

Report To:	EXECUTIVE CABINET
Date:	24 October 2018
Executive /Reporting Officer:	Members Councillor Oliver Ryan – Executive Member (Children’s Services) Gani Martins – Assistant Director of Children’s Services
Subject:	CORPORATE PARENTING UPDATE
Report Summary:	Provides update on the work and progress of the Corporate parenting Board.
Recommendations:	To note the improvements and progress in strengthening Corporate Parenting arrangements.
Links to Community Strategy:	Supporting vulnerable children and young people and fulfilling the council’s statutory responsibilities as corporate parents
Policy Implications:	Children Act 1989, Children and Social Work Act 2017. Looking after and protecting children and young people is one of the most important jobs that councils have to do and when a child can’t for whatever reason stay at home the council has to step in and give them the care support and stability they need. Corporate Parenting is an important part of OFSTED inspection Framework and was an area that was identified for improvement in 2016.
Financial Implications: (Authorised by the Section 151 Office)	There are no direct financial implications arising from the report.
Legal Implications: (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)	<p>It is important that there is effective governance and oversight of service delivery in particular given the additional resources being provided to the service to ensure value for money being achieved.</p> <p>All councillors and senior officers are corporate parents and the role brings with it significant responsibility.</p> <p>The Children and Social Work Act 2017 says that a corporate parent means that they should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and young people ✓ encourage them to express their views, wishes and feelings, and take them into account, while promoting high aspirations and trying to secure the best outcomes for them ✓ make sure they have access to services ✓ make sure that they are safe, with stable home lives, relationships and education or work ✓ prepare them for adulthood and independent living. <p>As corporate parents, it’s our responsibility to make sure that the council is meeting these duties towards children in care and care leavers. The LGIU have issued some useful guidance at https://www.local.gov.uk/corporate-parenting-resource-pack</p>

Risk Management:

The Corporate Parenting Board was one of the areas that required significant improvement following the Ofsted inspection in 2016. It is there essential that the progress made is maintained through regular meeting and monitoring and update of the action plan and Strategy.

Access to Information :

Background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting :

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Children and young people in care are accommodated by the Local Authority because their own family are unable to meet their needs, either temporarily or in the longer term. The council has a statutory duty to provide for the child's needs in the way that a good parent would. It is therefore very essential that we collectively care about these children and young people as well as care for them. In order to make sure we meet this requirement we have reviewed and revised our Corporate Parenting Strategy and developed a comprehensive plan of how we will improve outcomes for our children and young people in care and ensure that our Care Leavers have the best chance to successfully make the transition into independence.
- 1.2 We aim to be the best kind of pushy corporate parents – always looking for the very best for our children, always looking for more opportunities and support for them above and beyond the basics, and always trying to get as much help as possible from the extended corporate family network.
- 1.3 At the beginning of September 2018 we are Corporate Parents to 634 children and 290 Care Leavers. Primarily our aim is to safely reduce the number of children in care and to support families so that more children are cared for within their family networks and more children move into permanent care through Special Guardianship Order. Whilst our Looked after Children number is still relatively high, we are however now seeing some short term stability in numbers emerging over the past three months.

2. UPDATE AND WORK COMPLETED SINCE JANUARY 2018

Corporate Parenting Group

- 2.1 The Corporate Parenting Group agreed a new Terms of Reference in January 2018 including revised membership and chairing arrangements. There are now clear monitoring and reporting arrangements with thematic feedback from objectives of Corporate Parenting Strategy Action Plan and evidence that we are making improvements in achieving positive outcomes for our Looked After Children.
- 2.2 To ensure the delivery of the Corporate Parenting Strategy and plan, three multi-agency Looked After Children and Care Leavers partnership groups was established so that as corporate parents we are continuously seeking to improve the full range of outcomes for our children and young people. These groups are:
 - Safeguarding and Stability Group
 - Health and Wellbeing Group
 - Education, Training and Employability Group
- 2.3 The groups meet on a monthly basis and are responsible for ensuring the actions in the Corporate Parenting Strategy are followed through, and progress reported into the Corporate Parenting Group.
- 2.4 Young people now attend the Corporate Parenting Group and make very valuable contribution to discussions during the meetings.
- 2.5 There have been opportunities created for Care Leavers by the Lead Member in securing free driving lessons and apprenticeships and budgeting skills and financial advice from Barclays Bank.
- 2.6 In line with the requirement for all Local Authority to have a Local Offer clarifying Care Leaver's entitlement, a draft Local Offer has been written and was presented to the

Corporate Parenting Group in August 2018. There is on-going consultation regarding the plan and following this the Local Offer will be finalised and published in November 2018.

- 2.7 There is clear evidence that Elected Members and corporate leaders are now taking actions to demonstrate their commitment to corporate parenting in a way that was not previously evident, and issues raised at the Corporate Parenting Group are translated into action, followed through and implemented.

3. PARTICIPATION OFFICER AND CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL

- 3.1 Our newly appointed Participation Officer has been in post since May 2018 and has made tremendous impact in revising and energising the Children in Care Council. Participation of Looked After Children has increased in several areas, providing valuable input to service improvements and ensuring that we listen to their voice and act on what they are telling us about what we need to change to improve. This include active involvement in the Children in Care Council meetings every two weeks; meetings with senior officers to share their views about services; presentations to social workers and other staffs about what the Children in Care Council is and how to encourage more young people to be involved; active involvement in interviews and appointments of permanent staff such as the Director of Children's Services, Assistant Director of Children's Services, Service Managers, Team Managers, Practice Manager, Social Workers, and Personal Assistants in the Leaving Care Service.
- 3.2 The Care Leavers football group was entered into this year's Regional Care Leavers football tournament and won the competition.

4 EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

- 4.1 There has been significant improvement in the performance of the Virtual School and 97% of the children have Personal Education Plans that ensures their particular needs are prioritised in school to help them reach their potential.
- 4.2 At the end of August 2018, 70% of our 16/17 year olds are in Education, Training or Employment (45.5% for Statistical Neighbours) and 53% of 18-21 year olds are in Education, Training or Employment.
- 4.3 As of September 2018 we have 12 Care Leavers attending Higher Education (11 Under Graduate and 1 Post Graduate). 4 Care Leavers are undertaking Apprenticeships and the council have ringed fenced further Apprenticeship for 8 Care Leavers.
- 4.4 The Leaving Care Service is proactively working in partnership with the Virtual School Team and Positive Steps to promote and engage those young people Not in Education, Employment and Training in a range of education, employment and training opportunities locally.

5. ELECTED MEMBERS LINK TO CHILDREN'S HOMES

- 5.1 Arrangements have been made and are now in place for elected members to be linked to children's homes. This provide members the opportunity to see and connect with young people in their living environment and understand the living experience of the young people and in some cases provides mentoring support as appropriate.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 As stated on the report cover