at home- trend

There was currently 51 children placed at home with a parent. This had increased from the lowest point in February when there were 41 children recorded as being cared for at home by a parent.

This has reduced from an overall high of 99 children in September 2020.

This was an overall reduction of 48.4%

CP10:% of children who ceased to be looked after in the period who were adopted-trend

The % of children who ceased to be looked after in the period who were adopted has remained relatively stable across the last 12 months. In September 2022 the % reached 11% the same % as last month and a 1% increase in comparison to 12 month prior

CP13% of CiC in inhouse foster placement – 12 month trend

The % of inhouse foster carer placements has remained relatively stable in the last 12 months. The % remains below the 21% 2020/21 target in September 2022 reaching 19% - 0.40% in comparison to 12 months prior.

CP14- % of CiC placed with connected carers – 12 month trend

The % of connected carer placements has slightly fluctuated in the last 12 months. The % remains below the 2020/21 target of 29% across all months recorded. In September 2022 the % reached 24.50% -0.55 % in comparison to 12 month prior.

CP23- % of care leavers in EET- trend

The % of care leavers in EET is relatively stable across all recorded months remaining below the 2020/21 target 54%.

The highest recorded % was in May 2022 at 5.1% this has since decreased -1% to 50% in September 2022.

Finally, the manager provided information on CP24 - % of care leavers in suitable accommodation – 12 month trend. The % of care leavers in suitable accommodation remains below the 2020/21 target. 95% for all recorded months. In September 2022 the % reached 89% +1% in comparison to 12 month prior.

Following the presentation, there was some discussion surrounding suitable accommodation for care leavers. It was agreed that Thirteen would be writing to in relation to their support for care leavers and attendance at the Board.

AGREED

1. That the information be noted
2. That the Chair formally write to Thirteen.

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD STRATEGY ACTION PLAN- PERMANENCE

The Head of Looked after children and corporate parenting board provided the board with regard to progress made against the Permanence action plan.

The six priorities were as follows:

Strengthening Permanency in Our Social Work Practice
Growing Our Multi-Agency Partnerships for Permanency
Reducing Drift and Delay for Achieving Permanency

Improving the Way we capture and Use Our Data for Permanency
Supporting Permanency in Education, Employment & Training
Supporting Permanency in Education, Employment & Training

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 outlined the impact/ data and performance; these being:

- ✓ Overall in the last 12 months, the looked after populations has reduced from 544 children in August 2021 to 535 in August 2022 (1.6% reduction). There has been a 23.7% reduction in the overall numbers of looked after children since the height of 702 in September 2020.
- ✓ The rate per 10,000 has reduced from 164.2 in August 2021 to 161.5 in August 2022.
- ✓ In 21/22, 24 children secured Adoption Orders. This was significantly higher than any of the neighboring authorities.
- ✓ The average number of days our children wait between securing a Placement Order and being matched to an adoptive family has reduced from 301 days in 20/21 to 189 days 21/22
- ✓ There has been a total of 50 children secure permanence through the granting of a Special Guardianship Orders in the last 12 months.
- ✓ Connected Carers – There are currently 141 children in connected carers placements. This has reduced from a height of 212 in 2020. This is a reduction of 33.4%. The trend is showing an increase in the number of children in Connected Carers placements.
- ✓ Placement with Parents – There are currently 51 children placed with parents. This has reduced from a height of 99 children in September 2020 (48.4% reduction)
- ✓ There have been no looked after children permanently excluded from school in the last 5 years.
- ✓ There has been a 12.8% reduction in school suspension from 2019/20 to 2021/22
- ✓ Only 1.3% of looked after children are receiving less than 25 hours education (7 children). Of which there is an action plan and oversight from Virtual School with regards to each child.

In terms of risks:

- The increase in demand across the service and across the Tees Valley region
- Risks associated with the recruitment of staff in the looked after and care leaving service.

Finally, the manager provided information on the next steps:

- Life Story Work compliance and quality to continue be driven

- Progress the commissioning of Arcbox to support the quality of Life Story Work
- The ongoing reduction and tracking of the number of children residing in external residential placements
- Progress the Permanence Action Plan and report to Improvement Board and Corporate Parenting Board
- Practice leads deployed in to the service to improve the quality of care plans for looked after children
- Participation People to develop attendance and provide Corporate Parenting Board with a proposed plan for the Children in Care Council.
- Recruitment of permanent staff
- Practice Week in October 2022 to support staff development

22/9

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD STRATEGY ACTION PLAN- SUFFICIENCY

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 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 continues to be a national issue in a number of areas and work to ensure levels of staffing both internally and externally continue. She also advised that agency staff were being utilised and work to improve recruitment was ongoing.

In terms of next steps, the Manager stated that a full refresh of the commissioning action plan was needed and would be completed by the end of October 2022.

The Manager was thanked for her presentation.

AGREED- That the action plan be noted.

22/10

INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER (IRO) ANNUAL REPORT

The Chair introduced the Interim RAD Manager/Practice Lead who was in attendance to provide an overview of the Independent reviewing officer (IRO) annual report.

The key areas discussed were as follows:

- The report covered the period from the 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022.
- The report was a statutory requirement under *Section 7, paragraph 11 of the IRO Handbook*, which sets out that the manager of the IRO Service must provide an annual report on the delivery of the IRO Service which can then be scrutinised by members of the Corporate Parenting Board. It provides information on the Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) and their contribution to improving outcomes for children in care and young people leaving care.
- In Middlesbrough, the IROs have a dual role and therefore this report includes consideration of those children subject to a Child Protection Plan.

In summary the purpose of an IRO is to:-

- Monitor the activity of the local authority as a corporate parent in ensuring that care plans have given proper consideration and weight to the child's wishes and feelings and that, where appropriate, the child fully understands
- Offer a safeguard to prevent any 'drift' in care planning for looked after children and the delivery of services to them;
- Promote the child's voice

Progress

Children in our Care

OFSTED's Monitoring Visit of March 2022 regarding planning and decision making for children in care reported that:-

- *There is an improved oversight of independent reviewing officers. Mid-point reviews between the IRO and the social worker keep plans on track. Children know their IRO and are visited by them before their review. This is ensuring that children's views are known and are informing care planning.*
- This view was confirmed by our own oversight of IRO practice through performance and quality assurance activity which indicates improvements in practice for IROs over 2021/22.

- There were improvements in the timeliness of Reviews for children in our care with 82% in time compared to 65% in 2020/21.
- There was an increase in children and young people being seen and spoken to prior to their review by their IRO (68% of reviews, a 25% increase on 2020/21)
- There was cumulative evidence through increased visits and midway reviews of a 52% increase of the IRO footprint on the child's record compared with 2020/21
- Use of IRO challenge through the Issues Resolution Process was sustained over 2021/22 with 80 challenges made to make sure plans for children in our care meet their needs.

Child Protection

Over 2021/22, there were improvements in the timescales for child protection conferences with 83% of initial child protection conference in time compared to 65% in 2020/21 and 78% of child protection plans being reviewed in time compared to 69% in 2020/21

The evidence of IRO oversight including use of midway reviews, on case records improved by 20% since last year.

IROs raised 70 issues regarding children subject to child protection plans to make sure they received an appropriate response to their needs.

Areas for Improvement

The IRO improvement journey will remain closely linked to the Children's Services' Improvement Plan and their priorities for 2022/23 are to make sure that practice across the Team is consistently of a high standard.

This includes:-

- Improve compliance with key performance indicators Increase child participation in meetings about them, including use of advocacy
- Strengthen the IRO engagement with children through visits and regular contact between reviews
- Gather the views of parents and carers regarding their experience of conferences and reviews

- Embedded use of Mid-way reviews to drive planning for children
- increased continuous oversight for those children without stability and permanence
- Strengthen the impact of IRO Challenge and demonstrate IROs have high aspirations for Middlesbrough children
- IROs contribute to the overall practice priorities of Children's Services by monitoring quality of performance and informing learning and development.

The officer was thanked for her presentation.

AGREED- that the information be noted.

22/11

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

No items.