

Corporate Parenting Board

A meeting of Corporate Parenting Board was held on Friday, 7th August, 2020.

Present: Cllr Barbara Inman(Chairman), Cllr Carol Clark(Vice-Chair), Cllr Helen Atkinson, Cllr Robert Cook, Cllr Mick Moore, Cllr Hilary Vickers, Cllr Sally Ann Watson

Officers: Gareth Aungiers, Rhona Bollands, Martin Gray, Michael Henderson, Jackie Ward, Janet Wilson, David Willingham (SBC), Vicky Davidson Boyd (ATV)

Also in attendance: Ann Brock (Harrogate FT), DeborahFenny (Cleveland Police), Karen Grundy (Catalyst), Emma Groves (TEWV), Sarah McNulty (NT Trust)

Apologies:

CPB 1/20 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

CPB 2/20 **Minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2020**

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2020 were confirmed as a correct record.

CPB 3/20 **Adoption Tees Valley Update**

Members considered the biannual report of the ATV for the 6 months period to March 2020.

The Board noted that:

-During its second year of operation the ATV had spent time consolidating its structure and embedding practices and the way it wanted to work.

-Early permanence placements had been successful and remained a focus.

-ATV had placed two sets of sibling groups of three and a number of sibling groups of two.

- provisional data showed a reduction in timescales for children from entering care to moving in with adopters. A small number of children continued to have extended timescales, sometimes for reasons associated with Court decision making, and care planning for further siblings.

- the information on timescales from Placement Order to a match had remained the same over the last year. There was variation in the timescales for children, and while many children were achieving timely matching, some children waited longer.

- the service had made significant improvements in recruitment, which had contributed to availability of adopters for the children referred.

- the number of children who had been referred for an adoption placement

remained high, creating demand for placements. The number of children placed for adoption within the year had been the highest over recent years which had meant that although recruitment had been stepped up, there had been a rise in the number of placements with VAAs, and other RAAs over the last year.

- In terms of adopters, assessment timescales were improving, and once approved there had been a small reduction in the numbers of prospective adopters who waited more than 3 months before they were matched.
- Recruitment of adopters had gone well, with a significant improvement on the previous year. 50 adoptive families had been approved.
- the staff team had remained stable, while some new social workers, temporary business partners and support workers had joined the team. Team working was collegiate, and supportive, bringing a positive culture to the agency.
- adoption support had been offered to many more families, across a greater range of tier 1, 2 and 3 services. An education support officer had been appointed working with over 30 families and a number of schools.
- the adopter voice had become more embedded and the Partnership Forum has begun to take shape.
- the children's group had started up, with the first cohort getting benefits from this group's experience. Children meeting each other and getting support from each other.
- There had been an improved offer of therapeutic support and training, with high take up.

There were also some key challenges:

- a. There continue to be more children requiring families than adopters who were available, and so recruitment of adopters was a key priority.
 - b. there remained some challenges to achieve timely referrals, and provision of information for family finding.
 - c. timescales for placement remained a challenge for some children.
 - d. volume of Life Story work had continued to challenge the service.
 - e. Services for non-agency adoptions compete with resources for children in our care who required permanence through adoption. The service had had to create a waiting list for step-parents, and this could be lengthy.
- the overall picture was that the new organisation continued to work well, and had led to improvements in process, timescales and experience for adopters and for children placed for adoption.

-The impact of Covid had been a challenge but ATV had learned to work differently and continued to deliver services and recruit/approve adopters and move children into adoption, with appropriate risk assessment. An adopter Hub was available that provided online support.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

**CPB
4/20** **Virtual School Update**

Members considered an update report relating to the Virtual School.

The Board noted attainment across the key stages.
It was noted that in most areas attainment was above the NE and /or National rates for Children in Care.

Key stage 2 reading attainment had been below NE and National levels and a plan had been put in place to address this. Members were provided with details of the plan as well as other reading interventions organised by the Virtual School.

Members were provided with details of the work undertaken by the Virtual School during Covid 19.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

**CPB
5/20** **Children in Our Care Strategic Group Update**

Members noted that this Group had been stood down at the beginning of lockdown but had met recently and the Board was provided with an overview of discussion at that meeting.

It was noted that the report focused on the impact of Covid - 19 and how services had managed during the period. Members were provided with overviews from a number of service areas, including:

- Residential Children's Care Homes
- Foster Care
- Children in Our Care
- Early Help

Members noted a summary of the Group's findings relating to how services and children in our care had managed during the pandemic, so far:

- The resilience of our children and young people had been incredible, during this pandemic period.
- PPE had been available for staff and carers.
- Partners had all pulled together with a much more collaborative and positive approach being seen, particularly in relation to our schools.

- Communication had improved between all agencies and services.
- The introduction of the vulnerable children's data base had improved information sharing and the ability to identify those most in need of support.
- Remote/virtual working had been very positive in most areas i.e. a number of children had been much more willing to engage in meetings/sessions and discussions with key professionals.
- Birth parents had adapted incredibly well to the restrictions that had to be put into place, particularly around the removal of direct contact.
- Generally, a hybrid model of working was being considered by the majority of partners and services, as part of their recovery plans.
- There would be significant challenges moving forward in relation to the economy and the impact of this, particularly in relation to NEET and training opportunities for many CIOC.

Discussion:

It was noted that paediatricians had been categorised as part of the vulnerable group, at the start of Covid, and had not been able to undertake face to face health assessments. It was explained that face to face assessment would be introduced very shortly, via other clinicians.

There had been no recorded cases of Covid in young people living at residential care homes. However, one member of staff had tested positive.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

**CPB
6/20** **COVID-19 and our children in care**

Members considered a presentation that demonstrated some of the fantastic work Children in Our Care had undertaken during lockdown. New skills had been learnt and creative methods of home learning had been introduced. CIOC had supported VE day, the NHS and the wider community.

RESOLVED that the presentation be noted.

**CPB
7/20** **Work Programme**

Members noted the Board's Work Programme. It was agreed that a Virtual School update be presented to the December meeting of the Board.