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| Subject: | Introduction to Corporate Parenting | | |
| Date of Meeting: | 4th July 2012 | | |
| Report of: | Strategic Director, People | | |
| Contact Officer: | Name: | James Dougan | Tel: 29-5511 |
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| Key Decision: | Yes | Forward Plan No: | |
| Ward(s) affected: | All | | |

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT

The concept of corporate parenting was introduced with the launch of the Quality Protects Programme in 1998. The principle is that the local authority is the corporate parent for children in care and thus has the legal and moral duty to provide the kind of support that good parents would provide their own children. This includes enhancing the quality of life as well as simply keeping them safe. Although improvements in corporate parenting are children's services led, the concept applies to all functions of the local authority, as well as its city partners.

As an elected member you are responsible for making sure that the Council meets all of its statutory responsibilities. You have a right and duty to hold officers across the council functions to account, to challenge your local authority and demonstrate leadership within the council and within the community of Brighton & Hove.

1.1 WHAT IS A CORPORATE PARENT?

Corporate parenting means the formal and informal partnerships between all aspects of Brighton & Hove's in house services as well as the formal and informal partnerships with local agencies, both private and voluntary.

Corporate parenting operates at the strategic, operational and individual level. The three key elements are:

1. the statutory duty on all parts of a local authority to co-operate in promoting the welfare of children and young people who are Looked After by them, and a duty on other partners to co-operate with councils in fulfilling that duty.
2. co-ordinating the activities of the many different professionals and carers who are involved in a child or young person's life and taking a strategic, child-centred approach to service delivery.
3. shifting the emphasis from 'corporate' to 'parenting' as defined by Sonia Jackson in her seminal piece of work on Corporate Parenting 2003 as *'the performance of*

all actions necessary to promote and support the physical, emotional, social and cognitive development of a child from infancy to adulthood'. The local authority delegates this function to those providing day-to-day care for the child or young person.

Corporate parenting is not only a responsibility but a real opportunity to improve the futures of Looked After children and young people; recognising that all parts of the system have a contribution to make is critical to success. The concept of corporate parenting is, as we know inherently paradoxical; good parenting demands continuity and organisations by their nature are continuously changing. Staff move on, elected members change, structures change, procedures change. One challenge of being a good corporate parent is to manage these changes while giving each individual child or young person a sense of stability.

Being a good corporate parent means we should:

- accept responsibility for the council's Looked After children and young people;
- make their needs a priority; and
- seek for them the same outcomes any good parent would want for their own children.

Good parents make sure their children are well looked after, make progress at school, are healthy, have clear boundaries for their own and others' safety and wellbeing and enjoy activities and interests. As they grow older, they encourage them to become independent, and support them if they need it, to become part of the local community and access further or higher education, training and employment.

Corporate parents must do the same, albeit that many more individual people will be involved in the corporate family than some ordinary families. Every family is different and lifestyles across Brighton & Hove are becoming more and more diverse. Corporate parenting needs to be "the same but different" across different communities, while delivering the essential components that children need throughout childhood and young adulthood.

The Brighton & Hove Corporate Parenting Strategy (**Appendix 1**) meets a statutory duty placed on all parts of a local authority and detailed in the Children & Young Persons Act 2008 to co-operate in promoting the welfare of children and young people in care and care leavers and a duty on all partners to co-operate in fulfilling that duty.

This Strategy was agreed by the Children & Young People's Trust Partnership Board in November 2010 and by the Children & Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee in March 2011.

Implications of the Corporate Parenting Strategy:

1. Corporate & Legal: Describes the collective responsibilities members and officers of BHCC and its partner organisations have towards children and young people in local authority care. The commissioning and delivery of services is underpinned by the Children Act 2004, the Care Matters Implementation Plan 2008 and the Children and Young Person Act 2008.

2. Equalities: It is critical to the implementation of BHCC's Equalities Policy and to the achievement of the priorities set out in the Children & Young People's Plan 2009-12
3. Crime & Disorder: It aims to support young people to engage in law abiding and socially acceptable activity and behaviour
4. Risk and Opportunity Management: It will assist partners of the Children, Youth & Families Service to meet its duties to children and young people in care and care leavers including the management of significant risks, including risk to self, others, reputation and financial risk.

1.2 WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON STOPS BEING LOOKED AFTER?

Some children or young people will stop being Looked After to return successfully to their families, and some will be Looked After at various times throughout their childhood as their families struggle to cope in particular situations. If a young person is still Looked After at school leaving age, the council will put in place throughcare and aftercare services to support them into independent living. This transition to independence will be at a younger age than most young people leave the family home, and they will need significant support to help them to find somewhere suitable to live, take up further or higher education, training or work, and even to cope with the every day aspects of living independently.

Councils have a duty to provide advice and support to their young people up to age 21, and a power to do so up to the age of 25 if in full time education. They are encouraged to make sure that young people stay Looked After for as long as possible, preferably until they reach 18 if that is in the best interests of the young person. They should make sure that when young people do leave care they are equipped with the necessary life skills, and receive adequate financial and other support at what is a difficult time for all young people. Getting this package of support right is crucial to improving outcomes for care leavers to make sure they have the stability and support they require to fulfil their potential educationally and to develop the life skills to enable them to make a successful transition to independent living.

Research from Professor Mike Stein and his team from York University undertaken between 1984 – 2009 shows that from poor starting points, children and young people in care fall into 3 distinct categories:

- The 'Movers' – these are the young people who will successfully move on from a stable care experience with relatively low level but consistent support
- The 'Survivors' - these are the young people who will do well in adult life with skilled, intensive support
- The 'Strugglers'- these are the vulnerable minority of young people who will continue to need targeted support well into adulthood

It is useful to be mindful of these distinct groups when striving for improved outcomes for these children and young people

Corporate families are in a unique position to be able to support young people as they leave home in that they have their own housing, economic development, community

learning and development, welfare rights and health all of which will be helpful to ensuring young care leavers are not left to fend for themselves. In addition, councils and their community partners are often the largest employers in their local areas and are in a good position to be able to offer work experience, apprenticeships and employment to their young people.

1.3 WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO ACHIEVE?

We want all our children and young people to have successful, productive lives and we want to provide the services and supports that will help them succeed, particularly when they have problems to overcome.

It is suggested that as corporate parents we have an overarching outcome that we are collectively aiming for:

Children and young people who have experienced the care system will be successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors whose life outcomes mirror those of their peers.

The specific outcome relating to the function of corporate parenting is:

The Council and their city partners will fully understand and accept their responsibilities as corporate parents and governance arrangements will be in place to make sure that work within councils and their partner organisations is child-centred and focused on achieving the overarching outcome.

The ultimate aim of Brighton & Hove City Council's Corporate Parenting Strategy is that there is no discernible difference between the outcomes of children and young people who have been Looked After and their peers who have not. The aim of this guidance is to support councils and their city partners in closing the gap which has existed for decades between people who have experienced the care system and people who have not. We must improve educational achievement and attainment, achieving sustained positive post-school destinations, reduce Looked After children and young people and care leavers' involvement in the criminal justice system, their levels of homelessness, and help them to live full and healthy lives.

Corporate Parenting Scorecard – how do we know what we are achieving? (See Appendix 2)

The purpose of this document is to enable the monitoring of key aspects of provision affecting the life chances of children looked after. The document enables elected members to hold to account Officers for performance in key areas and enables trends to be identified and for data to be benchmarked against other comparator Authorities'.

The Summary Report Card is not just a technical document to be used strategically. It is designed so as to be accessible to all corporate parents and any professionals from other organisations and services that have, or potentially have a role in supporting our children and young people and promoting their life chances. Everyone who receives this report will have the opportunity to feed back on how to improve outcomes for our children.

This report produced by the Children's Services Performance Team provides regularly updated information on key activities and performance data about Looked After children and young people and care leavers. This report card:

- informs members and officers on trends, outcomes and achievements for Looked After children and young people
- highlights how Brighton & Hove is benchmarked against its statistical neighbour local authorities (Bath & NE Somerset, Bournemouth, Bristol, Plymouth, Portsmouth, Reading, Sheffield, Southampton, Southend and York) and with some data, against all English local authorities
- and by providing a narrative against each data set will evidence good outcomes and more importantly, identify areas where performance and outcomes must be improved

This data details the:

- demography of Looked After children and young people, including numbers, age, gender, ethnicity, ages they started and ceased to be Looked After, care applications to the family courts, their legal status and reasons why they are being Looked After
- the placement type and stability of Looked After children and young people, numbers planned and placed for adoption
- physical, emotional and behavioural health of Looked After children and young people,
- educational outcomes (at Key Stages 2 & 4, GCSE attainment) and school exclusions
- care planning and case reviewing
- accommodation, education and employment outcomes for young people who have left care

1.4 THE KEY QUESTION FOR YOU AS ELECTED MEMBERS IS "IS THIS GOOD ENOUGH FOR MY CHILD?"

You will want to:

- Know how many children and young people are Looked After by your council, why they are Looked After, that they safe at all times and how well they are doing.
- Make sure that your schools are inclusive, aspirational for all children and young people including those who are Looked After, and have in place strategies to ensure that Looked After children and young people are not disproportionately represented in poor attendance, exclusions, bullying and underachievement.
- Actively promote and support high standards of care for children and young people, and care leavers, taking account of their cultural needs.
- Actively seek high quality outcomes for your Looked After children and young people and care leavers and take responsibility for those outcomes.
- Remove barriers, where possible, which prevent your Looked After children and young people and care leavers achieving the desired outcomes.
- Challenge professionals to work in new ways which always promote inclusion.
- Make sure that the physical, mental and emotional well-being of your Looked After Children and young people and care leavers are being addressed at the earliest opportunity.

- Make sure that your Looked After children and young people are given the same opportunities that any good parents would provide for their child and that you have the same expectations and aspirations as you would for your own children.
- Champion the needs of, and be aspirational for, your Looked After children and young people and care leavers.
- Know who your care leavers are and make sure that there is support available to them.
- Be certain that the services your council provides or commissions for your Looked After children and young people and care leavers are meeting their needs to the highest possible standard, including when the child is placed outside your own services or geographical area.
- Make sure that you have effective scrutiny mechanisms in place to hold officers to account for local outcomes.
- Consider making a reference to improving outcomes for Looked After children and young people and care leavers in your Single Outcome Agreement, or at least make sure that their needs are recognised in your broader local outcomes and indicators and performance management system.
- Work with local health board members and other key partners to make sure that services are scrutinised across the community planning partnerships and this includes monitoring, integrated working, setting shared goals and values and continuous improvement.
- Make sure that all services in your authority are able to protect, support and encourage Looked After children and young people and care leavers, individually and collectively.
- Promote a positive view of Looked After children and young people and care leavers, and help to raise public awareness about the care system.
- Recognise and show pride in children or young person's achievements, build their confidence and defend them against unfair criticism.
- Make sure that the views of children and young people and care leavers are heard and listened to, and when decisions are being made that their views are being taken into account.

1.5 HOW WILL I KNOW AS AN ELECTED MEMBER THAT I'VE MADE A DIFFERENCE?

- When your Looked After children or young people or care leavers attend school regularly, pass exams, find and sustain jobs or a places at college or university on leaving school, find somewhere suitable to live and manage to sustain it.
- When families have been supported to enable them to look after their own children, where appropriate, and are able to enhance their parenting role.
- When your staff have job satisfaction, feel confident and competent in what they do, and your carers feel supported and valued.
- When your internal scrutiny and self-evaluation processes demonstrate that outcomes for Looked After children and young people and care leavers are improving, when your external inspection reports highlight good practice in your authority.
- When there is no discernible difference between the educational, health, employment and other life outcomes of Looked After children and young people, and care leavers, and those of their peers.

There is no single or simple answer to improving outcomes for all children and young people in care and care leavers and there is a need for thorough knowledge of the

characteristics of the care population and a range of appropriate strategies. Our aim must be to ensure improved outcomes for children and young people in care and care leavers become fully and permanently embedded in the culture of children's and all council services. There are few other specific issues of higher priority for the local authority than caring for the children and young people for which Brighton & Hove has a degree of parental responsibility.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

2.1 The specific outcome relating to children and young people in care is:

Children and young people who have experienced the care system will be successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors whose life outcomes mirror those of their peers.

2.2 The specific outcome relating to the function of corporate parenting is:

The Council and their city partners will fully understand and accept their responsibilities as corporate parents and governance arrangements will be in place to make sure that work within councils and their partner organisations is child-centred and focused on achieving the overarching outcome.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

4.1

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

5.1 There are no financial implications as a direct result of the recommendations of this report. However, the services highlighted within the report represent a significant level of expenditure within children's services and all new initiatives need to be fully costed and evaluated within the value for money context.

Finance Officer Consulted: Name David Ellis Date: 22.06.12

Legal Implications:

5.2 The term "corporate parent" is not one which has a formal legal definition. However, the term recognises that the local authority must have the same interest in the progress and attainments of looked after children as a reasonable parent would have for their own children. The responsibilities of being a corporate parent are relevant to all local authority staff. The Council has a legal duty to act as a 'corporate parent' for each and every child and young person that

is looked after, whether this is as a result of a voluntary agreement with their parents, or under a care order agreed by the court. In this respect the council is subject to statutory guidance, the requirements of the Leaving Care Act, and the duties to promote the well being of children under the Children Act 2004. Promoting the wellbeing, achievement and happiness of looked-after children and care leavers is a responsibility that must be shared and understood by all local services. Ultimately if a child receives a harmful experience in care they have the right to sue the authority for negligence. Under statutory guidance the Director of Children's Services and their senior staff, with the lead member for children's services, who are accountable for ensuring that looked after children are adequately safeguarded and that they are able to access effective services.

Lawyer Consulted: *Name* *Natasha Watson* *Date:* *22.06.12*

Equalities Implications:

5.3

Sustainability Implications:

5.4

Crime & Disorder Implications:

5.5

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

5.6

Public Health Implications:

5.7

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

5.8

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

6.1

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Brighton & Hove Corporate Parenting Strategy
2. Corporate Parenting Summary Report
3. The care system – consumer's views

Documents in Members' Rooms

1.

Background Documents

1.

