

Corporate Parenting Board

A meeting of Corporate Parenting Board was held on Friday, 9th October, 2020.

Present: Cllr Barbara Inman (Chair), Cllr Pauline Beall (Sub for Cllr Robert Cook), Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Helen Atkinson, Cllr Mick Moore, Cllr Hilary Vickers, Cllr Sally Ann Watson

Officers: Gareth Aungiers (IT support), Martin Gray, Jackie Ward, Jamie Wassell, Janet Wilson (CS), Michael Henderson (ADADE)

Also in attendance: Representative from LTA, Karen Grundy, Rachel Mcloughlin, Steve Rowland, Emma Groves, Ann Brock, Jo Gamble, Cllr Lisa Evans

Apologies: Cllr Robert Cook

CPB 8/20 **Declarations of Interest**

Cllr Pauline Beall declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in item 5, Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report , as fostering was referred to in the report and Councillor Beall served on the Child Placement Panel, which managed all Foster Care Placements.

CPB 9/20 **Minutes of the meeting held on 7 August 2020**

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 August 2020 were confirmed as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

CPB 10/20 **Let's Take Action**

A member of the Let's Take Action Group was present at the meeting and provided some insight into the experiences of three young people had had during the Covid pandemic. She also provided details of some of the limited activity that the Let's Action Group had been involved in, over the last seven months, and provided feedback to the Board, on priorities.

Covid experiences could be summarised as follows:

- missing contact with others
- anxious about completing college work.
- enjoyed talking over the internet, but not the same.
- missed going to swimming and other clubs
- enjoyed walking dog playing board games and watching movies with foster carers, as a family.
- Covid 19 guidelines had been confusing
- online learning was difficult at start, but improved
- very happy to return to school.

The Board then heard about some of the activities the Let's Take Action Group had been involved in. It was recognised that the Group's activity had been much less, due to Covid:

- a few weeks into lockdown the Children in Care Council held a virtual meeting. It had been useful to have discussions and share concerns.

- numerous quizzes had been held.
- Supporting the creation of a young person friendly version of the Valuing Care Assessment.
- joined discussion on accessing health services, with Children North East.
- Several members of the group supported the work of Stockton Public Health by being interviewed on accessing Sexual health services.

- eager to start meeting face to face, in smaller groups, if necessary
- group was supporting the creation of the new welcome book, by writing letters to young people coming into care. Letters would be added to the welcome book to make them personal to the young person receiving it. Recognising the difficult time that they were going through but letting them know that they had support from people who had been through it.
- the young person speaking with the Board had won the Mayor's Young Person of the Year Award and the Let's Take Action group were joint winners of the Service to the Community – Groups & Organisations.
- several members of the Group were preparing for the independent living programme.

Young people had identified some priorities that they wished to work on, as a group:

- coordinate life story work
- Improving available space to support Family Time for Children in Our Care.
- council tax exemptions
- extend leisure access
- app highlighting the rights and entitlements of children in care
- Independent Living Programme for care leavers
- improved access to mental health services
- To set up a virtual platform via teams to allow Children in Our Care living outside of Stockton to have their voices heard on the services which affect them.

RESOLVED that the update and priorities be noted.

CPB 11/20 Corporate Parenting Board Draft Annual Report

Members were provided with a draft Annual Report for the Board during 2019/20 (April 2019 - March 2020) and also identified priorities for 20/21.

The report provided background and context around the Board's formation, what it was seeking to achieve, what work it had had input into, the impact of that work and what priorities had initially been identified for 20/21.

It was explained that subject to agreement by the Board, the Annual Report would be published on the Council's website.

Discussion

- Members agreed that it was a very thorough and informative report but pointed out that there were a number of references to Covid 19, which had not been a

significant factor during the period that the report covered i.e. 2019/20. It was accepted that some reference to Covid was appropriate, however, officers would revisit the report and consider whether some work would be better reflected in the 20/21 report.

- there were some issues around historical data, for 2017-18, that would be addressed for the final version of the report

RESOLVED that the draft report be agreed and delegated authority be granted to the Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Chair of the Board, to agree a final version, for publication.

**CPB
12/20 Stockton on Tees Children in Our Care Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy 2020 - 2021**

The Board was provided with the Council's Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy 2020 – 2021.

The Strategy set out how the Council intended to meet its duty to ensure that there was a range of sufficient accommodation and services to meet the needs of children in our care, as required under the Children's Act 1989.

The Strategy provided an analysis of outcomes and findings from local and comparative national data into the needs of children in our care and children leaving care. It also described the Council's ambitions for effective commissioning and modelling of services from 2018 to 2021, to keep children and young people safe and connected to their communities, wherever this was safe and possible.

The strategy had been delayed due to the impact of COVID-19 and the lockdown period, and comparator data at a Tees Valley, England and statistical neighbour level had yet to be published. Therefore, a proportion of the indicators within this document referenced the latest available verified data for 2018-19. A new strategy would be produced during 2021 and would include comparator data once released.

Particular reference was made to section 8 of the Strategy which set out what work had been undertaken, what was planned and what the priorities and commissioning intentions were.

Discussion:

- Member queried what links Children in Our Care had with the Council's smoking cessation service. It was explained that issues around smoking would be picked up under Health Assessments and young people could be referred into smoking cessation services. There was also a Children in Our Care Nurse, who focused on this and offered advice and support to groups and individuals. Foster carers were also briefed on how to provide support to young people to quit.

- There was no evidence that smoking amongst young people had increased during lockdown, however, officers would take this up with the Children in Our Care nurses.

RESOLVED that the Strategy be noted and discussion actioned/noted, as appropriate.

**CPB
13/20** **Performance Report for Stockton Children's Homes**

The Board received a report that the Board with a performance update of Stockton's Children's Homes, as of 31st March 2020.

It was noted that, in Stockton, seven of Stockton's homes had been judged good or outstanding. The seventh home was only registered in March 2020 and was yet to be inspected.

It was explained that the judgements of 3 of Stockton's children's homes had changed in the last 12-18 months from 'outstanding' to 'good'. The Board noted that there had been a number of changes to residential provision to meet changing needs and capacity demands. Any such changes would normally be reflected in judgements as Ofsted required to see year on year progress and any change would automatically restart that journey, or process. Additionally, there had been changes in residential management arrangements, which also adversely affected judgements.

The Board noted that:

-The Resource Team intended to introduce further quality assurance in the monitoring of Stockton's Children's Homes. The purpose would be to ensure that the Council continued to promote the shared culture, ethos, ambition and drive that was commonplace in its homes.

- Each home would receive a monitoring visit/peer review, at least yearly, to support and prepare the home for future inspection. Should any children's home encounter difficulties, or a decline in their current judgement, this would prompt a monitoring visit from a member of the Management Team.

-The Council was fortunate to have a well embedded, sound skill and knowledge base in its homes' managers and senior management team. Moving forward this would ensure that the necessary support, direction and guidance would be a regular feature for any new managers and existing managers and therefore ensure a consistent high standard was maintained, across the increasing range of in-house residential bed base.

RESOLVED that the report and assurances it provided, be noted.

**CPB
14/20** **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.

Key points, included:

-Covid had been a major area of focus for the Strategic Group, however, the next meeting would be dedicated to the overall Action Plan.

-Social workers continued to have contact with CIOC, in line with visiting requirements. For the majority of CIOC this contact was now face to face although, with the continued increase in COVID19 cases, contact was likely to revert to becoming virtual again. The situation would be kept under close scrutiny.

-Contact (family time) for CIOC with their birth families had been progressed to include some direct contact. The children themselves were very knowledgeable around the risk associated with COVID-19 and 'did their bit' to remind their families of the need to safely distance.

-Personal Education Plan meetings had been held virtually and everyone involved in these agreed this was the most appropriate format, so this was likely to remain the case.

-Health Assessments were a mixture of virtual and face to face. A big focus was around Emotional Health and Wellbeing. Data would be available, shortly, around the numbers of CIOC assessments which had been undertaken. This data would be shared at a future Board meeting

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

**CPB
15/20**

Forward Plan

The Forward Plan was noted