

Corporate Parenting Board

A meeting of Corporate Parenting Board was held on Friday, 13 February 2026.

Present: Cllr Lisa Evans (Chair), Cllr John Coulson, (Sub for Cllr Jack Miller), Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Mick Moore, Cllr Hilary Vickers, Cllr Sally Ann Watson

Officers: Jane Smith, Michael Henderson, Debbie Farrow, Janet Wilson, Chris Renahan

Also in attendance: Ryan Davies, Louise Addison

Apologies: Cllr Clare Besford, Cllr Jack Miller

CPB /25 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

CPB /25 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meetings held on 10 October 2026 were approved as a correct record.

CPB /25 **Adoption Tees Valley**

The Board received a report from Adoption Tees Valley (ATV) providing an update on service activity, recruitment, placement sufficiency and adoption support arrangements.

Members noted recent national media attention regarding adoption disruption. It was explained that adoption placements across the Tees Valley remained stable. It was reported that only two Stockton adoption placements had been disrupted since ATV had been established in 2018 and both cases had involved complex circumstances. The Board heard that extensive safeguards were in place throughout the assessment, approval and matching process to ensure prospective adopters were fully informed and prepared to meet children's needs.

The Board discussed the increasing complexity of children's needs and noted that many children, placed for adoption, had experienced significant trauma, loss and adversity prior to placement. Members heard that trauma-informed practice was embedded throughout the adoption process, from adopter preparation and assessment through to post-adoption support.

Members sought assurance regarding the robustness of the approval process for adopters and the reasons why prospective adopters did not always progress through assessment. The Board was advised that all applications were subject to rigorous assessment and scrutiny, including consideration by the Adoption Panel, and that a range of factors could affect progression, including changes in personal circumstances and health considerations.

The Board also discussed adoption support services and the impact of recent national changes to the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund. Members were advised that reductions in available funding and changes to

assessment arrangements had created challenges for some adoptive families and had the potential to affect access to therapeutic support. ATV continued to work with families to mitigate the impact of these changes and provide support through its local offer.

Members heard that ATV was developing a multidisciplinary approach to adoption support, with a particular focus on trauma-informed assessment, evidence-based interventions and strengthening support available to adopters following placement.

The Board noted that recruitment activity remained focused on securing sufficient adopters for children with more complex needs, including older children, sibling groups and children requiring ongoing family contact arrangements.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

**CPB
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Family Placement Services – Performance Overview

The Board considered a report outlining performance of the Family Placement Service between 1 April 2025 and 31 December 2025.

Members noted that statutory compliance remained strong, including foster carer reviews, unannounced visits and safeguarding requirements. However, significant pressures continued to affect the service, particularly around foster carer sufficiency, workforce capacity and increasing demand for connected and kinship care assessments.

The Board heard that:

- Nineteen fostering enquiries had been received during the reporting period, with six progressing to assessment.
- Three new mainstream foster carers had been approved.
- Thirteen foster carers had retired or resigned.
- Demand for connected and kinship care assessments had increased significantly.
- Nineteen children had achieved permanence through Special Guardianship Orders.
- One hundred and three children were currently in matched long-term foster placements.
- Work continued to identify suitable placements for children awaiting long-term matches.

Members discussed the challenges associated with recruiting foster carers, particularly for larger sibling groups, older children and young people stepping down from residential care.

The Board discussed the Council's fostering offer and an update on recent revisions, including additional fostering levels, enhanced training, therapeutic support and an annual appreciation payment for foster carers. Members were advised that the revised offer aimed to improve recruitment, retention and placement stability. Members were informed that whilst fostering remained the preferred option for many children some children had needs which were best

met through residential provision and the placement decisions were made on an individual basis.

Discussion took place regarding aspirations for the Council's residential provision and members felt assured that there was a continuing focus on maintaining high standards and securing the best possible outcomes for children and young people

Discussion also took place regarding:

- Recruitment activity and barriers preventing prospective carers progressing through the assessment process.
- The use of individual profiling and targeted recruitment campaigns.
- The importance of maintaining high quality support for foster carers.
- Kinship care developments and enhanced support arrangements.
- Residential care, permanence planning and step-down arrangements.
- The future direction of fostering services following recent national reviews.

Members welcomed the positive impact of the Mockingbird model, the Foster Carer Conference and ongoing partnership work with Foster with North East.

RESOLVED that:

1. The report be noted.
2. The continued work to improve foster carer recruitment, retention and placement sufficiency be supported.
3. Further updates be provided to future meetings of the Board.

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Building on Progress

The Board considered a report outlining proposals to strengthen the effectiveness of the Corporate Parenting Board.

The Chair highlighted the significant progress made in recent years, including the introduction of young people-led meetings and increased participation by children and young people with lived experience.

Members were advised that an assessment of the Board's arrangements had identified opportunities to further strengthen:

- Strategic oversight.
- Partner accountability.
- Performance reporting.
- Co-production with children and young people.
- Delivery against the Corporate Parenting Commitments.

The Board discussed proposals to establish themed sub-groups linked to strategic priorities, improve feedback arrangements between young people-led meetings and business meetings, and introduce enhanced performance reporting.

Discussion also took place regarding Board membership, partner attendance and meeting arrangements. Concerns were expressed regarding recurring clashes with other regional meetings which affected attendance by key partners and senior officers.

Members supported the principle of undertaking a facilitated development session to review the Board's future direction, governance arrangements and membership.

RESOLVED that the Board:

1. Endorse the proposals to strengthen the Board's focus, structure and ways of working.
2. Agree to the delivery of a facilitated development session.
3. Support the continued use of alternating business-focused and young people-led meetings.
4. Support the development of themed strategic priority sub-groups.
5. Agree that feedback regarding future meeting arrangements be gathered from Members and partners.

**CPB
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No Limits Hub Update

The Board received a verbal update regarding developments within the No Limits Hub.

Members were advised of ongoing improvements to facilities within the Hub, including the development of dedicated creative and media spaces. Work was also underway to expand opportunities available to care experienced young people through a range of educational, employment, creative and wellbeing activities.

The Board welcomed:

- Development of podcast and media facilities.
- Additional therapeutic and wellbeing activities.
- Continued support for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people.
- Positive outcomes being achieved through the Trailblazer programme.
- Preparations for the forthcoming Children in Care Awards.

Recognition was given to staff and partners supporting care experienced young people into education, employment and training opportunities.

Members welcomed the continued success of the No Limits Hub and the positive impact being achieved for children and young people.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

**CPB/
25** **Forward Plan**

Members discussed and agreed the Forward Plan.