

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES & TACKLING INEQUALITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Agenda Item No. 7
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Report of the Assistant Director of Safeguarding Families and Communities

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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 the last twelve months.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Committee note the report.

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.

Elected Members have a crucial role in making sure that the interests of our looked after children and care leavers come first. The Cabinet set the strategic direction of the Council’s services and determine policy and priorities for the local community within the overall framework set by Government. Elected Members also carry out a key scrutiny role looking at how far the local authority and its partners are acting as good corporate parents.

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.

They have:

- 4.2
- 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 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 The topics that have been discussed this year have been focused on the priorities that 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; and
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 presented to the Panel during the past year include:

- Updates on the Marketing and Recruitment Strategy for Adoption and Fostering;
- Report on the educational attainment of our Looked After population;
- An update from Health colleagues about how children and young peoples' emotional and physical health needs are being met given delays in Initial Health Assessments being completed;
- Recruitment and retention of social workers;
- Participation and engagement strategy of Children in Care and Care Leavers;
- Staying Put Policy;
- Welfare Reforms and impact on care leavers; and
- Regulation 33 visits to Short Break Provision.

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. The scorecard includes comparative data so Members can see how performance differs from elsewhere.

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.

5.7 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 **N/A**

10. **APPENDICES**

10.1 Appendix 1 – Peterborough Corporate Parenting Panel Terms of Reference

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