

Bi Annual Update from the Corporate Parenting Panel

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide a bi-annual update to the Children's Select Committee on the progress and achievements of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

2. Background

- 2.1 In January 2016 the Panel approved their Corporate Parenting Strategy for 2016-18. **Copy attached as Appendix 1.**
- 2.2 Working together with children looked after and care leavers the Corporate Parenting Panel highlighted within this Strategy seven strategic priorities which if delivered will improve outcomes for both children looked after and care leavers.
- 2.3 Corporate Parenting Panel have nominated a Cllr to act as lead member for each of the seven priorities. The lead Cllr will meet regularly with relevant officers, scrutinise data and plans, and where appropriate meet with young people. Feedback on progress is then provided at each meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel.
- 2.4 The Corporate Parenting Strategy requires a six-monthly update to Children's Select on the progress made against each strategic priority. This report provides this update.

3. Update on Strategic Priorities

3.1 Strengthen the Corporate Parenting Role and Corporate Parenting function across Wiltshire Council as a whole – Cllr Laura Mayes

- Cllr Laura Mayes continues to chair the Corporate Parenting Panel, she also sits on the Looked After Children, Young People and Care Leavers Improvement Board and attends performance review meetings for relevant social work teams. Cllr Mayes is therefore well placed to provide Corporate Parenting Panel with a broad overview of performance across Families and Children's Services.
- In the last six months Cllr attendance at Panel has been good, new members have been welcomed to panel following elections in May and this has added a positive new dynamic to panel discussions.

- Panel's relationship and contact with young people in care and care leavers has improved. The structure and frequency of Shared Guardian sessions have been changed to maximise the value of these events. A consistent group of Cllrs will now meet with a larger group of children. We have used the initial sessions to update our promise to children in care, among other things this has identified the importance of stability of placement and placement choice. These are two themes that we will continue to scrutinise in the next 6 months.

3.2 Continue to improve timeliness of permanency for looked after children across the range of permanency options - *Cllr Jane Davies and Sally Smith – Chair of Wiltshire Fostering Association*

- Panel receives regular data on placement stability. Long-term placement stability at 77% is good (looked after for at least 2.5 years, in the same placement for the last 2 years), this is above the end of year target (72%) and national averages (68%). The percentage of children experiencing three or more moves during their first year in care has declined (10%) and is now within our target range and is line with the national average.
- Panel has received summary reports outlining learning from placement disruptions and Cllr Davies and Sally Smith meet regularly with the Fostering Service Manager to monitor how recommendations from learning are implemented.
- Corporate Parenting Panel has given its support to the implementation of a Mocking Bird type project in Wiltshire. This initiative, led by Wiltshire foster carers, will see foster carers working together to support each other. Panel will monitor the impact that this has upon children cared for within these hubs, it is anticipated that this will further improve permanency rates.

3.3 Ensure that there is sufficient accommodation for looked after children within Wiltshire which meets the needs of those children. Prioritise placement within Wiltshire – *Cllr Pat Aves and Sally Smith*

- Cllr Aves and Sally Smith have regular meetings with the Fostering Service manager to review the foster carer recruitment strategy. Performance data, including KPI for the fostering service is available for review.
- At each meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel an update is presented on placement budget and progress with foster carer recruitment is monitored.
- Panel have noted the growth in the number of new applications to foster but remain concerned that net growth is slow and that internal targets are unlikely to be met by year end. Panel will continue to scrutinise and seek evidence of impact on children through shared guardian sessions and reports from the Head of Service.

3.4 Improve care leavers journey by ensuring an enhanced offer to care leavers across all areas: education, employment and training, independent living, housing options and health – *Cllrs George Jeans and Melody Thompson*

- Corporate Parenting Panel has received regular updates on service plans in response to the Children and Social Work Act 2017. Within this there is a focus on services to care leavers.

- Cllr Jeans and Cllr Thompson continue to monitor development of the Wiltshire 'local offer' to care leavers. A first draft of the offer is due to be presented to panel for scrutiny in January 2018.
- Panel supported officers in their bid to ensure Care Leavers are included as a priority group in the Council Housing Strategy and have been instrumental in developing a pilot shared housing scheme within Wiltshire.
- Data submitted to panel is closely scrutinised. The percentage of care leavers in suitable accommodation at 98% for 16-18 year olds is good. This drops to 83% for 19-21 year olds and while this is better than the national average this will become a focus for attention as there is room for improvement here. A similar trend is seen in relation to EET figures, with 90% of 16-18 year olds in education or training but dropping to 46% for 19-21 yr olds. Panel will monitor the success of the Building Bridges programme in providing routes into employment for our older care leavers.

3.5 Improve the educational outcomes for looked after children; closing the gap between looked after children and other children in the county – *Cllr Phil Whalley*

- Cllr Whalley has regular meetings with the new Virtual School Head to scrutinise performance data and improvement plans.
- For the second year in a row our GCSE results have been strong with over 30% achieving 5 GCSE's including English and Maths. While we still wait for national data we do know that our performance is stronger than statistical and geographical neighbours.
- Our results at key stages 1-3 are poorer and consequently the Virtual School improvement plan identifies early years as a key point of focus.
- Cllr Whalley is a member of the newly constituted Virtual School Board of Governors and attended the inaugural meeting in Sept.
- New arrangements are in place to ensure Pupil Premium spend is targeted more effectively. Performance measures for individual children, schools and cohorts are being developed. Cllr Whalley works closely with the VSH on each of these developments and provides regular feedback to panel.
- The Virtual School Head is a member of Corporate Parenting Panel. In October she presented her initial assessment of the performance of the Virtual School and set out the priority action areas. These actions were endorsed by panel.

3.6 Ensure that looked after children are protected from the risk of child sexual exploitation and reduce the frequency with which some looked after children and care leavers currently go missing – *Cllr Pauline Church*

- Cllr Church meets with the manager of the Emerald Team and detailed reports are presented to every meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel.
- The quality and effectiveness of return interviews is monitored by panel. The percentage of missing episodes where a return interview is offered continues

to increase and reached 96% in Sept 2017 with 46% of these being completed.

- Push and pull factors are reported. Panel has discussed the problem the team experiences in tracking children placed in Wiltshire by other local authorities and the difficulty the Emerald Team experience when communicating with other local authorities where Wiltshire children are placed out of county. Both issues will be subject to continued scrutiny by panel.
- Cllr Church has also attended a MASH tour and presentation. Cllr Church reported to Panel that she observed a good mix of social work and police collaboration with good use made of child sexual exploitation indicators. Arrangements are being made for Cllr Church to attend a return interview to observe practice.

3.7 Ensure that looked after children and care leavers have timely and easy access to mental health services – ***Cllr Stewart Palmen***

- Cllr Palmen joined Panel following changes to membership after the general election. He has met with Sam Shrubshole from CAMHS to examine access routes and service provision for looked after children.
- Following the meeting with CAMHS Cllr Palmen plans to visit the OSCAR outreach/crisis team to better understand how this team supports children in placement and works with residential staff and foster carers.
- Priorities identified include the effectiveness of transition routes between CAMHS and adult mental health services and access to voluntary/community provision including MIND.

4. Proposal

4.1 That the Committee note the update from the Corporate Parenting Panel.

4.2 A full annual report will be presented to Children's Select at the end of the financial year.

Lucy Townsend (Director Families and Children's Services)

Report Author: Martin Davis (Head of Service)

30 November 2017

Appendix 1 – Corporate Parenting Strategy

**Wiltshire Council
Corporate
Parenting
Strategy
2016 – 2018**

Why the Corporate Parenting Strategy is important

Hello and welcome to Wiltshire Council's Corporate Parenting Strategy, which is about what looked after children and care leavers expect our corporate parents to do and work towards to be good in their role.

The strategy is about us – the children and young people in and leaving Wiltshire Council's care. It's about how we are looked after and how things can be made better for us – not just while we are in care but also afterwards.

Within the strategy the corporate parents have worked with the Children in Care Council to set out a number of priorities. This is important as it means our views are included within the strategy.

As the Children in Care Council represent that voice of all looked after children and care leavers, it is really important to us that the strategy works, so that children and young peoples' experience of being in Wiltshire's care is a positive one and builds solid foundations for our future.

We run this programme to benefit all Children in Care. As young people, we feel like our voice is not always heard and we ask that all Corporate Parents commit to spending time listening to us.

- Children in Care Council members, January 2017

1. Introduction

Wiltshire Council (the "Council") recognises that Looked After Children and Care Leavers are among the most vulnerable children and young people in our society.

The Council has a legal duty to act as a good and effective Corporate Parent to children and young people in its care.

The Council is guided in its duty as a Corporate Parent by The National Children's Bureau, which has produced guidance supported by central government, including a summary of the legal and policy guidance that informs Corporate Parenting. This strategy has been developed having regard to that guidance.

An effective Corporate Parent will ensure that looked after children and care leavers have at least the same care, nurture, support and life chances as any other child in our society might expect. Where these opportunities are not provided Corporate Parents will have failed in their primary duty.

As a responsible and reasonable Corporate Parent, the Council will deliver on our Promise to looked after children. This Promise was made following a meeting with the Children in Care Council who had talked to other children and young people in care to ask them what they wanted from their Corporate Parents. The wording below came direct from the young people themselves:

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 children and young people are involved in the creation and regular review of their care plans.*

Support

- *Better help getting into school or college 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.*

The aim of this strategy is to ensure that the Council's Corporate Parenting functions support improvement in services and to ensure the best possible outcomes for children and young people. In order to achieve this, it is essential that Councillors:

- Understand their roles and responsibilities as Corporate Parents.
- Scrutinise and challenge how the Council performs in delivering its services as a Corporate Parent.
- Engage effectively, with energy, consistency, and confidence with children and young people so that their voice is heard and has influence.
- Support and enable children and young people to challenge where services need to improve.
- Maintain a comprehensive overview of the progress of looked after children and for care leavers, ensuring they consistently scrutinise the quality, effectiveness and performance of the services that support them.

2. Corporate Parenting - Defined Responsibilities

Services for looked after children and care leavers need to be co-ordinated, focused and effective. Responsibility for this rests at a corporate level with Councillors who will hold senior staff accountable for the implementation of strategies and services.

In 2009, The National Children's Bureau, funded by the Government, created a gold-standard approach to corporate parenting, with a range of resources available to Councillors to help them design the best-fit corporate parenting model for local needs and to understand and fulfil their corporate parenting roles. This has been updated year on year and is available on the NCB website:
<http://www.ncb.org.uk/corporate-parenting>

NCB publications identify three distinct levels of role responsibility for Councillors; 'universal', 'targeted' and 'specialist'. These responsibility levels are defined below:

Universal responsibility

Every elected member and manager within Wiltshire Council, in conjunction with members of governing bodies of partner agencies, needs to:

- Understand their 'Corporate Parenting' role
- Have knowledge of the profile and needs of looked after children, young people and care leavers
- Understand the impact of council decisions on all looked after children and young people

- Examine information about current levels of quality of care and services for young people and assess whether this would be 'good enough' for their own child
- If shortcomings in services and support for young people are identified, ensure that action is taken to address these shortcomings and strive to continually improve outcomes.

Targeted responsibility

For elected members who visit Children's Homes or who are members of the Corporate Parenting Panel, and for managers of children's services, their responsibilities are as above.

In addition they will also need to make sure, in partnership with those with lead responsibility in partner agencies, that they:

- Are aware of Government expectations regarding services for looked after children and young people
- Have access to and examine qualitative and quantitative information about children and young people in Wiltshire
- Consider how they are going to respond to and hear the voice of children and young people and their carers/parents
- Continually take action, in conjunction with officers and partner agencies, to improve services and respond to changing needs

Specialist responsibility

This includes key roles of the Lead member for Children's Services, the Director of Children's Services, and the Chair of Corporate Parenting Panel. There is a responsibility for these individuals to:

- Provide leadership across the Council in safeguarding and monitoring the welfare of looked after children and young people
- Ensure effective governance arrangements are in place
- Undertake regular in-depth analysis of the needs of looked after children and young people and the services required to meet these needs
- Ensure the strategic plans of the Council and joint plans with partner agencies reflect the needs of looked after children and young people
- Keep up-to-date with national research and new performance indicators in relation to looked after children and young people

3. Corporate Parenting Panel – Functions and Terms of Reference

The Corporate Parenting Panel is the primary vehicle for Councillors to meet with key officers and to challenge and scrutinise the performance, quality and efficacy of Wiltshire Council's services.

The Corporate Parenting Panel will comprise up to 8 Core Members drawn from elected Councillors politically balanced and nominated by group leaders. Group leaders will ensure that they appoint substitute members to cover absences.

Associate Members will include officers from the council and key partner agencies and comprise of:

1. Corporate Director
2. Associate Director – Children's Operational Services
3. Head of Care, Placements and EDS
4. Senior Commissioning Officer – Children's Social Care (Voice and Influence)
5. A Representative from the Children in Care Council
6. Cabinet Member for Children's Services
7. Chair of Wiltshire Fostering Association
8. Conference and Reviewing Service Manager
9. Designed Doctor for Looked After Children
10. Virtual School Headteacher

If any of the core members are unable to attend a meeting they will send a substitute representative.

On behalf of all Councillors acting as Corporate Parents, the Corporate Parenting Panel will ensure delivery of the following seven strategic priorities:

- Strengthen the Corporate Parenting Role and Corporate Parenting function across Wiltshire Council as a whole.
- Continue to improve timeliness of permanency for looked after children across the range of permanency options.
- Ensure that there is sufficient accommodation for looked after children within Wiltshire which meets the needs of those children. Prioritise placement within Wiltshire.
- Improve care leavers journey by ensuring an enhanced offer to care leavers across all areas: education, employment and training, independent living, housing options and health.
- Improve the educational outcomes for looked after children; closing the gap between looked after children and other children in the county.
- Ensure that looked after children are protected from the risk of child sexual exploitation and reduce the frequency with which some looked after children and care leavers currently go missing.

- Ensure that looked after children and care leavers have timely and easy access to mental health services.

The Panel will appoint a Chairperson on an annual basis.

To ensure that strategic oversight and critical challenge is effective, each member of board will have a lead role in relation to delivery of one strategic priority.

4. Quorum

The quorum of the Corporate Parenting Panel will be 75% (6) Councillors, 70% (7) Associate Members in attendance. Where the meeting is not quorate, the Chairperson will adjourn the meeting.

5. Frequency of meetings

The Corporate Parenting Panel will meet bi-monthly with a minimum of 5 meetings a year.

6. Reporting

The Panel would report its work through the Wiltshire Council Children's Select Committee. Following each meeting the Chairperson will send a copy of the Panel minutes to the Chairman of Children's Select Committee. On a six monthly basis the Panel Chairperson will prepare a report for Chairman of the Children's Select Committee, addressing progress against each of the seven strategic priorities.

In addition to this the Chairperson of the Corporate Parenting Panel will present an annual report to Full Council which will be shared with the Children's Select Committee prior to submission.

7. Terms of Reference

Corporate Parenting Panel will;

- Make a commitment to prioritising the needs of looked after children and young people and their carers and demand that all departments within the Council prioritise the needs of this group
- 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

- Investigate on behalf of all Councillors ways in which the role of Corporate Parenting can be improved, using examples of research and effective practice 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
- Monitor the performance, quality and outcomes of the Council's services in relation to children and young people in public care and identify any areas for improvement
- Scrutinise key performance indicators in relation to children and young people in the care of Wiltshire Council
- Meet with government inspectors, where appropriate, for their input into inspections
- Participate as members of the adoption and fostering panels
- 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.