

Corporate Parenting Board

A meeting of Corporate Parenting Board was held on Friday, 7th June, 2019.

Present: Cllr Barbara Inman (Chairman) Cllr Helen Atkinson, Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Hilary Vickers, Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley, Cllr Sally Ann Watson

Officers: Michael Henderson, Jackie Ward, Dave Willingham, Jamie Wassell, Jo Lee, Faye McClean, Rachael McCloughlin

Also in attendance:

Apologies: Cllr Marilyn Surtees

1 Evacuation Procedure

Members noted the Evacuation procedure.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Minutes of the meeting held on 12 April 2019

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 April 2019 were confirmed as a correct record.

4 Data and Analysis and Priorities

Members considered a report that provided information designed to assist the Board to gain a full understanding of the nature and scale of issues in relation to Children in Our Care in Stockton-on-Tees. Relevant data and analysis was provided in a detailed statistical review attached to the report.

This statistical review looked to provide a context to the current position, including appropriate comparisons with other local authorities over a timescale of several years.

The statistical review contained details on:

- Children looked after at 31 March, by local authority.
- Children who started to be looked after during the years ending 31 March, by local authority.
- Children who ceased to be looked after during the years ending 31 March, by local authority.
- Children who ceased to be looked after and the number and percentage adopted during the year ending 31 March, by local authority.
- Care leavers now aged 19, 20 and 21 by activity, by local authority.

- Care leavers aged 17 and 18 by activity, by local authority.
- Children looked after who were missing or away from their placement without authorisation, by local authority.

The Board was reminded of the statistical baseline position identified at its December meeting.

Discussion/ issues raised:

- Members noted the reduction in children starting to be looked after and it was suggested that this could have a correlation with Early Help interventions. It was noted that there had been a spike in the trend during 2016 and this could have been attributable to changes to approaches following inspection.
- It was noted that, there had been a steep increase in looked after children being adopted, from 2017 to date. It was explained that around 2016/17 there had been a drive to source adoptive parents and there had been collaboration regional work. It was envisaged that the introduction of Adoption Tees Valley would continue the positive progress made in this area.

RESOLVED that the information and updated statistical baseline be noted.

5 Update from Strategic Officer Group

Members were provided with an update on work being undertaken by the Strategic Officer Group.

Items discussed by the Group had been:

- Children in Our Care Action Plan
- Helping Hand Scheme – update

Children in Our Care Action Plan

It was explained that the action plan was being developed to include a focus on 'Impact' and ensure that the Council was able to see and quantify the effectiveness of actions. Discussion had taken place with regards to the importance of being able to see the impact, whether at a service level, or an individual impact level.

Each member of the group had agreed to review the plan and provide examples of either service level, or individual level Impact, as a starting point.

Once developed further, the Action Plan would be provided to this Board.

Helping Hand Scheme – update

Helping Hand Scheme was an initiative being developed to give opportunity for every Stockton Council Employee to contribute to the role of Corporate Parent.

Specific reference was made to initiatives, being introduced via the Council's Talent Network, that would:

- help a child develop an interest, or talent
- identify Independent Visitors to children in our care.

Members requested a progress report on these initiatives and asked that consideration be given to whether any of the children involved could attend a future Board meeting, to provide their personal views and experiences.

RESOLVED that:

1. the report be noted and the Children in Our Care Action Plan be presented to a future meeting.
2. consideration be given to some of the children involved in the initiatives described above, attending a future meeting of the Board.

6 Sufficiency Statement - Action Plan

The Board received a report that presented a Children in our Care Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy, together with an associated priorities and progress log

The strategy delivered on the Council's statutory responsibility for sufficiency planning, and was part of a suite of documents for children in, and leaving our care.

The strategy was also about the Council's commitment to corporate parenting overall, and, in particular, the right for every child to live safely and securely when they were not able to live with their own parents, for whatever reason. It set out the challenges, associated with the increasing numbers of children in our care, and how we planned to respond to those challenges. It was the most detailed analysis and assessment yet, and was a strategy which underpinned much of the work on transformation – aiming to reduce, safely, the number of children who needed to be in care, seeking to ensure that more children could stay in their family networks, but continuing to provide high quality care, accommodation and support.

The Board noted that the statement was a live document and there would be regular updates

Discussion/issues raised:

- The Board was informed of the network of support available to Foster Carers, including providing support to each other.
- Members were advised of criteria associated with children going missing,

or away from placement, without authorisation. A brief overview of the protocol followed was provided. It was noted that staff had to contact the Police even if a child had been missing for a very short period.

RESOLVED that the Strategy, priorities and progress log be endorsed.

7 Corporate Parenting Events - Action Plan (verbal update)

The Board was provided with a verbal update on progress against the Corporate Parenting Events Action Plan:

- Portal in the Stockton Directory for both carers and young people – There were ongoing discussions on how to best move this forward.
- Create a new welcome pack – A group of young people would be reviewing the existing welcome booklet.
- Reduced cost bus tickets - This was progressing well and 42 vouchers had been handed out to 7 young people. Members were informed of some uses of the bus tickets:
 - Living outside of Stockton and having to get numerous buses to school and back.
 - Improving attendance at college.
 - attendance at appointments with leaving care advisor.
 - for getting to a summer job requiring daily bus journeys.
 - use of the bus tickets helped to release funding for other commitments, like accommodation costs.
- Finance course - the online course from the London Institute of Finance had been identified and a pilot was planned.

It was explained that the next Corporate Parenting Event would be in November.

It was highlighted that the young people valued there interaction with members and it was suggested that a sponsored walk, or other activity, could be arranged, involving young people and members. Any money raised could go to the Stockton Care Leavers' Association Fund.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

8 Young Inspectors Refresh - Verbal Update

The Board noted a verbal update on the Young Inspectors Programme:

- a Training plan had been developed for young inspectors and it was planned to get the training accredited.
- There had been a conference in York, about a new, 2 year, Government initiative and there was an opportunity for 1 young person to gain a spot on this initiative and become an inspector for the North.

RESEOLVED that the update be noted.

9 Corporate Parenting Board - Forward Plan

Members considered the Board's Forward Plan. It was noted that the Chair, Vice Chair and officers would review it further, outside the meeting, to identify priorities and scheduling for future meetings.