

Corporate Parenting Board

A meeting of Corporate Parenting Board was held on Friday, 16th June 2023.

Present: Cllr Lisa Evans (Chair), Cllr Carol Clark (Vice-Chair), Cllr Pauline Beall, Cllr Mick Moore, Cllr Marcus Vickers (Sub Cllr David Reynard), Cllr Hilary Vickers, Cllr Sally Ann Watson

Officers: Debbie Farrow, Martin Gray, Adele Moore, Mandie Rowlands, David Willingham, Janet Wilson

Also in attendance:

Apologies: Cllr David Reynard

1 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2 Minutes of the meeting held on 14 April 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 April 2023 were confirmed as a correct record.

3 Virtual School Update

The Board considered educational data, published by the Department of Education, in relation to the Children in Our Care(CIOC). Trends for 2018 to the most recently published data in 2021 were shown within the main report, and where appropriate comparisons were shown for Stockton the North East, Statistical Neighbours and England.

The report also informed members about the current work of the Virtual School including new initiatives and updates from the Annual Report presented in December 2022

- Members were given case study updates as follows:

- Case 1

A child who had been separated from family and siblings was struggling in primary school. The child struggled a lot on intervention, however following attendance at virtual school the child was progressing and went on to transition well into year 7. After facing lots of change and uncertainty with a few bumps in the road, the child and most of the child's siblings returned home. There was an initial dip in attendance at school, however following support from the school and parent's, attendance had now improved, and all was going well at school and home.

- Case 2

A secondary school child who had moved out of the area into a smaller secondary school than they had previously attended, had been permanently excluded. The exclusion had been challenged by the authority however the exclusion was upheld. The child then began virtual school tuition. The child was currently attending the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), however following half term

the child was struggling to attend. Had the child been younger a health care plan would have been put in place. The Virtual School/Head Teacher team were fully aware of the child's needs, and would continue to work with the child, the child's needs were at the forefront of everyone.

- Case 3

A child came into care one week prior to commencing year 11 from a different school. Attendance at the child's previous school was poor and there was no transition plan in place at the new school. The child was spotted by an ex-member of staff who worked at the school and who was head of the English Department. The child was given additional tuition and improved by two grades. Unfortunately following an incident at school, the child was suspended. The child then commenced online tuition and with the extra tuition given, revision timetables and practice exams the child was achieving a level 6 GCSE in English. The child had also been accepted at Stockton Riverside College.

Officers highlighted that CIOC were very able, however due to circumstances and experiences they were not achieving their full potential. The team continued to work closely with schools to get the best outcomes for CIOC. In terms of outcomes for CIOC, Stockton was doing really well statistically against National and Northeast figures.

- In terms of KS1 CIOC, educational outcomes had dropped since 2019 and was lower than the National CIOC figure. It was noted however that the cohort for 2022 only contained eleven students therefore the difference between the Stockton and National figure was equivalent to only 1.4 students.

Stockton's CIOC KS2 had made significantly better progress than the North East and National CIOC in 2022 for maths, reading and writing.

KS4 Progress 8 area comparison showed Stockton CIOC making much better progress than both CIOC in the North East and Nationally.

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 that there was a varied approach to how schools in the Borough dealt with the suspension / exclusion of CIOC at school, and whether there were exceptions made for CIOC to try and keep them at school as much as possible. The approach was varied across the borough and much depended on past experiences the child may have suffered and the circumstances surrounding the reason a child may be considered for suspension / expulsion. A lot of schools dealt with it extremely well and some may require further assistance. The main message was that schools needed to persevere as a lot of CIOC found it hard to accept positive outcomes.

- Members acknowledged how positive the Team were, working in this area and proud about the work the staff at Stockton Council did with CIOC.

- Brief discussion was had around future activities and the better ways in which corporate parents could engage with CIOC to make a difference.

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

4 Monitoring arrangements of external registered Children's Homes - Reporting Period 1 April 22 - 31 March 2023

Monitoring arrangements of external registered children's Homes - reporting period 1st April 2022 – 31st March 2023

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 2022 to 31 March 2023.

Information provided included:

- reason for, and numbers of, external provision
- reasons for the increase in residential placements over the last year
- a data summary relating to the use of external placements
- the approach to the monitoring and auditing of external provision
- a data summary relating to the quality of provision
- Issues, concerns, and action plans

The Authority was the top performing authority in England for placing children within a 20-mile radius of their homes.

There were 57 external placements currently. 2 placements had been moved outside of the area due to risk and 5 young people needed access to specialist care which was only available outside of the area, and in the last year there was one instance where secure accommodation was required for six months, after which, the young person transitioned to a secure unit.

The Board heard that if Officers should have concerns / safeguarding issues regarding placements, or if Ofsted ratings had reduced then staff would monitor the situation by visiting the homes, speaking to staff and children as well as other Local Authorities to ensure the homes were compliant. Overall, however Ofsted gradings had improved significantly and for the 3% of homes that were graded inadequate, those children had been moved to different homes. There were a small number of new homes that had yet to be graded and those homes in Scotland were overseen by the Care Inspectorate.

Children in care placement meetings were conducted fortnightly with the aim to bring external placements back to the area or offer in house provision.

5

Cared for children, care experienced young people and corporate parenting - refreshing our approach

The Board were presented with a report that provided an update on the refreshed approach around supporting children and young people in care, those that were leaving care and the Council's approach to corporate parenting. It gave updates on activities undertaken to refresh the strategy for cared for and care experienced children and young people, incorporating the specific challenges identified in the ILACS inspection. The refreshed strategy and accompanying action plan would be presented at the next corporate parenting board meeting for agreement.

Main topics discussed were as follows:

- The recent ILACS inspection had identified several areas for improvement, specifically around care leavers and care leaver offers which should be promoted with pathway plans and required including in the strategy as an additional priority. The 2 specific additional elements of the proposed strategy were 'Care Experienced Young People Priority' and 'Being a Good Corporate Parent Priority'
- It was highlighted that service directorates within the Council needed to ensure the needs of children and young people in care were prioritised when decisions were being made, for example:
 - 1) legal representation
 - 2) in any capital or physical investment programmes such children's homes
 - 3) in any HR policy development

In term of Members being good corporate parents, officers were wanting to simplify the ask and task, making members more accountable and responsible, talking up the achievements of the CIOC, to be supportive and welcoming and be present to attend training and events as well as giving their time and presence. All of the proposals contained within the report would be taken forward through training.

For individual staff being good corporate parents, there was a scheme 'No Limits' which officers could participate in which was ready to launch in July 2023. There were currently 5 volunteers trained who would roll out the scheme further. There would be 2 main elements to the scheme which would give staff the opportunity to contribute either through giving time and or money.

The Board went on to briefly discuss the next steps including how to get more elected Members involved as well as opportunities to get the public involved and to help the public gain a better understanding of the CIOC and the homes they lived in with a view to dispelling some of the negative myths perceived by some residents.

Mandatory corporate parenting training had been held for all Members and there were mop up sessions scheduled for Members who had not been able to attend.

RESOLVED that:

1. comments on the updates and activity to date be noted
2. the Board agree a final version of the report be presented to the Corporate Parenting Board at its meeting scheduled for 11 August 2023

6 Forward Plan

The Board noted its forward plan.