

Board Evaluation – Activities Report - Impact & Outcomes. 2016.

Ensured greater, multi-agency, clarity re: roles and responsibilities as Corporate Parents

1. A full Council briefing was held on 21st April at Southport Town Hall. The session explored the impact on children and young people growing up in care and the inequalities they face. Following discussion Members agreed to explore the possibility of including Sefton looked after children in the 'protected characteristic' group. The aim being that all Council planning and decision making would consider what, if any, impact it would have on this group. Work is ongoing on this and expected to be finalised early 2017.

2. The Sefton Corporate Parenting Board held a board development session on 23rd February 2016. Members agreed to update the existing 'Vision and Purpose Statement' and Terms of Reference. MAD group members were tasked to rewrite a new statement and the following was agreed at the board meeting held in June 2016.

'The Sefton Corporate Parenting Board will strive to improve all outcomes for our looked after children and care leavers with a focus on them doing well because they are in care and not despite being in care. We will work hard to reduce the stigma and stereotyping that they experience and support them in achieving a good quality of life.'

The Sefton Corporate Parenting Board will also seek to offer strong scrutiny and challenge working from a sound evidence base. The board strives to provide examples of best practice and become a leader in the field of Corporate Parenting working alongside our children and young people in order to achieve this.'

3. A full review of the Community Engagement visits, which replaced the Regulation 44 visit previously made by Cllrs, was held during August 2016. As a result the purpose of the visits was revised and the following key themes and guidance agreed:

Key Themes

To ensure that the homes are, as far as possible, fully integrated into the local community and that any community issues that may impact upon them are brought to their attention for consideration.

Think about:

How are relationships with neighbours? Do the children have local friendship groups? Is the local environment safe for the children to play in? What are staff's views and experiences of working in the local community? Are there any local community initiatives that the home could get involved in?

To act as a vital link to the local community within which the home is situated and to ensure that the experiences of the children living within the home are considered in local community planning.

Think about:

Have the homes been considered when local planning decisions etc are being taken? Will plans / proposals impact upon the homes and the lives of the children living there?

To listen to children and young people resident in the home. To gain insight into their experiences of living within the local community.

Think about:

What's it like for the kids to live in this area? Do they feel safe living here? Do they use the local facilities? Do they use local transport?

4. A dedicated session on Corporate Parenting roles and responsibilities is delivered on each foster carer preparation course. The session outlines the Sefton Corporate Parenting Initiative and gives potential foster carers an opportunity to consider how they will contribute to the role of Corporate Parent. Each session is co facilitated with members of the M.A.D (Making A Difference) group.

5. Following recruitment onto L.A Independent Visitor and Advocacy Scheme volunteers participate in a comprehensive training programme. Each programme contains a session of the roles and responsibilities of Corporate Parents. The session is co facilitated with members of the M.A.D (Making A Difference) group.

6. All workplace mentors supporting the delivery of the L.A Pathway to Employment Scheme receive a comprehensive briefing on the Sefton Corporate Parenting Initiative and the roles and responsibilities of Corporate Parents. The session also highlights the issues faced by care leavers and the absolute necessity that we endeavour to 'go the extra mile' in supporting their progress and learning. Sefton Council departments offering work experience and apprenticeship opportunities to Sefton Care Leavers include: Parks and Countryside, Leisure Services, One Stop Shop, Sefton Security and Cleansing.

7. Sefton Governors Association received briefing updates this year on the work of the Sefton Corporate Parenting Board and the roles and responsibilities of Corporate Parents. As a result of this input Sefton Governors Association agreed to continue sponsorship of 2 education awards at the No Limits Awards Ceremony held in November 2016

Strengthening multi agency partnerships.

1. Merseyside Connexions, Career-Connect.

Merseyside Connexions secondment of a personal advisor within Corporate Parenting Service continues. The secondment further strengthens the pathway planning process for all looked after young people in Sefton and supports their progression into further education, employment or training. In addition the contract with Sefton Connexions has been extended to include development of comprehensive data base to record, monitor and report EET activities and accommodation status of all Sefton LAC and Care Leavers 16yrs and over.

2. Local Authority Pathway to Employment Scheme. Sovini and One Vision Housing.

The LA **Pathway to Employment Scheme** was implemented on the 13th June 2011. The scheme was designed and developed by a multi- agency working group (which included Sefton care leavers) and chaired by Mark Dale, Head of Personnel at Sefton Council. Establishment of the group brought together, for the first time, representatives from a number of departments and partners, who, individually over recent years, had offered opportunities to care leavers in Sefton. As one member stated at the first meeting "It's the first time that all the individual efforts have been brought together – it now has a focus and sense of ownership."

Sovini Housing joined with the LA this year to offer apprenticeships to care leavers on the employability programme. This further extends the variety of opportunities that we can offer our care leavers and is a much welcomed addition to our placement providers.

The Corporate Parenting Board continue to monitor and evaluate the scheme and, in partnership with the Local Authority, have secured continued funding for the scheme to run on an annual basis.

3. Sefton Care Leavers Centre - Sefton CVS and Venus Project.

'Our Place' continues to provide additional support and services to Sefton looked after children and care leavers. The centre offers a variety of activities including: drop in sessions / shower and laundry facilities / tenancy support / outreach support / counselling and independent living skills. As of May this year the Leaving Care Personnel Advisors have been able to base themselves at the centre creating the opportunity for more collaborative work. In addition the Leaving Care team organised training on delivery of the 'Passport to Independence'. The training was attended by both LA and Centre staff and the programme has now been rolled out to current care leavers.

4. Duke of Edinburgh Awards – Virtual School and Sefton Integrated Youth Services.

A new initiative this year, which received the support of the board, is the introduction of the Duke of Edinburgh Awards for Sefton looked after children and care leavers. The initiative is being commissioned by the Virtual School, in partnership with Sefton Integrated Youth Services and will be run from the Sefton Care Leavers Centre. Plans are now underway to launch the awards scheme early in 2017.

5. Virtual School in partnership with Save the Children.

The Virtual School work in partnership with Save The Children to deliver the 'Beanstalk' project. The project provides schools, who have 3 or more looked after children, with volunteer readers to work with the children on their reading skills twice a week.

6. Virtual School in partnership with The Reader Project.

The Reader Project are working with the Virtual School to provide additional reading support to looked after children in Sefton in their placement. Volunteers from the Reader Project visit the children on a weekly basis to read with them. Currently 5 children are benefitting from the project with a further 25 places available over the coming months.

7. Health and Wellbeing Services

Following ratification of the Sefton Pledge, Sefton Health and Wellbeing Services extended the distribution of leisure passes to all care leavers up age 21years. This had been identified as an issue, by care leavers, during work on the Pledge. In addition leisure passes have also been distributed to foster carers, birth children and siblings of LAC.

8. Council Tax Initiative in Partnership with Arvato

Members of the Corporate Parenting Board instigated discussion with partner agency Arvato regarding development and implementation of a local protocol in relation to Sefton care leavers who become first time tenants liable for council tax payments. The transition to adult hood can be a complex time for care leavers and budgeting incomes can be a difficult skill to learn. Care leavers can often find themselves in serious debt with their council tax payments and in a position whereby the formal recovery process has been instigated with them possibly ending up with a court fine in addition to the accumulated debt. Following discussions a Sefton protocol was introduced. The names of care leavers becoming liable for council tax are now shared with colleagues at Arvato and a

flag is attached to their file. Should they default on a payment their Leaving Care PA is alerted and steps can be taken immediately to get them back on track. To date 36 interventions have been instigated all of which are currently being resolved without having to implement a formal recovery process

9. No Limits Awards 2016 - Celebration of Achievements.

The Corporate Parenting Board have established a multi-agency working group to support and ensure continued deliver of the annual No Limits Annual Award Ceremony for LAC and Care Leavers. This year sponsorship support was received from a wide variety of agencies and organisation including: Parenting 2000 / Sefton Governors Association / Homescope / Sefton CVS / Crosby Soroptimists and Southport Soroptimists / Sefton Council Library Service and Sefton Council Integrated Youth Services and the Porter family. In 2016 the event celebrated its 15th year and was a huge success with over 270 nominations received from social workers, foster carers, teachers and support staff. Every nominee received a £20 voucher and certificate with 29 main awards presented on the night. The event was attended by The Mayor and Mayoress of Sefton, the Lead Member for Children, Schools and Safeguarding and Sefton Council Director of Health and Social Care.

Again this year a member of the Making A Difference group hosted the event with a number of other members of the group volunteering both on the organising committee and on the evening. The group also made an inspirational film which was shown at the beginning of the ceremony.

10. Department for Work and Pensions Protocol.

Due to the recent welfare reforms, and following a full review of the existing protocol agreement between the LA and the DWP, an updated protocol was agreed by the board at the February 2016 meeting.

In addition the Sefton local protocol was used as the framework for a Merseyside Protocol which is currently being developed by Merseyside DWP in partnership with all Merseyside boroughs.

Membership of the working group continues to include a range of partners: DWP / Connexions / Sefton@Work / Ingues / Leaving Care Personal Advisors and Sefton EBP. The group report quarterly to the Corporate Parenting Board.

11. CAMHS.

The CAMHS Clinical Lead for Sefton continues to provide quarterly reports to the Corporate Parenting Board detailing support and services provided to looked after children in Sefton. Joint working between Sefton CAMHS and Sefton Council has also been further developed with regular clinics being held giving staff and foster carers the opportunity to discuss, and seek advice in relation to behavioural or emotional issue experienced by children and young people in our care.

12. Sefton and Merseyside Clinical Commissioning Groups.

Representatives continue to sit on the Corporate Parenting Board to provide information and assistance with commissioning issues. Board members are kept informed of all changes made that affect health service and provision for looked after children and young people.

13. Sefton Schools Forum. Targeted Funding of £1,000 per LAC per year – Local Initiative.

The Sefton Schools Forum have agreed to continue the targeted funding of £1,000 per looked after child per year. This is a local Sefton initiative and is in addition to the national Pupil Premium grant of £1,900 per looked after child.

The governing body for the Virtual School continues to meet and is chaired by the Director for Health and Social Care. A member of the M.A.D. (Making A Difference) Group sits on the governing body. The governing body report quarterly to the Corporate Parenting Board.

At the suggestion of the MAD group the Virtual School Headteacher worked in collaboration with members to design and develop the 'Sefton Superstars' Programme. The programme was six weeks long with one session delivered each week at the Care Leavers Centre. The sessions are designed to support and nurture young people's aspirations and inspire them in achieving them

Corporate Parenting board members continue to receive quarterly reports on the education and attainment of looked after children and young people in Sefton.

14. Families First (Early Learning and Childcare Services)

Following a presentation on Corporate Parenting roles and responsibilities to members of the Families First executive committee members agreed to prioritise Sefton care leavers, who were parents, in relation to service provision and support and waive the residential criteria, re: allocation of services, for this group. Leaving Care support staff report that the joint working Families First colleagues has ensured greater access to information, services and support for care leavers who are parents. Families First support of two care leavers, who are single parents, allowed both of them to return to part time studying.

15. Sefton Governors' Association (SGA)

The SGA provides a direct link between governors and the Local Authority (LA) on matters of mutual concern and interest, to improve communications generally and to ensure the views of Sefton Governors are recognised.

A member of the SGA (CPB member) provides feedback to the SGA at their termly meetings. Corporate Parenting is a standing item on the agenda of all SGA meetings. The minutes of these meetings are distributed to all governors in Sefton. This has led to increased awareness by the membership. Following agreement at the AGM (Annual General Meeting) in October 2012 the SGA sponsored two awards at the 2014 No Limits Awards Ceremony. In 2015 the amount of sponsorship was increased and continued through into the 2016 awards.

16. Foster Family Friendly Agreement

Following representation to the board, in relation to the support of foster carers who are in employment, members developed and introduced a 'Foster Family Friendly' agreement. The aim of the agreement is to commit signatories to providing employees with additional support if they are registered foster carers. To date the following partners have signed up to the agreement: Liverpool Community Health / Sefton Council / Sefton CVS / Merseyside Connexions / Kings Meadow Primary School and Holy Rosary Catholic Primary School.

17. Annual Celebration of Sefton Looked After Children and Care Leavers.

A number of partners join with the LA each year to support the annual No Limits celebration event for our looked after children and care leavers. Sponsors of this year's event were:

Parenting 2000 / Sefton Governors Association / Homescope / Sefton Library Service / Sefton CVS / Sefton Integrated Youth Service / Sefton Care Leavers Centre / Crosby Sorooptimists / Southport Sorooptimists / Porter Family.

18. Early Intervention and Prevention Service – Sefton Summit.

Members of the MAD group were invited to provide input at the Early Intervention and Prevention Summit held in Sefton in June 2016. Group members read out their thoughts on how early intervention and prevention services may have made a difference in their families and, perhaps, prevented them from coming into care. The summit was attended by all early intervention and prevention services across Sefton with the group input receiving excellent feedback.

19. Liverpool City Region Health and Social Care Summit

Following the success of the MAD groups input at the Sefton Summit, group members were invited by the Chief Executive of Sefton Council to participate in the LCR Health and Social Care Summit in October 2016. The event was attended by senior officers from across the region with 240 people in attendance. The MAD group members recounted their personal stories and views on how early help could have made a difference in they and their lives.

20. Sefton Council Adult Social Care.

Following the Ofsted inspection a protocol was developed between Sefton Council Children and Adult Social Care Services. The protocol introduces a new pathway of transition for young people between the two services allowing for earlier referrals to be made and greater collaborative working during the transition period. The protocol was introduced in November 2016. In addition the Corporate Parenting Officer now attends the monthly Transition Working Group which is chaired by the Service Manager for Adult Social Care.

Increased accountability and scrutiny.

- 1.** The Corporate Parenting Board provide the LSCB and the Health and Wellbeing Board with the minutes of each board meeting for information and vice versa.
- 2.** Annual Board Evaluation Document is sent to Sefton Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Children's Services.
- 3.** Senior managers are required to report quarterly to the Board on current status, developments and issues in relation to Fostering and Adoption Services / Corporate Parenting Services / Leaving Care Support / Residential Homes/ and Planning and Performance (QA).
- 4.** A standing item on the Board's agenda is a full briefing on the activities of the M.A.D (Making A Difference) group. Board members are keen to both support, and ensure, the qualitative involvement of looked after children and care leavers.
- 5.** A standing item on the Board's agenda is a briefing from the Director of Health and Social Care, Sefton Council. This is to ensure that members are kept fully informed of strategic developments in relation to all aspects of support and services for looked after children and care leavers in Sefton.
- 6.** The Youth Offending Service (YOS) provide the Corporate Parenting Board with annual review of all looked after children and care leavers in Sefton who have been engaged with their services.
- 7.** The Independent Reviewing Service provide bi annual reports to the Corporate Parenting Board.
- 8.** The Children's Complaints Service provide an annual report to the Corporate Parenting Board.
- 9.** The Independent Visiting and Advocacy Service provide an annual report to the Corporate Parenting Board.

10. The Sefton Care Leavers Centre - 'Our Place' - provide a quarterly report to the Corporate Parenting Board.

11. The Virtual Headteacher, on behalf of the Virtual School Governing Body, provides quarterly reports to the Sefton Corporate Parenting Board.

12. The Local Authority framework for the delivery of regulation 44 visits to Sefton's children's homes was reviewed by the board in 2014 with a new framework introduced during 2015. In 2016 3 new visitors have been recruited in addition to the initial 3 recruited in 2015. The new visitors are senior staff from partner agency Sefton CVS. In addition one member of the MAD group has been trained and is now an independent regulation 44 visitor. The aim is to continue to train the MAD group members to become visitors throughout 2017.

13. To ensure continued involvement of Elected Members with Sefton's Children's Homes the board, in consultation with members, introduced monthly Community Engagement Visits. The key themes for the visits are outlined on page one of this report.

Increased involvement of young people and foster carers in the strategic development and scrutiny of services.

1. Four young people (LAC & Care Leavers reps) are members of Corporate Parenting Board. Membership rotates on a two yearly basis. In addition members of the Making A Difference Group who have 3 years, or more, membership of the group can become full members of the Corporate Parenting Board. The aim of this 'progression' route is to offer further opportunity and challenge to M.A.D (Making A Difference) members and seek to increase further their knowledge of, and contribution to, the strategic work of the Local Authority. There are, currently, three care leavers who are full members of the board with a further four members representing the MAD group.

2. Three Sefton Care Leavers are members of the All Party Parliamentary Group that meets in Westminster.

3. One Sefton Care Leaver is a member of the National Youth Justice Advisory Board.

4. M.A.D. group members participated in the design and development of a bespoke 'Sefton Superstars' Programme with the Virtual School Head Teacher. Group members decided each session and planned how the programme was to be rolled out. Members of the group also co-facilitated each of the six sessions.

5. LAC and Care Leavers are members of Employability Working Group, Child Sexual Exploitation Working Group, Housing Support Group and Virtual School Governing Body.

6. M.A.D. group members are part of the organising committee for the Sefton No Limits Annual Awards. With one group member hosting this year's event and six others volunteering in running the event.

7. LAC and Care Leavers meet quarterly with CEO and the Director of Health and Social Care and have been actively involved in LA Strategic Planning initiatives including discussions with the CEO on what it is like for a young person living in Sefton and the public services that are of importance to them.

8. LAC and Care Leavers meet monthly with the Service Manager for Corporate Parenting Services.

9. Two MAD members have been trained this year and commenced membership of the Sefton Fostering Panel. Further training will be undertaken by the other MAD members during 2017. The

aim is to create and maintain a 'pool' of care leavers to ensure each panel has care experienced young people in attendance

10. Two care leavers sit on the Operational Board and Strategic Board of the Community Adolescent Service.

11. Foster Carers Planning Groups have been established to encourage and support greater involvement of foster carers in the planning and delivery of fostering services.

12. One Sefton foster carer and one Sefton adopter are members of the Corporate Parenting Board.

13. M.A.D. group members were actively involved in the development of the Sefton Council Corporate DVD with two group members appearing in the final piece. The DVD is used during the induction of new employees and as an information piece about the borough.

14. Looked after children and care leavers were involved in the interviews for the following posts: Head of Service, Vulnerable Children / Social Workers, Corporate Parenting Service / Employability Officer, Corporate Parenting Service / Looked After Children's Link Nurse / Sefton Council Children's Complaints Officer.

15. MAD members fully participated in the Ofsted inspection of Sefton Children's Services in April 2016. The work of the MAD group was highly praised by Ofsted and the group were awarded with an Annex O highlighting their work as 'best practice'.

16. One MAD group member has received training and is now a Regulation 44 visitor to Sefton's Children's Homes. A further two group members will begin their training early in 2017.

Training:

17. Elected Members / Councillors.

Two Corporate Parenting sessions are held annually to ensure members are up to date and fully briefed on the work of the Corporate Parenting Board and their role as Corporate Parents

18. Foster Carers

Foster carer preparation courses are routinely held with one session devoted to the roles and responsibilities of Corporate Parents. This session is co-facilitated by members of M.A.D. Feedback from sessions has been overwhelmingly positive and helps potential foster carers to dispel some of the initial 'myths' they have about children and young people in care. Ultimately this will support their understanding of children and young people who live in care and the issues that affect them.

19. Independent Visitors and Advocates

Independent Visitor and Advocacy training courses are held for community volunteers recruited onto the L.A scheme. Members of M.A.D deliver a session on Corporate Parenting and the needs of looked after children giving the volunteers an insight into the lives of children in care. Feedback from sessions held has been extremely welcoming acknowledging the valuable contribution this session makes to participants overall understanding of children and young people living in care.

20. Designated Teacher Training.

One member of M.A.D. routinely co-facilitates Designated Teacher training sessions with the Virtual School Head Teacher. The input focuses on children and young people's views of education and their thoughts on how they can be best supported. The information uses local and national perspectives. In addition the M.A.D group wrote and produced a training DVD for use in teacher training. The DVD focusses on the young people's experiences of education whilst living in care, the difficulties they often face and the ways in which they were helped by teaching staff.

21. Social Work Students

M.A.D group members were invited by Liverpool John Moore's University to deliver a session to 1st year MA in Social Work students. Seven MAD group members delivered the session to 48 students and covered topics such as Corporate Parenting roles and responsibilities as well as a question and answer session. The session was extremely well received with one student commenting on how it had 'reinvigorated' her enthusiasm for social work and reminded her why she wanted to be a social worker.

Sefton Pledge to Children in Care.

1. The 'Pledge' was ratified at the inaugural meeting of the Sefton Corporate Parenting Board on the 6th of October, 2009 and is included within the Sefton Corporate Parenting Strategy.
2. Annual survey on Sefton Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers introduced in 2010. Survey outcomes are reported to Board. Board members agree areas for improvement and an action plan is developed. The action plan is then circulated to senior managers who report, directly to the Board, on progress made. The 2016 survey was sent to 345 children and young people aged 5yrs plus with a total of 91 (26%) completed forms returned.
3. Every report to the Corporate Parenting Board requires the author to state how they incorporate the Sefton Pledge into their work, how they engage with and involve looked after children and care leavers and examples of any feedback they have gathered in relation to the service and support they provide.

Ofsted Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers.

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Inspection findings

Sefton Corporate Parenting Board

"The corporate parenting board has appropriate oversight of important issues and the work of the board contributes to the improvement of outcomes for children looked after in Sefton. Chaired by the lead member and with membership from across the council and wider partnerships, including care leavers, it has been instrumental in setting up effective systems for monitoring children and young people looked after placed in Sefton and those from other areas, ensuring that they are safe and receiving appropriate services. Strong challenge from board members and especially the MAD group is evident. The annual survey in relation to the pledge for children who are looked after is an example of good practice because it is clear that children and young people are listened to and that action is taken as a result. An example is the development of an action plan to promote advocacy to children and young people after increasing numbers reported that they did not know about the service."

MAD Group, Participation and Involvement

"Participation and involvement of young people is a strength in Sefton and this is creating meaningful opportunities for young people to engage in strategic thinking and planning. The MAD group has strongly influenced actions in important areas and the group provides a range of training to foster carers and elected members. It exerts influence in most important strategic groups and planning forums. Moreover, its contribution is highly valued by senior leaders, staff and elected members"