



Children in Our Care Strategic Group (CIOCSG) Update

Report for Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) 8 October 2021

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Section 1: Items Discussed

Refreshed CIOCSG Approach

Our recently held Children in Our Care Strategic Group (CIOCSG) focussed on the 'how' element of our refreshed approach to improving the life chances of children in our care (CIOC). A new CIOC Core Group has now been developed, made up of senior leads from within Children's Services. A lead has been identified for each element of our agreed action plan to improve focus and drive towards making change.

CIOC action plan update:

Priorities identified:

1. To keep families together.
2. To develop high quality specialist provision.
3. To capture the voice of the child and use this voice to develop and improve services and practice.

How we intend to drive forward change:

1. Strategy

Refresh our current Children in care and care leavers strategy with focus on our priorities and how these will be met. Our pledge is to only bring children into care when we have to, look after them for as short a time as possible, move them when it is only in their best interests to do so and to support them within the local area.

2. Keep families together

- Design a refreshed sufficiency and commissioning strategy with specific deliverable objectives
- Develop a short term sufficiency plan based on need and demand data to inform what we need in the next 12-24 months.
- Review and refine 'Our Place'.
- Expand our 'edge of care' service by increasing resources (rather than a further building).
- Expand our 'Turnaround' home – the new Bishopton Road building to become a 2nd 'Turnaround' home.
- Expand in house fostering capacity by launching a new and refreshed Foster Care offer, increasing capacity within our fostering team and developing the 'Mockingbird' model.
- Expand placement management team capacity as part of the ongoing Children's review.
- Design/redesign/commission and procure new therapeutic provision for children in care, edge of care and their families based on need and informed by data and intelligence.
- Develop a new medium term sufficiency plan based on need and demand data to inform what we need in the next 36 plus months.
- Explore 'No wrong door', and the 'Housing project approaches.
- Improve partner engagement by including multi agency membership in all task and finish groups lead by the new CIOC core group.

- Explore options with Spark of Genius (SoG) and based on need, present a clear residential business plan.
- Explore options with Darlington – i.e. joint commissioning of services/resources.

3. Finance

* Proactively manage placements to ensure we are consistently assessing how well the needs of children in our care are met by:

- Developing a rolling medium term financial plan for all external placements based on our valuing Care tool i.e. focus on need.
- Revising the way we work with finance to monitor and model the cost of all placements.
- Reviewing and re-designing the independent reviewing officer (IRO) role in placement management decisions.
- Designing and embedding new arrangements for prioritising support services to transport transition into alternative settings.
- Explore the option of capital funding i.e. prudential borrowing.

4. Schools

- Close the gap between CIOC and those not looked after by:
- Reviewing the role of the Virtual School (VS) and being more specific around priorities.
- Improve our understanding of what trauma informed practice is based on by clearer analysis of demand and need, data and intelligence.
- Increase and improve the delivery of trauma informed practice within schools.
- Improve CIOC exclusion rates by improving support and challenge to relevant schools.
- Improve data to inform a better understanding of which schools require the greatest support (and challenge).

5. Health (including CAMHS)

Improve the health chances of our CIOC by:

- Reviewing our current contracts and strategies to ensure the right support is being offered with the most appropriate partner engagement.
- More focus on our agreed priorities of:
 - Speech and Language.
 - COVID recovery.
 - Building healthy relationships.
 - Mental health and wellbeing.
 - Trauma informed practice.
 - Improving our health and dental performance by working closely with CCG to recommission a new health assessment model and with NHS England to offer dental appointments at any dentist for a CIOC.

6. Voice of the child

- Develop a participation strategy to clarify the purpose, role, need and importance of the voice of the child to ensure that this is embedded in all we do and hope to achieve – ‘You spoke, we listened’.

- Involve CIOC in reviewing all current tools to capture the child's voice and agree what we need moving forward.
- Extend our current MOMO contract for a further year.
- Develop a viewpoint app/module.
- Identify what services can be developed what practice can be changed/influenced by the child's voice.
- Introduce development sessions across all partners to embed the child's voice within all of our planning.

7. Care Leavers

- Refresh our current Care Leavers offer.
- Involve CIOC to develop the offer further.
- Review the marketing of this offer/use of App and website.
- Make contact with other Local Authorities/partners to learn from/adapt existing good practice.

8. Training and employment

- Implement the agreed scrutiny action plan via a task and finish group, which includes CIOC and partners.
- Review the current EET clinic and process to ensure that funding and incentives will help young people to access and sustain EET opportunities.
- Explore national and local initiatives available for employee and employer when employment is gained.
- Redefine the current approach and commitment to getting CIOC and Care Leavers into EET.
- Develop a task and finish group to improve focus on retraining partners and the workforce to improve further opportunities.

9. Performance

Discreet package of data to be gathered and shared with relevant groups so that 'our story' is well understood across all partners – enabling us to learn from areas of good performance and prioritise the areas where performance needs to be improved

10. Governance

- Develop a plan and raise awareness to communicate our vision/principles and pledge around children in our care by developing a marketing strategy that is clear and concise and easily accessible.
- Review and re design our governance arrangements for placement decisions i.e. create a dedicated panel for external high cost placements.
- Review and revise our scheme of delegation and implement appropriate decision-making arrangements for placements.
- Embed new governance arrangements for placement decisions.

11. Innovation

- Continue with shaping a brighter future 'More Than Just a Job' workstream to deliver on the previously developed action plan.

- Raise the awareness of the role of the Corporate Parent within SBC and partners.
- Develop stronger links with 'Bright Minds Bright Futures'.
- Establish a 'just giving page.'
- Establish charitable status.
- Develop a payroll deduction scheme by developing a task and finish group from workstream to work with Xentrall.
- Agree a process to establish the amount and deduction.
- Agree a process to inform employee of options.
- Undertake some promotion.
- Develop clear guidelines/TOR on what funding will be used for.
- Regular feedback to employees on what the funding is used for.
- Set up an employee panel to determine what the funding is used for.
- Develop a funding raising strategy i.e. involve all young people in events/away days encouraging sign up.
- Define a clear purpose/vision/objective for this programme. What do the young people want?
- Define the role.
- Task and finish group to develop a project brief outlining the process for a 6-10 week pilot to learn lessons from the 'no limits' project.
- Develop and agree a process to select employees to be part of this pilot.
- Provide regular updates to CIOC.
- Organise a drop in session with young people.
- Agree employees and young people matches.
- Task and finish group to develop governance framework to support this programme.
- Develop a flow chart process.
- Devise and offer on-going training and support.
- Build a review and evaluation pilot.
- Develop a communication plan to market and promote the charity and 'giving Time' aspects.

12. Virtual School (VS) – extended duties

The role of the virtual school is to be extended following new legislation brought in in June 2021. This legislation means that the VS will have responsibility for all vulnerable children who have or have had a social worker to promote their educational achievement. This is clearly wider than the statutory guidance brought in in 2018 that all Local Authorities were required to appoint an officer (Virtual School Head) to make sure that its duty to promote the educational achievement of Children in Care was properly discharged.

As part of this extension of duties and as is similar to Children in our care, the Virtual school will support schools in meeting the needs of vulnerable children by:

- Supporting and challenging schools to ensure that they are working in the best way to identify and meet the needs of vulnerable children.
- Providing appropriate training to all stakeholders.
- Signposting to relevant services and resources.
- Ensuring that the work of the VS is linked to research and takes into account national, regional and local trends.
- Supporting all professionals and stakeholders to focus on early identification of needs.

- Promoting the importance of transitions.
- Information sharing.
- Promoting an attachment aware and trauma informed approach.
- Working closely with colleagues in SEND to ensure all SEN are met in a timely and appropriate way.
- Supporting improved mental health and wellbeing.

This is currently a pilot role for two terms but it is anticipated that it will be extended beyond this period.

13. Vaccination Programme

The vaccination programme for 12-15 year olds was rolled out on 22.09.2021. All young people will have access to the programme via school. Catch up sessions are also planned for those children who may have missed out on the opportunity of a vaccination.

Leaflets/information for CIOC have been shared with our Foster Carers and Residential Homes staff to support our young people in making informed choices.

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