



# **CORPORATE PARENTING ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15**

Decision to be taken by: City Mayor & Executive

Decision to be taken:

Lead Director: Frances Craven, Strategic Director

Children's Services

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## Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: all
- Report author: Cheriell O'Neill, Head of Service Looked After Children
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- Report version number plus Code No from Report Tracking Database: 1

### 1. Purpose of report

The annual report provides an overview of activity governed 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)

### 2. Summary

Looked After Children (LAC) are children and young people in public care. LAC is 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.

### 3. Recommendations

#### Children, Young People and Schools Scrutiny Commission

- 2.1. That the Commission to recommended to consider the Report and pass any comments to the Executive for consideration when it received the Report.

#### Executive

- 2.2. That the Executive notes the contents of the report and continues to support the business of the Corporate Parenting Forum.

- 2.3. That the Executive notes the revised Terms of Reference and the need for continued Representation. ( Appendix 2 )
- 2.4. That the Executive agrees that the City Mayor is invited to one Corporate Parenting Forum per year.
- 2.5 That the Executive agree that the role and function of the Safeguarding Childrens Panel is taken over by the Corporate Parenting Forum.

#### **4. Report/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.

The Corporate Parenting Forum is chaired by The Assistant Mayor for Children; The Strategic Director for Children is the vice-chair. The forum has representation that includes Children in Care Council, Elected Members, and Senior Officers from across the council directorates, Local Partnerships, Connexions, Foster Carers and Health.

In January 2015 the Local Authority was inspected and the outcome of the inspection judged, services to Looked After Children and Care leavers as Requiring Improvement and Adoption Services as Good.

Ofsted inspection highlighted the lack of performance reporting available to the corporate parenting forum. This gave rise to question that the forum's ability to have a sufficient understanding of the performance of local services and their impact on all outcomes for children looked after and care leavers. The main areas for improvement are embedded in the Leicester City Children's Improvement Board Action Plan. This will determine the priority areas for the Corporate Parenting forum and the performance data reporting needed for the forum to understand and drive proactively the outcomes for LAC across the partnership. These include:

- Numbers of Care leavers not in Education Employment or Training
- Care Leavers in suitable accommodation
- Educational Attainment
- Health assessments and review assessments
- Foster Carer Reviews

- Quality of Care Plans and Pathway Plans
- Children missing from Care and Education

The Corporate Parenting Forum, the work of the Corporate Parenting Executive, Children In Care Council and Pledge are detailed in Appendix one. In order to monitor and ensure active partnership contribution to the Forum arrangements will be reviewed and agreed with the new Lead Member For Children. The arrangements will need to ensure .

- Commitment from other council departments
- Commitment from partner agencies
- Increased involvement and contribution from LAC in informing and improving service delivery.
- Implement changes in the Care Planning regulation and prepare for changes in requirements relating to extending the age of Care Leavers support and alternative provision.

Previous arrangements to ensure political alignment with the wider children's agenda were established through the Safeguarding Children Panel. In order to ensure transparent governance and accountability, all prior responsibility of the Safeguarding Children Panel will now be vested to the Corporate Parenting Forum. Arrangements will be in place to facilitate and support elected members in meeting their responsibilities of playing a key part in contributing to the overall safeguarding arrangements for children and young people.

## **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 Equalities Implications

This report applies for all Looked After Children .There are no equality implications for any specific group.

### 5.5 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 2014/5

Appendix 2: 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”?**

No

## **10. If a key decision please explain reason**

N/A

Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2014/5

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 is 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 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 an increase in the numbers of Looked After between from 540 to 586. This number has not remained consistent but is on an upward trajectory. They fall into 4 main groups:

- Children who are accommodated under a voluntary agreement with their parents (section 20)
- Children who are subject of a care order (Section 31) or interim care order (Section 38)
- Children who are 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).

There are approx. 200 Care leavers and within this group there are different statutory obligation placed on Local Authorities depending on the care history of the young person.

Corporate Parenting relates to all Children and Young People in these definitions.

## 2.2 Corporate Parenting Forum

The Corporate Parenting Forum is the accountable body for ensuring positive progress is made for LAC in all aspects of their lives. This means the activities promoting progress; encompass education, health and welfare, leisure, holiday 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.

### PRIORITIES FOR THE FORUM

The Ofsted Inspection in January 2015 highlighted the lack of performance reporting available to the corporate parenting forum. This gave rise to question that the forums ability to have a sufficient understanding of the performance of local services and their impact on all outcomes for Children Looked After and Care Leavers.

The areas for improvement as stated in the Ofsted Report

- Ensure that care plans are informed by regular and up-to-date assessments of needs.
- Ensure that initial health assessments for Children looked after take place within 28 days of their reception into care.
- Improve the consistency and quality of personal education plans as a tool to improve the educational attainment and achievement of Children looked after.
- Ensure that effective re-unification plans are agreed by a statutory review and that these arrangements are monitored in a timely way following the child's return home.
- Strengthen the capacity of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) service to fulfil all aspects of the IRO Handbook, particularly enabling them to more effectively track and quality assure the progress of care plans in between statutory review processes.
- Improve the timeliness and quality of foster carer reviews and strengthen the level of independent oversight provided within reviews.

For Care leavers

- Ensure that caseloads are at a level that enables personal advisors to work proactively with all care leavers allocated to them, including those aged 16 and 17 years
- Strengthen the pathway review process to ensure that formal reviews take place regularly with the contribution of other agencies and are subject to robust management oversight.
- Ensure that risk assessments are undertaken for all young people living in unsuitable accommodation.
- Ensure that care leavers are provided with full information about their health histories prior to leaving care.

The areas highlighted as strength

- 87% live within 20 miles of their home.
- The majority of young people placed out of authority are not disadvantaged by distance and have appropriate access to health and education services.
- 79% of children looked after are placed with foster carers, higher than statistical neighbours and England levels. Appropriate use is also made of kinship placements, which enable children to remain with their families and communities.
- Children looked after have good access to therapeutic help and recreational leisure opportunities, which promotes their health and well-being.
- Children with an adoption plan are quickly matched and placed with adopters, maximising their life chances in their adoptive homes.
- Post-adoption support is a significant strength, evidenced by the value placed on it by adopters and the lack of adoption disruptions.
- Through the Big Lottery funded Y-POD, care leavers with complex needs have been provided with wraparound services which improves their outcomes. These benefits are planned to be rolled out to all care leavers in April 2015.

There is now an imperative for the forum to reconsider the forum arrangements to ensure that necessary improvements are made. Prior to the inspection it had been agreed that there needs to be an authority-wide approach which stated a commitment from all Council divisions, Elected Members and partners agencies responsible for Looked After Children, directly or indirectly.

The Corporate Parenting Forum arrangements will need to ensure:

- Key Performance data, analysis and outcomes are available to the forum
- The areas for improvement are addressed with clear evidence of the impact of service improvement on Looked After Children
- The areas highlighted as good practice are maintained
- A mechanism is in place to continually monitor, audit and review the means by which their services contribute to positive outcomes for Looked After Children and that this is reported systematically to assure the forum of the progress
- Ensure each department will develop and promote employee awareness and commitment to the Corporate Parenting and Leaving Care Strategy
- Have policies and practices that promote access to services for looked after children and their carers
- Facilitate to achieve participation and inclusion, so that children and young people have a say in how decisions are made about the services that affect them and that they have an opportunity to influence those decisions.

Over the past year the Corporate Parenting Forum has not met every 2 months. This was due to the outcome of the Ofsted Inspection, the departure of Chair, Assistant Mayor for Children, and the Interim Arrangements in place prior to council elections in May. The challenges over past 12 months have offered an opportunity to redevelop Corporate Parenting Forum to better assert the needs of LAC and to fulfil the corporate parenting responsibilities.



### 3. 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.

The Representation of the forum will need to be reviewed to ensure a level of attendance, monitoring and challenge. Those attending are confirmed as representative and have the status to promote, make decision and resource the improvements for LAC across the diverse needs of the LAC population.

This will also mean the Terms of reference will need to be revised.

#### 3.1 Corporate Parenting Executive

The priorities of the Forum are supported through the Corporate Parenting Executive. The membership and terms of reference for the executive will need to be revised in accordance with the new arrangements. .

### 4. MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS 2014/15 for Looked After Children

- Looked After Childrens Services have maintained a stable workforce, ensuring that children and young people have a consistent social worker. This has been highlighted as a need by the CICC
- Adoption service has maintained a good rating. There have continued improvements in the Performance Indicators relating to adoption timescales placing Leicester City are in the top of 30 Local Authorities for Adoption.
- The implementation of the Care Leavers Offer, has been implemented with increasing numbers of Care leavers in a 'staying put ' arrangement or in suitable accommodation .
- There have been improved partnership working between Social Care and Police leading to improved processes and responses to Children who go missing. Missing from care/home reports are presented to the Children's Safeguarding Panel on a 6 monthly basis.
- Arrangements for providing supervised contact and parenting assessments for children in care have greatly improved. This is evidenced through the number of commendations received from parents experiencing the service.
- Producing the Leaving Care Entitlement Leaflet

## 5. Children's Pledge/ Children in Care Council

### Children in Care Council views about Corporate Parenting Forum

- The Children in Care Council has continued to meet monthly and attend Corporate Parenting Forum.
- They have been consulted on Service developments and contributed to policy documents such as the Corporate Parenting Strategy and content of leaflets including in relation to Private Fostering and Information for Care Leavers. This is now in place.
- They have helped recruit key officers including the Director for Children's Services. Senior managers and the Lead Member attend their meetings to hear their views and ask them about issues that are affecting children in care and care leavers.
- They are able to pick up themes from the Children's Rights and Participation Service if young people are contacting the service about similar concerns. This means that they have significant influence on Service delivery and developments.
- Although their voice is heard this does not mean that their views will always prevail, for example their views about the Managing Your Own Home Course and the LAC Youth worker post. They ensure that their voice is heard nationally for example they attend the All Party Parliamentary Group which influences government policy and they responded to the government consultation on new National Standards for Children's Homes. As a result, the references to the importance of children's homes in helping prepare young people for independence were strengthened.
- They spent time with the OFSTED inspectors in January and told them about the impact on young people of frequent changes of social worker and delays in plans. They spoke positively about the support that is available in relation to education and the positive outcomes for some young people. This was partly based on the survey that they carried out on employment/ education and training issues. Also they said that Leicester is a good place for children in care to live and that they feel that the Pledge has made a difference and that they are able to hold people to account for the Services that they deliver. They knew that there were challenges in the services because of staffing levels and the implementation of Liquid Logic and agreed with many of the concerns identified in the OFSTED report. They want to help the Council build on its strengths and improve Services and they are pleased that they have been asked to sit on the Improvement Board.
- They realise that a lot of things are happening to improve things but that it is too early to say if they have had an impact. They want to be involved with initiatives at an early stage. For example, they feel that the Staying Put policy should have been brought to the Children in Care Council at the draft stage and this may

have helped avoid some of the challenges there were when it was first implemented. They were asked about how to make the Children and Young People's Plan accessible but they were not consulted about what should be the priorities/ content of the plan.

- They feel that their involvement with the development of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment was meaningful and that their views were informing the work.
- They have spent time with health partners and are trying to encourage the health community to develop a participation group for young people. They had started to develop a 'Big Conversation' approach with the Strategic Directors and this will be reviewed when the Corporate Parenting Forum meetings are resumed.

## 6. Elected Members Training

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

## 7. Priorities for the coming year

As stated the priorities for the Forum over the coming year is firmly based within the Improvement Agenda.

In addition there needs to be ongoing focus on

- Review the impact of the improvement plans for Residential Care, Adoption and Fostering services.
- Raise the profile of internal and external independent providers regarding LAC who are at risk of missing from care/or at risk of child sexual exploitation;
- Continue to Co-ordinate work to maximise placement stability for LAC.
- Complete a Placement Sufficiency Review to ensure correlation between cost and quality.
- 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.
- Develop an integrated Service for Care Leavers.

Cheriel O'Neill  
Head of Service, Looked After Children  
July 2015

## 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, Education Children and Families

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 eight 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