

Date: Friday 13 October 2023 at 10.00 am

Venue: Meeting Room 1, Jim Cooke Conference Suite, Stockton Central Library,
Stockton on Tees, TS18 1TU

Cllr Lisa Evans (Chair)
Cllr Carol Clark (Vice-Chair)

Cllr Pauline Beall
Cllr Mick Moore
Cllr Sally Ann Watson

Cllr Alex Griffiths
Cllr Hilary Vickers

AGENDA

- 1 Evacuation Procedure** (Pages 7 - 8)
- 2 Apologies for Absence**
- 3 Declarations of Interest**
- 4 Minutes**
To approve the minutes of the last meeting held on 11 August 2023. (Pages 9 - 14)
- 5 Corporate Parenting Peer Review** (Pages 15 - 18)
- 6 Engagement with Young People**
- 7 Children's Homes Update**
- 8 Update on No Limits Scheme**
- 9 Forward Plan**

Members of the Public - Rights to Attend Meeting

With the exception of any item identified above as containing exempt or confidential information under the Local Government Act 1972 Section 100A(4), members of the public are entitled to attend this meeting and/or have access to the agenda papers.

Persons wishing to obtain any further information on this meeting, including the opportunities available for any member of the public to speak at the meeting; or for details of access to the meeting for disabled people, please

Contact: Judy Trainer on email judy.trainer@stockton.gov.uk

KEY - Declarable interests are:-

- Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI's)
- Other Registerable Interests (ORI's)
- Non Registerable Interests (NRI's)

Members – Declaration of Interest Guidance



Table 1 - Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Subject	Description
Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain
Sponsorship	Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the council) made to the councillor during the previous 12-month period for expenses incurred by him/her in carrying out his/her duties as a councillor, or towards his/her election expenses. This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.
Contracts	Any contract made between the councillor or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners (or a firm in which such person is a partner, or an incorporated body of which such person is a director* or a body that such person has a beneficial interest in the securities of*) and the council — (a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and (b) which has not been fully discharged.
Land and property	Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the council. 'Land' excludes an easement, servitude, interest or right in or over land which does not give the councillor or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/ civil partners (alone or jointly with another) a right to occupy or to receive income.
Licences	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the council for a month or longer.
Corporate tenancies	Any tenancy where (to the councillor's knowledge)— (a) the landlord is the council; and (b) the tenant is a body that the councillor, or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/ civil partners is a partner of or a director* of or has a beneficial interest in the securities* of.
Securities	Any beneficial interest in securities* of a body where— (a) that body (to the councillor's knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the council; and (b) either— (i) the total nominal value of the securities* exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or (ii) if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the councillor, or his/ her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners have a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.

* 'director' includes a member of the committee of management of an industrial and provident society.

* 'securities' means shares, debentures, debenture stock, loan stock, bonds, units of a collective investment scheme within the meaning of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 and other securities of any description, other than money deposited with a building society.

Table 2 – Other Registerable Interest

You must register as an Other Registrable Interest:

- a) any unpaid directorships
- b) any body of which you are a member or are in a position of general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority
- c) any body
 - (i) exercising functions of a public nature
 - (ii) directed to charitable purposes or
 - (iii) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union) of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management

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Room 1 Jim Cooke Conference Suite, Stockton Central Library **Evacuation Procedure**

If the fire or bomb alarm should sound please exit by the nearest emergency exit. The Fire alarm is a continuous ring and the Bomb alarm is the same as the fire alarm however it is an intermittent ring.

If the Fire Alarm rings exit through the nearest available emergency exit and form up in Municipal Buildings Car Park.

The assembly point for everyone if the Bomb alarm is sounded is the car park at the rear of Splash on Church Road.

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CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

A meeting of Corporate Parenting Board was held on Friday 11 August 2023.

Present: Cllr Lisa Evans (Chair), Cllr Carol Clark (Vice-Chair), Cllr Pauline Beall, Cllr Alex Griffiths, Cllr Mick Moore, Cllr Sufi Mubeen (sub for Sally Ann Watson) and Cllr Hilary Vickers.

Officers: Vicky Davidson-Boyd, Debbie Farrow, Adele Moore, Johanne Parker, Elaine Redding, David Willingham, Janet Wilson and Rachel Harrison.

Also in attendance:

Apologies: Cllr Sally Ann Watson.

CPB/7/23 Declarations of Interest

In relation to item 7 Annual Report of the Fostering Panel, Cllr Pauline Beall declared an interest as a Member of the Fostering Panel.

CPB/8/23 Minutes

AGREED the minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2023 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

CPB/9/23 Corporate Parenting Board – Annual Report 2022/23

Members considered the Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report 2022/23. The report provided an overview of the work undertaken by the Board for the year 2022/23. It outlined progress against key Corporate Parenting priorities, as set out in the Council's Children and Care Leavers' action plan.

Key points:

- The five key priorities from the Children in Care and Care Leavers Action Plan helped focus and steer work throughout the last year.
- The number of children in care had stayed broadly stable for the past 4 years, though had increased slightly in 2022/23. The growth had been largely due to an increase in the number of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children.
- The Council had secured more proportionate legal orders for some Children and Young People as a direct result of the improved offer around Special Guardianship Orders. This prevented some children from becoming the subject of Interim Care Orders or Care Orders solely for financial reasons.
- There were 20% of children attending Children in Our Care review meetings, but a much larger percentage (over 80%) were having their views heard through written submissions or via advocates.
- The 'No Limits' scheme was to be launched to enable Council Members and officers to give their time, make a financial contribution to support children in our care and care leavers or contribute to giving schemes such as the book at Christmas.

- The Council was in the process of opening two new children's homes to support their work on sufficiency planning.
- Work had started with the Northeast Fostering on a new approach to recruitment of foster carers and their assessment as part of the Councils' plans to increase the number of in house foster carers and to extend the Mockingbird model.
- Plans for a new youth space in Stockton Town Centre which would provide a base for Let's Take Action Group which would play a big role in its design.

Charts

- Regarding the types of placements being occupied in 2022/23, the vast majority - 93% - of Children in Our Care (CIOC) were placed in kinship foster care (25.9%), Independent foster agencies (IFAs) (21.1%), in house fostering (18.3%), with parents (11.4%), then external children's homes (9.7%) and then independent living (6.6%). The remaining 7% of the cohort were placed in seven different types of placements.
- In terms of the ages of children in our care, most aged 0-5 were placed in house fostering or kinship fostering; most aged 6-10 were placed in kinship foster care or with an independent foster agency (IFA); most aged 11-15 were placed with an IFA or kinship foster care; most aged 16-17 were placed in independent living and, most aged 18+ were placed in independent living.
- 6 in 10 children became looked after due to a S20 (they could not live with their families). An increase of 1 from the previous year and marginally below regional based on the most recent data.
- 3 in 10 children became looked after due to an interim care order (an arrangement to enable the Local Authority to protect a child and enable further assessment). This was in line with the previous year and also with regional based on the most recent data.
- 1 in 20 children were detained on child protection grounds in Local Authority accommodation. This was a smaller proportion than the previous year and below regional on the most recent data.
- 1 in 50 children were the subject of a Full Care Order (an arrangement to enable the Local Authority to protect a child from suffering or from being at risk of significant harm). This was more than was the case in 2021/22 and this proportion was larger than across the Northeast based on most recent data.
- 1 in 100 children had Youth Justice Legal Status and this was the case in 2021/22 and this proportion was the same across the Northeast overall based on most recent data.

Performance summary

In terms of performance, the Council had experienced some notable improvements since year end 2021/22, with evidence of sustained improvement and a notable amount of above regional average performance based on available information.

Discussion

- The Chair welcomed new members and emphasised the importance of being a Corporate Parent.
- The Board supported the Northeast Pathfinder pilot to increase the number of inhouse foster carers and ensure the council is providing the right offer. Members requested an update of the pilot be brought back to a meeting near Christmas time.
- Discussion was held around the establishment of a Care Leavers Board, the purpose of the board and who the most suitable person to Chair the meeting would be.

- Members asked, if the type of care a child grew up in, affected a child's likelihood in attending university. Officers replied that is not something that had previously been looked into but could possibly be looked at in the future.
- An explanation of Virtual School was provided to the board to help their understanding for future meetings.

RESOLVED that the Annual report be endorsed, and the discussion noted and actioned, as appropriate.

CPB/10/23 Ofsted Themes In House Residential Provision

The Board received a report on the findings of Ofsted inspections of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Councils' residential provision.

Out of the 7-council run Children's homes 4 were rated good, 1 outstanding and 2 required improvement.

There had been some challenges for the homes in the last couple of years. These included:

- The recruitment and retention of suitably qualified and experienced Registered Managers and Residential Care Workers.
- A reliance on the use of agency staffing to meet the needs of young people.
- Staff development and progression planning for staff and managers.
- The homes needed maintenance and redevelopment.

As recognised by Ofsted:

- The children were making good progress.
- Children and young people could form trusted relationships with staff, and this was evident across all the homes.
- The children's many achievements were captured.
- Managers invested in their staff and recognised their potential.

Discussion

- The Board thanked officers for a good report.
- Brief discussion was held around the availability of qualified agency staff and the new portal being used to ensure any agency staff used in future would be suitably qualified.
- Board members asked about the possibility of apprenticeships being available in the future to invest in the local community. Officers replied currently there were no apprenticeship opportunities. The interim Director of Children's Services spoke about the Social Worker Academy being scaled up with apprenticeships being considered as an option.

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

CPB/11/23 Brief Performance Report for Stockton's Children's Homes Outcomes

Consideration was given to a report that provided the Board with Stockton's Children's Homes performance, in comparison to the national picture, and provide assurance of the quality of those children's homes, operated by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council.

Nationally the number of children's homes in England continued to rise, as of 31 March 2023 there was a 9% increase in the number of children's homes compared with 31 March 2022.

As of the 31 March four out of seven of Stockton's homes were judged good or outstanding improving to five out of seven after the release of the national data. It was noted one home had been closed for refurbishment and therefore had not received an inspection in this time.

It was accepted that the children's homes in Stockton had declined in their overall judgements in the past 2 years. Two homes had been downgraded from Outstanding to Good. The decline was due to a combination of Registered managers leaving the Local Authority and recruiting suitably experienced Managers to the positions.

It was explained despite the difficulties the homes had faced, it was important to note that Stockton's Outstanding Children's home was among the top 10% in the country, and the good homes were among the top 69%.

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

CPB/12/23 Annual Report of the Fostering Panel 2022/23

The Board received the Annual Report of the Fostering Panel for 2022/23.

The Fostering Panel considered matters referred to it under the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and the Care Planning and Case Review Regulations 2010. The Panel considered the assessment of applicants' suitability to foster for both unrelated and connected foster carers. The Panel sought to reach a recommendation in respect of suitability and terms of approval, identifying type of fostering, numbers and characteristics of the children the carer should foster. The Panel also considered and made recommendations in respect of matches of children with long term foster carers.

Members were provided with information relating to: -

- the role and operation of the Panel.
- the Constitution and membership of the Panel.
- Quality Assurance.
- Data relating to suitability to foster applications and Foster Care Reviews.
- Extension to Temporary Approval of Connected Carers
- Long-Term Fostering Matches.
- Feedback in respect of Panel Functioning.
- Training for Panel

The Committee noted the current position:

- On 31 March 2023 there were 162 approved fostering households, a decrease of 4 from the previous reporting period (166)
- There were 88 mainstream approved foster carers (which had reduced by 3 from the previous year).
- There were 74 approved connected carers (which had decreased by 1 from the previous year).
- Between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023, 10 mainstream foster carers resigned (compared to 14 during the previous year). 4 of these carers retired from fostering due

to age/ill health, 4 due to work commitments, 1 following an allegation and 1 transferred to their own local authority.

Discussion

- Board Members were disappointed with the number of social workers unable to attend the Fostering Panels. Officers replied that nonattendance was not due to not wanting to attend but competing demands.

RESOLVED that the Annual Report of the Fostering Panel for 22/23 be noted.

CPB/13/23 Adoption Tees Valley Update

The Board considered the annual report of Adoption Tees Valley, which was the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA), for the 5 Local Authority Councils of Darlington; Hartlepool; Middlesbrough; Redcar and Cleveland; and Stockton.

Some key highlights from the report included:

- This year had been one of building on partnerships, and existing practice to strengthen and improve adoption in Tees Valley. There had been more work with regional partner Regional Adoption Agency's (RAA's), and the regional Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAA's), on collaborative projects. Work had continued with the 5 partner Local Authorities to continue to strengthen early twin track care planning for adoption.
- The adoption team had been working on trauma informed practice, inspired by one of the presentations at the national RAA Adoption Support Conference in September 22. Adoption Tees Valley (ATV) implemented a model of the Trauma Timeline, and use of the trauma tree in assessments of adopters, and in preparation for matching children. Staff, adopters, partner Local Authorities and Panel were reporting very positively on this practice, which helped to focus on the long term needs of the child, arising from early trauma.
- While there have been the same number of Early Permanence (EP) placements as in the previous year, more prospective adopters had been approved for early permanence.
- The focus had also continued on adoption support, including on the long-term identity needs of adopted children and adults. With more early permanence for children, and continuous development of the framework for these placements, more adoptive parents were meeting with the parents of the child from the outset.
- This year followed the "tail" of the Somerset judgement, and its repercussions for children in the adoption system across England. A small number of children in Teesside had delayed adoption orders, and there were some delayed placements due to the legal implications of Somerset in the previous year: for this reason, a small number of children who had gone on to be adopted, or even placed for adoption within this period, could have had that part of their adoption journey in the previous year.
- Adoption Orders were higher than the last year, while children placed for adoption remained the same as in the previous year. This level of placement activity was at a lower level than has been the case, which followed the national trend, where adoptions from care had reduced over the last 2 years. Of Significance in this region

was the increase in numbers of Placement Orders granted within this year – 87 which was the highest level in the previous 4 years.

- Adoption Tees Valley (ATV) continued to perform well in timeliness of adoption for children. Many children were being placed within government set timescales for placement once the Placement Order (PO) was granted.
- Timescales (PO to match) had improved this year, from 174 to 146 days and ATV continued to perform better than the England average by some 50 days, although remained over the government target.
- The time from a child starting their first care placement to moving in with adoptive parents had increased, with average days being 411 across the Tees Valley, which was lower than the national target (421 days) and 70 days lower than the England average.
- The number of families approved over the past year had risen from the previous year, with 55 families having been assessed and approved to adopt. While this increase was welcomed, Adoption Tees Valley continued to need more families for siblings, for older children up to the age of 5, and for children who may have some uncertainty in relation to developmental delay.

Discussion

- Members thanked officers for a detailed and comprehensive report.
- Board Members asked the Adoption Tees Valley Service Manager what Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council could do better. The Adoption Tees Valley Service Manager praised Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council for the collaborative approach of working together with partner agencies including the permanence champion. The Assistant Director, Children Social Care thought Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council needed a deeper understanding of what early permanence meant and more awareness of what a child's final destination could be as soon as the council was made aware of them.

RESOLVED that the report and discussion be noted

CPB/14/23 Forward Plan

Members noted the Board's Forward Plan.

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

13th October 2023

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

CORPORATE PARENTING PEER REVIEW

SUMMARY

This report provides an overview of the Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Parenting Peer Review which is scheduled to be held during November/December 2023.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Corporate Parenting Board:

1. Considers the format of the peer review and endorses the proposed approach.

DETAIL

Background

1. In June this year, a report was presented to Corporate Parenting Board which outlined the work taking place to refresh the strategic approach for children in our care and care leavers. It was identified in the March 2023 Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) that improvement was needed to:
 - strengthen the Borough's offer for care leavers
 - ensure that children in our care and care leavers have a voice
 - increase placement sufficiency, especially for foster care
 - ensure SMART actions in pathway plans
 - provide consistent and high quality personal adviser support for young people
 - consistently provide appropriate accommodation for care leavers
 - promote the care leavers offer not being well promoted
 - ensure greater participation

Corporate Parenting Peer Review

2. Whilst some initial work had commenced on the development of a new Corporate Parenting Strategy, this has been paused to allow a peer review to take place. It is intended that the peer review will provide an in-depth review of our current approach to corporate parenting and our ability to meet the needs of children in our care and care leavers whilst also providing a critical friend view of our strengths and opportunities for improvement. This will then inform the development of a set of strategic priorities and an implementation plan for rapid improvement.

3. The peer review will be undertaken in partnership with the LGA and will comprise of a self-assessment, followed by a bespoke, tailored package of support to address the issues identified.
4. The self-assessment process will be informed by members of the Corporate Parenting Board through a series of facilitated workshops to be held during November 2023. Children and young people's voice and lived experience will also inform the self-assessment, as will the perspectives of members of the Corporate Management Team. The themes of the self-assessment are as follows:
 - a) **Health and Wellbeing of Children in Care and Care Leavers** : to act in the best interests and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people
 - b) **The Voice of Children in Care and Care Leavers** : to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings and to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people
 - c) **Aspiration and Achievement** : to help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority/ partners and to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people
 - d) **Quality, Planning, Stability and Permanence** : for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work
 - e) **Care Leavers and Transition** : to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living
 - f) **Governance and Board Effectiveness** : Strong corporate parenting means strong leadership, challenge and accountability at every level. How the governance framework facilitates effective corporate parenting is key. How the council fulfils its responsibilities and champions the needs and aspirations of Children in Care and Care Leavers.
5. Following completion of the self-assessment, a bespoke programme of support will be developed which will address the key issues identified and support the development of the Corporate Parenting Strategy priorities and approach.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6. There are no direct financial implications from the Peer Review.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7. There are no specific legal implications from the Peer Review.

RISK ASSESSMENT

8. There are no additional risks to those included on the existing risk register.

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

9. There are no specific legal implications from the Peer Review.

COUNCIL PLAN POLICY PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITIES

10. The remit of the Corporate Parenting Board contributes to the key priority of: Making the borough a place where people are healthy, safe and protected from harm.

CONSULTATION, INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

11. As outlined within the report, a self-assessment will be informed by members of the Corporate Parenting Board.

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