

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES AND TACKLING INEQUALITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM NO. 6
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Report of the Executive Director of Children’s Services

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REPORT ON THE WORK OF CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 This is a report to update the Committee on the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel covering January 2014 until December 2014.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Report to be noted

3. LINKS TO THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY

- 3.1 Corporate Parents have a duty to actively safeguard and promote the welfare of the children they look after. Elected Members play a crucial role in making sure that the interests of our looked after children and care leavers come first. The Corporate Parenting Panel champions our looked after children and young people, and assures through its scrutiny that we are providing the best possible care and protection to them.

The Panel reviews and monitors the services provided to looked after children and care leavers, monitors the performance of the Council services in relation to how we meet the needs of looked after children and care leavers and reviews and scrutinises the outcome of decisions made or actions taken by or on behalf of the Council in relation to looked after children and care leavers.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 In Ofsted inspections of services for looked after children, the effectiveness of Corporate Parenting is a key area of focus. 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.

- 4.2 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.

- 4.3 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.

5. KEY ISSUES

- 5.1 In 2014 the Corporate Parenting Panel took a particular interest in the complaints that were made by Looked After children and challenged the detail behind the data questioning how the staff would learn from complaints and improve practice and service delivery as a result. There was a clear process established and feedback on outcomes is a regular agenda item at each meeting. There has been improvements in practice in respect of ensuring that children and young people have passports and there is an increased vigilance on applying for British Citizenship when this is required.

- 5.2 Participation of children and young people was promoted effectively through meetings with the CICC in advance of Corporate Parenting Panel meetings, attendance at the LAC Celebration Day and more recently a commitment to championing apprenticeships for care leavers. As corporate parents there was a clear reinforcement of the need for children and young people in care to have their CICC pack in a timely manner and for Care Leavers to have a guide to the services available post sixteen. The CICC packs have been republished and distributed and there are clear check points built into the care planning cycle to ensure that they are moved onto the teenager pack and care leaver guide as required.

- 5.3 Over the year there has been improved information provided to enable councillors to have a good grasp of the Looked After population within Peterborough and the challenges presented by an ever increasingly diverse demographic, the particular challenges of working with interpreters and the issues raised within care proceedings about legal jurisdiction.

- 5.4 The Corporate Parenting Panel has actively requested case studies to illustrate the work undertaken throughout the department and how cases are worked with to prevent the need for the children or young people to become looked after. This has enhanced understanding of the dilemmas, challenges and risks inherent within the social worker role.

- 5.5 The panel have been supportive of the fostering recruitment campaign and were proactive in suggesting how the council tax bills could include a leaflet about fostering to assist with ongoing recruitment. They were also clear that the marketing budget should be maintained to ensure the ongoing work in developing links with those communities that are hard to reach to recruit foster carers and adopters who reflect the ethnicity and cultural heritage of the looked after population.

5.6 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. Children and young people in care and care leavers will achieve well within local education and training provision and will be well prepared for independent living within their local community. Children and young people will have stability of care leading to better outcomes. If children are not provided with good care at an early stage they are at risk of disrupted placements leading to higher costs and increasingly complex difficulties that often last into early adulthood and beyond.

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

9.1 N/A

10. APPENDICES

10.1 Appendix 1 – Peterborough Corporate Parenting Panel Terms of Reference

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