



## **DERBY CITY CORPORATE PARENTING FORUM**

### **SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The Ofsted Safeguarding and Looked After Children report of June 2011 noted the low profile of looked after children and that 'there is no Corporate Parenting Board, and elected members do not provide rigorous challenge or effectively champion outcomes for looked after children and young people'.
- 1.2 It is proposed to strengthen the role of members and widen the responsibilities of all areas of the Council in supporting and developing the services to and outcomes for our Looked After Children. The term of reference have been discussed at the Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission on 12 July 2011.
- 1.3 The proposed Forum would include a wider group of councillors and officers than currently constituted. The governance and reporting responsibility would be extended to include Chief Officer Group and the Children Families and Learners Board.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 To receive the report, note the contents and agree to support the business of the Corporate Parenting Forum.
- 2.2 To agree the revised reporting and communication regime as outlined in the terms of reference in Appendix 2.
- 2.3 To approve the updated terms of reference and the need for increased representation.
- 2.4 To agree that the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council are invited to one Corporate Parenting Forum per year.
- 2.5 To support the elected members training and development programme planned for 2011/12

### **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 Looked After Children (LAC) are Children and Young People in Public Care. LAC are the collective responsibility of all Council Officers, Elected Members and partners. Corporate Parenting requirements constitute the formal and local partnerships needed between all divisions in the Local Authority and associated agencies responsible for

working together to meet the needs of LAC. This includes all Service Directors considering corporate parenting implications in any proposed decisions within reports progressing through the political process. 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.

- 3.2 A Corporate Parenting sub group had been formally established some years ago. Providing a focal point for the interests of LAC and Care Leavers in Derby, the sub group acted as a representative body for elected members in terms of their role as corporate parents. The Corporate Parenting sub group had not met for some time and the sub group was eventually disbanded as there was a recognition that it was in need of a complete overhaul.
- 3.3 It is anticipated the Corporate Parenting Forum will meet bi-monthly. Standing items on the agenda will include themed reports relating to the Every Child Matters outcomes, progress against the Children's Pledge, statistics that provide useful information about the progress our LAC are making, and reports detailing officer's regular inspection of the residential care homes in Derby City.
- 3.4 The Corporate Parenting Forum has updated terms of reference, and these are attached at Appendix 2. The terms of reference for the forum include a remit to receive information being provided by the Council for all LAC, such as the approval of new protocols and policies for looked after children.

## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 4.1 The numbers of LAC varies from week to week. Over the past 12 months there has been between 450 and 490 LAC within Derby City Council. (This means cared for more than 24 Hours by the authority). They fall into 4 main groups:
  - Children who are accommodated under a voluntary agreement with their parents (section 20)
  - Children who are the 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).
- 4.2 There are many reasons why children become looked after by local authorities. The main reason is that they cannot be safely cared for within their own homes and families. They are all likely to have undergone distressing experiences. Children who are looked after have, identities, aspirations and particular needs and it is the responsibility of the local authority to ensure they achieve positive outcomes through the quality of care and services afforded them.
- 4.3 Many children in care are subject to care orders. This means that the local authority has gone to court to assume parental responsibility because the child has suffered or is likely to suffer 'significant harm'.

- 4.4 Although children on care orders can live with a parent, most are cared for away from their families, in foster placements or residential children's homes.

#### **4.5 CORPORATE PARENTING FORUM**

- 4.6 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 also ensures that praise and encouragement is given and achievements are recognised and celebrated.

- 4.7 The Corporate Parenting Forum should meet every 2 months. The role and responsibility of the forum is set in the terms of reference (appendix 2). The priorities for the forum is to ensure the quality of service to LAC with specific reference to:

- Ensuring children are provided with safe and stable environment where they can develop positive and caring relationships with adults and children.
- Achieving the highest possible standard of education, wherever possible in mainstream schools.
- Ensuring that they are helped to be emotionally and physically as 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 in their transition to adulthood and promote their economic prospects.
- Ensuring children are consulted and influence decisions and plans that affect them individually.

- 4.8 It is proposed that the forum is chaired by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Children and Young People and the Strategic Director for Children and Young People, (Andrew Bunyan) is vice-chair. The forum has representation from the Children in Care Council, cross-party Elected Members, senior officers from across the Council's directorate, local partnerships, foster carers and health.

#### **4.9 REPRESENTATION AND SUPPORT**

- 4.10 Having cross-party representation, the Corporate Parenting Forum relies on the involvement and commitment of elected members, senior officers across the Council, foster cares 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 groups and settings.
- 4.11 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. The training and development programme for elected members will now include a modular based approach, incorporating Safeguarding, Corporate Parenting and a specific event for portfolio holders. This has been timetabled to commence from late Summer/Autumn 2011.
- 4.12 Forum meetings are structured in such a way as to provide forum members with the latest developments in legislation, research, policy and practice as they relate to LAC.
- 4.13 Forum members are also invited to training events, workshops, and conference related to the subject of LAC to enable them to remain engaged with the issues.

4.14 LAC and Care Leavers views will be represented through the Children and Young People Engagement Officer and the Children in Care Council with the Children's Pledge incorporated into the work programme for the forum.

#### **4.15 CHILDREN'S PLEDGE/CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL**

4.16 Care Matters identifies underpinning principles that Local Authorities must adhere to in complying with the basic statutory duties relating to Looked After Children. It places a responsibility on Corporate Planning arrangements of Local Authorities to ensure LAC have been consulted and are involved in developing the pledge, the regular review of the 'pledge' and that the pledge is reflected in the Children and Young People's plan.

4.17 The pledge is a statement about the support and services in care can expect to receive in relation to:

- What they can expect from Derby City Council as a child in care;
- Encouraging best practice;
- Promoting better outcomes;
- Reinforcing our corporate parent responsibilities

4.18 Derby's Children's Pledge has been launched. The performance of the Council in relation to the Pledge commitments will be assessed and reviewed through the Children in Care Council and will be reported at each Corporate Parenting Forum.

#### **OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

5.1 None

**This report has been approved by the following officers:**

<b>Legal officer</b> <b>Financial officer</b> <b>Human Resources officer</b> <b>Service Director(s)</b> <b>Other(s)</b>	Stuart Leslie
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<b>For more information contact:</b> <b>Background papers:</b> <b>List of appendices:</b>	Name 01332 643556 e-mail Andrew.Bunyan@derby.gov.uk  Appendix 1 – Implications Appendix 2 – Terms of Reference
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<b>IMPLICATIONS</b>
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**Financial and Value for Money**

- 1.1 There are no significant implications arising from this report

**Legal**

- 2.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the report

**Personnel**

- 3.1 None

**Equalities Impact**

- 4.1 Yes

**Health and Safety**

- 5.1 None

**Environmental Sustainability**

- 6.1 None

**Asset Management**

- 7.1 None

**Risk Management**

- 8.1 None

**Corporate objectives and priorities for change**

- 9.1 To fulfil statutory duties relating to Looked After Children.

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Corporate Parenting Forum Terms of Reference**

#### **Council Priorities**

Corporate Parenting highlights the collective responsibility of Councils, their elected members and their partners for all children and young people in their care and constitutes the formal and local partnerships needed between all local authority departments and services, and associated agencies, who are responsible for working together to meet the needs of looked after children and young people.

#### **Statutory Responsibility**

The Children Act 1989 and the Children Act 2009 set out the duty of a local authority to safeguard and promote the welfare of looked after children. This duty is exercised through the role of the corporate parent to children who are looked after. The term 'looked after' refers to any child or young person for whom the authority has, or shares, parental responsibility, or for whom the authority provides care and accommodation to the child or young person on behalf of their parent.

#### **Aims and Principles**

The Corporate Parenting plays a key role in ensuring that the Council is effectively discharging its duty, as corporate parent, to safeguard and promote the welfare of looked after children. To achieve this Councillors need to have a clear understanding and awareness of the 'pledge' they have made to Looked After Children in Derby City so that they can ensure that their responsibilities as corporate parents are reflected in all aspects of the work of the Council. In addition to this all service divisions should have their services audited to improve their ability to deliver to the corporate parenting agenda, and have mechanisms in place to continually monitor and review the means by which their services contribute to positive outcomes for looked after children; specifically, each division will develop and promote:

In accordance with requirements of the Care Matters Time for Change document, the main aim of the Forum is to oversee the and ensure Derby City Council has provided the following for children and young people in its care:

- Ensure children are provided with safe and stable environment where they can develop positive and caring relationships with adults and children.
- Achieve the highest possible standard of education, wherever possible in mainstream schools.
- Ensure that they are helped to be emotionally and physically as fit and healthy as possible.
- Understand their needs and ensure they have realistic aspirations, self determination, confidence and resilience to achieve what they want to achieve.

- Support and assist their transition to adulthood and promote their economic prospects.
- Ensure children are consulted and influence decisions and plans that affect them individually

To achieve this, the Forum will ensure services are in place to:

- Match children to placements that will need their assessed needs.
- Work with children and young people to resolve and problems they may experience.
- Work with other agencies to ensure the children in our care benefit from the services they provide.
- 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.

## **Meetings and Membership**

The Forum will meet every two months. The agenda and minutes will be circulated prior to the meeting.

The Cabinet member for Children and Young People will chair the Forum and the Vice Chair will be the Strategic Director of Children's Services. The lead Officer will be Service Director, Specialist Services.

Membership will consist of:

- Senior representatives of all strategic directors of the council
- Cross-party representation of Councillors
- Children and Young Peoples' Engagement Officer
- Representative from Derby City Carers
- Representative from Connexions
- Representative from Health Services
- Representative from Derby Foster Carers
- Representatives from Children Services Department

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 Every Child Matters outcomes within the Care Matters Time for Change document and the children's 'Pledge'. They will also receive annual reports as required from regulated services e.g. fostering, adoption, children's homes etc.

The objectives of the forum will be closely monitored and reviewed. A progress report will be presented at each Forum

## **Governance**

Corporate Parent Forum will report annually to

- Children Family and Learners Board
- Derby City Partnership
- Chief Officer Group
- Cabinet
- Full council
- Children in Care Council

Corporate Parent Forum will invite the Chief executive and the Lead Member of the council to one meeting a year.

## **Views of Children and Young People**

The Forum will ensure that the views of children and young people are represented. The Children and Young Peoples' Engagement Officer will be 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.

The forum will report back to the Children in Care Council when invited to do so.

## **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 their respective service areas and political groups and settings

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.

Examples of where and how elected members can actively promote the needs of Looked After Children:

- Engagement with the work of the Children in Care Council and the project worker
- Jointly undertaking Regulation 33 inspections
- Arranging to visit Children's Homes and talking to the children who live there about their experience of care.
- Attend events and ceremonies celebrating the success of Looked After Children
- Act as a mentor for individual Looked After Children
- Visit service areas in Social Care and Safeguarding
- Promote and champion Looked After Children within the formal and informal political arena.

### **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 departments.
- 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 Terms of Reference will be reviewed in June 2012**

Andrew Bunyan  
Strategic Director  
(Children and Young People's Services)

27 July 2011