

<b>CHILDREN AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>	AGENDA ITEM No. 6
<b>21 JANUARY 2021</b>	<b>PUBLIC REPORT</b>

Report of:	Corporate Parenting Committee Chairman	
Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Lynne Ayres Cabinet Member for Children’s Services, Education, Skills and the University	
Contact Officer(s):	Nicola Curley Assistant Director Children’s Services	Tel. 864065

**REPORT ON THE WORK OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE FOR 2019-2020**

RECOMMENDATIONS	
<b>FROM:</b> Corporate Parenting Committee Chairman	<b>Deadline date:</b> N/A
It is recommended that the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee notes the work of the Corporate Parenting Committee over the last 12 months.	

**1. ORIGIN OF REPORT**

1.1 A report is submitted to Children and Education Scrutiny Committee annually on the role of the Corporate Parenting Committee.

**2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT**

2.1 The purpose of this report is to advise the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee of activity carried out by the Corporate Parenting Committee in the municipal year 2019-2020

2.2 This report is for the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee to consider under its Terms of Reference Part 3, Section 4 - Overview and Scrutiny Functions, paragraph No. 2.1 Functions determined by Council:

Children’s Services including:

- a) Social Care of Children;
- b) Safeguarding; and
- c) Children’s Health.

2.3 The report addresses all areas of the Children in Care pledge and the Care Leavers’ Charter. It specifically demonstrates to Scrutiny how the Committee has been addressing the increase in the Children in Care population; the changes to the partnership with TACT; and Children in Care and Care Leavers’ education and training needs.

### 3. **TIMESCALES**

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	<b>NO</b>	If yes, date for Cabinet meeting	N/A
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### 4. **BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES**

4.1 Following the changes engendered by the Ofsted Inspection of 2018, the Corporate Parenting Committee has continued to work to support the needs and ambitions of the Council's Children in Care and Care Leavers.

4.1.1 The meeting format has continued to work well, especially at engaging our young people, and in depth discussion of issues relevant to our Children in Care and Care Leavers.

#### 4.2 **Work Programme and Reporting Mechanisms**

4.2.1 The thematic meetings have continued, where a single topic is considered in depth to enable councillors to fully understand the complexity of the issue in the round, have a proper opportunity to scrutinise the information before them and challenge officers in a timely and thorough manner. The Committee focuses on three key areas for children and young people: education; placement; and health. These are linked across the formal and informal meetings, and have been effective in developing ideas and themes for Members to scrutinise.

4.2.2 The final area of development related to bespoke reporting mechanisms for the Corporate Parenting Committee. QlikSense is now the standard reporting tool across Children's Services, and it is possible to monitor all current activity very effectively. The development of a static report (Dashboard) is now in place with feedback from the pilot that Council Members prefer this format.

#### 4.3 **Corporate Parenting Champions**

4.3.1 This has continued to be an effective use of Member influence. Champions are Members who sit on the Committee but have also volunteered to take a particular lead for an area that impacts on Children in Care and Care Leavers. The role of the Corporate Parenting Champion is to support improved outcomes for Children in Care and Care Leavers and champion their needs.

4.3.2 The Committee was asked to note a change to its terms of reference in respect to Champion appointments, which was ratified at Council on 12 December 2018. This followed a recommendation made by the Committee at its informal meeting dated 12 September 2018. The recommendation was as follows: The Committee recommended to Council that the additional Champion role for Effective Care Planning be included within the Corporate Parenting Committee terms of reference, in order to support Children in Care and their carer families, with the aim to improve the stability of placements. The Effective Care Planning position was also formally ratified at the formal Corporate Parenting Committee held on 21 November 2018.

4.3.3 In June 2019 the Corporate Parenting Committee received a report in relation to the Corporate Parenting Champion positions, which was considered by Members.

4.3.4 The purpose of the report was to provide Members with an outline of the proposed Champion positions. The Democratic Services Officer introduced the report to Members and requested them to note the contents and consider the proposed positions they wished to volunteer for. All Champion positions and appointments were ratified at the formal Corporate Parenting Committee meeting in July 2019.

4.3.5 Members discussed the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- The Chairman commented that he wished to see a focus on leaving care transition.
- Members were advised that they could put forward up to three Champion choices.

4.3.6 The Corporate Parenting Committee considered and unanimously resolved to note the report with the following agreed actions;

- That Committee Members would send their preferences for Champion positions to the Democratic Services Officer for ratification at the formal meeting on 17th July 2019;
- The Head of Corporate Parenting would explore the option of including an additional Corporate Parenting Champion role of Care Leavers Transition; and
- To combine the Employment and Training Opportunities within the Council Departments and Partner Agencies and the Education Attainment and access to Higher Education Champion roles.

4.3.7 The Corporate Parenting Champions 2019–2020 have been:  
In between each informal Committee the Corporate Parenting Champion has been responsible

<b>Area of Focus</b>	<b>Champion</b>	<b>Officer Lead</b>
Housing, Finance and Benefits	Councillor Bond	Sean Evans/Sandra Bond
Employment and Training Opportunities within the Council Departments and Partner Agencies	Councillor Ayres	Pat Carrington
Health	Councillor Robinson	Jodie Chambers
Education Attainment and Access To Higher Education	Councillor Bashir	Dee Glover
Recreation and Leisure Activities	Councillor Day	Lauren Smith
Effective Care Planning	Councillor Jones	Michaela Berry

4.3.8 for the following:

- a) Meeting with the Lead Officer;
- b) Undertaking a site visit (virtual where required);
- c) Meeting with a child in care / young person / service user / other officers and discuss their experience of the service for Children in Care; and
- d) Contributing to a brief report back to the Committee.

4.3.9 The new Champion role, created at the suggestion of Councillor Jones, out of discussion around the availability of suitable placements for our children was the Effective Care Planning Champion. Councillor Jones works closely alongside the team manager for the Leaving Care team focusing on particularly 16-18 year olds and preparation for adulthood. Additionally, Councillor Jones has been supporting the introduction of an evidence based approach to support that preparation providing them with the tools for adult life; this is called the 'Passport to Independence'. In September 2019 Councillor Jones provided an update to Members regarding the work being undertaken on a passport to independence for young people in care.

4.3.10 The Health Champion, Councillor Robinson, provided an update regarding the work being undertaken nationally to support young people in care with mental health issues in order to compare what services Peterborough was providing. The aim was to look at a joined-up approach in regards to health and the education provision for Children in Care and a meeting with the Virtual Head Teacher was planned to explore the way forward.

4.3.11 In January 2020, the Chairman complimented Corporate Parenting Champion members on their engagement during their champion roles during 2019 and 2020. The Corporate Parenting Champions provided further overview of their champion area.

The Education Employment and Training and Access to Higher Education Champion, Councillor Bashir, outlined the outcome of a recent visit to the city college and virtual school, and the opportunities for children in care. In addition, the Champion advised that she was a trustee on

- 4.3.12 the vivacity board and hoped to link in some of the opportunities available to young people and children in care. In addition, the champion advised that she would explore the subject of apprenticeship opportunities.
- 4.3.13 The champion for Effective Care Planning, Councillor Jones, provided an update in relation to assessors for apprenticeships. In addition, the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education, Skills and the University also provided an updated in relation to the work being undertaken to improve the apprenticeship scheme which had included the current levy paid by the Authority.
- 4.3.14 The Housing, Finance and Benefits Champion, Councillor Bond, provided an update in relation to her recent meeting about the housing arrangements for Care Leavers. The Champion had gained knowledge about how the services operated and linked in order to support the young people in care. The next steps for the Champion was to visit the Foyer and learn more about the provision for disabled care leavers.
- 4.3.15 The Recreation and Leisure Activities, Councillor Day, spent time with the Children in Care team manager to understand the positive impact that leisure activities have for Children in Care and agreed to send the details of any arts and cultural activities that Children in Care could access.
- 4.3.16 During the 2018-2019 round of work Councillor Ayres, in her role as Employment and Training Opportunities Champion, has been extremely persistent in raising the needs of our Care Leavers at every meeting in this area. The Committee has continued to be supportive of the development of apprenticeship proposals for Care Leavers, and we are really pleased to report that two Care Leavers have now taken up apprenticeships with our partners, TACT and Serco.

#### 4.4 **Specific Focus of Work**

##### 4.4.1 **CIC Population**

- 4.4.2 Over the last year, we have seen numbers of children and young people in care stabilise in Peterborough. At the end of January, this was 375 children altogether. Comparative data for the financial year 2018/2019 on Children in Care nationally was published in the autumn of 2019. This data evidences that Peterborough's numbers were lower across the Eastern region and nationally. This evidences that the Family Safeguarding Model has been embedded in practice and is effective in the right children coming into care for the least period needed.
- 4.4.3 2018-2019 saw Peterborough's stability of placements being the best in the Eastern region and being the second best nationally. This means that for those children who remain in care have the opportunities to remain in the same placement for over 2.5 years.

##### 4.5 **Peer Review July 2019**

- 4.5.1 Children in Care and Care Leavers had a focused Peer Review in the summer of 2019, they focused on a number of key areas such as transfer of cases into the service, our unaccompanied asylum seekers and effective care planning.  
In all three areas they were particularly impressed with practice, verbally sharing with us that they felt children received a good to outstanding service from their social workers.
- 4.5.2 The Peer Reviewers were particularly impressed with the Corporate Parenting Committee and how it was structured with the emphasis for council members to consider Children In Care within all planning and council activity.
- 4.5.3 They equally were impressed with the approach Children in Care were taking with regard to unaccompanied asylum seeking young people who had exhausted all their rights to remain as they felt Peterborough was forward thinking in its practice.  
From the Peer Review there was an action plan developed focusing on areas that we and they agreed needed further focus and work, the service has since then focused on those areas to promote an even more consistent approach to service delivery.

#### 4.6 **TACT Partnership**

- 4.6.1 TACT exercised the right to serve notice of their intention to cease operation of the Permanency Service in the spring of 2019. The service subsequently transferred back to the local authority as of the end of October 2019, with staff and foster carers all coming back to the local authority. This change was initially reported to the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee in September 2019, with a further update provided to the same Scrutiny Committee in March 2020.
- 4.6.2 The focus on its return has been to reassure Foster Carers and staff and to induct them back as well as begin the process of restructuring and developing a recruitment strategy.

#### 4.7 **Meeting Educational Needs**

- 4.7.1 The work to raise awareness of the need to be aspirational for children and young people in care continues. The Virtual School has prioritised with Designated Teachers the need to not only seek the views of children but also to ensure that any ambitions are supported by carers and social workers. The Virtual School contributes to the foster carer training programme and the need to be aspirational is emphasised. The Children in Care Council members have contributed to the consultation around their section of the Personal Education Plan (PEP) and this is in the process of being changed to reflect their views. Other developments within the PEP will improve the quality of termly attainment data collection to ensure education providers are accountable and allow for appropriate interventions from the Virtual School specialist staff.
- 4.7.2 As also identified by Ofsted, there has been a general recognition of a lack of some aspiration for the children and young people of Peterborough in educational terms. This has also translated itself into the ambition we have for our children and young people in care, and the Corporate Parenting Committee has challenged itself and officers to think more creatively about achievement for our children and young people in this area. The Virtual School has been asked to report in a more timely way about young people's academic results, as well as providing their formal validated report, and there is an ongoing project to enhance the function and meaningfulness of Personal Education Plans. The work on apprenticeships is already bearing fruit, as stated above.
- 4.7.3 The placement of children out of city continues to present a level of challenge in respect of securing appropriate and good education provision. To alleviate this there is consultation between social workers, the Access to Resources team and the Virtual School which ensures that children are not placed in local authorities where there are barriers to school admission. The placement of those Children in Care who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and require specialist provision is particularly difficult but is being addressed with the Peterborough SEN team and more widely with the National Association of Virtual School Heads.
- 4.7.4 The Committee also identified a growing trend where Children in Care's educational progress was being negatively impacted by their placement outside of the local area. To meet children's emotional or physical needs, sometimes placements can only be sourced outside of Peterborough, or because of the lack of placement choice, we are forced to identify foster placements across Local Authority borders. This means that another Authority becomes responsible for meeting the child's educational needs, and this can become more challenging if the local school is an Academy with its own admission criteria. Children in Care with Education, Health and Social Care Plans (EHCPs) are an even more specific minority, and identifying a school place after a placement move can take months in some cases.

#### 4.8 **Best Practice Example**

- 4.8.1 The Peer Review reaffirmed the Corporate Parenting Committee Model of best practice is still fit for purpose and is innovative in its approach to including young people having council members as champions and linking strategy with operational issues.

## 4.9 **Links to the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers' Drop In**

4.9.2 The Children in Care Council continues to meet on a monthly basis, and has 8 regular members. The group is well attended during school holiday periods when activities are offered in addition to the normal meeting. In the last 12 months, along with their co-chairing duties at the informal Corporate Parenting Committee meetings, the group has:

- Young Inspectors have been introduced who are taking an active role in reviewing aspects of service delivery that they use. They have produced a report with an action plan on their activity.
- Given feedback to the IROs on their review paperwork.
- Planned and delivered the annual celebration events for children in care.
- Spoken at Corporate Parenting Committee about their experiences in different placements.
- They co-chair the Informal Corporate Parenting Committee.

4.9.2 The 'Children in Charge' youth group for children aged between 8 and 12 continues to meet in alternating weeks. It is regularly attended by an average of 10 young people.

4.9.3 The Care Leavers' drop in continues to operate, attracting an average of 6 young people at each session. They have been consulted on the new "passport to independence" piece of work which evidenced they are ready to live on their own, this has successfully been trialled and implemented.

4.9.4 A second year of full activity programme was offered to children and young people in the summer encompassing a variety of activities and events curated by Children in Care Council members for young people to increase reach and engagement with this group. Young people and their carers have consistently reported back how much they value this because they feel that they are part of a community.

## 5. **CONSULTATION**

5.1 The Children in Care Council has been fully aware and consulted upon the changes referred to in this paper. The feedback from them to date is that working with the Committee is a very positive experience, and that they value the opportunity to work with the Corporate Parenting Champions.

5.2 This report was approved by all members of the Corporate Parenting Committee.

## 6. **ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR IMPACT**

6.1 Children and Education Scrutiny Committee members to accept the report of the Corporate Parenting Committee.

## 7. **REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION**

7.1 *N/A*

## 8. **IMPLICATIONS**

### **Financial Implications**

8.1 None

### **Legal Implications**

8.2 None

### **Equalities Implications**

- 8.3 Children in Care and Care Leavers should be entitled to the same opportunities as their peers.

### **Rural Implications**

- 8.4 None

### **Carbon Impact Assessment**

- 8.5 The report includes the objective of reducing the reliance on out of area placements for children, increasing the range of placements more locally as its contribution to carbon off setting.

### **Other Relevant Implications**

- 8.6 This report provides information on the role of the Corporate Parenting Committee and relates to services provided to children in care and care leavers.

## **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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