



Leicester
City Council

WARDS AFFECTED
All Wards

FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:

Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee

2nd March 2010

CABINET

8th March 2010

FULL COUNCIL

25th March 2010

Corporate Parenting Annual Report

Report of the Strategic Director, Children

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To inform of developments around Corporate Parenting

2. Recommendations (or OPTIONS)

- 2.1. That Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee notes the contents of the report and makes any recommendations to Cabinet.
- 2.2. That Cabinet agrees that new Corporate Parenting briefings will be arranged on a six monthly basis, and will comprise 'beginner' sessions and 'refresher' sessions for members who have attended previous briefings.
- 2.3. That Cabinet recommends to Council an approach whereby the Party Groups are asked to demonstrate their commitment to Corporate Parenting by agreeing to compulsory training for all elected Members as set out in 4.7, coupled with more specific training for Members with additional responsibilities.
- 2.4. That Cabinet agrees the revised reporting and communication regime as outlined in the terms of reference.
- 2.5. That Cabinet notes the updated terms of reference and the need for increased representation.
- 2.6. That Cabinet agrees that the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council are invited to one Corporate Parenting Forum per year.
- 2.7. That Cabinet agrees to "Corporate Parenting" being added as an implication to all reports.
- 2.8. That Council notes the progress in embedding Corporate Parenting across the City Council and supports the recommendation set out at paragraph 2.3 above.

3. Summary

- 3.1. There are approximately 475 children and young people in the care of Leicester City Council.
- 3.2. Councillors and Officers are all responsible for ensuring that the council acts as the “corporate parent” for all the children in its care. The role of corporate parent is to seek for the children in public care the outcomes that every good parent would want for their own children.
- 3.3. The Corporate Parenting Forum has met every 2 months since March 2006. The main purposes of the Forum meetings are to:
 - inform Councillors and Officers of the issues for children in care and their Carers
 - look for areas of commonality where cross Departmental efforts can improve outcomes for children in care.
- 3.4. The Lead Member for Children and Schools, Councillor Dempster, chairs the Forum. The Strategic Director for Children Rachel Dickinson is vice-chair and she attends with a range of senior officers from across the Council. The Forum has representation from partnership agencies such as Connexions and Leicestershire Cares.
- 3.5. It is important that all political parties are represented on the Forum to ensure that the corporate parenting initiative is not associated with any one political party.
- 3.6. At present a Participation and Rights Officer presents the views of young people on the Forum. Further developments in this area are detailed in the full report.
- 3.7. Briefings for Councillors on Corporate Parenting are delivered on two occasions every year.
- 3.8. The Corporate Parenting Forum has agreed updated terms of reference, and these are attached at Appendix 1.

4. Report

Developments in Corporate Parenting

4.1. Introduction

- 4.1.1 There are currently 475 children and young people in the care of Leicester City Council.
- 4.1.2 Under the Children Act 1989, a child is looked after by a local authority if he or she is in their care or is provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours by the authority. In legislation and guidance they may be referred to as looked after children (LAC) or children in care (CiC). They fall into 4 main groups:

- children who are accommodated under a voluntary agreement with their parents (section 20)
- children who are the subject of a care order (Section 31) or interim care order (Section 38)
- children who are the subject of emergency orders for their protection (Section 44 and 46)
- children who are compulsorily accommodated. This includes children remanded to the local authority or subject to a criminal justice supervision order with a residence requirement. (Section 21).

4.1.3 For most children, care is intended to be time limited with the aim of returning home as soon as possible. Although there are many reasons why children are looked after by local authorities, they are all likely to have undergone distressing experiences. All children who are looked after have distinct backgrounds, identities, aspirations and particular needs. A common misconception about children in care is that they are there because they have done something wrong. This is untrue. The overwhelming majority of children in care (over 90% locally) are there because of family pressures and problems or because they have experienced abuse or neglect. Only one percent of children enter care because of their own behaviour.

4.1.4 Many children in our care (70%) are subject to care orders. This figure has remained fairly constant for some time. This means that the local authority has gone to court to assume parental responsibility because the child has suffered or is likely to suffer 'significant harm'.

4.1.5 Although children on care orders can live with a parent, most are cared for away from their families, in foster placements (75%) or residential children's homes (9%).

4.2 Beacon Status Award for Care Matters: Improving the Outcomes for Children in Care

4.2.1 Children & Young Peoples Services Department applied for Beacon Status in June 2007, on the theme of "Care Matters: improving the outcomes for children in care". The application form highlighted three main areas where Leicester City can rightfully be proud of the developments that continue to impact positively on outcomes for the children in our care:

- Corporate Parenting and links with the private sector
- Innovative Services that improve educational outcomes
- Participation by children in care in Service design and delivery

4.2.2 Leicester City Council was awarded Beacon status for Care Matters on 4th March 2008, and the Beacon 'year' ended in June 2009. Being a Beacon Authority has been a challenge and hard work, but we have had a high national profile at a number of events and conferences, including GOEM, LGA, Westminster Briefings, IDeA briefings for Lead Members, CAPITA and LGC conferences. Leicester City Council is regarded as a beacon of good practice in relation to Corporate Parenting.

4.2.3 A key outcome of being a Beacon Authority is to have a 'legacy product'. In Leicester we are using some of the reward money to fund a 'care-experienced' Project Worker

post that will be the key link between officers, members and children in care. This worker is taking up his post on 1st February 2010.

4.3 Corporate Parenting

- 4.3.1 Councillors and Officers are all responsible for ensuring that the council acts as the “corporate parent” for all the children in its care. The role of corporate parent is to seek for the children in public care the outcomes that every good parent would want for their own children.
- 4.3.2 These outcomes should encompass their education, their health and welfare, what they do in their leisure time and holidays, how they celebrate their culture and how they receive praise and encouragement for their achievements.
- 4.3.3 The corporate parenting responsibility is towards children looked after by Leicester City Council. However, it is important to bear in mind that it is not just social care services that impact on these children. Section 27 of the Children Act 1989 places a duty on health, housing and education authorities to assist social care services in carrying out their functions under the Act – this includes assisting in their corporate parenting function.
- 4.3.4 The council as a whole is the “corporate parent”; therefore all councillors, in addition to their specialist portfolio responsibilities and ward representation duties, share a corporate responsibility for the children in Leicester City’s care.

4.4 Corporate Parenting Forum meetings

- 4.4.1 The Corporate Parenting Forum has met every 2 months since March 2006. The main purposes of the Forum meetings are to:
 - inform Councillors and Officers of the issues for children in care and their Carers
 - look for opportunities to support children and young people in care and their carers through cross Departmental efforts to improve outcomes.
- 4.4.2 From the outset Forum participants agreed to:
 - raise the profile of Looked After Children and their Carers, and to act as champions for the needs and rights of Looked after Children in their respective Service areas and Political groups
 - engage with children and young people in a meaningful way, and offer them a genuine opportunity to contribute to the work of the Forum
 - accept that being an effective parent is a continuous supportive process, and being an effective Corporate Parent isn’t just about attending the Forum meetings every 2 months. Being an advocate for Looked After Children and their carers in the context of Forum membership requires sustained involvement in the activities and awareness raising opportunities associated with them.

4.4.3 More detailed aims of the group are included in the terms of reference document at **Appendix 1**.

4.5 Representation on the Forum

4.5.1 Cabinet Lead Member for Children and Schools, Councillor Dempster, chairs the Forum. Rachel Dickinson (Strategic Director, Children) is the groups co-chair. Interim Children's Services Director Andy Smith attends with a range of senior officers from across the Council.

4.5.2 The Forum intends to revisit the membership of the group to better reflect the One Leicester priorities, and ensure sufficient representation from across all key services in the Council. Members need to be of a sufficient seniority to be able to offer their Services' involvement and commit resources to support children and young people in care and their carers.

4.5.3 The Forum has representation from partnership agencies such as Connexions and Leicestershire Cares. Membership has now been increased to include a representative from the Leicester Foster Carers Association, Health, and the Delivering Excellence Team.

4.5.4 It is important that all political parties are represented on the Forum to ensure that the corporate parenting initiative is not associated with any one political party.

4.6 Support for Corporate Parenting Forum Members

4.6.1 Forum meetings are structured in such a way as to provide Forum members with the latest developments in legislation, research, policy and practice as they relate to children in care.

4.6.2 Forum members are also invited to training events, workshops, and conferences related to the subject of children in care to enable them to remain engaged with the issues.

4.7 Support for Elected Members

4.7.1 Briefings for members are held on a six monthly basis. The purpose of the briefing is to raise awareness amongst all Councillors of their Corporate Parenting responsibilities. The purposes of the briefings have been to:

- share some headline demographic data about the care population
- introduce Councillors to the issues for children in care
- encourage Councillors to act as a member of the Forum.

4.7.2 There are plans to further adapt these briefings by using the toolkit produced by the National Children's Bureau entitled "Putting Corporate Parenting into Practice".

4.8 Involvement by Children and Young People in care and Children in Care Council

- 4.8.1 The voice of Looked after Children and Care Leavers is provided through the work of “Stand Up Speak Out”, the Looked After Young Peoples Participation Group. Under the heading “What Looked After Children want”, the group requested a list of outcomes from the Forum. The list included issues around: Health/Lifestyle, Education, Placements, Finance, Cultural Needs, Information/Communication and Belonging. These have been incorporated into the Work Programme for the Forum.
- 4.8.2 At present a Participation and Rights Officer presents the views of Young people on the Forum. A Project Worker post has recently been created (see 4.2.3). His role as a former looked after child will provide a crucial link with young people, and together they will develop the Pledge for Children in Care alongside the Children in Care Council. Children and young people in care were invited to an event on 19th August to launch the Children in Care Council. From this we have a range of young people who have volunteered to meet regularly to develop their Council. They have met twice so far to scope out the Terms of Reference for the Council and to start some preliminary work on the Pledge.

4.9 Progress on Corporate Parenting

- 4.9.1 As a result of a range of initiatives both within the Council and in partnership with the private sector, looked after children have improved outcomes in the following areas:
- i) Through a partnership with our local Business in the Community initiative, *Leicestershire Cares*, opportunities have been given to looked after children and care leavers to undertake 4 week work experience placements with companies in the private sector. This is in addition to apprenticeships in the city council. This has resulted in more care leavers moving into further education, training and employment.
 - ii) A high number of children and young people in care and their foster carers, and/or carers enjoying a range of free leisure activities, impacting positively on their health, wellbeing, self confidence and helping them become active members of their communities. This includes:
 - Free Leisure opportunities are accessible to children in care and their carers
 - Free Bicycles and associated training.
 - Free gym and swim memberships for young people in care aged 16 and over
 - Free swimming and lessons are being accessed not only by children in care, but by their Carers and their families.
 - Tickets for children in care & Carers civic events and festivals, and to certain De Montfort hall shows
 - Tickets for rugby games at the Tigers

4.10 Governance arrangements

- 4.10.1 There are clear and robust inter-agency governance arrangements in place, which build on a long tradition of strategic partnership to drive the improvement of services for children in care in Leicester:
- Outcome indicators for children in care are included in the Local Area Agreement

- The Children's Trust Board is one of the four Local Area Agreement delivery partnerships of the Leicester Partnership. It is chaired by the Council's Strategic Director, Children and governs the city's integrated children's services arrangements. Children in care are recognised as a priority group by the Children's Trust Board.
- There are five thematic groups sitting beneath the partnership arrangements to ensure that identified need is understood, priorities are set and that performance monitoring is rigorous and robust. These groups follow the thematic areas within Every Child Matters and include Staying Safe, Being Healthy, Enjoy and Achieve, Positive Contribution and Economic Wellbeing. Children in care are prioritised as a cross cutting theme across all of these groups, and in the Children and Young Peoples Plan the groups are working to.
- The core responsibility for providing good quality care and support is located with the Social Care and Safeguarding Division under the Investing in Our Children Priority.
- Reporting arrangements are included in the revised terms of reference and set out an annual process for disseminating information throughout the structures of the City Council.

4.11 Current Performance

4.11.1 We are measured in relation to outcomes for LAC in a number of areas through Performance Indicators. The Fostering and Adoption service are both subject to regular Inspections as are the Local Authority Children's Community homes.

Leicester City Council Fostering Service (February 2008) is rated as 'Outstanding'. The Adoption Service has been rated as 'Satisfactory', largely due to circumstances associated with the county side of the joint arrangement. Leicester City Council has 2 children's homes that are rated as "Outstanding" by OFSTED and the other 3 are good with outstanding areas.

4.11.2 In summary, Leicester City Council continues to perform well across a range of measures. The main challenge in relation to performance is NI 101, Children in care achieving 5 A*-C GCSEs (or equivalent) at Key Stage 4 (including English and Maths). The Forum has recently received a report on the steps being taken to address this challenge.

4.11.3 Although there is evidence of improvements in performance in respect of LAC, the Council cannot be complacent. Ongoing vigilance is required to ensure high standards are maintained and improved upon.

5. FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1. Financial Implications

5.1.1. There are no significant new financial implications arising from this report. However, Members may wish to note that the Beacon reward funding of £73,170 is being spent to engage a project worker for a year from February 2010 and also on the recent Celebrating Success event; and that opportunities and benefits for our children and young people are being developed under the title of the "Flying Fish Project" - to which

the Council has agreed to contribute £10k in 2010/11 from the CareMatters funding (in the Area Based Grant), to support the project in the interim until it secures other grant monies in the following financial year. - Colin Sharpe, Head of Finance and Efficiency CYPS, ext. 29 7750

5.2. Legal Implications

5.2.1. With the express support of the Party Groups, training for existing and newly elected Members on their Corporate Parenting responsibilities can be made compulsory. Currently the only statutory prerequisite for mandatory training occurs within the Planning Committee; however the endorsement, by their political groups, of a parallel approach for all Members in relation to Corporate Parenting would reinforce the commitment of the Authority to taking this obligation seriously. (Kamal Adatia, Barrister, ext 7044).

6. Other Implications

OTHER IMPLICATIONS	YES/NO	Paragraph References Within Supporting information
Equal Opportunities	N	
Policy	Y	3.1- 3.8
Sustainable and Environmental	N	
Crime and Disorder	N	
Human Rights Act	N	
Elderly/People on Low Income	N	

7. Report Authors

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Key Decision	No
Reason	N/A
Appeared in Forward Plan	N/A
Executive or Council Decision	Executive (Cabinet)



Corporate Parenting Forum

Terms of Reference

'The role of the corporate parent is to seek for the children in public care the outcomes that every parent would want for their children'

Aims and Principles

The Corporate Parenting Forum is one means by which member involvement and commitment can be secured, to deliver better outcomes for Looked After Children.

The main aim of the Forum is to oversee and ensure that Leicester City Council has provided the following for children and young people in its care:

- Warm, welcoming and safe accommodation, a place to call home.
- Good quality care, nurturing supportive and meaningful relationships that encourage the growth of self-esteem, confidence and resilience; enabling young people to cope with change and difficult times
- The highest standard of education; wherever possible in mainstream schools
- Opportunities and encouragement for self-development and keeping fit and healthy
- Opportunities for the transition to work, including open days and work placements
- Assistance with the transition, where possible, from being in Care to being looked after by family
- Support with the transition from care to looking after themselves
- Placement stability that will avoid disruption and maintain continuity of care, education placements and relationships
- Support for families to enable Looked After Children to leave care and return to their families

To achieve this, the Forum agrees to:

- listen to the views of looked after children, young people and their carers, and to involve them in the development and assessment of services
- encourage Looked After Children to become active citizens and offer them new opportunities which are enjoyable and fun.

Meetings and Membership

The Corporate Parent Forum will meet every two months. The agenda and minutes will be circulated prior to the meeting.

The Forum will be chaired by the Lead Member for Children and the vice-chair will be the Director of Children's Services. Lead Officer will be the Head of Service (Resources), Social Care and Safeguarding.

Membership consists of :

- Senior representatives of all strategic directorates of the Council.
- Cross-party representation of Councillors
- Representative from Leicestershire Cares
- Representative from Health Services
- Representative from Connexions
- Representative from Leicester Foster Carers Association
- Representative from the Delivering Excellence Team
- Project Worker for Looked After Children

Corporate Parent Forum members agree to take into account the needs of Looked After Children at every opportunity and will champion the needs of this group in their respective service settings.

Corporate Parent Forum meetings will be themed around the five Every Child Matters outcomes.

Governance

Corporate Parent Forum will report annually to:

- Strategic Board (formerly Corporate Directors board)
- Children's Trust (formerly C&YP Partnership)
- Leicester Partnership
- OSMB

- Cabinet
- Full Council
- Children in Care Council (in an easily readable format)

Corporate Parent Forum will invite the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council to one meeting per year.

The Safeguarding Panel is an integral element of corporate parenting and one of the mechanisms by which councillors fulfil their responsibilities.

Corporate Parenting principles must be integral to the Children and Young People's Plan.

Views of Children

The views and comments of children will be represented by the Project Worker for Looked After Children.

The Corporate Parent Forum will feedback to children and young people through the Project Officer and by attendance, when invited, to relevant forums such as the Children in Care Council and Stand up Speak Out.

Involvement of Elected Members

Corporate Parenting is non-political and relies on cross party commitment.

Members who are also on the Safeguarding Panel must have regular Criminal Records Bureau checks.

Members will raise the profile of Looked After Children in their respective service areas and political groups and settings.

Members will be invited to the annual Celebrating Success event.

Duties of Officers and co-opted Forum attenders

To raise the profile of Looked After Children and their Carers, and to act as champions for the needs and rights of Looked after Children in their respective Service areas.

To prioritise the needs of Looked After Children and their carers.

To be creative and flexible in meeting the needs of Looked After Children.

To identify resources for Corporate Parenting and use these to good effect.

August 2009