

Corporate Parenting Board

A meeting of Corporate Parenting Board was held on Friday, 8th April, 2022.

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

Officers: Michael Henderson, Jo Lee, Mandie Rowlands

Also in attendance: Cllr Lisa Evans, Debbie Jones (Cornerhouse Youth Project)

Apologies:

CPB 34/21 **Declarations of Interest**

Cllr Pauline Beall declared an interest in the item entitled 'The Mockingbird Project' as she was a member of the Child Placement Panel.

CPB 35/21 **Minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2022**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2022 were confirmed as a correct record.

CPB 36/21 **Adoption Tees Valley**

The Board considered a Bi-Annual Report of Adoption Tees Valley (ATV), which was the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA), for the 5 Local Authority Councils of Darlington; Hartlepool; Middlesbrough; Redcar and Cleveland; and Stockton on Tees.

The Bi-Annual Report covered the period of 1 April 2021 to 30 September 2021.

Key Points and discussion:

- The numbers of children adopted and the numbers of children placed for adoption had risen, compared with the same period last year. Nationally, there were declining numbers.
- Early permanence placements had reduced during this period.
- The overall timeliness for children entering care, to moving in with adopters, had risen slightly.
- ATV had seen a reduction in the numbers of adopters approved, overall
- On average, timescales for assessment had increased.
- Work was ongoing to develop an ATV strategic plan, to identify areas of focus.
- Members were reminded that responsibility for Life Story Books was transferring from ATV, to local authority social work teams. Members supported this change.
- There had been some delays around the Letterbox Service which facilitated

contact between children and their birth parents. The service had been restructured and received some additional resources, which had improved the position.

- ATV provided good value for money, when compared with other Regional Adoption Agencies. The unit cost, per adoption for ATV, was around £4000 less than the average RAA costs.
- Main costs for ATV were interagency placements.
- Members were advised of the Somerset Judgement, which related to the placement of children and compliance with regulations, particularly with regards to the way children's health information was handled. ATV had reviewed processes in the light of the judgement to ensure compliance in its Placement Orders.
- Sufficiency of internal adopters continued to be a challenge

RESOLVED that the report and discussion be noted.

**CPB
37/21**

Introduction to Mockingbird Project

Members received a report, relating to the Mockingbird Project.

It was explained that officers were working with the Fostering Network to implement the Mockingbird Project. The project was based on the premise that it takes a Community to raise a child. One that nurtures the relationships between children, young people and foster families, supporting them to build a resilient and caring, secure base from which to thrive.

The model was based on Constellations (Connected Groups of 6-10 foster families) supported by a hub home carer and liaison worker, to offer each other support, advice, social activities, learning and development opportunities and sleepovers. It was explained that there were plans to link hubs with cluster residential homes. The vision was that foster carers would have access to support from the residential home, as well as share training, good practice and, in some situations, overnight stays. A video, describing the model, and feedback from those who had been involved in other areas, was provided to the Board.

It was envisaged that this model of support would strengthen Stockton-on-Tees' Local Authority fostering families, with a view to sustaining placements for looked after children.

Stockton was in the early stages of the implementation of Mockingbird and providing information for stakeholders about the model and benefits.

Over the coming months, work would be undertaken to recruit a hub carer and liaison worker in order to establish the first satellite constellation.

Discussion:

- It was envisaged that the first constellation would be in place by the end of this

year.

- The Hub leader would be an established foster carer with the necessary skills and experience.
- Constellations would be based on best fit of the families.

RESOLVED that the report and discussion be noted and an update be provided December 2023.

**CPB
38/21** **Children in Our Care Strategic**

Members received an update report on the work of the Children in Our Care Strategic Group (CIOCSG).

The report included details of existing judgements for the Council's Children's Homes. It was explained that five homes currently had judgements of 'good', or 'outstanding'. Two homes, namely Our Place and Oak House had 'requires improvement' judgements. Members were provided with details of the circumstances of the judgements and noted that action plans, to deliver necessary improvement, had been developed. Members also received brief details of plans to review the Council's residential care model.

The Board discussed plans to enable members, and staff, to make charitable donations, that would be used to benefit Children in Our Care (CIOCSG). There was also discussion relating to the donation/acquisition of clothing, to assist CIOCSG attending school proms.

RESOLVED that the update and discussion be noted.

**CPB
39/21** **Forward Plan**

Members noted the Board's Forward Plan.