

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

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

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

PRESENT BY INVITATION: Councillors

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: CSnowball, D fenny, N Ayres and Dunning (HARROGATE AND DISTRICT NHS FOUNDATION TRUST)

OFFICERS: S Blood, V Banks, S Butcher, T Dunn, R Farnham, P Jemson, T Parkinson, Beevers, C Breheny, G Nicholson , L Jefferson and T James

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors R Brown, R Scott, L Garvey and J Walker

21/1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for Absence

21/2 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

21/3 **MINUTES- CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD- 30 NOVEMBER 2021**

The minutes of the Corporate Parenting Board held on 30 November 2021 were read and accepted as a true record.

21/4 **COVID -19 UPDATE**

The Director of Children's Services provided a verbal update to the Board. She advised that in the week previously Middlesbrough had had the highest infection rate in the Country, however it has come down.

Social care- not a significant effect on staffing in front line teams, all children who are looked after are having visits, and although we do not have our performance figures for January 2022, there was no concerns that these visits were not taking place. Only area of staffing what was being effected was within the children's' homes, however they are continuing to manage the homes successfully. If staffing.

Vacancy levels are monitored on a 3 weekly basis (internally) and we have to report figures to the Department of Education (DFE) on a fortnightly basis , however if staff absences go above 20% Middlesbrough must be reported directly to the DFE so that they can support Middlesbrough and offer guidance to reduce the risk overall. There has been a suggestion that they may be able to provide financial assistance for Agency workers, however they are difficult to come by.

Schools have been significantly affected by Covid and whilst no school has closed, there has been high levels of staff affected and we would like to commend our teaching staff, as they are ensuring our children are being taught, regardless of staff sickness.

There has been a call for retired teachers to return to support schools, however those schools whom the Director has spoken too, have advised this is not as useful as anticipated as staff are unaware of the running of the school.

Following the update a number of comments/ questions were raised:

Mask wearing of parents on drop off/ pick up- are we able to ask parents to do this? In

response, the Director advised that the local authority can ask parents but we are unable to mandate this. The Head of Access to Education also advised that the LA are trying to encourage this and we discuss covid related procedures with Head Teachers. The Director also advised that there is a system in place that if vulnerable children are not in school, social workers are notified.

From an outbreak and public health perspective, we have been advising schools that they have preventative measures in place, however this is difficult for the schools to enforce, especially when parents are outdoors. It was the schools responsibility to ask why parents are not wearing masks, however the local authority do not have this information. Parents are asked to wear masks indoors, however it is difficult to enforce outside.

In terms of covid numbers in schools, the rates have slightly increased, however historically we have seen an increase in the 19-59 age group (working age) however it is starting to ease and therefore hopefully not having a massive impact on teaching.

The Director advised that she would reiterate the mask wearing with head teachers at a future meeting.

The vaccination take up was further mentioned by a Board member and in particular school staff. In response, public health advised that they do not have these figures but there have been some concerns from certain schools regarding unvaccinated staff, however as advised the local authority are unable to mandate this, only encourage. It was suggested that virtual schools/ social workers could ask young people what the impact has been on their learning and it could be discussed at the children and care council/ care leavers' forum.

AGREED- That the update be noted.

21/5 **CHILDREN IN CARE IN MIDDLESBROUGH- THE ROLE OF THE CCG AND THE DESIGNATED LAC (CHILDREN IN CARE) TEAM**

21/6 **PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN MIDDLESBROUGH**

The Chair welcome Hannah Wiseman, Programme Manager, Specialist and Targeted to provide an update on participation of children and young people in Middlesbrough.

The officer firstly provided an overview of who Participation People are; advising that they have been working with Middlesbrough since August 2021 to make services better for young people that live in Middlesbrough.

Participation People have 5# youthvoice work strands:

- Middlesbrough Youth Council
- Middlesbrough in Care Councils
- Middlesbrough Young Champions
- Middlesbrough Young Researchers
- Middlesbrough Young Journalists

Participation people facilitate open, safe, and inclusive spaces with these forums regularly. Each group creates fun and engaging opportunities for their peers and decision- makers to get involved in service improvement activities, campaigns and events. There are 8 officers within the Middlesbrough Team, 2 are Middlesbrough Council officers. Xavier is supporting the in care councils.

In terms of progress from December 2021, the Programme Manager provided information on the following:

- Re-launch of the care experienced #youthvoice forum- relaunch on 18th and 20th January 2022.
- Celebration events
- Youth Champions
- Youth Researchers
- Youth Councils- election will take place in February 2022.

In terms of the Care Experiences #youthvoice , the Board heard that these were relaunching in person on 18th and 20th January 2022. Flyers had been generated and shared, as well as individual contacts with young people. The forums were operating out of the Easterside Hub and the Pathways building and would be facilitated by Xavier Davies and supported by Kathy from Participation People. Further updates would be brought to the February meeting.

The Programme Manager discussed the Care experienced Roadmap, which included for example, a celebration event , social activities, a residential and future training for councilors. The Board were further reassured that the care experience #youthvoice forums, would be undertaken under the current covid-19 guidance, which included pre session covid questionnaires and lateral flows tests. The Board were advised that in the event that national or local guidance prevents from meeting in person, a virtual delivery would be offered to ensure the forums continue.

They have also developed a recognition and reward policy, where we as the young people what they would like from being part of the group, as we want to ensure young people participate but feel valued and continue to work with participation people. All Corporate Parents are invited to attend the session.

Following the presentation, the Chair questioned further there was 1 young person selected from each school elected to attend Middlesbrough Youth Council. In response, the Programme Manager advised numbers were smaller than expected at present, however they were expecting to get a young person from each school and from each ward. In terms of the Member of Youth Parliament for Middlesbrough, where the young person would represent the views of all young people, the election would take place at the end of February and there were currently 8 candidates standing.

AGREED

That the information be noted

21/7

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD STRATEGY ACTION PLAN- REVIEW OF THE PERMANENCY ACTION PLAN

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

The Head of service in a previous meeting had highlighted the findings by Ofsted in November 2019. This was included in the report for reference and the report was to highlight any changes/ updates since the Board were updated in October 2021.

The six priorities as previously discussed were as follows:

1. Strengthening Permanency in Our Social Work Practice
2. Growing Our Multi-Agency Partnerships for Permanency
3. Reducing Drift and Delay for Achieving Permanency
4. Improving the Way we capture and Use Our Data for Permanency
5. Supporting Permanency in Education, Employment & Training
6. Supporting Permanency in Education, Employment & Training

The Head of Service went through each of the priorities and identified what has been achieved since the permanency action plan had been to the Board in October 2021. Full details of these were outlined in the report which had been circulated to the Board prior to the meeting.

The Head of Service further went on to state some of the impact/ data and performance in the last 12 months:

- Overall in the lasts 12 months, the looked after populations has reduced from 654 children in November 2020 to 526 in November 2021 (19.5% reduction). There has been a 25% reduction in the overall numbers of looked after children since the height of 702 in September 2020. In the last 12 months 205 children started to be looked after compared to 344 children ceased to be looked after.
- The rate per 10,000 has reduced from 197.4 in November 2021 2020 to 158.8 in November 2021. This is the lowest rate in the last 12 months and has continued

to reduce consistently.

- Since 01 April 2021 19 Adoption Orders have been secured. This includes:
 - 4 children of BAME
 - 4 sibling groups of 2
 - 2 aged 4+
- More children have been adopted in Middlesbrough than all other authorities in Teesside.
- The number of days between a Placement Order being granted and a child being adopted has reduced from 558 in 209/20 to 342 in 2021/22.
- There are currently a further 38 children progressing to adoption with Placement Orders. Of which only 2 children do not have confirmed links.
- There has been a total of 76 children secure permanence through the granting of a Special Guardianship Orders in the last 12 months.
- Connected Carers – There are currently 124 children in connected carers placements. This has reduced from a height of 212 in 2020.
- Placement with Parents – There are currently 47 children placed with parents. This has reduced from 52 children in October 2021 and from a height of 99 children in September 2020 to 58 in August 2021. (52.5% reduction)
- There has been a reduction in the number of children in external residential placements from 74 in June 2021 to 47 in December 2021
- School attendance for looked after children was 91% in November 2021.
- There have been no looked after children permanently excluded from school in the last 5 years.
- Only 3.1% of looked after children are receiving less than 25 hours education (11 children). Of which there is an action plan and oversight from Virtual School of each.

The Head of Service identified two 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.

The Board finally heard the next steps in respect to the action plan:

- Data Team to develop a Permanence Dashboard and Score Card – Performance and progress to be reported to Improvement Board and Corporate Parenting Board
- Life Story Work compliance and quality to continue be driven
- 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.
- The Audit to Excellence team will carry out a deep dive audit of the looked after and care leavers service in January 2022. Audit findings to be reported back to Corporate Parenting Board.
- Recruitment of permanent staff

After the presentation a number of Board members congratulated the members of staff for their work in this area.

A board member queried whether foster carers were involved in life story training and in response the Director of Children's care advised that at present they had been concentrating on training a cohort of Middlesbrough Council staff to be able to support this work, however the Council were looking at purchasing a life story platform, where foster carers, parents/carers and young people could upload regular photos and updates. Foster carers have not yet been training on this, however they are critical to gaining lifestory work and the staff will support foster carers (train the trainers).

The slides would be made available to all members of the council to show the progress, further to this, the Director of Children's care advised that although reducing the number of

children in care was a key point, the work on the edge of care, and work on developing permanence was paramount. A briefing would also be provided.

The Head of Service was thanked for her presentation.

AGREED- That the action plan be noted.

21/8

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD STRATEGY ACTION PLAN- REVIEW OF THE SUFFICIENCY 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 October 2021.

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 permanency action plan had been to the Board in October 2021. 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 external residential placement monitoring continues and we have seen a big swing in in-house placements following the opening of Rosecroft and Daniel Court. As at 4th January 2022 we had 68 placements of which 23 (34%) were internal, 45 (66%) were in external.
- In-house fostering placements have overtaken external IFA placements and as at 04.01.22 there were 326 fostering placements of which 169 (52%) in house and 157 (48%) external

In terms of risks, the Manager advised that COVID has impacted on staffing levels but this was being monitored and in the event that issues are identified the Council will work closely with providers and the service area to provide as much support and resilience as possible.

The Board finally heard the next steps in respect to the action plan:

- Establish monthly Action Plan Meetings on a monthly basis for 2022
- Continue to ensure tasks are driven forward
- Ensure any change controls are secured where any changes to deadlines are identified.

The Chair thanked the Manager for her presentation.

AGREED- That the action plan be noted.

21/9

PERFORMANCE AGAINST CORPORATE PARENTING 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.

At the last meeting, the Board had asked for further information on demographics of our children looked after, which the Board was as follows:

- Gender -54% of the current looked after population are male with 1% of these young boys being Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers. 45% of the looked after population are female.
- Ethnicity - The highest percentage of the children in our care are of a White British ethnicity (81%).
- 8% of children are of mixed ethnicity and 7% are Black or Black British.

The Board were advised that the most common reason for a child to become looked after was due to abuse or neglect. 97 children have become looked after in the last 6 months to protect them from this cause. This was only a slight increase from 2020/2021 however remains significantly higher than our statistical neighbours and the England average.

Further main points to note were as follows:

Demand

- In January 2021 there were 617 children looked after in the authority.
- There has been a rapid reduction over the year demonstrating an increase of 17% over the last 12 months and an overall 27% 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 6 months

Children supported to become not looked after

Future for Families have supported 50 young people on the edge of care since they went live. Of the 50, 37 (74%) of these did not become looked after.

- 21 were supported on a child in need level (57%)
- 11 remain supported on a child in need level
- 10 (47%) no longer require a child in need plan and are no longer supported by the LA
- 16 were subject to child protection procedures (43%)
- 10 remain supported on a child protection level
- 4 (25%) have stepped down and receive child in need support
- 2 (13%) no longer require any service from Children's Social Care

Demand – Caseloads

- Caseloads have consistently reduced since December 2020 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

- Children Placed with Parents - The number of children placed with a parent and subject to a Care Order has reduced significantly since January 2021. There are currently 47 children placed with a parent. This is a 52% overall reduction since the height on 99 children in September 2020.
- Connected Carers – There are currently 114 children looked after and placed with a Connected Carer. This has reduced from a height of 212 in 2020 (46%).
- Adoption - The average number of days from entering care to being placed in an adoptive placement 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, 123 looked after children had experienced three or more placements over the last twelve months. This amounted to 20% of the looked after population.
- This has reduced to 36 children in December 2021. This equates to 7% of the current looked after population. We are currently below all external benchmarks, and are also below our outturn for 2020/21.

Finally the Head of Service outlined some of the quality and impacts:

Visits

94% of looked after children have been seen within the last 6 weeks. This was a 5% decrease from last month. This has been consistently high at over 90% since May.

Supervision/Management Oversight

94% of looked after children have had a supervision within the month of December 2021. This is a 5% decrease from last month. This has been consistently high at over 90% since May 2021.

Personal Education Plans

Performance in relation to PEPs remains high at 99% of children having a recorded PEP within the last 6 months. This performance has remained consistently high and has not dropped below 93% for the last 12 months.

Health Assessments

90.8% of health checks have been conducted and recorded within the last 12 months. This does not take in to account those older children who have refused a medical assessment. Performance has been consistently high at over 90% for the last 12 months.

Dental checks – 66.1% of children have had a dental check in the last 12 months.

The Head of Service was thanked for her presentation.

AGREED

- That the information be noted