

CHILDREN AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM No. 5
12 JANUARY 2023	PUBLIC REPORT

Report of:	Dennis Jones Chair of Corporate Parenting Committee	
Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Lynne Ayres Cabinet Member for Children’s Services, Education, Skills and the University	
Contact Officer(s):	Myra O’Farrell	Tel. 864065

REPORT ON WORK OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE FOR THE CHILDREN AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2021-2022

RECOMMENDATIONS	
FROM: Scrutiny Committee	Deadline date: N/A
<p>It is recommended that Children and Education Scrutiny Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Note the contents of the report and accept recommendations 	

1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

1.1 This report is submitted to Children and Education Scrutiny Committee annually to report on the work 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 2021-2022

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
- Social Care of Children;
 - Safeguarding; and
 - Children’s Health.

2.4 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 creation of the regional adoption agency, the fostering service and Children in Care and Care Leavers’ education and training needs.

3. TIMESCALES

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	NO	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 with a rotating focus on three areas, placements, health and education. These are linked across the formal and informal meetings and have been effective in developing ideas and themes for Members to scrutinise. The well embedded approach enables a single topic to be considered thoroughly, enabling councillors to fully understand the complexity of the issue in the round along with scrutiny of the information presented.

4.2.2 Due to Covid restrictions the committee adapted its approach in September 2020 to being virtual and this remained in place for the whole of 2021. This year the committee has reintroduced face to face formal and informal committee meetings.

4.2.3 Power BI is now the standard reporting tool across Children's Services, and it is possible to monitor all current activity very effectively, the reports are produced from Liquidlogic which is the management tool used by all staff within Children's Social Care. The development of a static report (Dashboard) is now in place and a specific Corporate Parenting report developed.

4.3 Corporate Parenting Committee 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 champions' scope has changed slightly in the last 12 months to reflect the changing priorities nationally.

The Corporate Parenting Champions 2021–2022 have been:

Focus	Champion	Officer Lead
Support for Care Experienced Young People (Housing, Finance and Asylum Issues)	Councillor Sandra Bond	Sean Evans
0-25 Education, Employment and Training (including the Combined Authority and Partners)	Councillor Sainsbury	Pat Carrington
0-25 Physical and Mental Health and Emotional Well Being	Councillor Robinson	Catherine York
Citizenship, Participation and Leisure activities	Councillor Howard	Nikki Hanks
Placement Sufficiency and Care Planning - Councillor Jones	Councillor Jones	Michaela Berry
Fostering	vacant	Fiona Van den Hout

4.3.2 In between each informal Committee the Corporate Parenting Champion has been responsible 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.

4.4 **Outcomes from Corporate Parenting Committee**

- Reviewed the Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire used by Health, Education and Children's Social Care to ensure it works seamlessly and promotes appropriate resource allocation for children in care.
- Wrote to NHS England advocating on behalf of Children in care about the lack of available dentists in the Peterborough area. This resulted in Health improving their offer to children in care, through clear pathways for foster carers and placements to access.
- Provided scrutiny on placements out of area to lead officers
- Provided scrutiny and constructive feedback on placement stability.
- Worked collaboratively with the CIC council and the care leavers forum on promoting 'goodbye cards' when a social worker ends their involvement with children.
- Worked collaboratively with the CIC council and care leavers forum to produce personalised bags for children when leaving their placement.
- Supported the OFSTED Focused visit on Corporate Parenting in 2021
- Supported the 'Young Inspectors' inspection of the supervised contact centre.

4.5 **CIC Population**

4.5.1 Between September 2020- March 2021 there was a steady increase in the number of children in care, and this peaked at 396. The impact of Covid on families has had a significant impact on Children's Services including the number of children in care.

4.5.2 As of the 31st of March 2022, there were 362 children in care. 97 out of 140 children were experiencing stable placements for over 2.5 years. This equates to 69.3%, which is 1.7% higher than last year. Performance is on a par with statistical neighbours.

4.5.3 Peterborough has continued to maintain stability of placements for children in care. At the end of April 2021 30 children had had 3+ moves within a 12-month period out of 358 children in care at month end. This is 8.4% and is a decrease in performance on last year by 0.9%.

4.5.4 We continue to be aspirational about the importance of placement stability. Performance when compared to statistical neighbours, the region and nationally is good as all of these are currently performing at 69% Whilst there has been a slight dip in performance this should be seen within the context of COVID the easing of restrictions and fatigue and significant challenges within the placement market as a whole.

4.5.4 Statutory visits to children in their placements during COVID were largely virtual. This was monitored weekly to ensure children in care were safe and well cared for in this challenging context. Face to face statutory visits resumed in March 2022. At the end of March 90.9% of children had been seen in their placements by their allocated SW. Meaning that out of 363 children who have a visit on a six weekly basis 350 were seen within this period.

4.6 **Meeting Educational Needs**

4.6.1 The Virtual School continues to promote the need for all concerned with children and young people in care to have high aspirations through training of carers, social workers and designated teachers, and scrutiny by PVS staff of all Personal Education Plans. The child's voice is a priority

and the changes recommended by the Children in Care Council have been made to the section of the PEP seeking the views of children and young people. These views are a subject for discussion at the PEP meeting and targets are set with the child or young person to further any ambitions. Changes have also been made to the attainment section of the PEP to ensure greater accuracy of data.

4.6.2 Work across partners has focused on strengthening the data collected from strength and difficulty questionnaires. The assessment tool used by Health is now used routinely within the PEP meeting process termly to monitor and draw in timely resources for children in care.

4.6.3 The support of those children and young people placed out of city has been enhanced using the virtual meeting facility so PVS staff are able to attend more PEP meetings and have easier access to designated teachers. Children and young people have also found it easier to participate in their PEP meetings.

4.7 **Placement Sufficiency**

4.7.1 This remains a challenge in 2021-2022, with demand outstripping supply nationally, regionally and locally. The work to stabilise placements to prevent placement breakdowns has been critical in managing the market. However, there has been an increase in children entering residential provisions in the last year, some of which traditionally would have a foster placement offer but within the current climate there isn't this option.

4.7.2 Children entering the care system are entering with more complex issues particularly those that are older teenagers. As a result, placement packages have increased significantly.

4.7.3 In an authority like Peterborough that has worked hard to maintain children and young people at home wherever this is in their best interests and that has a low number of children in care as a result, it follows that a higher proportion of those children and young people will have more challenging and complex care needs. This has created challenges for our Fostering Service in terms of trying to meet the needs of these children and has led to more placements out of area and at higher tariffs.

4.7.4 The Sufficiency strategy 2021-2024 is supporting the investment in locally based placements. This is routinely monitored and scrutinised by the Corporate Parenting committee.

4.8 **Independent Care Review**

4.8.1 The Independent Care Review was published in June 2022. A number of recommendations were made, and if actioned would require legislative changes. The Government aim to review these recommendations in autumn 2022 and until this time no changes should be made.

4.9 **Main Recommendations**

4.9.1 The Independent Review is a very detailed and comprehensive document. There is an appreciation that the children and families we work with are very much products of their environments, and that a great deal of change is also required in public health, housing, income and deprivation before real inroads can be made into many of the issues impacting on positive outcomes for children.

4.9.2 **The Care System**
In the care arena, the Review proposes the creation of regional care cooperatives. These organisations would have a regional sufficiency duty, and would ultimately become responsible for all fostering services, adoption services and residential provision in the region (these are not necessarily based on current regional splits). The Review envisages that other government departments, i.e., health and justice, will support these bodies as it also wishes to close all secure

training centres and youth offending institutions and create more local secure units to meet the needs of these young people. There would be a national foster carer recruitment campaign, and an expectation that areas adopted an extended foster carer support model.

4.9.3 Leaving Care

For those leaving care the Review proposes a refreshed Care Leaver Covenant, that provides those leaving care with statutory protections up to 25. It focuses on offering lifelong links programmes to young people leaving care, new powers around housing and homelessness (including legal changes) and enhancement to the leaving care grant. Staying Put, Staying Close and supported lodgings arrangements should be extended to 23, the Virtual School should provide its services until 25, and there should be extended apprenticeship support trying to address issues around education, employment and training for this group of young people. There should also be a renewed focus on the physical and mental health of those leaving care, including providing specific mental health services in local authority teams.

4.10 Links to the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers' Drop In

4.10.1 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:

- Given feedback to foster carers, social workers, IRO's on the qualities they are looking for from them.
- Planned and delivered the annual celebration events for children in care.
- Spoken at Corporate Parenting Committee about their experiences in different placements.
- Co-chair the Informal Corporate Parenting Committee.
- Young Inspectors 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.
- Designed 'goodbye cards' for social workers to share with children in care when they end their time with them.
- Have commissioned bespoke luggage for children in care so if they need to move they have their own luggage.

4.10.2 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.

4.10.3 The children in care council and care leavers forum reviewed and revised the 'Our Promise to children and young people in care'.

1. We will work to keep you safe and help you keep yourself safe
2. We will do everything we can to make you feel cared about, valued and respected as an individual
3. We will be honest with you and explain if we are unable to do something we said we would do. We will not make unrealistic promises to you.
4. We will involve you in decision making so your views are listened to, and will explain when we decide something you may not like or agree with.
5. We will work to keep you in a supportive and caring environment where you feel safe and happy.
6. We will support you to maintain a healthy lifestyle and help you look after your physical and mental health
7. We will help you see your family, friends, and other people, who are important to you. If there are people we cannot support you to see we will explain why.
8. We will support you to achieve your goals and your potential, in your education, hobbies, and interests.

- 4.10.4 Even within COVID there has been a year of activity programme 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.
- 4.10.5 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. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

5.1 This links in to the following priorities:

1. *The Economy & Inclusive Growth*
 - There are no proposals within this report and therefore there is no carbon impact.
2. *Our Places & Communities*
 - *Places and Safety (including any rural implications)*
 - *Health and Wellbeing*
3. *Prevention, Independence & Resilience*
 - *Educations and Skills for All*
 - *Children*

Further information on the Council's Priorities can be found here - [Link to Corporate Strategy and Priorities Webpage](#)

6. CONSULTATION

6.1 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.

7. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR IMPACT

7.1 For committee members to note the contents of the report and raise any queries with members and lead officer.

8. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

8.1 This report has been approved by the cabinet member for Children's Services, Education, Skills and the University and signed off by Corporate Parenting Committee members.

9. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9.1 N/A

10. IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

10.1 None

Legal Implications

10.2 None

Equalities Implications

10.3 None

Children in Care and Care Leavers

10.4 This report provides information on the role of the Corporate Parenting Committee and relates to services provided to children in care and care leavers. This ensures that Scrutiny Committee are aware of changes to processes and the outcome for children in care and care leavers.

11. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

11.1 None

12. APPENDICES

12.1 Appendix 1 – briefing report on numbers of CIC and placement moves

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