

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

Monday, 22 July 2024

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A meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board was held on Monday, 22 July 2024 at the Guisborough Youth Centre, Laurence Jackson School, Church Lane, Guisborough TS14 6RD.

PRESENT Councillor K King (Chair)
Councillors C Curr, U Earl, L Robson and
B Suthers.

OFFICIALS D Malone, V McLeod and C Leng.

IN ATTENDANCE

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C Cawley, N Hargreaves, M Ovens (Vice-Chair), L Pallister and D Powlay.

61 **TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18 JUNE 2024 AND TO NOTE THE ATTENDANCE MATRIX**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Corporate Parenting Board held on Tuesday 18 June 2024 be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record, and the attendance matrix be noted.

62 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

63 **CHILDREN IN OUR CARE QUARTERLY BRIEFING**

The Assistant Director for Social Care and Early Help provided a Members Report pertaining to Children in Our Care (CiOC) reporting on the services undertaken within the Directorate including young people in the Council's care, care experienced young people, the Care Leaving Service, Virtual School and Vulnerable, Exploited, Missing and Trafficked (VEMPT) young people, reporting on quarter one from April to June 2024.

As part of the ensuing discussion, the following comments and questions were noted:

- The data for quarter one was not available but would be circulated to Members by the Assistant Director for Social Care and Early

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- Help when available.
- Members were informed that during quarter one, eight new foster care inquiries were received of which 7 were progressed onto the initial assessment service. There are 11 progressing through the through the initial assessment pathway service which can take up to 6 months due to DBS checks, family interviews, medical reports and various other assessments that form a part of this robust assessment process.
 - A Member asked what the average timescale for assessments to be completed was and were there any blockages in the system slowing down the process. The Assistant Director for Social Care and Early Help advised that on average the process was around 6 months due to the robustness of the assessments, ensuring for example risk assessments have taken place and medical reports are obtained. Some delays are due to personal circumstances such as availability for appointments if in full time work or shift working. All checks within the assessment process are vital to ensure the safety of the child and foster person/family.
 - Members were advised that the Directorate are working regionally towards a 'local offer' for foster caring families to ensure the rates regionally are competitive to maintain local foster families.
 - A Member queried the current number of foster carers compared to how many are required. Members were advised there are approximately 102-104 active carers, plus 18 in the assessment process. This is fewer than the number of young people requiring foster placements. All other Local Authorities are in similar situations.
 - A Member asked if any of the regional partnerships that the Council is already a member of has benefited the Councils offer and service. Members were informed that advertising is included within all Foster Carers North East marketing and events. The Directorate work closely with Foster Carers North East to ensure work is not duplicated.
 - A Member queried the difference between fostering and adoption and if different agencies supported the Council locally and regionally. Members were advised that Adoption Tees Valley recruit and assess people/families and this is a separate service to fostering. To undergo the adoption process is to sever ties with the birth parent(s), this is a serious consideration and process to consider for example, if a foster situation has broken down. A Child Permanence Report needs to be completed and a Placement Order would be filed with a Court to initiate the process of adoption.
 - Members were informed of the increase number of young people in the foster care system with mental health considerations due to historical abuse, therefore a family foster setting isn't always suitable. Residential Care would then be considered with therapeutic services available to support that young person,

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however this is a greater cost to the Council compared to a foster person/family placement.

- Members were advised that young people in care and foster carers both receive individual social workers to support their needs. The foster carer(s) can access additional training, foster carer buddy systems are available, and training is being rolled out regarding trauma and therapeutic services.
- A Member queried the rising cost of placements and independent agencies. Members were informed that costs have risen as follows:
 - Residential Foster Services (IFA) increased by 33%
 - Independent Fostering Agency increased by 9%
 - The average cost for Foster Carers has increased by 9%

This is the same regionally and nationally. The IFA is a contracted service with costs negotiated yearly. Prices cannot increase mid-contract. It was further speculated that if costs increased to attract more carers, there currently isn't the number of carers available in the system to support demand.

- A Member queried the cost of different foster carer categories. Members were assured this information would be shared with them.
- Members were advised that regionally Directors are sharing best practice and the presentation from the Regional Directors Meeting would be shared with this group and that further updates will be given at the All-Members Conference on Wednesday 24 July 2024.
- Members were informed the Directorate is advertising for a Deputy Team Manager to add capacity into the teams. Consideration will also be given to recruit a Recruitment Officer to attend local and regional events and target potential foster carers. It is envisaged this post would work alongside Foster Carers North East to promote the service.
- A Member queried if there are any measurable benefits from the partnership with Foster Carers North East. The Assistant Director for Social Care and Early Help informed Members that the service which is driven by the Government was established in September 2023 therefore no data is available.
- Members were advised of the British Association of Social Workers research which identified that migrant young people did not like the word 'unaccompanied' because it implies parents had abandoned them, which was not the case. Therefore 'Unaccompanied Migrant Young People' has been changed to 'Separated Migrant Young People'.
- Members were informed about the Safeguarding Adolescents from Exploitation (SAFE) Team launched April 2024 at the same time the [SHiFT](#) Team was established which is a London initiative rolled out nationally to support young people to break destructive cycles they are stuck in and reduce any risk of crime; **NOTED**.

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64 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THE CHAIR CERTIFIES AS URGENT**

There were no items certified as urgent.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Members departed to attend a Have Your Say Group meeting with young people in foster care.