

Executive Decision Report

CORPORATE PARENTING ANNUAL REPORT 2012/13

Decision to be taken by: City Mayor & Executive

Decision to be taken: November 2013

Lead Director: Elaine McHale, Strategic Director

Education and Children's Department

CYP Scrutiny Commission: 17th September 2013

Council: 21st November 2013



City Mayor

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: all
- Report author: Cheriell O'Neill, Head of Service, Looked After Children
Andy Smith, Director, Children's Social Care & Safeguarding
- Author contact details: 0116 2565213 / 0116 2528306
- Report version number: 1

1. Summary

This annual report provides an overview of progress made by Leicester City's Corporate Parenting Forum over the last 12 months. This report informs on the achievements, developments and challenges for the Corporate Parenting Forum and how the work of the forum directly impacts on the outcomes for Looked After Children and Care Leavers. (Appendix 1)

Looked After Children (LAC) are children and young people in public care. LAC are the collective responsibility of all Council Officers, Elected Members and partners. Corporate Parenting requirements constitute the formal and local partnerships needed between all departments in the local authority, associated agencies and all responsible for working together to meet the needs of LAC.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. The Executive notes the contents of the report and continues to support the business of the Corporate Parenting Forum.
- 2.2. The Executive agrees the reporting and communication regime as outlined in The revised terms of reference.
- 2.3. The Executive notes the revised Terms of Reference and the need for continued representation. (Appendix 2)
- 2.4. The Executive agrees that the City Mayor is invited to one Corporate Parenting Forum per year (noting that the City Mayor attended in April 2013).

3. Supporting information including options considered:

Responsibility for ensuring positive outcomes and life opportunities for LAC rests with the City Council and partner agencies. The Corporate Parenting Forum is the accountable body for ensuring positive progress is made for LAC, that the activities promoting progress encompass education, health and welfare, leisure and holidays activities and celebrating culture, ethnicity and diversity. The Corporate Parenting Forum endorses the statements in the Children's Pledge and aims to ensure the quality of services fulfil the City Councils promise to Looked After Children The Corporate Parenting Forum also ensures that praise and encouragement is given and achievements are recognised and celebrated.

Over the past year the Corporate Parenting Forum has continued to meet every 2 months. The forum is chaired by The Assistant Mayor for Children, Young People and Schools, Councillor Dempster. The Strategic Director for Children Elaine McHale is vice-chair. The forum has representation from the Children in Care Council, Elected Members, and Senior Officers from across the council divisions, Local Partnerships, Connexions, Foster Carers and Health.

Over the past 12 months significant changes have been made to strengthen the role and accountability of the forum in ensuring the quality of care to LAC. These include:

- Continued governance and ownership of the operational services through a newly formed Corporate Parenting Executive;
- Review of the Children's Pledge;
- The inclusion of LAC in service design, quality assurance and strategic planning;
- Improved opportunities for Care Leavers, through the Ypod project and Way Ahead project.

The achievements of the Corporate Parenting Forum, Work of the Corporate Parenting Executive, Children In Care Council and Pledge are detailed in appendix one. These include:

- Comprehensive review of the Pledge for Children in Care involving a good representation of all looked after children;
- Positive Ofsted inspection of the Adoption Service where the service was judged 'good';
- Improvement in the timescale for adoption;
- Implementation of the Accommodation Standards for Care Leavers and the commencement of a Quality Assurance process;
- Introduction of a Quality Assurance process for Children and Young People placed in external provision;
- 15 Care Leavers who will be supported through the training to access the Mayor's opportunity of apprenticeships;
- Implementation of a new Remand Framework.

The priorities for the forum in the coming year are:

- Reducing the number of teenage pregnancies in the looked after children population including work with LAC young men;
- Raise the profile of independent providers regarding LAC who are at risk of missing from care/or at risk of child sexual exploitation;
- Coordinated work to ensure that care proceedings for LAC are completed within 26 weeks and decisions made around permanence including adoption are made in a timely way;
- Coordinate work to maximise placement stability for LAC;
- Implementation of the Care Leavers Charter;
- Reduce placement expenditure whilst ensuring quality of provision;
- Work with the Children in Care Council on continual improvement of services including engaging with all LAC in care about how safe they feel, and are, in the care system; including children placed in externally commissioned placements;
- Reduce the numbers of care leavers not in education, employment or training and build on the successful work already undertaken in securing care leavers in apprenticeships across the City Council;

- To ensure all Council departments contribute to improving the quality of service and outcomes for LAC through direct service provision.

4. Details of Scrutiny

All services for looked after children are subject to external scrutiny and inspection by Ofsted.

5. Financial, legal and other implications

5.1 Financial implications

There are no financial implications arising from this report.
Martin Judson, Financial Services ext 39 7500

5.2 Legal implications

There are no direct legal implications arising from the report.
Pretty Patel, Principal Lawyer (Social Care & Safeguarding) ext: 37 1457

5.3 Climate Change and Carbon Reduction implications

There are no climate change implications associated with this report.
Mark Jeffcote, Environment Team ext: 37 2251

5.4 Other Implications (You will need to have considered other implications in preparing this report. Please indicate which ones apply?)

None

6. Background information and other papers:

7. Summary of appendices:

Appendix 1: Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2013/1

Appendix 2: Revised Terms of Reference

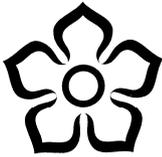
8. Is this a private report (If so, please indicated the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?

No

9. Is this a “key decision”?

Yes

10. If a key decision please explain reason



Leicester
City Council

APPENDIX 1

Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2012/13

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 This annual report provides an overview of the progress made by Leicester City's Corporate Parenting forum over the last 12 months. This report informs on the achievements, developments and challenges of the Corporate Parenting Forum and how the work of the forum directly impacts on the outcomes for Looked After Children and Care Leavers.

1.2 Looked After Children (LAC) are Children and Young People in Public Care. LAC are the collective responsibility of all Council Officers, Elected Members and partners. Corporate Parenting requirements constitute the formal and local partnerships needed between all departments in the local authority, associated agencies and all responsible for working together to meet the needs of LAC. The council requires officers to think about how their work contributes to improving outcomes for LAC. The role of corporate parent is to seek for LAC the outcomes that every good parent would want for their own children.

1.3 The Corporate Parenting Forum has been provides a focal point for the interests of LAC and Care Leavers in Leicester, the forum acts as a representative body for elected members in terms of their role as corporate parents.

2. Report

2.1. Background

Over the past 12 months there has been between 510 and 526 LAC within Leicester City Council. This has remained consistent. (This means care for more than 24 hours by the authority). 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).

2.2 Remand framework

There is now a new provision in the Legal Aid and Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act (LASPO). The Act requires that from December 2012, all under 18's who have been remanded must be supported by local authorities as Looked After Children. This will lead to an additional responsibility for local authorities.

Locally process and practice is being developed to ensure children remanded receive looked after support from Social Care and Safeguarding and additional support if they are eligible for leaving care status.

2.3 CORPORATE PARENTING FORUM

Responsibility for ensuring positive outcomes and life opportunities for LAC rests with the City Council and partner agencies. The Corporate Parenting Forum is the accountable body for ensuring positive progress is made for LAC, that the activities promoting progress encompass education, health and welfare, leisure and holidays activities and celebrating culture, ethnicity and diversity. The Corporate Parenting Forum endorses the statements in the Children's Pledge and aims to ensure the quality of services fulfil the city councils promise to Looked After Children. The Corporate Parenting Forum also ensures that praise and encouragement is given and achievements are recognised and celebrated.

Over the past year the Corporate Parenting Forum has continued to meet every 2 months. The forum is chaired by the Assistant Mayor for Children, young people and Schools, Councillor Dempster. The Strategic Director for Children, Elaine McHale, is vice-chair. The forum has representation from the Children in Care Council, Elected Members, and Senior Officers from across the council divisions, Local Partnerships and Foster Carers.

2.3.1 Representation and Support

The Corporate Parenting Forum relies on the involvement and commitment of elected members, senior officers across the council, Foster Carers and young people. It is expected that all members of the forum will raise the profile of Looked After Children in their respective areas, political forums and settings.

It is expected that Elected Members on the Forum will have participated in the dedicated training events for members relating to Corporate Parenting, Looked After Children and Safeguarding.

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 LAC.

LAC and Care Leavers views are represented through the dedicated LAC Project Worker and Children in Care Council and the Looked After Young Peoples Participation Group and the Children's Pledge incorporated into the work programme for the Forum.

2.4 Corporate Parenting Executive

The priorities of the Forum are supported through the Corporate Parenting Executive.

The Corporate Parenting Executive is chaired by the Director, Children's Social Care & Safeguarding. Membership includes senior officers in Children's, Adults and Cultural services and is responsible driving forward the business of the Corporate Parenting Forum. Officers take lead responsibility for all decisions and action identified through the Forum and these are monitored and /or implemented through the executive. The work plan for the executive is set through priorities agreed at the Forum. These have been consolidated into an action plan. Updates of progress are a standing agenda item for the Corporate Parenting forum.

2.5 ACHIEVEMENTS 2012/13

There has been one Ofsted inspection over this year relating to Looked After Children.

In June the Adoption Service received the three yearly inspections. This was the first inspection since disaggregation. Previously under the joint arrangements the judgement had been Adequate. The outcome for Leicester as a single Adoption Agency was judged as Good.

Earlier this year Ofsted undertook a thematic evaluation of the effectiveness of the independent reviewing services. The report was published in June 2013.

Other achievements include:

- Comprehensive review of the Pledge for Children in Care involving a good representation of all looked after children;
- Positive Ofsted inspection of the Adoption Service where the service was judged 'good';
- Improvement in the timescale for adoption;
- Implementation of the Accommodation Standards for Care Leavers and the commencement of a Quality Assurance process;
- Introduction of a Quality Assurance process for Children and Young People placed in external provision;
- 15 Care Leavers who will be supported through the training to access the Mayor's opportunity of apprenticeships;
- Implementation of a new Remand Framework.

There have been improved partnership working between Social Care and Police leading to improved processes responses to Children who go missing. Missing from care/home reports are presented to the Children's Safeguarding Panel on a 6 monthly.

Arrangements for providing supervised contact for children in care have greatly improved. The completion of the organisational review has led to improvements in the quality contact to children and families across the city. This is evidenced through the number of commendations received from parents experiencing the service.

2.6 Children's Pledge / Children In Care Council

2.6.1 Contribution written from CICC

In 2012 the Children in Care Council (CICC) primary responsibilities were to consult wider with LAC about their views/ experiences of the services and care that they receive in order for judgements to be made about how well the Pledge for LAC was working. All of the activity for 2012 assisted the CICC and the Forum to review the Pledge in October 2012 of which an Annual Report was written and presented to the Forum.

In 2012 the Children in Care Council:

- held 3 locality meetings across areas of Leicester to meet with LAC aged 11+ years to gain their views on their care/services they receive, focussing on 'Coming into care and Getting it right at the start' / 'Staying in Care' (Permanency) / Leaving Care at any point;
- held an event for younger LAC aged under 10 years of age at the Curve Theatre as an interactive and creative way of gaining their views on how they are looked after in a child friendly way by means of a story line of Lester Bears picnic;
- produced the Film, 'You Promised – We Asked'; a comical and thought provoking film acted by the CICC incorporating the views of LAC gained at the events across the year to illustrate how well they felt the Pledge was working and areas for development . This Film has been widely shown across the Council;
- completed an Annual Review of the Pledge held at the Peepul Centre in October 2012 where CP Forum/Members /Ward Councillors attended as an interactive event hosted by the CICC as presenters, table top discussion and a re- created Question Time Panel of CICC/ Senior Officers having questions put to them by LAC. The final part of this event were the Pledge Manifestos by the Lead Member and Service Director /Head of Service for Child Care Teams as a promise as to what they would do throughout 2013 to improve services for LAC. The Annual Review of the Pledge Report details the findings of children/young people's views by the 6 outcomes of the Pledge;
- representatives attended 4 out of 5 Corporate Parent Forums, to present the views of the CICC on the themes of the Pledge and to update the Forum on the next phases of their work programme.

Additionally outside of the Forum but on behalf of LAC representatives of the CICC attended 5 of the Governments All Party Parliamentary Group discussions regarding improvements for LAC and those Leaving Care. This assists the CICC to understand the political agenda around LAC and how Government can shape policy around young people's views/experiences.

Activity for 2013:

- To hold 3 Service area events where CICC and other LAC can meet the managers/staff of services they receive to hold a dialogue about improvements to the care system;
- To hold a Younger Children's Event to ensure the voices of under 10 year old are taken into account in the review of the Pledge;
- To meet with another CICC in another LA to share Best Practice;
- To make a film about the CICC for LAC;
- To incorporate the findings /views from a recent survey of children/young people in Out of Authority placements(led by the Commissioning Service) into the Annual review of the Pledge;
- To hold discussions with LAC who are young parents to consider how services are working for them;
- To hold discussions with LAC who go missing and /or involved in sexual exploitation about their experiences and what can be learnt about how we might be able to keep children/young people safer in our care;
- To reproduce the Pledge following the Annual Review.

2.6.2 Outcomes for Looked After Children...the difference the CICC can see is being made by the Forum

Overall the CICC gave their views about how well they thought the Council was doing to improve lives of LAC in the Pledge Review Event and in the CICC Film. Generally CICC told us that there have been a lot of improvements and the outcomes from the themes of the Pledge are positive in most areas but more still needs to be done. The CICC note that Forum Members do listen to the views of LAC both in and out of the Forum, and by enabling CICC to attend the Forum, Scrutiny sessions, meet the Lead Member and DCS it enables them to be empowered to raise issues that other LAC tell them about. The CICC were pleased to have the feedback from the LILAC Assessment that their work with LAC was seen as positive for LAC

The CICC can see differences being made to the lives of young people leaving care and their involvement with the Y Pod, Accommodation Standards and the Leaving Care Grant

2.7. Elected Members Training

A programme of training has been implemented, with day and evening sessions offered. This will continue

2.8 Priorities for the coming year

- Reducing the number of teenage pregnancies in the looked after children population including work with LAC young men;
- Raise the profile of independent providers regarding LAC who are at risk of missing from care/or at risk of child sexual exploitation;
- Coordinated work to ensure that care proceedings for LAC are completed within 26 weeks and decisions made around permanence including adoption are made in a timely way;
- Coordinate work to maximise placement stability for LAC;
- Implementation of the Care Leavers Charter;
- Reduce placement expenditure whilst ensuring quality of provision;
- Work with the Children in Care Council on continual improvement of services including engaging with all LAC in care about how safe they feel, and are, in the care system; including children placed in externally commissioned placements;
- Reduce the numbers of care leavers not in education, employment or training and build on the successful work already undertaken in securing care leavers in apprenticeships across the City Council;
- To ensure all Council departments contribute to improving the quality of service and outcomes for LAC through direct service provision.

Cheriel O'Neill
Head of Service, Looked After Children

Appendix 2

Corporate Parenting

Terms of Reference for the Corporate Parenting Forum and Executive Group

Aims and Principles of the Corporate Parenting Forum

Corporate Parenting is the collective responsibility of all elected members; council officers and agencies towards looked after children and care leavers. The approach taken is that the local authority should be looking after these children and young people as other parents would look after their own children.

The Corporate Parenting Forum plays a key role in ensuring that the Council is effectively discharging its duty, as corporate parents, to safeguard and promote the welfare of looked after children. To achieve this elected members need to have a clear understanding and awareness of the 'pledge' they have made to Looked After Children in Leicester City so that they can ensure that their responsibilities as corporate parents are reflected in all aspects of the work of the Council.

The main aims of the Corporate Parenting Forum are to ensure improved outcomes for looked after children and those leaving care by:

- Ensuring children are provided with a safe and stable environment where they can develop positive and caring relationships with adults and children.
- Achieving the highest possible standard of education and attainment, wherever possible in mainstream schools.
- Ensuring that they are helped to be emotionally well and physically fit and healthy as possible.
- Understanding their needs and ensure they have realistic aspirations, self-determination, confidence and resilience to achieve what they want to achieve.
- Supporting and assist their transition to adulthood and promote their economic prospects.
- Ensuring children are consulted and influence decisions and plans that affect them individually.
- Ensuring that all requirements are met for Young People in Secure Remand or Young Detention Accommodation.

To achieve this, the Forum will ensure services are in are place to:

- Match children to placements that will need their assessed needs.
- Work with children and young people to resolve any problems they may experience.
- Work with other agencies to ensure the children in our care benefit from the services they provide.
- Ensure children leave care with support and when they are ready.
- To receive regular reports on the provision of leaving care, housing and training services for Care-Leavers.
- Celebrate their achievements and successes
- Listen to their views and ensure they influence policy plans and practice
- Support families to enable them to contribute to the care of their children.
- Engage with education, employment and training opportunities.
- Respect and promote their cultural identity.
- Encourage them to become active citizens within their communities.

Corporate Parenting Forum Meetings and Membership

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

The Executive Lead for Education, Children, and Families will chair the Forum and the Vice Chair will be the Strategic Director of Children's Services. The lead Officer will be Head of Service Children Looked After Children, Social Care and Safeguarding.

Membership will consist of:

- Senior representatives of all Strategic Directors of the council
- Cross-party representation of elected members
- Project Worker Looked After Children
- Representative from Learning Environment
- Virtual School Head
- Representative from Legal Services
- Representative from of Leicestershire Cares
- Representative from Youth Offending Services.
- Representative from Health Services
- Representative from Police Services .
- Representative from Foster Careers
- Representative from the Children in Care Council

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 services and activities designed to improve outcomes for looked after children and young people and in accordance with the children's 'Pledge.'

Involvement of Elected Members

The Corporate Parenting forum relies on cross party involvement and commitment. It is expected that Members will raise the profile of Looked After Children in the course of their duties, political groups and settings.

A core group of ten elected members will be identified to sit on the Corporate Parenting Forum. It is expected that Elected Members on the Forum will have participated in the dedicated training events for members relating to Corporate Parenting, Looked After Children and Safeguarding.

Duties of Officers and Co-opted Forum attendees

All members of the Forum have a responsibility to:

- Raise the profile of Looked After Children through work and developments in their divisions.
- Act as champions for the needs and rights of Looked After Children.
- Prioritise the needs of Looked After Children – e.g. in developing apprenticeships.
- To identify resources for Corporate Parenting and use these to good effect – e.g. leisure facilities for Looked After Children and their carers.
- To ensure children in care are able to participate in plans for their care and developments for service planning and delivery.

The Executive Group

The Executive Group of the Corporate Parenting Forum is a group of partners from across the council and other agencies and is responsible for driving forward the business priorities of the forum.

The Executive Group shall meet at least six times per year, with meetings taking place between each forum meeting.

The Executive Group will be chaired by the Divisional Director, Social Care and Safeguarding. Membership of the Executive will be drawn from members of the Corporate Parenting Forum and will include senior representatives from: Social Care and Safeguarding from children's fieldwork, LAC Service and the safeguarding unit; Health; and Education (Virtual School), with the option of senior officers from other council divisions attending the Executive at appropriate points.

The Executive Group will drive the work of the Corporate Parenting Forum by:

- Drafting the Action Plan based on priorities set by the Forum and Children in Care Council designed to improve outcomes for looked after children and those leaving care.
- Implementing the Action Plan agreed by the Forum and ensuring appropriate resources across the council are responsive and can deliver against the priorities and targets in the plan.
- Ensuring that the Corporate Parenting Forum is accountable to the Children in Care Council for the delivery of the Pledge made to children in care, and the involvement of looked after children in service planning, design and delivery.
- Determining the response to new Government guidance or other developments, including modifying the Action Plan to take account of these where necessary.
- Planning the Corporate Parenting Forum meetings.
- Ensuring key themes/developments in the area of looked after children and care leavers are brought to the Forum wherever these have implications for the work of the wider agencies represented on the Forum.
- Receiving and responding to performance management reports relating to quantitative and qualitative outcome data. This includes providing regular updates to the Forum on progress against the targets and priorities contained in the Action Plan.

Roles and Responsibilities of Executive Group Members

- To attend all meetings of the Executive Group
- To be a full member of the Corporate Parenting Forum, attend all meetings and represent own service areas.
- To promote/champion looked after children within own service areas and across partnerships.
- To hold own services to account for the quality of looked after children work.
- Where identified by the Executive Group, to ensure the provision of performance management reports to the executive and/or forum.

Governance

The Executive Group is accountable to the Corporate Parenting Forum.

The Corporate Parent Forum will report annually to:

- Children's Trust
- Children's Scrutiny
- Executive
- Full council
- Children in Care Council

Corporate Parent Forum will invite the City Mayor to one meeting a year.

Views of Children and Young People

The Corporate Parenting Forum ensures that the views of children and young people are represented through membership on the forum. In addition, a Project Worker for Looked After Children is a Forum member. Evidence of how and where children and young people's views have influenced policy and practice will be incorporated in the work of the Forum.

Review

The Terms of Reference will be reviewed in September 2014

Andy Smith
Director
Children's Social Care and Safeguarding

Cheriel O'Neill
Head of Service
Looked After Children

August 2013