

**YOU MATTER TO US- CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**

A meeting of the You Matter to Us- Corporate Parenting Board was held on Tuesday 28 November 2023.

**PRESENT:** Councillors C Cooke - Elected Mayor (Chair), D Jackson, J Kabuye, T Livingstone, M Nugent, G Wilson and Sharp

**PRESENT BY INVITATION:** Councillors

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** Davidson-Boyd (Service Manager) (Adoption Tees Valley)

**OFFICERS:** V Banks, S Blood, T Dunn, R Hamer, G Nicholson, Hart, Beevers, Peacock, C Heaphy and D Alaszewski

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Councillors J Walker, A Romaine, Z Uddin, M Storey, P Storey and R Brown

22/1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors J Kabuye, A Romaine, J Walker and Z Uddin.

22/2 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

22/3 **MINUTES- CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD- 13 SEPTEMBER 2023**

The minutes from You Matter to Us- The Corporate Parenting Board, held on 13 September 2023 were submitted and approved as a true record.

22/4 **MIDDLESBROUGH VIRTUAL SCHOOL- ISLINGTON MODEL**

At the meeting on 13 September 2023, the Panel received an update from Victoria Banks, Virtual School Head regarding the support in place from children looked after and care leavers.

During the meeting, there was reference made to the potential app, specifically for care leavers, which would contain useful information to assist them in their journey to independent living.

The Board were advised that Rob Brown, Director of Education and Partnerships had asked that the Virtual school to explore a Virtual College. The Head of Virtual schools reached out to Persons publishers who support this. Islington Council currently provide an app (Izzy4u) and a conversation had taken place with Matthew Blood, Virtual School Head of Islington to provide further guidance.

The Board were provided with a demonstration of the app, which is hoped to be adapted and introduced in Middlesbrough. The App would provide interactive videos from care experienced children and young people, and would give more credibility from young people, rather than from an adult perspective.

The Virtual School Head advised that the app would only work effectively if it provided current information and was co-designed with care experienced young people. The Director of Children Service's and Head of Access to Education, therefore advised that a task and finish group would be established and finding would be fed back to the Board in due course.

Following the demonstration, Board members posed a number of queries:

1. Could the app embed function skills?
2. Would there be a facility to provide a chat room function ?
3. Could the app provide pen pictures of key officers of Children Service's?

In response, the Virtual School Head advised that at present the app does not provide this, however it could be something embedded if there was a need. The app does not provide chat rooms, however an email address could be included but this would not be 'live'. In terms of the pen pictures, this is an area which could be developed.

The Board noted that this currently no platform of this nature in Middlesbrough, only a website and brochures. The Care Ambassadors in attendance, felt this was a positive step, as feedback from young people, outlined that they wanted conversations and bitesize information. There was concern that introducing this app would take away the purpose of the Personal Advisor (PA) however the Interim Director of Children's Care felt that that the app would work side by side and provide complimentary information and support. For example, if a care leaver had recently only met their PA, how comfortable would they feel about speaking to them about sexual health? The whole purpose was to support young people going into independence.

One of the Care Ambassadors queries whether the app could provide neutral support for all young people, however the Virtual School Head explained that as this is will be developed by Virtual schools, the support is focused on children and young people with a social worker, who are proven to be more vulnerable and require additional support. However the Virtual School Head welcomed the comments and advised these would be welcome, as well as the Care Ambassadors input in the task and finish group.

AGREED:

- That the information provided be noted.
- That a task and finish group be established and feedback in relation to the development of the App be brought back to a future meeting of You Matter to Us (April 2023)

22/5

### **CARE EXPERIENCED YOUTH VOICE UPDATE- SEPTEMBER 2023- NOVEMBER 2023**

The Chair welcomed Adam and Holly to the meeting, who were in attendance to provide an update from the Care experienced Youth Voice.

A brief overview of the groups were provided:

#### **'We Matter' (Middlesbrough's Children in Care Council)**

- Care experienced young people aged 11 - 16 years meet fortnightly at Easterside Hub 17:00 - 18:30pm. We have five members
- They have fun, have a voice and create events to hear from their care experienced peers
- They share their views with key decision makers who act on what they say and positively change services to meet their needs
- They will support teams to act on what they say and help monitor the 'You Said, We Will, We Did reporting tool
- We meet with young people at their residential homes

#### **Older Care Experienced Young People**

- We have three older care experienced who have volunteer roles as Care Ambassadors and are co-opted onto the Corporate Parenting Board.
- The Care Ambassadors will support the work of 'We Matter' and create engagement events for their older care experienced peers
- We work with Pathways to support them with their events - Annual celebration event,

Christmas dinner and we will engage with their care experienced young adults at the Forum

Whilst the report provided full details of the activities for each group, Adam provided the following examples :

**We Matter**

*September 2023*

The group planned the Teesside engagement event, which then took place on 14 September 2023, where Ralph Presgrave ran a session on staying safe online.

*October 2023*

Catherine Prest (Fostering) attended to the group on 3 October and talked to the group about meeting potential foster carers and delivering training to current carers. We Matter also held a Halloween Party on 27 October 2023, where 49 young people attended.

**Older Care Experienced Young People**

*July/ September 2023*

- Engagement took place with residential services and the group visited staff within homes to discuss plans and focus for their engagement with young people. As a result, engagement with young people within our residential homes has commenced to ensure we capture everyone's voice.
- In July, members attended Pathways 'Core Offer ' launch event and in late August, members attended the Regional Children in Care Council to help plan the conference in November.
- 13 September 2023, our New care ambassadors attended Corporate Parenting Board.

*October 2023*

Care Ambassadors started to attend Pathways Team meetings and spoke to Dawn Alaszewski and Sharon Hetherington regarding their journey in Pathways.

*November 2023*

1 November-attended the Regional Children in Care conference, along with Dawn Alaszewski and Rob Hamer. Everyone made a pinky promise.

Holly is now working with young people, Pathways and 16+ provision to design and develop a life skills course and accreditation.

Adam advised that over the next few months, the groups plan to:

1. Continue to work with the teams to promote the 'We Matter' group to increase membership and attendance at the engagement and fun events
2. Have all our care experienced young people/adults set up as volunteers
3. Create ASDAN awards to provide accreditation for their work and the young people they work with
4. Work with the Commissioning team to create 'Young Commissioners'
5. Meet more care experienced young people who live in residential care
6. Support We Matter and the Care Ambassadors to work with the fostering service to talk with potential foster carers
7. Involve We Matter and the Care Ambassadors to undertake Regional Children in Care Council work
8. Hold our Christmas party for care experienced young people - 14th December 5 - 7.30pm Riverside Stadium

AGREED

That the information be noted.

22/6

**CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD- PERFORMANCE DATA**

The Interim Director of Children's Care provided a presentation in relation to the Children's services scorecard, which specifies reference to children in care.

The Board were advised that as of 28 November 2023, there were 514 children looked after in Middlesbrough. The scorecard was showing this as a green action, however the Interim Director advised that she felt the benchmark needed amending as this had been set when Middlesbrough had increasing numbers (702), this would be actioned accordingly.

The Board had been provided the data prior to the meeting for information, however there were a number of points to note:

- Demand to the front door service has slowed down
- Been some significant work undertaken around special guardianship orders (SGOs) and connected persons.
- There were currently a cohort of children who were secure a permanent placement within the next few months, which would decrease the number of children in care/ need.

The Director of Children's Services advised that it was important to look at more mature data and have expectation of stability, taking into consideration the context of Middlesbrough (poverty and deprivation) and ensure our children and young people are safe.

A panel member asked whether higher number of children looked after effected Ofsted's view of the local authority, In response, the Director outlined that Ofsted would look to analyse 10-20 young people in case by audit. The benchmark does need amended to be more realistic of the current situation and officers would bring slightly different data to future meetings.

**AGREED**

- That the information be noted.
- That the benchmark for children looked after be amended to be reflective of Middlesbrough's current situation.

22/7

**PATHWAYS JOURNEY- OUR IMPROVEMENT**

Holly Sharp, Care Ambassador provided a presentation in relation to Pathways, which had been delivered to Heads of Services and members of the Corporate Parenting Board on 9 November 2023.

The presentation provided information on what was going well, not so well and future ideas; which included:

- Having earlier support to ensure we are in a better place before moving to the Pathways team
- Having good communication around what we are entitled to, we suggested having training put into place for this to be a success
- Having a positive plan around post 18
- Putting money, we use for social groups into other areas such as housing, so we have a safe space to move into instead of an unsafe area and the money to be beneficial instead of a waste
- Social groups to have a meaning behind them
- Personal advisors to be allocated before 18 this is to build up that relationship so they can have a clear path post 18
- Social worker to understand that they need to listen to both side of stories during crisis and placement breakdown.

It was noted that issues needed to be flagged at an earlier stage and that young people needed to have a more lengthy transition and introduction to their personal advisor (PA) prior to them turning 18.

Rob Hamer, advised the Board that PA's are now introduced at the aged of 17 and have a clear move on plan. A Councillor also had concern that young people are not prepared to move into independent living and It was noted that this was being looked at as part of the wider pathways plan.

**AGREED**

- That the presentation and actions be noted.
- That the care ambassadors continue to have engagement with Pathways to ensure the plan for future care leavers is clear.

22/8

**FEEDBACK FROM 'YOU MATTER TO US ' ENGAGEMENT SESSION - 9 NOVEMBER 2023**

The Mayor advised the Board that following Holly's presentation on 9 November 2023, those

present were asked to make a pledge.

There were as follows:

<b>Pledge</b>	<b>Officer</b>
Social groups to have a meaning being them-continue working with care ambassadors to hear voices from older care experienced young people.	Laurie Hunter Communications and Engagement Officer
Proactively work with mental health professionals in order to meet with the needs of the young people who are affected by the mental health issues.	Zafar Uddin Executive Member for Children's Services
Work with housing providers to provide more housing	Chris Cooke The Mayor
Implement training for social care staff to be led by young people.	Joe Tynan Executive Director of Children's Services
To explore care ambassadors' apprenticeships.	Sharron Herrington Service Manager- Pathways
To support the services to progress with all of the future ideas that have been shared by our young people.	Dawn Alaszewski Interim Director of Children's Care
To continue working with our young people to hear what is working and what needs to change.	Dawn Alaszewski Interim Director of Children's Care
Ensure Pathways plans are aspirational supporting young people to have a clear vision in all areas. Capturing clear views and wishes setting realistic steps to achieve.	Gemma McLaren Team Manager- Pathways
Care Ambassadors are very important to help on the awareness and leadership and feedback.	
That our care experienced young people continue to feel part of decision making, by attending meetings, feeling their voices are heard and influencing change.	Susie Blood Democratic Services Officer and Volunteer 'We Matter'
The way we engage with our young people and ensure young people have a greater influence on decisions that affect them.	Adam Hart Headstart South Tees Apprentice
To be on time and to make sure we get full views of all young people.	Lilly Scott. Personal Advisor

The Mayor addressed the Board with specific reference to housing. The young people had mentioned a number of providers who were delivering inadequate housing for care leavers. The Mayor made a promise that these providers were no longer being used and would remain off Middlesbrough council's register.

Rob Harmer also addressed the Board and whilst he was not present at the engagement session, he had pledged the following at the Regional conference:

*" Now as Head of Service of Placements, my promise at the regional conference was to ensure that our young people are prepared for adult life and currently the team are putting places in place to ensure this happens"*

AGREED:

- That the pledges are noted.
- That the pledges are monitored and updates be provided to the Board.

#### **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 Paragraphs 1 and 3 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.

22/10 **ADOPTION TEES VALLEY- MIDDLESBROUGH'S PERFORMANCE AND UPDATE**

The Chair welcome Vicky- Davidson Boyd, Service Manager of Adoption Tees Valley (ATV) to the meeting, who provided an overview of Middlesbrough's performance in relation to the wider region.

Also in attendance were 3 care experienced young people from ATV's Voice and influence group, who shared their view and stories with the Board.

AGREED-

- That the overview of Middlesbrough's performance be noted.
- That the information shared by the young people be circulated to Directors for further discussion.

22/11 **ANY OTHER URGENT ITEMS WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, MAY BE CONSIDERED.**

No Items.