

Corporate Parenting Board

A meeting of Corporate Parenting Board was held on Friday, 10th June, 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, Jonathan Fawcett, Jo Lee, Mandie Rowlands, Dave Willingham, Janet Wilson

Also in attendance: Councillor Lisa Evans, Ian Brown (Cleveland Police)

Apologies: All members present

CPB 1/22 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

CPB 2/22 **Minutes of the meeting held on 8 April 2022**

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 April 2022 were confirmed as a correct record.

CPB 3/22 **Virtual School Update**

The Board considered validated education data, published by the Department of Education, in relation to the Children in Our Care, together with an update on a case study that members had been provided with, at its meeting held in December 2021.

The case study detailed the support of a child who had attachment issues and had been supported through appropriate interventions. The child had settled in a residential care home and was progressing well, exhibiting increased self-esteem and confidence and was able to reflect on incidents in a much more positive way. This had helped the child with their academic work, with particular improvement in maths. Work continued with this child and other children in our care, to find the right solution, for each of them.

In addition, members were informed of the current work of the Virtual School including new initiatives and updates from the Annual Report, which had been presented in December.

Discussion

- Members noted the problems associated with the lack of benchmarking data to assess achievement.

- Members were invited to attend children causing concerns meetings, if they wished.

- The Board had queries about the three permanent exclusions, detailed in the data provided. It was explained that there were ongoing attempts to overturn one of the exclusions and members were provided with details of the current situation relating to that young person.

- Members asked that a breakdown of school exclusions be provided as part of future updates, including reasons for exclusion.
- There was no fixed threshold for temporary exclusions to become permanent, however, some schools applied a general guide of 45 days, though this was at the headteacher's discretion and would depend on the circumstances.
- The Virtual School Team liaised with schools around exclusions and challenged reasons, when appropriate, ensuring that reasonable adjustments/interventions had been applied.

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

**CPB
4/22** **Monitoring arrangements of external registered children's
Homes - reporting period 1st April 2021 – 31st March
2022**

Monitoring arrangements of external registered children's
Homes - reporting period 1st April 2021 – 31st March
2022

The Board considered a report that provided an overview of the monitoring process in regard to external residential children's homes, where children in our care lived. It also provided information with regard to the quality of care provided from those homes. The report covered the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.

Information provided included:

- Reasons for, and numbers of, external provision
- Monitoring and auditing of External Provision.
- A data summary relating to the quality of provision.
- Issues, concerns and action plans

It was explained that the Council's Accommodation Placement Support Team had excellent relationships with providers, offering not only guidance but practical support, that was available to residential children's homes. Feedback from providers confirmed that this was valued. Monitoring from the team continued to play a vital part in ensuring our children were receiving the highest level of care. There was a schedule of monitoring visits planned for the next year.

Visits had been prioritised, to provision, where concerns had been shared, in order to obtain the assurances that children in our care were in safe and stable placements.

It was recognised that the Borough had less children placed in good, or outstanding, provision than previous years and some children were currently in provision judged as 'requires improvement' (RI). Providers would be monitored closely and further work would be undertaken to understand if this was a local issue, or a trend that was emerging nationally.

Discussion

- Members voiced concerns that children in our care were being placed in provision that had been rated as RI. Members were advised of the national shortage of provision and the approach of some private providers who were cherry-picking children, they considered to be the least challenging, and charging inflated fees. This created a very challenging environment in which to find placements.

- Members were reminded that homes were inspected once a year and, if a home received a RI judgement, it would hold that judgement until its next inspection, even if it had addressed all concerns soon after the judgement. Officers looking to secure placements considered the Ofsted ratings and any action plans in place. There were discussions with the homes' managers and other local authorities who placed their children in the homes. Children were not placed in homes with RI ratings without extensive checks and balances being undertaken and there was always thorough planning and dialogue with the homes. Independent Reviewing Officers were involved in any processes.

- In cases where children were placed in a home, when it's rating was good/outstanding, and the home was subsequently rated RI, all the processes described above were undertaken, together with an assessment on whether to remove the child from a home that they may be settled in and had established relationships.

- It was noted that there were serious problems in the residential homes sector, in terms of a shortage of staff and managers, and it was considered that this may be impacting on judgements, negatively.

- Concern was expressed at the distance between some placements and a child's place of education, with lengthy periods being spent travelling. The Board noted that issues of this nature were discussed with the Virtual School to get the best outcome for the child and it was considered important to maintain stability in the child's education.

- Members were reminded of the work that had been approved by Cabinet to provide further in-house provision, which would give the Council more control over quality and cost and keep more of our children in the Borough.

RESOLVED that the update and discussion be noted.

**CPB
5/22**

Children in Our Care Strategic Officer Group - Update on Action Plan

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

Discussion:

- a member referred to increasing levels of criminal Anti-Social Behaviour in Portrack and Tilery. This had been raised as a concern with the police and

local MP and was of particular concern, as care leaver accommodation was sited in that area. It was noted that assessments of areas were undertaken, prior to placement and it was considered important for all relevant agencies to tackle such issues as quickly as possible. It was explained that options around care leavers accommodation were becoming very limited.

- the Board was advised of some available funding from the Prosperity Fund to provide functional numeracy courses. One of the targeted groups would be care leavers and it was felt that this would help them with future employment opportunities. Discussions on this matter had already commenced within Children's Services.

RESOLVED that the update and discussion be noted.

**CPB
6/22**

Forward Plan

Members noted the Board's Forward Plan.