

<b>CREATING OPPORTUNITIES AND TACKLING INEQUALITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>	<b>Agenda Item No. 5</b>
<b>16 MARCH 2010</b>	<b>Public Report</b>

## **Report of the Executive Director of Children’s Services**

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### **THE CORPORATE PARENTING PLEDGE TO CHILDREN IN CARE**

#### **1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to share with the Committee the final draft version of the Corporate Parenting Pledge to Children in Care

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That the Committee considers the content of the final draft version of the Pledge and to make any appropriate recommendations which can be included in the report to Cabinet

#### **3. LINKS TO THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT**

- 3.1 One the priorities contained within the Sustainable Community Strategy is Creating Opportunities, Tackling Inequalities, which is within the remit of this Committee.

#### **4. BACKGROUND**

In a letter to Directors of Children’s Services and Lead Members in April 2009 Ed Balls described children in public care as being, *“the litmus test of how we are all delivering the ambitions set out in the Children’s Plan”*.

Central to the drive to improve the lives and outcomes of children in care is Care Matters; A time for Change.

Care Matters requires an integrated step change in custom and practice of all Local Authorities and their partners to address the huge waste of human potential caused by neglect and abuse of the most vulnerable of children and young people.

Care Matters requires all Local Authorities to make effective changes in the following general areas that impact directly on the quality of life of children in public care: ~

- Corporate Parenting,
- Family & Parenting Support,
- Care Placements,
- Delivering a first Class Education,
- Promoting Health & Wellbeing,
- Transition to Adulthood and

- The Role of the Practitioner

Fundamental in achieving these changes is a promise from corporate parents to children in care. This is normally referred to as “the pledge”.

In a letter to children in care in November 2009 Ed Balls told them that,

(1.) We are changing the law so that you must be asked for your views before any major change takes place in your life, for example, before you are moved from a foster carer or children’s home, as well as on day to day issues like pocket money, bedtimes and food.

(2) We have asked all local authorities to set up Children in Care Councils to regularly ask children and young people in their care for their views on how support to you could be improved. Local authorities will also be writing down a set of promises to all children in their care (usually called their ‘Pledge’) about how they will improve the care and support you receive.

Over the past few months, some members of the children in care council, Members of the Corporate Parenting Group and the Departments’ Head of Learning & Opportunity for Children in Care (our virtual head teacher) have been developing the Peterborough Pledge to children in care. The final draft version is attached as appendix 1 to this report.

The intention is that this Scrutiny Committee can have an opportunity to make any final comments prior to it going to Cabinet and then onwards to a full Council Meeting at which Members of Council will be asked to acknowledge their role and responsibilities as corporate parents.

## **5. CONSULTATION**

We have worked hard to attempt to include all key partners in drawing up the pledge. Extensive work has taken place between the CiC participation officer and children in care themselves. A wish list that the children developed was presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel. Further work was undertaken that drew on best (and worst) practice from other Authorities. Options were considered at a workshop session in November 2009 involving Children in Care, Elected Members and Local Authority Officers in order to draw up a first draft of the pledge. Following the discussion and a post it exercise the first draft was drawn up. This is based on the five every child matters outcomes linking to the Children’s Trust shared priorities, plus an additional area to represent other issues that the children in care raised. At the January Corporate Parenting meeting a final version of the Pledge was agreed and prepared for presentation to the full Council. Through out the process Children in Care, Social Workers and Education Team for Children in Care (ETCiC) have been aware of the developments that have been made. Drafts of the pledge have also been presented to the Enjoy & Achieve Partnership group, Designated Teachers for CiC, selected Foster Carers and the Senior Leadership Team within Learning & Skills.

## **6. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

1. Care Matters – A Time for Change (Cm7137): June 2007
2. Letter to DCS and Lead Member from Ed Balls: April 2009
3. Letter to Children in Care from Ed Balls: November 2009

## Promises to our Children in Care

We want children in care, like every child and young person in Peterborough to have high aspirations about what they can and will achieve. Therefore we have listened carefully to the views of our children in care and the Corporate Parenting Panel to develop our pledge.

Peterborough City Council promises the children that we take into our care that:~

- We will always be honest with them and only promise the things we know we can make happen.
- Children are at the centre of everything that we do and therefore their views are important. We expect that all adults working with our young people are committed to listening to them and give a high priority to their views in every decision that is made.
- We promise that all adults who work with children in care will always act in the child's best interests in the same way as they would expect parents to treat their own children. This means that they will want the best outcomes for them and will always try to involve them in the decision making process, but will also explain why something that they wanted to happen cannot.

The whole City Council is committed to our children in care.

We believe that being taken into care should not hold anyone back. Peterborough City Council will always have high expectations of what children in care can do and what they can achieve. The Council is committed to supporting children in care to achieve their full potential

Signed

Lead Member for Childrens Services

Signed

Executive Director Childrens Services

April 2010

Children in Care said that they want:

**“To be encouraged to be healthy”**

The Corporate Parenting Panel said that by the age of 16 they wanted our children to:

- Have had regular health and dental checks and vaccinations
- To have the knowledge to make informed choices about how to have a good diet, stay healthy and physically fit and
- To be happy & healthy

***This means that Peterborough City Council will***

- Work with Doctors, Nurses, Dentists, Opticians and other health professionals to ensure that they understand the challenges that children in care face so that they can give the best possible support and treatment to you
- Expect your carers to encourage you to eat healthily and to have regular health and dental checks
- Expect your carers to support you to attend your health assessment and medical appointments
- Expect your carers to support and encourage you to take part in at least 2-3 hours sport or exercise that you enjoy each week



**Be  
Healthy**

**Peterborough Children's Trust Shared Priorities**

- 1) Children & Young People are supported to make **healthy choices**
- 2) Children & Young people have the best possible **emotional health**

Children in Care said they want:

**“Every effort to be made to find the best home available that suits them, where they feel safe, supported, cared about and treated well for as long as is needed”**

The Corporate Parenting Panel said that by the age of 16 they wanted our children to:

- Have experienced being brought up in a supportive, stable home environment
- Have a good relationship with the people that care for them and about them
- Understand why they have been taken in to care and why the decisions that have changed their life have been made
- To be safe from antisocial and criminal behaviour and
- To be in safe and secure accommodation where they feel at home
- To feel that they are a valued member of the community

***This means that Peterborough City Council will***

- Give written information about where you are going to live before you meet the carers and make sure that you have a proper introduction to your new home
- Avoid moving you if at all possible
- Try to keep you and your brothers and sisters together, but if its not possible, make sure you see each other regularly and know where they are living, if appropriate
- Expect you to be treated equally, as one of the family
- Make sure that carers understand how to help you to feel just like anyone else and ask how you want to explain your living arrangements to other people
- Make sure you have a holiday at least once a year
- Make sure that you have a bank account and Children’s Trust Fund set up for you
- Ensure that you can follow your own religion if you choose to do so
- Support you to stay in care up to the age of 18 if that is what you wish, and beyond 18 if continuing onto higher education or training
- Make arrangements for you to stay in touch with or stay on with your carers after 18.
- Make arrangements for you to take an active role in positive community activities
- Give you the opportunities to undertake cultural and leisure activities
- Put plans in place to discourage you from becoming involved in anti social behaviour or crime

Children in Care said that they want:

**“To be supported to do the best they can at school  
and in their hobbies and talents”**

The Corporate Parenting Panel said that by the age of 16 they wanted our children to:

- Have had a good education and have achieved their full potential in assessments and examinations
- Have had their abilities and talents recognised and celebrated
- Had the opportunity to take part in a range of out of school experiences and activities
- Have been taught in schools which understanding them, which expect them to achieve and strive to treat them as they would any other pupil or student and
- To have the opportunity to access all Peterborough City Council Cultural & Leisure facilities
- Be involved in the hobbies and activities that they select

***This means that Peterborough City Council will***

- Make sure that younger children can attend a nursery at the age of 3 or 4
- Make sure that you get a place at the school which best meets your individual needs
- Make a personal education plan with you, your carers, your social worker and the school that gives you the help and support you need to learn and achieve your full potential
- Expect carers to take an active interest in your education, attend consultations with teachers and other school activities. They will also need to encourage and support you to complete homework and coursework to the best standard you can
- Work with Teachers, schools and other education professionals to ensure that they understand the challenges you face so that they can give you the best possible support and advice
- Meetings should be arranged that don't involve you missing lessons or always having the meeting in school
- Make sure that you have access to a computer and other equipment, experiences and visits that you need as part of your education or training
- Support all young people financially and practically onto college and university if they are able
- Organise events that celebrate your achievements on a regular basis



**Enjoy &  
Achieve**

**Peterborough Children's Trust Shared Priorities**

- 5) Children & Young People have enjoyable and appropriate **learning opportunities**

Children in Care said that they want:

**“To be supported to make a positive contribution to their communities and to the experiences of other children in care”**

The Corporate Parenting Panel said that by the age of 16 they wanted our children to:

- Have a strong Children in Care Council that represents all children in care
- Have the opportunity to become involved in charity and community activities
- Have had a real choice in what they have been able to experience
- Have developed their own contact and support networks and
- To have contributed to the care process to influence the things that affect their lives

***This means that Peterborough City Council will***

- Help you run a Children in Care Council to give everyone the opportunity to have their say
- Encourage you to contribute to improving how things work for all children in care
- Develop a website that allows you to communicate with other children in care safely & securely.
- Work with young people and community organisations to provide information about volunteering and give you access to opportunities to help others.
- Give you support to develop your interests and talents



**Making a Positive Contribution**

**Peterborough Children's Trust Shared Priorities**

- 6) Children & Young People are **engaged and supported** within their communities
- 7) Children & Young people resist engaging in **crime and antisocial behaviour**

Children in Care said that they want:

**“To be supported practically, financially and emotionally, to prepare for their future in their own time and to help them make positive choices for independent living.”**

The Corporate Parenting Panel said that by the age of 16 they wanted our children to:

- Have been prepared to make the next step into more independent living
- Have started to develop the skills that will allow them to be able to care for themselves
- Have the skills, qualifications and opportunities to continue to learn and / or get a good job
- Understand what allowances and support they are entitled to
- To have an understanding of how to use money and budget effectively

***This means that Peterborough City Council will***

- Ensure that you can stay in care until you are at least 18 if you want and we will stay in touch with you until you are 21 and up to 24 in some circumstances
- Require Carers to help you to know how to budget, cook and learn the skills needed to live independently like any other young person
- Provide opportunities for you to learn life skills away from your home
- Provide a named worker to support you into independent living and develop and review plans and provide written information about your rights and financial entitlements
- Carers, named workers and other staff will be available if you need someone to talk to.



**Achieve  
Economic  
Wellbeing**

**Peterborough Children's Trust Shared Priorities**

- 8) Children & Young People achieve their potential and succeed economically
- 9) All Young people must have access to appropriate housing



Children in Care said that they want:

“A named worker who has quality time to spend with the young person doing the things they want to do; who will get in touch with them quickly when they needed help, by e-mail, phone, text or in person.”

“Regular contact with family and friends that is agreed in a care plan and happen in a safe way.”

“Have adults that listen to them, treat them with respect, are reliable, give young people time and space to consider all decisions to do with their care, to know how their views have been taken into account and to have decisions explained.”

The Corporate Parenting Panel said that by the age of 16 they wanted our children to:

- Be able to keep in touch with their family & friends
- To feel that they have experienced the normal childhood things
- To have been involved and have influenced what happened to them

### ***This means that Peterborough City Council will***

- give you clear information and contact details of who you can contact in an emergency
- make arrangements for adults to see you at least as regularly as legally required and give you the time to get to know them by spending quality time together
- Ensure the workers plan meeting times with you and attends them punctually
- Makes and supports the arrangements for you to see and keep in touch with your family and friends if appropriate
- Check with you to assess the quality of what we do
- Involve you in all decisions affecting your life
- Celebrate your success and achievement
- Support you by giving information on how to get an independent advocate/visitor and ensure that we have a clear complaints procedure



Peterborough  
Children's Trust  
Partnership

### **Underpinning Priorities**

### **Peterborough Children's Trust Shared Priorities**

- 10) **Vulnerable Children & Young People** are supported to achieve the best possible outcomes
- 11) Deliver an effective **infrastructure** to ensure service can continue to improve outcomes for children and young people

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