

CREATING OPPORUNITIES AND TACKLING INEQUALITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Agenda Item No. 4
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Report of the Executive Director of Children’s Services

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CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL ANNUAL REPORT

1. PURPOSE

1.1 This is a report to update the Committee on the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP) covering the last twelve months. The future format of the report is to be reviewed by the CPP.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 Report to be noted.

3. LINKS TO THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

3.1 Corporate Parents have a duty to actively safeguard and promote the welfare of the children they look after. This duty is entirely consistent with the ‘Creating Opportunities – tackling inequalities’ priority that includes both improving health and supporting vulnerable people as well as ‘Creating strong and supportive communities’ that talks about making Peterborough safer, building community cohesion and building pride in the City.

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 During Ofsted inspections of services for looked after children, the effectiveness of Corporate Parenting Groups is often commented upon. Ofsted observations of these groups or panels is generally that when the panels work well they provide the leadership necessary to drive ambitious and coherent multi-agency approaches to improving outcomes for children in care and care leavers. Conversely where they do not work well services for children in care tend to be less effective. Where services have been judged as ‘good’ Ofsted have found Corporate Parenting Panels have shared the following features.

They have:

- Demonstrated a strong cross-party commitment to looked after children, by championing their rights, having high aspirations for their achievement, monitoring children’s progress and challenging outcomes
- Clearly understood it’s role and the responsibilities of the local authority towards looked after children and planned for and prioritised their needs, resulting in a greater focus on improving outcomes
- Actively engaged with their young people, for example through children in care councils that are well-established and have effective regular links with senior management and elected members.

Peterborough City Council’s Corporate Parenting Panel is determined to meet these expectations and its work of the past 12 months is evidence of the commitment of members and officers in this regard. It was during this year that the panel revised and strengthened the Terms of Reference for the panel and have agreed to set out the work of the Panel in an Annual Report to Scrutiny.

5. KEY ISSUES

- 5.1 The agenda items that have been considered by the CPP over the past twelve months have been varied and have sought to ensure that the Panel base their judgments about the quality of care provided by the Council on a number of different sources. These include regular reports from Foster Carer representatives, regular feedback from the Children in Care Council representatives of which attend nearly every meeting of the panel and from analyses of complaints made by or on behalf of children and young people. In addition the panel requests reports from officers on specific topics that are of most concern to them.
- 5.2 More recently these topics have been drawn together to represent the priorities that will drive the Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy which are:
1. Assertive prevention of care by supporting families
 2. Effective care planning
 3. Placement stability and range of high quality placement provision
 4. Health issues of children and young people in care
 5. Educational attainment and achievement
 6. Leisure and interests outside of school
 7. Working to our promises in the Pledge
- 5.3 At each meeting the CPP considers reports from one or more of these areas in order to ensure that over the course of the year all the priorities for the service will have been considered. Reports that have been tabled during the past year include:
- Updates on performance in the Fostering and Adoption services that have provided details about numbers of new carers and adopters being recruited and to advise about the development of the Fostering Recruitment Strategy.
 - Information about changes to regulation, policy and statute insofar as they impact upon Children In Care and Care Leavers.
 - Ofsted Inspection outcomes. In October 2012 there was an inspection of the Fostering Service which resulted in a judgment of adequate.
 - A report on the leisure, culture and health work championed through the Vivacity Board
 - Reports of educational attainment, the functioning of the Virtual School and progress in reducing the numbers of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)
 - A report from Health colleagues about how children and young peoples emotional and physical health needs are monitored and reviewed
 - A report about how children with disabilities who are in care are supported with their transition to adults services.
- 5.4 In addition to the reports as outlined above the Panel receives an update at each meeting about where the children and young people are placed by placement type. This enables them to monitor the numbers of children who are placed in the more preferable family based placements such as foster care or family and friends care as opposed to residential care. While residential care is a necessity for a minority of young people with very complex needs the vast majority of children should always be placed in family homes.
- 5.5 As is consistent with best practice the service has developed a local 'scorecard' with the data broken down into categories that enables Elected Members to evaluate the information and monitor local targets for improvement. For example there is now an objective to recruit more local carers for our local children so that they do not have to be placed a long way from the City. A local measure about how many children are placed more than ten miles from the City has been set so that the CPP and others can measure progress against this objective. The scorecard includes comparative data so Members can see how performance differs from elsewhere.
- 5.6 The CPP is familiarising itself with the scorecard and will no doubt present the appropriate degree of scrutiny and challenge where performance appears to require improvement or where an explanation of the story behind the data is required.

5.7 Finally the CPP has overseen the revision of the Children In Care Pledge. This has been updated by the Children In Care Council in consultation with a wider group of children in care and was presented to the CPP in July 2012. The Pledge has now been distributed to all children in care and care leavers and will be taken to full Council for information very shortly. The CPP report template has been revised to ensure that all reports now specify in what way the work that is being reported upon is contributing to keeping the commitments made to children in the Pledge.

5.8 Conclusion

The most important benefit of effective corporate parenting will be to improve outcomes for individual children, but there are other benefits. If effective services have been developed that meet the needs of Peterborough's children in care and care leavers there will be less need to look outside the authority to purchase emergency or specialist provision. Such provision is not only costly but is less likely to provide the child or young person with stability over time, leading to poor outcomes. If children are not provided with good care at an early stage they are risk of worsening problems and disrupted placements leading to higher costs and increasingly complex difficulties that often last into early adulthood and beyond. In addition Ofsted will in future not only examine the local authority services for children in care, but also the effectiveness of corporate parenting arrangements.

5.9 In short, good local services and placements are likely to improve the life chances of children in care, be better value for money and contribute to good performance ratings. The Corporate Parenting Panel has an important contribution to make in maintaining an overview of the quality and effectiveness of services and ensuring that officers are both challenged and supported in order to achieve the objectives set in the Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy.

6. **IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 N/A

7. **CONSULTATION**

7.1 N/A

8. **NEXT STEPS**

8.1 N/A

9. **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

9.1 None

10. **APPENDICES**

10.1 None

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