

TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL**CABINET – 15 MARCH 2018****CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY 2018-2020****REPORT OF ASSISTANT DIRECTOR: EDUCATION & CORPORATE PARENTING****LEAD CABINET MEMBER - CLLR PAUL WATLING, CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN & ADULTS, EARLY HELP & SUPPORT (LEAD MEMBER FOR CYP)****PART A) – SUMMARY REPORT****1. SUMMARY OF MAIN PROPOSALS**

- 1.1. Telford & Wrekin Council want all children and young people to achieve their ambitions and reach their full potential. The purpose of the Corporate Parenting Strategy is to reaffirm the Council's commitment and reinforce the corporate responsibilities of the whole council, jointly with our partners, to ensure that our children in care and care leavers have every opportunity to achieve success.
- 1.2. The purpose of this report is to present the 2018-20 Corporate Parenting Strategy for approval.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet approves the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2018-2020.

3. SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

COMMUNITY IMPACT	Do these proposals contribute to specific Co-Operative Council priority objective(s)?	
	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • put our children and young people first • protect and support our vulnerable children and adults • Improving local people's prospects through education and skills training; and • Improving the health and wellbeing of our communities and address health inequalities.
	Will the proposals impact on specific groups of people?	
	Yes	Children in care and care leavers
TARGET COMPLETION/DELIVERY DATE	The strategy will be refreshed in Autumn 2019. The action plan to monitor progressed will be refreshed annually.	
FINANCIAL/VALUE FOR MONEY IMPACT		Any costs associated with the delivery of this strategy will need to be met from within existing resources. The actions contained within the strategy

		<p>should have a positive impact on future costs as outcomes for children are improved.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>TS 20.02.2018</i></p>
<p>LEGAL ISSUES</p>		<p>Section 18 of the Children Act 2004 requires every top tier local authority to appoint a Director of Children’s Services [DCS]. The DCS is responsible for the performance of local authority functions relating to the education <u>and</u> social care of children and young people and for ensuring that effective systems are in place for discharging these functions.</p> <p>Section 19 of the Children Act 2004 requires every top tier local authority to designate one of its members as Lead Member for Children’s Services [LMCS] who will be a local Councillor with delegated responsibility from the Council. The LMCS, as a member of the Council Executive, has political responsibility for the leadership, strategy and effectiveness of local authority children’s services.</p> <p><i>“Statutory guidance on the roles and responsibilities of the Director of Children’s Services and the Lead Member for Children’s Services for local authorities”</i> was last updated on 8th April 2013, earlier versions having been published in 2005, 2009 and 2012. Local authorities must have regard to it and, if they decide to depart from it, they will need to have clear reasons for doing so.</p> <p>The Children and Social Work Act 2017 [CSWA] received Royal Assent on 27th April 2017 and is intended to improve support for looked after children and care leavers, promote the welfare and safeguarding of children, and make provisions about the regulation of social workers. The Bill was introduced following a programme of suggested reforms set out in the Government’s July 2016 policy paper <i>“Putting Children First: Our Vision for Children’s Social Care”</i></p> <p>The main purpose of the legislation is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve decision making and support for looked after and previously looked after children in England and Wales. • Improve joint work at the local level to safeguard children and enable better learning at the local and national levels

		<p>to improve practice in child protection.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the safeguarding of children by providing for relationships and sex education in schools. • Enable the establishment of a new regulatory regime specifically for the social work profession in England <p>Section 1 of the CSWA 2017 establishes a set of seven principles aimed at bringing the focus back to the looked after child. It reminds the local authority (LA) what it means to be a “corporate parent”. The principles are described in the body of the report. Section 1 applies to the whole LA and not just children’s services.</p> <p>The Local Government Association published guidance on the 2017 Act on 24th July 2017 entitled “<i>Get in on the Act: Children and Social Work Act 2017</i>”.</p> <p>The Children and Social Work Act 2017 (Commencement No. 1) Regulations 2017 were made on 13th September 2017 and, to date, only 13 of the 71 sections of the 2017 Act are in force.</p> <p>The Department for Education Government consulted on draft statutory guidance to support the Corporate Parenting principles from 16th October 2017 to 27th November 2017.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>KF 19.02.2018</i></p>
EQUALITY & DIVERSITY	No	N/A
IMPACT ON SPECIFIC WARDS	No	N/A
PATIENTS & PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT	Yes	Engagement with the children in care, care leavers, and professionals is a key part of the Corporate Parenting Strategic Group’s work.
OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS & OPPORTUNITIES	No	N/A

PART B) – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

1. WHAT IS A CORPORATE PARENT?

1.1. When a child can no longer be cared for at home and the child becomes looked after, the local authority assumes parental responsibility for that child when a care order is made.

1.2. Corporate Parenting is the term generally used to describe this legal responsibility, but the concept is wider than that; good corporate parenting emphasises that we should

have the same interest in and aspirations for children in care and those leaving care, as we would for our own children.

2. WHO ARE CORPORATE PARENTS AND WHAT ARE THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES?

- 2.1. Corporate parents champion and advocate the rights of children in care and care leavers, and support the practitioners working with those young people.
- 2.2. National research shows that children in care can be vulnerable to poorer outcomes than their peers. In practical terms, being a corporate parent means advocating on behalf of children in care and care leavers to ensure they get the support they need to achieve the best outcomes, narrowing the gap to their peers, and challenging any poor practice.
- 2.3. Corporate parenting responsibilities are not limited to the Council's Children's Safeguarding Service: the whole of the local authority (both officers and members), as well as relevant partner agencies, have a duty to ensure that children in care and care leavers have their needs recognised and appropriately met, in a way which does not disadvantage them in relation to their non-looked after peers.
- 2.4. All elected members have responsibilities as corporate parents, whether they are involved directly with young people, or on the Corporate Parenting Strategic Group. These responsibilities include ensuring that the needs of children in care are appropriately recognised by relevant services, such as housing, as well as making representations on behalf of an individual child in care or care leaver who wish to make a complaint about the services or support they have received.

3. CHANGES IN LEGISLATION THAT IMPACT ON CHILDREN IN CARE AND CARE LEAVERS

- 3.1. Following the introduction of the Children and Social Work Act in April 2017, the Department for Education created a specific guidance document to support the changes related to corporate parenting; "*Applying corporate parenting principles to care and pathway planning*". The guidance, although currently in draft form, details seven corporate parenting principles which should "*shape the mind-set and culture of every part of a local authority in how it carries out all of its functions in relation to looked after children and care leavers*".
- 3.2. The seven principles are:
 1. *"To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people*
 2. *To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings*
 3. *To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people*
 4. *To help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners*

5. *To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people*
6. *For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and*
7. *To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.”*

3.3. These principles are integral to the way that corporate parenting works in the Borough and are threaded through the new Corporate Parenting Strategy.

4. GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

4.1. In Telford and Wrekin a Corporate Parenting Strategic Group oversees the services provided to children in care and care leavers within the Borough. The Group brings together elected members, officers from the Council, and colleagues from partner agencies.

4.2. The Group is responsible for scrutinising all services available for children in care and care leavers (from universal through to safeguarding) and as part of this work has developed a strategy to define the overarching priorities for the next three years. Whilst the Group challenges the safety of children in care and care leavers, this is also done in the wider context of safeguarding children and young people in the Borough through the Telford & Wrekin Safeguarding Children Board (TWSCB).

4.3. The strategy identifies four overarching priorities which have been decided through analysis of intelligence and consultation with partners. The four priorities for 2018-2020 are:

- Improve access to health and emotional wellbeing services and support;
- Narrow the educational achievement, employment and training gap between children in care/care leavers and their peers;
- Ensure all children in care have placements that meet their social, health and educational needs; and
- Ensure that care leavers are able to develop the appropriate skills to live independently.

4.4. A cross-cutting aim of the Corporate Parenting Strategic Group is to raise the profile of corporate parenting within the whole council. The lead officers have begun to develop an engagement programme for members and officers, who are not directly working with children in care and care leavers, to raise awareness of this statutory expectation and their roles and responsibilities.

4.5. The Corporate Parenting Strategy outlines how the Board and its partners will address the four priority areas over the next three years and how this will impact on children in care and care leavers. A copy of the draft Corporate Parenting Strategy can be found in Appendix A.

4.6. Progress against the priorities will be monitored and challenged through the Partnership's action plan and associated performance framework.

- 4.7. The Corporate Parenting Strategic Group is accountable to the Children and Families Partnership who will receive regular updates on the implementation of the strategy. The Group is also held to account through the Council's Cabinet and, specifically in relation to safeguarding, through the TWSCB.

5. PROGRESS TO DATE

- 5.1. Since the new legislation was announced, work to further develop the services for children in care and care leavers began. This section of the report highlights key areas of development that are further improving the outcomes for children in care and care leavers.
- 5.2. **Review of The Pledge** – In November the Virtual School hosted and coordinated the Takeover Challenge (part of National Takeover Day). This year the challenge involved 15 children in care and, working alongside members of the Corporate Parenting Strategic Group (CPSG), they reviewed The Pledge. The Pledge details what the values and expectations of services that children in care and care leavers can expect in the Borough. The review concluded that the aims within the Pledge remained relevant and appropriate for children in care in 2017-18.
- 5.3. **Development of a Looked After Mental Health Practitioner** – the emotional health and wellbeing of children in care is a key factor in their development and positive outcomes. Through the new 0-25 Emotional Health and Wellbeing Service (delivered by South Staffordshire and Shropshire NHS Foundation Trust, SSSFT) a new post specifically for children in care has been developed. The post is currently in the recruitment phase and, once in post, will work closely with the Council's Children's Safeguarding Services and support the work around emotional health and wellbeing for our children in care.
- 5.4. **Cross Border permanency work** – Telford & Wrekin are working with Shropshire, Staffordshire and Stoke Local Authorities to improve permanency for children in care. This includes the development of a permanency tracker and a project plan is in place which monitors the development of this work across the four areas. The aim of this work is to speed up the permanence planning process for specific groups of children in care (e.g. sibling groups or those with complex needs) through sharing resources, skills and knowledge across the four areas. This work is further enhanced by the fortnightly Placement Stability Meetings as part of the Council's wider work around placement fragility and includes members of the Virtual School Team to give a holistic view of the needs of the young person.
- 5.5. **Improved data sharing processes** – The Council's Children's Safeguarding Service and the Shropshire Community Health Trust are working closely to streamline the data sharing processes involved in health assessments and Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQs). This work will result in a more efficient service for children in care and foster carers as well as other professionals who are involved in the processes.
- 5.6. **Life Story Worker in place** – This is an important piece of work for children in care to help them make sense of their family history and life outside the care system, as well as why they entered. There is now a dedicated worker based in the Children in Care and

Leaving Care Team who delivers this work and is also able to track and report on the work taking place.

5.7. The development of a Local Offer for Care Leavers has begun – this is a new statutory requirement and will detail what Care Leavers can expect from services in the Borough, for example what is on offer around apprenticeships for care leavers within the Council, what support is available around paying Council Tax and specific offers available through Leisure Services. The offer will be informed and consulted upon by Care Leavers and Children in Care. The Local Offer will be published during Summer 2018.

5.8. Restructuring of the Virtual School Team to allow more mentors to work with young people - The Virtual School Team has been restructured so that the Inclusion Mentors are now allocated to each of the three localities within Telford and Wrekin with a fourth Inclusion Mentor allocated to work with young people out of borough. The focus for the Inclusion Mentors is twofold; first, to ensure that the school set appropriate targets and interventions are aimed at improved outcomes for young people and that these are recorded in the Personal Education Plan (PEP). Second, the Inclusion Mentors support those young people who are struggling to engage in school directly in the school setting.

6. NEXT STEPS

6.1. The Corporate Parenting Strategic Group will continue to monitor and challenge progress made against the actions identified to deliver the strategy. This will be scrutinised through the Children and Families Partnership and any issues raised with agency leads where appropriate to ensure timely progress is being made.

6.2. The Corporate Parenting Strategic Group will work with VOICE (the Care Council) to develop a concise guide to corporate parenting which is linked to the new strategy. Using this guide the Corporate Parenting Strategic Group, and its members, will continue to promote the corporate parenting responsibilities of everybody working with, or representing the interests of children in care and care leavers.

6.3. The Group will provide a further report to Cabinet in early 2019 outlining its progress to date on delivering the strategy.

7. IMPACT ASSESSMENT – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Nothing further to add at this time.

8. PREVIOUS MINUTES

None

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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