

GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD MEETING

Tuesday, 20 September 2022

PRESENT:	Councillor Gary Haley (Chair)	Gateshead Council
	Councillor Angela Douglas	Gateshead Council
	Councillor Freda Geddes	Gateshead Council
	Councillor Hazel Weatherley	Gateshead Council
	Linda Hubbucks	CCG
	Dr Kate Ward	CNTW
	Malcolm Hedley	Foster Carers
	Moiria Richardson	Public Health
	Deborah Ewart	Housing
	Kevin Stoodley	North East Young Dads and Lads Project
	Ben Van Wagtendonk	Gateshead Children's Social Care
	Claire Morris	Gateshead Children's Social Care
	Laura Rosby	Senior CNTW Psychologist
	Aisha Imran	Young Person Ambassador
	Mariceu Neto	Young Person Ambassador

IN ATTENDANCE:	Bev Coombs	Gateshead Children's Social Care
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1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Sheila Gallagher, Cllr Kathleen McCartney, Cllr Ian Patterson, Lynne Colledge, Sarah Diggle, Chris Hulme and Jean Thompson.

2 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING AND ACTION LIST

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 May 2022 were agreed as a correct record and the action list noted.

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

3 THE INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

The Board received an update following the Josh MacAlister review of children's social care. The review was requested by government the aim of which was to develop recommendations for a system that;

- Provides intensive help to families in crisis
- Acts decisively in response to abuse
- Unlocks the potential of wider family networks to raise children
- Puts lifelong loving relationships at the heart of the care system
- Lays the foundations for a good life for those who have been in care.

The review suggests the issues facing the social care system can only be addressed through a 'radical reset'.

The review highlighted failures in recognising relationships and the strength of families. It was noted that Gateshead is addressing this through relational social work as part of its model and through things like narrative practice.

The review recognises the need for better multiagency working. In terms of family networks it was acknowledged that this is being improved in Gateshead through the family support service and kinship carers. The review recommends allowing kinship carers without the need for them to become Foster Carers. Within Gateshead, the Kinship Care Team is doing well at providing dedicated support to keep young people with their families.

The review recommends new care standards for all children's homes and the creation of Regional Care Cooperatives which would be responsible for planning, running and commissioning care provision in the region. It was acknowledged that this would allow better control over the supply of places.

In addition it was recommended that a number of existing roles be replaced by more independent advocacy. For example, Independent Reviewing Officers are always employed by the local authority so the review questions how independent really is this role.

The five ambitious missions from the review are;

- Loving relationships
- Quality education
- A decent home
- Fulfilling work
- Good health as the foundation for a good life

There was also a call on a wider range of organisations to act as corporate parents for looked after children and the review suggests that the UK should be the first country in the world to recognise the care experience as a protected characteristic.

The review also suggests recommendations in order to realise the potential of the workforce, such as; five year early career framework, improving case management systems and reducing the use of agency social work by regional staff banks. The point was made however that recruitment continues to be difficult and more needs to be done on a national scale to encourage people to this area of work.

The review calls on a system focused on children and families, it recommends schools to be included as a statutory safeguarding partner and identifies priority actions such as; reduce social worker time spent recording, frictionless sharing of information and improving data collection and its use in informing decisions.

To achieve the proposed reforms a single five-year reform programme will be required and £2.6 billion of new spending over four years. In response to the review the government has set up a new National Implementation Board of sector experts

and people with experience of the care system. The government is also implementing a new evidence-based framework for all professionals working in children's social care.

A Day of Action was held in June, to which Gateshead's Young People Ambassadors attended. This was an opportunity for care experienced young people to speak directly with decision makers about what needs to change in the care system.

Government's response to the review is expected before Christmas and an update will be provided to the Board once this is published.

RESOLVED - That the information presented be noted.

4 WORK OF YOUNG AMBASSADORS

A report was presented to the Board on the work of the Young Ambassadors since commencing employment in January 2022. The three Young Ambassadors appointed are Aisha Imran, Jake Curbison and Mariceu Neto.

Each Young Ambassador has two Corporate Parenting themes. Aisha's themes are participation, accommodation and placements, Jake's themes are; health, education, training and employment and Mariceu's are; leaving care, arts, leisure and activities. These themes guide their daily work alongside other key roles of the posts such as supporting children in care, improving involvement, promoting campaigns as well as representing young people on a number of bodies.

It was reported that during the summer holidays the Young Ambassadors carried out activities such as Tik Tok workshops. Moving forward they will be working on helping to organise the Achievement Awards and Christmas events to get young children and teens together. The Young Ambassadors are hoping to arrange further weekly or monthly clubs to get more young people engaged and involved and socialising.

Part of the role of the Young Ambassadors has been attending Children's Homes to undertake consultation work. This has helped to build relationships with those young people in the homes and enabled the Young Ambassadors to provide feedback to the service.

Over the summer they were involved in the Red Bus Scheme which provided drop in sessions for Care Experienced young people and Looked After Children. Consultations were carried out and feedback provided to the Virtual School Head.

Over October half term the Young Ambassadors will be running a Healthy Relationships workshop at two Children's Homes. One Voice is also starting up again following the summer break.

The Board noted it is a high priority to hear the views of care experienced young people in order to ensure services can change and do things differently if required.

It was suggested that it would be beneficial to identify two or three key themes that

could be done better that the Board can commit to doing something differently. It was agreed this would be brought back to the next meeting of the Board.

RESOLVED - That the information presented be noted.

5 HEALTH OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN ANNUAL REPORT

The Board received a report giving an overview of the work undertaken during 2021/22 to support the health and wellbeing of looked after children.

There has been an organisational change with responsibility transferring to the Integrated Care Board from 1 July 2022. The North East and North Cumbria ICB (NENCICB) is the biggest in the country with many areas of deprivation, it will now commission the statutory roles of the Designated Doctor and Nurse. Transition arrangements are in place until April 2023.

There has been an increase in the number of children in care, this has impacted on the number of Initial Health Assessments and Review Health Assessments being carried out. At the end of March 2022 64.1% of Initial Health Assessments were carried out within the timeframe, a slight reduction on the previous year against a target of 95%. It was noted that this has remained fairly static over the last few years. There was also a reduction in the number of Review Health Assessments completed within the month. However, 100% of leaving care health passports were completed for young people turning 18.

In terms of Key Performance Indicators it was noted that the picture is positive with performance for Gateshead better than the regional and national averages, however substance issues remains high. It was noted that this could be down to the robustness in collecting that data.

Completion of the Strength and Difficulty Questionnaire has improved since last year however the average score has reduced over the last two years, where it would be expected to see continued improvement.

67 CNTW appointments were requested and offered over the year. The main reason for referral was for emotional wellbeing. A Trauma informed model has been developed to support vulnerable groups to enhance the offer to young people. This is going through procurement at present.

There have been no known pregnancies within the care population in the last year following enhanced support from the Specialist Nurse and Sexual Health Services in Gateshead.

There has been an increase in the number of care meetings the nurses in the specialist health team have been requested to attend. In addition there has been an increase in activity for Medical Advisors for both adoption and fostering following the Somerset Judgement.

It was reported that 12 young people required assessment and support from drug and alcohol services for cannabis, nicotine and alcohol use.

For the first quarter of 2022/23 the number of Initial Health Assessments has reduced due to a delay in receiving consents. However, completion of Review Health Assessments has exceeded target. The team has also recruited to a post to support emotional and mental health needs within children's homes. Proposals for the LAC health team have been drafted and an outcome is awaited.

The free travel pass for care experienced young people is still being developed and it is anticipated these will be distributed in September. It is hoped that a new enhanced dental service for children in care will be developed following a good model in Yorkshire, discussions are ongoing with Dental Commissioners.

Priorities for the next year are around Care Leavers, Strength and difficulty screening and transition to the ICB. Scoping work is also progressing regionally around early deaths in the care leaving population and a request for a national review process to be considered. The quarterly LAC Be Healthy meetings are continuing to be held and a member of the Youth Justice Team and a Young Ambassador have recently joined.

It was questioned whether there will be an ICB representative on the regional Care Leavers Board, however this detail was not yet known.

It was requested that a further interim report be brought back to the Board in six months time so the Board can keep informed on the transition to the ICB.

RESOLVED - That the content of the report be noted and a further report be brought to the Board in approximately 6 months time.

6 MISSING FROM CARE ANNUAL REPORT

The Board received a report on the missing from care episodes from August 2021 to July 2022.

It was noted that the Philomena protocol, which was drafted with police and local authorities, has been used since 2019 across foster families, care homes and private placements. Once a child is missing the referral forms are very detailed and defines what category they are; low, medium or high risk. Age is a key factor around defining a category.

For those young people who continually go missing there is a daily meeting held with the police and as a result, those occurrences are reducing.

It was noted that for those young people 'absent' this is defined as the young person not being at the place where they are expected and there is no apparent risk. There is a distinction in terms of how police and the service respond to a child missing and absent.

During the last year there were 723 missing episodes, this is an increase from 510 the previous year. However, the lower numbers the previous year was due to Covid lockdown and this year's figures are quite normal in comparison to previous years. It

was reported that 117 missing or absent episodes were for over 24 hours, again an increase from 81 the previous year.

It was confirmed that in-house residential missing episodes relate to a small cohort of young people, with one young person having 30 missing episodes.

For each missing episode a Return Home Interview (RHI) is offered. The RHI's should be facilitated by an independent person ideally and it was confirmed that an independent RHI Support Worker has been in post for one year and has excellent engagement with the young people. Every young person is offered a RHI, not all take up this offer however there has been a significant increase in take up over the last year. The RHI Support Worker has a unique approach, her style is conversational so the young person does not feel that they are being interviewed. The young person also has a welfare check by police. The data from these interviews is collected and analysed to identify trends and ascertain the reasons and causes of missing episodes.

Over the last year 1018 RHI's were offered, the number of interviews declined by the young person or their parent/carer was 18.37%, a reduction from 34.51% the previous year.

The RHI support worker works with those young people to support them at other CYPS appointments and develops relationships with them. #

It was confirmed that the age range of those going missing tends to be teens and older teens for over 24 hours. It was agreed that information about where the young people are going missing from would be included in the next annual report to the Board.

It was noted that the gaps in some of the data around placements was due to moving to a new computer system. It was confirmed that this data is now available and would be reflected in the next annual report.

RESOLVED - That the information provided in the report be noted.

7 SUFFICIENCY STRATEGY

The Board received Gateshead's Sufficiency Strategy for the accommodation of children in care and care leavers. It was noted that the authority is under a legal duty to ensure suitable accommodation is provided and that the strategy is made public.

It was acknowledged that securing accommodation requires a whole system approach.

The five guiding principles of the strategy were outlined;

- The voice and needs of the child at the centre of the strategy
- Look to keep children within their family unit where it is safe to do so
- Support carers, providers and young people to move in a planned way
- High quality services and a range of different kinds of homes to ensure there is sufficient choice

- Work with all partners and providers to ensure services are aspirational for young people, are of high quality and provide good value for money.

It was noted that there is an action plan which sits behind the strategy and shows the performance indicators and how the authority is performing.

RESOLVED - That the information presented be noted.

8 FINANCIAL SUPPORT OFFER TO CARE EXPERIENCED YOUNG PEOPLE

The Board received a report on the current offer of financial support for care leavers and sought views on how this can be developed.

It was reported that the current offer compares favourably to other authorities in the region. There has been a regional Care Leavers Board established which is looking to make a standard offer through a regional agreement.

It was noted that a lot of our arrangements have not changed since 2010 and given inflation this does not seem to be sufficient.

Following successful summer activities around practical work and improving mental health, further work is ongoing to develop a Preparation for Adult Life programme which will be tailored to the needs of our young people.

Next steps are around the implementation of the travel pilot scheme which will help support young people with the cost of living crisis. Workstreams for the Regional Care Leavers Board have been agreed, with conclusions expected in 9-12 months. Financial forecasting is also underway around possible increases to the setting up home allowance, this will involve working with housing colleagues to see what they can offer to support the setting up home process.

It was suggested that the possibility of capital bids through housing be used to improve energy use in homes that young people will be living in and ensure they are not on pre-paid energy meters. It was confirmed that a lot of conversations are ongoing around this issue as it is not unique to care leavers with a lot of vulnerable residents on pre-paid meters, the housing representative will pick up this point with colleagues. It was also suggested that there are opportunities to explore this with procurement colleagues linking to social value.

RESOLVED - That the information presented and the comments made be noted.

9 INITIATIVES IN SCHOOLS

Item deferred to a future meeting.

10 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 20 December 2022 at 2pm.

