



# COUNCIL MEETING

24 May 2018

## GATESHEAD COUNCIL

### REPORT FROM THE CABINET

#### 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

This is the report from the Cabinet. Its purpose is to report on issues for the period March to May 2018.

#### PROGRESS ON KEY ISSUES

#### 2. PEOPLE

##### *Children and Young People*

##### Grove House Children's Home

A recent inspection by Ofsted has reinforced the Outstanding rating for this children's home.

The inspection took place on 30 - 31 January 2018, and the inspector found that Grove House provides "highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good".

Key findings from the inspection include recognition that:

- there is excellent attention to detail in bespoke care plans for the children and young people;
- Grove House is maintained to an exceptionally high standard, including the use of specialist equipment to meet children's needs;
- there is a focus on providing a stimulating offer of care to children;
- the registered manager is dedicated and forward thinking.
- the staff team ensure that children's rights are promoted, resulting in improvements in children's behaviour and self-determination;
- there is a highly skilled staff team in the administration of medication and the management team ensure that competency checks are undertaken to maintain the staff team's excellent skills
- children are supported to develop new friendships and spend time with established friends through careful matching and staff flexibility.

Two recommendations were forthcoming from the inspection:

- staff should ensure dates and times are recorded when, after an incident, a debrief takes place with a child;
- the policy on e-safety should be reviewed regularly and revised where appropriate.

##### Gateshead Schools' Dance Festival

The Gateshead Schools' Dance Festival took place at Sage Gateshead on 20-21 March 2018. This two day, six session, annual event organised by the Gateshead School Sport Partnership provided the platform for 74 Gateshead\* Schools (Nursery, Primary, Secondary & Special) to take part, performing 103 different, lively and

entertaining dance routines. In total, more than 2,600 children showcased their skills in dance. Participants were well supported by the local community with c.4000 parents and family members attending to spectate.

This year's festival benefited from an exciting new partnership with the Disney On Ice Fit to Dance education programme. This will help to ensure a legacy from the event, enabling the GSSP to reach out to schools with an inspirational cross-curricular initiative to encourage creativity and sustained physical activity through dance. Next year represents a key milestone as it will mark the ten year anniversary for this event at Sage Gateshead.

\*2 community groups and 2 schools from outside the area (Sunderland & Prudhoe) were also involved.

### Pupil Exclusions

The increasing numbers of pupils being excluded from schools is a national issue. However, within Gateshead the rates of exclusions would appear to be even greater than the national average over recent years. This issue was identified by the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) and officers were asked to carry out research to identify why exclusions were increasing at such a rate and more importantly how could this be halted and reversed. This work was led by Dr Jeanne Pratt and a report presented to LSCB in the Spring 2017. The report identified a number of factors were likely to be driving up exclusions. A key outcome was that a range of children's services, health and school professionals would need to try to address the issue by working more closely together. As a consequence, a conference was organised to bring services together to discuss the issue and agree a way forward. The conference was led by the chair of the LSCB.

Following the LSCB "Reducing Permanent Exclusions" conference in the summer of 2017, a joint action plan was devised and agreed with partners. Actions started to be implemented from September 2017 and are being monitored and evaluated by a group consisting of partners from the original LSCB conference. In addition to the LSCB receiving regular updates, Families OSC has asked for a regular update on the impact of the action plan.

Although it is relatively early days in regard to the plan, there are some promising figures to date.

	Numbers of Permanent Exclusions		
	16/17	17/18	% change
Autumn Term	34	29	-15%
Spring Term	19	15	-11%

Compared to last year, by the end of the Spring Term 2018 there have been 9 fewer permanent exclusions.

### Ofsted focused visit – Care Leavers

Ofsted undertook a focused visit of Gateshead's children's services on 20 March 2018, looking at the Council's arrangements for care leavers.

The inspectors considered a range of evidence, including discussions with care leavers, social workers, personal advisers and senior managers. They also looked at performance management and quality assurance information and children's case records.

The inspectors noted the Council and senior leaders have embraced the role of corporate parents "taking determined steps to raise the ambition of care leavers". They acknowledged 'the Local Authority's commitment to continuous improvement of the service is clear but the strategic ambition is not fully realised in all aspects of operational practice.'

The inspectors highlighted "two significant areas where the Council has developed very strong practice improving outcomes for young people", i.e. access to an impressive range of creative initiatives to support the young person in education, employment and training, and the accommodation offer which provides flexible and bespoke housing options.

It was noted that children who leave care in Gateshead benefit from the support of a dedicated group of personal advisers who "have the skills to develop trusting relationships to facilitate effective direct work". However, the pathway planning and plans seen by Ofsted and written by Personal Advisers were considered to be poor in quality and Ofsted also reported that there needed to be better engagement with the young people and their own plan.

The Ofsted inspectors were also critical of management processes and oversight: "Management processes to support effective casework need to be strengthened. A lack of critical challenge provided through management oversight means that staff's supervision is not providing sufficient rigour to drive aspirational plans."

Ofsted identified the following areas for improvement:

- Most pathway plans written by personal advisers could be better. Plans need to be strengthened to be outcome focused, evidence that the young person is an active participant, better consider diverse needs and identity, and to have a meaningful contingency if things go wrong.
- The quality of case management oversight of pathway planning, written plans, and reviewing processes needs to be improved. Managers should ensure that supervision supports personal advisers to maintain a focus on being appropriately ambitious for young people.
- Auditing practice in the care leaver's service needs to be strengthened as a tool for monitoring quality of practice, rather than compliance and to feed into service development and forward planning.

An action plan has been developed to address these improvements, which will be monitored for progress by the Corporate Parenting Overview and Scrutiny Sub Committee.

#### Foster Carer Awards Ceremony 2018

The annual Foster Carer Awards were held on 24 April 2018 to recognise the dedication and hard work of all of the Council's foster carers. In Gateshead there are 333 children placed in short and long-term foster placements, including those children

placed with relative and friend foster carers. Without our foster carers Gateshead Council would not be able to offer these children safe, nurturing family homes.

These awards allow Gateshead Council the opportunity to celebrate some of the fantastic work that goes on, behind the scenes, every day in the Fostering Service. The theme of this year's event was VIP (Very Important People). It acknowledged just how vital our Foster Carers are to Gateshead Council and the children they care for.

The evening saw the acknowledgement of the following:

- **17** sets of new foster carers welcomed to the service,
- **6** sets of foster carers achieving their certificates for Department of Education, Training, Support & Development Standards,
- **11** foster carers achieving a Bridging Unit, Level 2 or Level 3 Diploma for the Children and Young People's workforce, and
- Long Service awards were presented to **24** sets of foster carers for achieving their 5, 10 and 15 year anniversaries.

In addition to these achievements we had one award nominated by foster carers, three awards nominated by colleagues and other professionals and the final award also nominated by foster carers.

These awards were:

- **Extra Mile Award** – Awarded to foster carers who regularly go above and beyond what is expected of them in delivering an exceptional standard of care. They provide a unique level of service that enhances the reputation of foster carers and Gateshead Council.
- **Unsung Hero Award** - Awarded to foster carers who have a sense of enthusiasm that drives them to put in extraordinary effort to deliver safe, high quality care and support. They epitomise dedication and drive and always deliver on their promises in an unassuming way. They never seek recognition and work really hard behind the scenes delivering what is needed.
- **Outstanding Newcomer of the Year Award** – Awarded to foster carers who have joined the organisation since 1 April 2017 and have brought a fresh perspective to the service. They show real drive, exceptional performance, enthusiasm, motivation and inspire those around them.
- **Most Amazing Carer Award** - We asked our looked after children to nominate their foster carer(s) for an award if they believe them to be amazing.

The event was inspiring for all who attended and the following quotes from children in foster care demonstrate the real difference foster carers in Gateshead make to the children in our care.

- *“They are always kind to us and when the dark times strike and we say they give us hope and make us happy. When we're all happy it brings joy to my heart. They are my light at the end of the tunnel. Together we can make anything happen.”*
- *“My carers are amazing because through everything they have for themselves they always seem to put us as foster children first. They have stuck by us and helped us through the tough times and got us to where we are. Through the four years that I have been here I don't think that I would have been able to have a life the way I have.”*

- *“You are amazing because you are very supportive. They helped me get the correct support in school which helped me pass my exams. They have done everything for me for the past 7 years and I couldn’t ask for anyone better. They helped me boost my confidence up and joined me in cadets and I am really happy that they did because I’ve been there for nearly 4 years and I want to join the navy when I finish my course at Newcastle College.”*

### **3. PLACE AND ECONOMY**

#### ***Environment and Transport***

##### Air Quality Update

Tyneside authorities (Gateshead, Newcastle and North Tyneside) have been awarded £1.7m for Early Measures Funding to help deliver compliance with DEFRA identified air quality exceedances. This includes funds to help deliver improved cycling and walking infrastructure and improve the operation of traffic signals.

The longer-term development of the air quality work continues on a joint basis, with a view to producing a final action plan to ensure compliance with relevant pollution limits.

##### Active Travel

Since September 2016 a programme of active travel promotion has been delivered to schools in Gateshead. This combines practical walking, cycling and scooter based activity with classroom based sessions with the aim of promoting safe and sustainable travel to school. Since 2016 measures have been delivered in over 30 schools, with involvement of over 22,000 children and 1,100 staff. Currently funding has been secured to continue this programme to July 2020.

##### Electric vehicles

Following the installation of two rapid charges for electric vehicles, located at Gateshead Leisure Centre, and the other at the Metrocentre a review of existing chargers across the region has been undertaken. The review has found widespread problems with these being broken and, in many cases, not conforming to national requirements. A new regional contract is being worked on which would see the operation of the existing stock placed on a commercial footing. This would generate the necessary revenue stream to cover maintenance and electricity costs and, hopefully, support future expansion of charging networks.

#### ***Housing***

##### Police within Private Sector Housing Licensing Team

To coincide with the commencement of a Selective Landlord Licensing Area in Bensham, a joint working pilot has commenced between the Environmental Health service and the Police.

This will try to find ways to tackle crime and antisocial behaviour more effectively in the area and its surroundings. Police officers are based within the Private Sector Housing team to allow a better sharing of knowledge and ideas, and to allow officers from the Council and police to learn more about each other’s roles, and how each can support the other.

Previous Selective Landlord Licensing Areas have seen significant reductions in crime and antisocial behaviour, and it is anticipated that the learning from this pilot will lead to even more significant reductions in future.

#### Call Blockers

The Trading Standards team has been involved in a trial of Nuisance Call Blockers in conjunction with the Alzheimer's Society and the National Scams Team. The Alzheimer's Society helped to select seven vulnerable clients who were suffering from persistent nuisance calls for the trial.

It was found that the devices blocked almost every unsolicited call, and helped to improve the quality of life of those taking part.

One of the of the dementia support workers commented "I have spoken to my client on a regular basis and much to her delight she has had no nuisance phone calls, she is much happier in herself, and does not feel so intimidated in her own home. Many thanks to you and your team for helping this lady and the peace of mind your device has given her".

### ***Economy***

#### Business Investment Activity 2017/18

During the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018, the Council worked with a number of businesses to deliver 137 investment project successes, 18 of which bring new business investment into the Borough.

As a result, 637 new jobs have been created with a further 538 jobs being safeguarded. Collectively, £28m of private sector investment has been brought into the area and generated £230,000 of new business rate income to the Council.

## **4. COMMUNITIES**

### ***Culture, Sport and Leisure***

#### New E-Book Lending Service Launched

The library service has offered an e-book lending facility since 2012, but this has recently been relaunched. Users of smart phones and tablets can download the Borrow Box app to access an improved range of e-book and e-audio titles. In the next few months the service will be further enhanced though the addition of e-magazines. There has been very positive customer feedback resulting from this service enhancement that allows 24-7 access to library resources across the Borough.

#### Gateshead Central Library - Unseen Gateshead – HLF funded project

The Council is now halfway through a development phase for the Heritage Lottery Fund project, 'Unseen Gateshead'. In August, the library service will submit an activity plan to HLF, detailing activities, digitisation work and volunteer recruitment, as well as more detailed architectural designs. The service has recruited a Project Officer to lead on the activity plan. The aim of the project is to engage the community in the local studies collection and to improve access to resources, both physically and digitally.

### Gateshead Family Sculpture Day shortlisted for Journal Culture Award

The Finalists have been recently announced for the 12th annual Journal Culture awards which will celebrate those organisations, artists and events that made a splash on the North East arts and culture scene in 2017. The awards are seen as a reward for brilliance in the cultural sector and being selected as a finalist is an achievement. Gateshead Family Sculpture Day has been selected as one of three finalists for 'Best Event in Tyneside', along with GemArts Masala Festival and Freedom City. This year's award ceremony will take place in Hexham Abbey on the evening of Thursday 24 May.

### Brainstorm Youth Theatre Project

Brainstorm was a successful collaborative project between theatre company Mortal Fools, Gateshead Council Culture Team, Art Centre Washington and The Culture Vulture. The funding covered the period of January – April 2018 and including the development of the theatre show with a group of eleven young people followed by a mini tour and several outreach workshops with young people on the show's themes.

Brainstorm focused on brain development of teenagers, mental health, relationships and was developed with neuroscientists. On 11 April, 95 young people and their parents attended the show at The Caedmon Hall at Gateshead Central Library. The Gateshead show was the finale of a regional tour. The Culture Team organised five free bespoke workshops for Gateshead Young people aged 14-18yrs to explore the themes of the show with a professional theatre company. The contact time with young people in Gateshead has fed into the Culture Team's young people's strategic strand of future work and further focus on creative opportunities targeting mental health.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

The Council is asked to note this report.