

Annual Council

15 May 2012

Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Panel

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report forms the annual update to Council from the Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP) in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Panel comprises 12 Members as nominated by Group Leaders:

Councillors Jane Burton, Andrew Davis(Vice Chairman), Lionel Grundy, Russell Hawker, Malcolm Hewson, Jon Hubbard, Alan Macrae, Laura Mayes, Helen Osborn, Sheila Parker, Pip Ridout and Bridget Wayman.

During the period May 2011 to May 2012, Councillor Sheila Parker was Chair.

- 2.2 The Lead Officer is Karen Reid (Virtual School Headteacher)

- 2.3 The meetings are regularly attended by the following Officers:

Jackie Chipping (Children in Care Policy Officer), Sharon Davies (Service Director, Children and Families Social Care and Integrated Youth Service), Damian Haasjes (Voluntary Sector Youth Development Co-Ordinator), Lin Hitchman (Head of Children in Care), Karen Reid (Virtual School Headteacher) and Liza Ware (Children's Rights Officer). Other Officers attend to present particular reports, e.g. Reducing Offending Behaviour.

- 2.4 All Councillors are CRB checked and the majority of members on the CPP have now completed the 2 day specialist Total Respect training which is co-facilitated by both adult and young trainers. The young trainers are all care experienced and have all completed the Open College Network (OCN) accredited 'Train the Trainers' course. The course aims to raise awareness of the issues faced by children and young people in care and to promote their involvement in all aspects of social care.

- 2.5 For all other Councillors in their role as Corporate Parents, a condensed one day version of the Total Respect training has been offered.

- 2.6 Panel members have attended briefing sessions given by Officers on the legislation in relation to children in care.

- 2.7 Each member of the Panel has their own copy of a 'Putting Corporate Parenting into Practice' which is a handbook for Councillors published by the National Children's Bureau.

- 2.8 All Panel members are invited to attend events involving Looked After Children and Young People, which take place throughout the year. These have included the STAR Awards and the AfroReggae project.
- 2.9 There is a consistently high level of attendance and engagement by Councillors at the CPP meetings with a strong commitment to improving the services Wiltshire Council provides for its Looked After Children and Young People.

3. Key Improvements and Achievements in the Past 12 months

STAR Awards

- 3.1 A number of Panel members attended the STAR (*Successful, Talented, Achievement Recognition*) Awards for Looked After Young People from 11-18 years, at the Salisbury City Hall on 23rd March.
- 3.2 There were nominations for just over 90 young people from a range of professionals and approximately 50 young people were able to attend the prestigious event to receive their certificates, vouchers and STAR trophies.
- 3.3 The awards were presented by Councillors Lionel Grundy and Laura Mayes and the two Announcers were one of our Care Leavers and the Assistant Manager of the Children in Care Through Team in the South.
- 3.4 There were 36 categories of Awards, reflecting a wide range of achievement, such as: Excellent Attendance at School; Participation in Virtual School Activities; Overcoming Challenges; Focus and Perseverance; Transition to new School, amongst others.
- 3.5 The evening began with an informal reception in the foyer of City Hall and guests were treated to live music provided by the Salisbury Young Musicians Jazz Band 2, as well as singers performing their own compositions. These young people were Care Leavers who have been successfully following education programmes in an alternative provision.
- 3.6 An exhibition of work produced through a second alternative provider was presented by one of our looked after young people.
- 3.7 The formal part of the evening was opened by John Glen MP and the evening ended with a party for the young people.
- 3.8 The STAR Children's party was also a huge success and took place at The Spencer Sports and Social Club in Melksham on the 5th April.
- 3.9 Approximately 40 children attended out of 55 nominees, together with Foster Carers, Social Workers, Independent Reviewing Officers and several Councillors from the Corporate Parenting Panel. The theme was Easter and the children had fun with party games and an unexpected visit from the Easter Bunny!

3.10 The Leader of the Council, Jane Scott, presented the awards which were based on the Every Child Matters Outcomes, as detailed below:

- Being Healthy - i.e. physical, mental and emotional health and making healthy lifestyle choices.
- Stay Safe - i.e. coping/resolving bullying problems, avoiding harmful situations etc.
- Enjoy and Achieve - i.e. starting a new school positively, coping with transitions, having good attendance, increased participation, progress in academic achievement, good results in exams, etc.
- Make a Positive Contribution - i.e. engaging in decision making, helping others, positive behaviour in and out of school, developing good relationships, successfully dealing with change, etc.
- Achieve Economic Wellbeing - i.e. engaging in further education, employment or training, showing readiness for employment, coping with independent/supported living, etc.

Canon's House

3.11 Panel members have continued to be involved in regular visits to Wiltshire Council's Children's Home, Canon's House. These visits are part of the monthly monitoring undertaken by The Children in Care Policy Officer, Jackie Chipping. A Panel member accompanies Jackie and reports back to the Panel.

Children in Care Council

3.12 The Chairman of CPP attends the Children in Care Council on a regular basis to seek the views of young people.

CPP Meeting Format

3.13 Panel meetings are planned through pre-meetings between the Chairman of CPP, Service Director and Lead Officer to ensure that Officers' reports are checked and signed off, the agenda is confirmed with all relevant parties and pre-brief sessions highlight any particular items for celebration and or challenge at the Panel meetings.

3.14 The new format for Corporate Parenting Panel meetings is now embedded. The formal part for the Panel meetings is designed so that Councillors receive formal reports from Officers covering the whole range of issues and aspects of the Care system. Performance data, service provision, plans for improvement and feedback from young people are the means by which Panel members are able to advise on further developments and improvements. Topics include: education and those not in education, employment or training; health; placements; adoption; fostering; the Ofsted process and the transition to adult services.

3.15 The Shared Guardian Sessions which follow the formal part of the

meeting, have been attended and led by a number of looked after young people and Care Leavers. The young people lead each session and involve Councillors and Officers in tasks and discussion which presents the opportunity for young people to express their views in an open and 'safe' environment where their views are listened to and respected. As a result of these sessions, Councillors have gained a deeper understanding of the issues the young people face and improvements in service delivery have been made.

3.16 Shared Guardian Sessions have covered the following topics:

- Leaving Care – grant and independent living
- Adoption and sibling contact
- Review of the Promise (2 sessions)
- Consultation on the Aspire Centre

Ofsted Inspection

3.17 In the recent Ofsted inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children Services (March 2012), the inspection report highlights the following positive aspects of the Corporate Parenting Panel:

Overall Effectiveness:

3.17.1 *'The Children in Care Council is well established and effective. Their involvement in the corporate parenting board is valued and the young people concerned feel listened to and feel they make a difference.'*

Capacity for Improvement:

3.17.2 *'Commitment from elected members, partners and senior managers within the council has ensured that all outcomes for looked after children and young people have significantly improved.'*

Making a positive contribution, including user engagement:

3.17.3 *'The well established corporate parenting board, which includes a commissioning representative from health, demonstrates a mature understanding of its responsibilities and a determination to make a difference for children and young people who are in care.'*

3.17.4 *Elected members have been quick to respond positively to learning from Total Respect training delivered by young people who have left care and who describe themselves as 'experts by experience'. They exert informed and constructive challenge to information presented by professionals including key managers from children's services and from health.*

3.17.5 *Recognising the importance of hearing directly from young people, the corporate parenting board has successfully developed with young people a model of 'Shared Guardian' sessions, which enables members of the Children in Care Council to speak out and to play a meaningful part in the review and development of services at the highest level. The session observed by an inspector included*

discussion of how the impact of the 'promise', developed some time ago and recently revised by the Children in Care Council could be maximised; how best to launch a high quality DVD on coming into care made by and for children and young people; and a lively debate on how developing plans for the new Aspire Centre could involve young people further.

3.17.6 These opportunities keep corporate parenting members well in tune with the reality of life in care and give looked after children and young people excellent opportunities to take responsibility and to make a difference individually and collectively. Examples of this can be seen in changes made to pathway planning, the format of personal education plans, the provision of supported accommodation and contact arrangements for siblings following adoption.'

Ambition and prioritisation:

3.17.7 'Ambition and prioritisation of services for looked after children, young people and care leavers are good. There is a strong determination across the council and partnership that children and young people in care should be well supported and encouraged to have high aspirations and achieve.'

3.17.8 Elected members, the corporate parenting board and the portfolio holder for children's services, champion the needs of children in care and young people. They have been successful in ensuring services for looked after children and young people are designed to be child focused with a high level of participation from the children and young people concerned.

3.17.9 This principle is strongly evidenced in the Shared Guardianship aspect of the corporate parenting board that includes looked after children and young people in care in all its meetings. The outstanding participation of children and young people exemplifies the commitment of the partnership to children and young people who are looked after.'

Leadership and management:

3.17.10 'The corporate parenting board provides strong challenge and champions the needs of children in care and care leavers. A standing looked after children task group chaired by a senior member of the Children's Select Committee provides challenge to the corporate parenting board and senior officers to ensure the needs of looked after children and young people and care leavers are met effectively.'

3.17.11 'Strategic planning through the work of the corporate parenting board is effective, child centred and focused on keeping children and young people in care safe, enhancing their levels of educational achievement and attainment and on encouraging them to have high aspirations for themselves.'

Performance management and quality assurance:

3.17.12 *'The corporate parenting board receives and scrutinise management information on the service and holds officers to account.'*

4. Further Developments

- 4.1 It is the aim of the CPP to ensure that all Councillors are aware of their responsibility as corporate parents to Wiltshire's Looked After Children and Young People. In order to fulfil their role, Councillors should participate in the Total Respect training programme, which has been condensed for this purpose, to one day. (See Appendix B - Extract from the Council's Constitution - Roles and Responsibilities of Councillors in relation to Corporate Parenting).
- 4.2 It is expected that Councillors attend the Shared Guardian Sessions relevant to their area of responsibility, in order that they are directly involved in the discussions about issues affecting Looked After Children and Young People and can be part of the solutions and improvements.

In conclusion:

- 4.3 The Corporate Parenting Panel in Wiltshire has changed and the new way of working is proving to be successful in engaging young people and improving services for them.

5. Main Considerations for the Council

- 5.1 The Council is asked to note the work of the CPP to date and to become involved in the new style of meetings in their role as Corporate Parents.

6. Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

- 6.1 Not applicable.

7. Equalities Impact of the Proposal

- 7.1 The proposals seek to bring Councillors and Officers to work together to ensure that our Looked After Children receive the best services possible and have a voice within the Council.

8. Risk Assessment

- 8.1 Panel Members are required to have a CRB check undertaken every 3 years and Risk Assessments will be drawn up for when visits are made to vulnerable children and when Councillors attend Officer Team Meetings, etc.

9. Financial Implications

- 9.1 Expenses for young people participating in the CPP will be paid for from the Children in Care budget.

10. Legal Implications

- 10.1 Ian Gibbons (Solicitor to the Council) has confirmed that the Panel is an Advisory panel and not a Committee of the Council; it can therefore make recommendations but not decisions. Carolyn Godfrey, the Corporate Director for Children's Services is the lead decision maker.

12. Proposal

- 12.1 To receive and note the Annual Report and ratify the improvements required to strengthen Corporate Parenting in Wiltshire.

Carolyn Godfrey (Corporate Director)

Report Author: Karen Reid (Virtual School Headteacher)

Date of report: 01 May 2012

Background Papers

None

Appendices

Appendix A: The Promise

Appendix B: Extract from Part 12 of the Council's Constitution – Roles and Responsibilities of Councillors in relation to Corporate Parenting

The Promise

We Promise:

Being in Care

- A choice of when to move on from care.
- To try not to separate brother and sisters (however, if this is not possible, try to ensure brother's and sister's placements are close together and allow contact).
- To allow looked after children and young people to be involved in the choice of their placement from the start.
- To find a place where you feel comfortable and 'at home' and can stay until the end of your time in care.

Listening to Looked After Children and Young People

- To listen to your views and act on them.
- To provide a social worker you can rely on who keeps to meetings, gives clear information, is honest and responds when needed.
- Make looked after children and young people aware of their rights and to train others in the rights of looked after children and young people.
- To ensure that young people are involved in the creation and regular review of all care plans.

Support

- Better help getting into school whatever has happened.
- To provide support so looked after children and young people can see their family (i.e. transport)
- To use reliable transport for young people.
- To organise group activities for young people in care and those leaving care.
- That if bullying arises for any looked after child or young person it will be dealt with quickly and efficiently.
- To support young people in care to find training, education or a job that suits them when they leave school.

Extract from Part 12 of the Constitution – Roles and Responsibilities of Councillors

6. Principal roles

6.5 To fulfil your responsibilities as a “corporate parent” for children and young people in the care of the local authority

- by having an understanding of the profile and needs of the children in the care of the local authority
- by being aware of the impact on looked-after children of all council decisions
- by considering whether this would be good enough for your own child
- by ensuring that action is taken to address shortcomings in the service and to improve outcomes for looked-after children.
- by being aware of the work and aims of the corporate parenting panel and, if nominated by your group leader, attend meetings of the corporate parenting panel as a committee member

6.6 The council has established a Corporate Parenting Panel, whose role is to secure councillor involvement and commitment throughout the council to deliver better outcomes for children and young people who are looked after. The terms of reference now follow:

Part 12.1 – Role and Function of the Corporate Parenting Panel

Composition

The Corporate Parenting Panel will comprise up to 12 elected councillors nominated by group leaders

Role and Function

To secure councillor involvement and commitment throughout the council to deliver better outcomes for children and young people who are looked after.

To ensure that corporate parenting is a key mechanism by which councillors and officers can ensure that for children and young people in its care, Wiltshire Council is providing:

- warm, welcoming and safe accommodation
- high 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 for all and consistent with the needs and abilities of the child
- opportunities and encouragement for self-development and keeping fit and healthy

- encouragement to take up hobbies, acquiring life skills and being a good citizen
- assistance with transition from care to looking after themselves, including the provision of suitable accommodation
- placement stability that will avoid disruption and maintain continuity of care, education placements and relationships.

The Corporate Parenting Panel will:

- undertake regular monitoring of the outcomes associated with these priorities
- make a commitment to prioritising the needs of looked-after children and young people and their carers
- receive reports from the Children in Care Council and act on their views
- provide clear strategic and political direction in relation to corporate parenting
- show ambition and aspirations for all looked-after children and care leavers
- ensure that all councillors and Wiltshire Council departments are fulfilling their roles and responsibilities as corporate parents proactively. This may involve, for example, the Corporate Parenting Panel organising specific education and training events for all members to ensure they are equipped with the knowledge and skills to be corporate parents
- receive regular/annual reports on the level and quality of services to looked-after children and care leavers
- promote achievement and acknowledge the aspirations of children and young people looked after by supporting celebration events
- investigate on behalf of all councillors ways in which the role of corporate parenting can be improved, using examples from other local authorities
- listen to the views of children, young people and their carers to involve them in the assessment and development of services
- engage with children and young people who are looked after, or have left care, by inviting them to act as advisers to the Panel
- meet with government inspectors, where appropriate, for their input into inspections
- anticipate as members of the adoption and fostering panel
- champion the provision of council-based work experience placements and apprenticeships for looked after young people
- agree a work plan, review progress, membership of the panel and attainment of its role and terms of reference and report to the Cabinet and Children's Services Select Committee as appropriate, and in any case to the Full Council annually.