



Leicester
City Council

WARDS AFFECTED
All Wards

FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:
OSMB
CABINET

11th October 2007
26th November 2007

Developments in Corporate Parenting

Report of the Corporate Director, Children and Young People's Services

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To inform of developments around Corporate Parenting

2. Summary

2.1 There are 441 children and young people in the care of Leicester City Council.

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.

2.3 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.

2.4 Lead Member for Children and Schools, Councillor Dempster chairs the Forum. Children's Services Director Sheila Lock attends with a range of senior officers from every Department in the Council. The Forum has representation from partnership agencies such as Connexions and Leicestershire Cares.

2.5 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.

2.6 At present a Participation and Rights Officer presents the views of Young people on the Forum. Efforts are underway to enable young people to attend the Forum meetings and contribute for themselves. The Lead Member and Director of Children's Services will meet with the group during the Summer holiday period to see how this can best be achieved.

- 2.7 A briefing for Councillors on Corporate Parenting was delivered on 19th June, and more briefings are planned for 25th October 2007.
- 2.8 Progress has been made across a range of issues in the first 16 months of the Forums business, both across Council departments and with partner agencies.
- 2.9 On June 21st 2007 the Government published the White Paper "*Care Matters: Time for Change*" which set out the steps the new Department for Children, Schools and Families will take, together with local delivery partners, to improve outcomes for children and young people in care.
- 2.10 The White Paper contains 122 proposals, and a Care Matters Implementation Group is to be formed to guide the local implementation. The group will meet for the first time in early October 2007.
- 2.11 Children & Young Peoples Services Department applied to the Improvement & Development Agency for Beacon Status in June 2007, on the theme of "Care Matters: improving the outcomes for children in care". The application form highlights 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
- 2.12 The council will be notified on 8th October 2007 whether or not the application has been successful.

3. Recommendations (or OPTIONS)

- 3.1 That Cabinet & OSMD note the progress made towards developing Corporate Parenting across the City Council
- 3.2 That Cabinet & OSMB recommends that all political parties engage with and are represented on the Corporate Parenting Forum.
- 3.3 That a report on all aspects of Corporate Parenting be considered on a quarterly basis.
- 3.4 That OSMB receives a progress report at a future meeting highlighting the developments arising from the White Paper on Children in Care.

4. Report

Developments in Corporate Parenting

4.1.1. Introduction

There are 441 children and young people in the care of Leicester City Council.

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).

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.

Many children in our care (75%) are subject to care orders. 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'.

Although children on care orders can live with a parent, most are cared for away from their families, in foster placements (69%) or children's homes (11%).

4.1.2 Corporate Parenting

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.

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.

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.

The council as a whole is the “corporate parent”, therefore all councilors, in addition to their specialist portfolio responsibilities and ward representation duties, has a basic level of responsibility for the children in Leicester City’s care.

4.1.3 Corporate Parenting Forum meetings

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 LAC.

From the outset Forum participants agreed to:

- raise the profile of Looked After Children (LAC) 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

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

The format of the meeting is shaped around three main elements:

- A presentation and discussion on a themed topic that is based on a section from the DfES/LGIU’s document “If this were my child....”(The Councillors’ Guide to being a good Corporate Parent).
- Progress on the Forum’s own work programme
- Developments arising from the White Paper “Care Matters: Time for Change”.

4.1.4 Representation on the Forum

Lead Member for Children and Schools, Councillor Dempster chairs the Forum. Children’s Services Director Sheila Lock attends with a range of senior officers from every Department in the Council. The Forum has representation from partnership agencies such as Connexions and Leicestershire Cares.

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.

4.1.5 Support for Corporate Parenting Forum Members

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.

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.

4.1.6 Support for Elected Members

Following the elections in May 2007, a briefing was held on 19th June for all members to raise awareness amongst all Councillors of their Corporate Parenting responsibilities. The purposes of the briefing were to:

- share some headline demographic data about the care population
- introduce Councillors to the issues for children in care
- encourage Councillors to act as their Party's representative on the Forum.

More briefings for Councillors are planned for 25th October 2007.

4.1.7 Involvement by Children and Young People in care

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.

At present a Participation and Rights Officer presents the views of Young people on the Forum. Efforts are underway to enable young people to attend the Forum meetings and contribute for themselves. The Lead Member and Director of Children's Services will meet with the group during the Summer holiday period to see how this can best be achieved.

4.1.8 Work Programme Progress

Progress has been made across a range of issues in the first 16 months of the Forums business, including:

- Through a Partnership with our local Business in the Community initiative, *Leicestershire Cares*, opportunities and benefits for our children and young people are being developed under the title of the Flying Fish Project. Early work from the Project has concentrated on:
 - Sponsoring a Rewarding Achievement Dinner for those who have passed exams
 - Identifying sources of sponsorship to support awards ceremonies and corporate parenting activities

- Developing a network of local employers who are willing to support our children, to give them a taste of the world of work on a 4 week mentored work placement
- Free Leisure opportunities are accessible to children in care and their carers
- Sports Services now offer 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.
- Colleagues in Regeneration and Culture provide free tickets for children in care & Carers civic events and festivals, and to certain De Montfort hall shows
- Computer stocks in care placements have been replaced/upgraded
- A drop-in Centre for children in care to meet and call their own has been opened for children in care at Mansion House in the City.

4.1.9 Governance arrangements

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
- Leicester Children and Young Peoples' Strategic Partnership (LCYPSP) is one of the four Local Area Agreement delivery partnerships of the Leicester Partnership. It is chaired by the Council's Director of Children and Young People's Services and governs the city's integrated children's services arrangements. Children in care are recognised as a priority group by LCYPSP.
- The Joint Commissioning Board (JCB) has operational responsibility for the pooling of resources against priorities contained within the plan, one of which is children in care. The JCB also has a vital role to play in the overall co-ordination and planning of services, looking for opportunities for better integration and streamlining where there is evidence that to do so would improve outcomes.
- 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 within C&YPS. Children in care feature as one of the Divisions three core Continuous Development Priorities.

4.1.10 Care Matters

On 9th October 2006 the Government published the green paper "*Care Matters: Transforming the Lives of Children and Young People in Care*" which set out a radical package of proposals for transforming the lives of children in care. The paper stated that although outcomes for these children have improved, they have not kept pace with other children. The Green Paper set out policies for consultation, to ensure earlier interventions and support for families where children are on the edge of care. It went on to include proposals to strengthen the 'corporate parenting' role of local authorities; create high quality placements which meet children's needs; ensure a first class education; a positive life outside school; and support for transition into

adulthood. Four working groups were convened by central government to investigate best practice in supporting those in care.

On April 17th 2007, Beverley Hughes, Minister for Children and Families, published “*Care Matters: Consultation Responses*”, which represented the views of more than 2,000 frontline staff, managers, groups representing children and children themselves in response to the Care Matters Green Paper.

Building on the green paper and the responses to it, as well as the concluding reports from the four working groups, on June 21st 2007 the Government published the White Paper “*Care Matters: Time for Change*” which set out the steps the new Department for Children, Schools and Families will take, together with local delivery partners, to improve outcomes for children and young people in care.

The White Paper covers the following areas:

- **Corporate parenting** – supporting local authorities and their partners in their corporate parenting role
- **Family and parenting support** – supporting children at home with their families where possible, focusing on early intervention to reduce the need for children to be taken into care
- **Care placements** – improving choice and the quality of placements, with an emphasis on providing greater stability for children in care and better enforcement of national standards for residential placements
- **Education** – measures to ensure children in care receive the best possible education tailored to their needs
- **Health and well-being** – improved partnership working to deliver better health outcomes, and proposals to enhance children and young people’s leisure time
- **Transition to adulthood** – ensuring young people have support as long as they need it
- **The role of the practitioner** – focusing on providing a child with a seamless, consistent service responsive to their needs
- **Next steps** – including the development of a detailed implementation plan later this year to take forward the White Paper’s proposals.

4.1.11 Implementing proposals from Care Matters: Time for Change

The White Paper contains 122 proposals, and implementation of these proposals will require prioritisation, strategic planning, co-ordination, resourcing and detailed implementation/action plans.

A Care Matters Implementation Group is to be formed with representation from across the Divisions within Children and Young Peoples Services, as well as partner agencies. The group will meet for the first time in early October 2007.

Given that services for children in care will be the subject of close scrutiny within the Joint Area Review (JAR) to be conducted in January 2008, the work of the Implementation Group will provide the opportunity for co-ordinated preparation ahead of the inspection.

4.1.12 Beacon Status Bid

The Beacon Scheme disseminates best practice in service delivery across local government. Government ministers select ten themes for each round of the scheme. The themes represent issues that are important in the day-to-day lives of the public and reflect key government priorities.

Beacon status is granted to those authorities that can demonstrate a clear vision, excellent services and a willingness to innovate within a theme. Awards are made by government ministers based on recommendations made by an independent advisory panel.

Authorities awarded Beacon status then enter a 'Beacon year', during which time the Improvement & Development Agency (IDeA) works with them to facilitate the sharing of good practice through a series of learning activities.

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 highlights 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

The council will be notified on 8th October 2007 whether or not the application has been successful. In the event that it has, Assessors will visit the Council in November 2007 to look further at the evidence underpinning the application, followed by a formal presentation to a panel in January 2008

The national focus on services for children in care arising from the Care Matters: Time for Change White paper would mean that whichever authority/authorities were successful in achieving Beacon status would be instrumental in raising awareness of good practice.

Beacon status can have a positive impact on staff morale and raise the profile of a council nationally. It can also have a positive impact on how local people view their council and its employees. Additionally, achieving beacon status can help to encourage recruitment and retention, and provide an opportunity for dialogue with central government.

5. FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1. Financial Implications

Whilst there are no specific financial implications involved in this report, the financial and resource implications for Care Matters: Time for Change will become clearer over the coming months, as will the detail of the additional resources promised by the Government for local authorities to implement Care Matters.

5.2 Legal Implications

Whilst 'Care Matters: Time for Change' will lead to new legislation and to significant changes to the legal accountability for the way in which services to children are assessed and delivered, there are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

6. Other Implications

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

7. Background Papers – Local Government Act 1972

7.1 None

8. Consultations

8.1 None

9. Report Authors

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DECISION STATUS

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Key Decision | Yes |
| Reason | Significant effect on one or more wards |
| Appeared in Forward Plan | Yes |
| Executive or Council Decision | Executive (Cabinet) |

Appendix A

Corporate Parenting Forum **Terms of Reference**

1. To secure member involvement and commitment throughout the council, to deliver better outcomes for Looked After Children
2. To ensure that Leicester City Council has provided the following for children and young people in its care:
3.
 - 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
4. 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 and settings
5. Clarify the lines of Accountability and reporting from the Forum group
6. To make a commitment to prioritising the needs of Looked After Children and their carers
7. To provide clear strategic direction in relation to Corporate Parenting
8. To have the ambition to raise the standards of core services
9. To promote achievement and help to build (and meet) aspirations by supporting the Celebrating Success Awards ceremonies.
10. 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.

11. To encourage Looked After Children to become active citizens and offer them new opportunities which are enjoyable and fun.
12. To be creative and flexible in meeting the needs of Looked After Children.
13. To monitor the Council's provision for Looked After Children
14. Co-ordinating information gathering and research and ensuring that reporting systems are in place which reflect the qualities of services for Looked After Children
15. Commissioning Working groups and activity arising from Corporate Parenting forum meetings
16. To identify resources for Corporate Parenting and use these to good effect
17. To oversee the provision of work placements and apprenticeships for Looked After Children by the City Council.
17. To identify best practice in other Councils, and to import these ideas as appropriate.