

Corporate Parenting Board

A meeting of Corporate Parenting Board was held on Friday, 11th December, 2020.

Present: Cllr Barbara Inman(Chairman), Cllr Pauline Beall, Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Robert Cook, Cllr Mick Moore, Cllr Hilary Vickers, Cllr Sally Ann Watson

Officers: Linda Russell - Bond, Paul Diggins, Martin Gray, Rhona Bollands, Judith Henderson, Jonathan Fawcett, Michael Henderson, Jackie Ward, Dave Willingham, Jamie Wassell, Gareth Aungiers (SBC)

Also in attendance: Emma Groves(TEWV), Sarah McNulty (NTFHT)

Apologies: None

CPB Declarations of Interest

16/20

Cllr Pauline Beall declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in item 5, Annual Report of the Fostering Panel, as she served on the Child Placement Panel, which managed all Foster Care Placements.

Cllr Barbara Inman declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest, in item 5, Annual Report of the Fostering Panel, as a member of her family was currently a foster parent.

CPB Minutes of the meeting held on 9 October 2020

17/20

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 October 2020 were confirmed as a correct record.

CPB Children in our Care – comparative analysis - Presentation

18/20

The Board was provided with statistical analysis of data relating to Children and Young People in Our Care.

Comparisons were provided against North East local authorities, Tees Valley local authorities and ONS Statistical Neighbours.

Key issues:

- The rate of children in Stockton's Care, per 10,000 children, aged under 18 years, was 134, as at 30 September 2020. This was less than the Tees average but more than the North East, statistical neighbours and England averages. There had been significant increases across the Tees Valley.

- The rate for children starting to be looked after was 49 per 10,000 for the year ending 31 March 2020 and this had dropped to 33, as at 30 September 2020, which was below the North East and Tees Valley.

- The rate for children ceasing to be looked after, in Stockton, as at 30 September was 27, below the North East, Tees Valley and statistical neighbours and close to the National average.

- There had been an increase in the number of children in our care, in Stockton, and this was a local issue, with increases being even greater in other parts of

the Tees Valley.

- There were less children and young people leaving care in Stockton than there were in other areas.

- In terms of leaving care, to be adopted, it was noted that there had been some significant success, over the last couple of years, since ATV had been operating.

The presentation slides would be circulated to members.

RESOLVED that the data and analysis be noted.

**CPB
19/20 Annual Report of the Fostering Panel and Fostering Service Report 1 April
2019 31 March 2020**

Members considered a report that provided an overview of the work of the Fostering Panel and the Council's Fostering Service.

The Board was provided with details of the Panel's Constitution and membership. The Board was also informed of the Panel's role, including: -

- Consideration of assessments of applicants' suitability to foster for both unrelated and connected foster carers. The Panel made recommendations in respect of suitability and terms of approval, identifying type of fostering, numbers and characteristics of the children the carer should foster.

- Making recommendations in respect of matches of children with long term foster carers.

- The receipt of foster carer annual reviews, under certain circumstances, and making recommendations whether the foster carers continued to be suitable to foster, or whether, they should be de-registered.

- Consideration of requests, in respect of the extension of temporary approval of connected person foster carers (family and friends).

- Quality assurance of fostering work undertaken by the Service.

The Board was updated, on training undertaken by Panel Members, together with feedback on how relevant staff and applicants felt the Panel was functioning.

Members considered data relating to determinations by the Panel and certain requirements of Fostering Service Regulations.

Details of the current status, relating to fostering in the Borough, was provided: -

- At 31 March 2020 there were 155 approved fostering households.

- There were 103 mainstream approved foster carers (this has reduced slightly from the previous year 106).

-At 31 March 2020 there were 52 approved connected carers (this compared to 43 in the previous year) and 63 temporary approved connected carers.

-Between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020, 7 mainstream foster carers resigned (compared to 8 during the previous year). Two of these carers retired from fostering, one resigned due to being granted a Special Guardianship Order for the children in their care, and four, for personal reasons.

Discussion:

-Members noted that there was an initial focus on placing children and young people with connected foster parents.

-During Covid, the service had gone back to some foster carers who had recently retired and asked if they were able to return, during the period, and two such carers had returned. Also, one foster carer, who had retired from the Independent sector, had been reapproved by the Council's Fostering Service.

-There were pressures on placements, and it was becoming increasingly difficult to find placements within the Council's resources and the Independent sector.

-Connected carers had access to the full training package, available to mainstream carers.

RESOLVED that the update and discussion be noted.

CPB 20/20 Post 16 and Care Leavers support and accommodation report August 2019 - September 2020

Members received a report that provided:

- An overview of the use of, and the monitoring of, supported accommodation for care leavers, young people 16 and over, who may be looked after, or children in need and were at risk of becoming homeless.

- An overview of the options currently being explored regarding the development of supported accommodation following the commissioned contract which in part had been extended and would be coming to an end in October 2021.

The Board noted that the Council was well prepared for changes in demand for its services. Officers were looking at how the Council could continue to meet challenges and members noted some of those challenges and future plans: -

- The recommissioning of 12 dispersed units of accommodation with a proposal that could meet the needs of our young people.

- Revising our Supported Accommodation policy to reflect new guidance published by the government to ensure our care leavers continued to receive the appropriate support and accommodation.

- The loss of 6 units at St James House, which was being decommissioned was likely, in the short term, to lead to an increase in use of spot purchased provision to meet demands of the service.
- Continued work with local providers to explore a range of accommodation options that worked for our young people (including longer term lets, floating support services, etc).
- Young people at risk of Child Criminal Exploitation or those with links to known Organised crime gangs continued to rise. The Council would continue to work with all agencies to ensure that there was appropriate accommodation and services that can monitor and manage these risks.
- Continue to implement and review the Valuing Care assessment process that helped identify needs and match young people to providers, who could meet those needs.
- Continue to strengthen partnership working with the Homelessness and Housing Solutions Team, providers of accommodation and other agencies that work with our young people.

Discussion

- In terms of spot purchased provision, members noted that work was being undertaken to, potentially, identify a number of accommodation placements around the area, rather than using one building. Members highlighted that there were some areas of the Borough that suffered, more than others, in terms of organised crime activity and exploitation. It was agreed that efforts should be made to identify placements where young people were less likely to be exposed to such activity. Officers indicated that the matters highlighted, by members, would be considered when identifying suitable properties, with providers. Members were assured that there was a huge amount of work undertaken, and risks were assessed, before identifying accommodation for each young person.
- Members noted that young people, in individual placements, would receive help from a floating support service, tailored to needs and agreed in conjunction with the young person and provider.

RESOLVED that the update and discussion be noted and actioned as appropriate.

**CPB
21/20**

Virtual School Annual Report 2019 - 2020

Members received the Virtual School Annual Report 2019 – 2020. Reference was made to:

- Increasing numbers of pupils and the impact on capacity
- Work undertaken by the school, during the Covid Pandemic.
- Educational Outcomes, attendance and Exclusions, Destinations
- Challenges and Support
- Service Practice
- Continual Improvement

- Child Engagement/ Celebration
- How Actions during the year align with the Council Plan

Members noted that, Linda Russel Bond, Virtual Head Teacher, would be retiring next year and this had been her last presentation, of the Annual Report, to the Board. The Chair, on behalf of members and officers, thanked Linda for all the hard work she had undertaken with our children and the fantastic legacy she would be leaving, that could be built on. The Chair wished her a very long and healthy retirement.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

**CPB
22/20** **Children in Our Care Strategic Group Update**

Members were provided with an overview of work and discussions at the Children in Our Care (CIOC) Strategic Group meeting held on 27 November 2020

Key areas discussed, included:

- The impact of Covid-19 - Referral numbers to CAMHS continued to be high and a theme of raised anxieties in children was noted. There continued to be a dedicated CAMHS team for children in our care and they continued to offer sessions with children on a face to face basis.
- Celebration and Awards – A plan was in place to ensure that children’s success and achievements were recognized, and a working group was developing a virtual event.
- Digital Safeguarding - The Strategic Group was highlighting the dangers that being on-line could bring to children and young people and a digital safety campaign had been launched, which aimed to provide parents and carers with information about safe and responsible internet use.
- Children’s Commissioner briefing – The Children who no-one knows what to do with. This briefing highlighted the situation of some children in our care who had been placed in external provision, which may not be suitable. As a result of discussion, the Strategic Group were keen to strengthen the multiagency response and were considering including it in the Children in Our Care Action Plan, as a priority.
- The Action Plan would be refreshed and brought back to the Board in the future

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

**CPB
23/20** **Forward Plan**

The Board noted the Forward Plan