

<b>CREATING OPPORTUNITIES &amp; TACKLING INEQUALITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>	AGENDA ITEM NO. 9
<b>18 JANUARY 2016</b>	PUBLIC REPORT

## **Report of the Corporate Director of People and Communities**

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### **Report to Creating Opportunities and Tackling Inequalities Scrutiny Committee 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 2015 until September 2015.

#### **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 Children in Care, 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 its role and the responsibilities of the local authority towards children in care and planned for and prioritised their needs, resulting in a greater focus on improving outcomes
  - Hold officers and the wider professional and voluntary agency network to account for

services provided to children in care and care leavers, ensuring these are considered in all aspects of provision across the City

- 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.
- Supported young people to have a clear voice within the Council, and promoted their participation throughout all aspects of service delivery

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 Corporate Parenting Panel has continued to show a keen interest in children and young people's complaints, monitoring these in terms of any emerging patterns from the services provided. It has been noted that YP are feeling able to complain on their own behalf, and often report a positive response once their issue is addressed. Case study presentations have continued at Panel from different aspects of the Council, and a particularly evocative one came from an adopter, sharing all of the highs and some lows of the experience.

5.2 Corporate Parenting Panel has also maintained a close scrutiny of services being provided by partners to Children in Care, and has added its voice to the concerns about the difficulties in providing timely Child and Adolescent Mental Health services to this population of children. This lack of resource has been addressed by significant additional monies being provided, and the Panel is now monitoring the impact of this on waiting times for Children in Care. It is aware that other services are also being provided for these young people within the Council, and has supported the LAC Psychology Service over a long period.

5.3 Another significant issue for Children in Care has been health assessments. Reports have come to Corporate Parenting Panel illustrating patterns of health concern emerging from the assessments, and giving examples of how individual needs have been met for young people as required. Again, there was a resource and organisational issue in terms of the timeliness of Initial Health Assessments, and Panel appropriately asked for updates on this issue and held both Health and Social Care colleagues to account for resolving the difficulties. Additional resources were provided by Health, and a new administrative system has been devised that is significantly improving the service to children and young people. Officers will continue to report on this matter to Panel throughout the year.

5.4 The Corporate Parenting Panel has also demonstrated its interest and concern for Care Leavers, and was fully supportive of the need for the Council to invest more funds into the Staying Put Programme. This allows young people to remain living with their foster carers beyond the age of 18, and offers them options when they look to further education, apprenticeships or other opportunities. The Panel supported the significant investment of up to £130,000 this year, with capacity to increase over the following 2 years as demand increased. This is extremely valuable, considering the current context of needing to demonstrate value for money with all Council activity.

5.5 Apprenticeships for Care Leavers has been another area of interest for the Corporate Parenting Panel. It has been supportive of the significant efforts made to improve opportunities both within the Council itself and in the wider community. The Panel has also recognised that these efforts have yet to come to complete fruition, and will be looking at ways to support these efforts in the coming year.

### 5.6 Conclusion

The work of the Corporate Parenting Panel is key in helping to ensure that the needs of the Children in Care to Peterborough are met consistently, and that outcomes for them improve year on year. This is of benefit to individual children, but in the long term should also impact on

strategic service delivery and the best use of the Council's limited resources in relation to its most vulnerable citizens.

There is a need to develop on the good progress over the last 6 months, as the Council tackles the stronger national agenda around the Voice of the Child, and ensures that the Children In Care Council maintains a strong representation of its members' wishes and feelings. The Corporate Parenting Panel will champion increasingly high ambitions for Peterborough's Children in Care, and offer the appropriate challenge and support to ensure that all parts of the Council and multi-agency partnership work rigorously to this agenda.

**6. IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 N/A

**7. CONSULTATION**

7.1 N/A

**8. NEXT STEPS**

8.1 N/A

**9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

N/A

9.1

**10. APPENDICES**

10.1 Appendix 1 – Peterborough Corporate Parenting Panel Terms of Reference

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