

Corporate Parenting Board

A meeting of Corporate Parenting Board was held on Thursday, 14th February, 2019.

Present: Cllr Di Hewitt (Chairman), Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Elsi Hampton, Cllr Barbara Inman, Cllr Sally Ann Watson

Officers: Michael Henderson, Jackie Ward, Jamie Wassell, David Willingham, Jo Lee (SBC);

Also in attendance: Sarah McNulty (NTHNFT), Steve Rose (Catalyst); Vicky Davidson Boyd (ATV)

Apologies: Cllr Marilyn Surtees, Cllr Gillian Corr

CPB 28/18 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

CPB 29/18 **Minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2018**

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2019 were agreed as a correct record.

CPB 30/18 **Adoption Tees Valley - Bi Annual Report**

Members considered Adoption Tees Valley's Bi Annual Report - 1 May - 30 September 2018.

It was explained that Adoption Tees Valley (ATV) began operating, as a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA), on 1 May 2018.

It brought together the former Local Authority adoption services of Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland and Stockton.

The Bi Annual Report provided a review of adoption activity, for the first five months of operation of the ATV.

It was considered that Adoption Tees Valley had had a successful start, with a number of children achieving placements, who had waited some time for adopters. Additionally, a significant number of adopters, who were waiting at the time of transfer had, subsequently, been matched with children, and, in many cases, the children had moved in.

A key aim of the agency's programme was to impact on timeliness of children, waiting for adoption. Early, available, indicators were that timeliness was improving for children, and that, with a greater "pool" of adopters, more children, had achieved their permanent families, through adoption.

ATV had worked collaboratively with senior leaders, and social work teams across the Tees Valley, and there was a well-developed mechanism for early referral of any child with an adoption plan. The impact of this was that ATV had been able to track and plan for these children, and early permanence was being achieved for more children. In many cases adopters were being identified, at an early stage. In the first six months, 24 children had been placed for adoption.

It was considered that adopters had benefited from the RAA by having more children available, with whom they were well matched. ATV had recruited a steady stream of new adopters, but within this period there were just three new approvals, with a further 20 prospective adopters in assessment at the period end.

The vision for ATV was to be a centre of excellence and resource for adopted children and their families, throughout the period of their childhood, and beyond, where necessary. It was known that there could be considerable support needs for children and families, after the Adoption Order was granted. Many adopted children had needs associated with early trauma; attachment difficulties; separation and loss; and needed some help with recovering and managing the long term impact of those issues. ATV was setting out to deliver a core offer to all adopters and children, through regular engagement events, activities, training, workshops and informal support. The service was also the agency through which therapeutic support could be commissioned, funded by the Adoption Support Fund (ASF).

The first six months had been busy and a time of huge development and change for staff, as well as those who were in the adoption journey during the transition. Ultimately, the changes had been very positive.

Discussion:

- Support for adopters was across 3 tiers. 1st tier was universal, 2nd was Targeted , e.g. training, buddy system; 3rd tier was for adopters experiencing significant difficulties.
- the larger footprint, provided by the ATV, had been responsible for a number of beneficial outcomes.
- the ATV had improved contact between siblings.
- there was a need to raise awareness of ATV and the fact that it was a local authority service. An advertising campaign was in the pipeline.
- there was a backlog of children's life story books. A plan was in place to clear this.
- a provider event had been held and a preferred provider list, for therapeutic interventions, was being compiled, with a Quality Assurance Framework.
- Catalyst would contact the ATV to discuss how it might get involved in supporting its work.
- ATV had set a very difficult target of identifying 60 adoption families in 2019/20.
- Children in Care were considered for apprenticeships within the Council.

RESOLVED that the Bi Annual report and discussion be noted/actioned as appropriate.

Children in Our Care Project

Consideration was given to a report that provided an overview and update of the work, in year 1, of the Children in Our Care Project and an outline of plans for year 2.

Members were reminded that the numbers of Children in Our Care was high in Stockton, and was increasing. In addition, too many of our children were being placed out of the area. This was detrimental to the child's relationships with families and local services and was a drain on resources, as these placements were expensive.

Members were aware that the number of Children in Care was also increasing, nationally, and there were a number of theories as to what was causing this, such as, the impact of austerity, risk aversion, a lack of court confidence in support offered to families.

Members were informed of work that had been going on, to understand and address issues, including:

- multi-agency audit of out of area placements
- development of a business case to expand Borough provision.
- Development of services e.g. Edge of Care.

Going forward, a plan of action was being developed and this would be reported to the Board. Work continued with Dartington Service Design Labs to:

- map/match local needs and local services.
- model the child's journey through the social care system to develop a Dynamic System Model.
- develop tools and thresholds

Discussion:

- a business case had been drawn up relating to a range of suitable accommodation being made available to care leavers. Further details of this could be reported to a future meeting.
- It was envisaged that some deep dive audits, into why children came into care, may provide further understanding.
- Members were keen to understand if there were factors that were putting more children at risk.
- it was noted that lots of work was going on in prevention, to reduce the number of children going into care but there was also a significant amount of work being undertaken to help care leavers, do so safely.

It was noted that, intelligence, gathered from deep dive audits was likely to be available towards the end of March and could come back to this Board.

The Board was provided with a presentation on 'Our Place', which was a service for families, and their children, who were considered to be on the Edge of Care.

RESOLVED that:

- 1.the report and 'Our Place' presentation be noted.
2. outcomes of ongoing work, including the action plan, be reported to the Board.
3. the Chair discuss the CIOC Project further, with the Corporate Director of Children's Services.

**CPB
32/18 Children in Our Care Strategic Group Update**

The Board received a report from the Children in Our Care Strategic Group about work it had undertaken since the last update.

Areas of work/discussion had included:

- strength and difficulties questionnaires.
- CIOC Health Assessments
- the high number of CIOC and the project introduced to safely reduce those numbers.
- the Strategic Group's Action Plan

In terms of the Action Plan, Members referenced the fact that the CAMHS contract had been under review for some time. Members were informed that CAMHS continued to be a high quality service, highly valued by the Council and its users. However, it was recognized that it was quite specific and other therapies should be part of the overall offer. It was agreed that a report be provided to the Board's next meeting, detailing why the review of CAMHS was taking so long and providing some further details on how valued the current service was, in order to provide some additional assurance to Members.

RESOLVED that the update be noted

**CPB
33/18 Action Plan Update - Corporate Parenting Event**

Members received an Action Plan that had been updated in the light of outcomes from a Corporate Parenting Event.

It was noted that the Action Plan had been endorsed by a group of Children in Our Care. It was agreed that progress on implementation should be reported to the June meeting of the Board.

During discussion it was explained that, an agreement between Arriva, Stagecoach and the Council had resulted in a 66% reduction in ticket prices, for young people. A number of tokens had been purchased for children in our care, which, affectively became a ticket, once handed into either bus company. It provided a weekly bus pass for Billingham, Middlesbrough, Stockton and Thornaby, anytime of the day.

Members were provided with a poster, produced by CiOC detailing, what they considered to be the key features of the Perfect Corporate Parent. It was agreed that the poster should be circulated to relevant social work teams and, thought should be given to combining it with the Corporate Parenting Pledge.

RESOLVED that the Action Plan be agreed and progress against it be reported to the June meeting.

CPB **Forward Plan**
34/18

Members considered the Board's Forward Plan and agreed it be updated to reflect discussion during the meeting.