

SOCIAL & HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Thursday, 5 th October 2017
Report Subject	Corporate Parenting Strategy
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Social Services
Report Author	Chief Officer Social Services
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Corporate Parenting is the term used to describe the collective responsibility of the Council towards looked after children and care leavers. Corporate Parenting is founded on the principle that we have the same aspirations, and wish to provide the same kind of care, that any good parent would provide for their own children.

The report outlines the ongoing work that is being undertaken to form a new Corporate Parenting Strategy within the context of the Social Services and Well-Being Act and national developments relating to Corporate Parenting.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	Members scrutinise and endorse proposed actions to develop a new Corporate Parenting Strategy
---	---

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	BACKGROUND
1.01	Children in the care of a local authority are often referred to as Looked After Children. They are one of the most vulnerable groups in society. No child or young person is the same, they enter the care system for a variety of reasons and at different points in their lives. These can range from family breakdown, abuse or neglect, to voluntary arrangements to support children and young people's welfare whilst work is undertaken to rebuild relationships or parenting capacity.
1.02	As a Corporate Parent our role is to offer 'authoritative parenting' which recognises that children and young people want to be listened to, to be loved, to be supported, to be helped, to be respected, to be safe and to be given boundaries.
1.03	Throughout the year the number of looked after children fluctuates with children entering, and leaving, the 'looked after' system. We currently have 220 looked after children in Flintshire.

2.00	PROGRESS IN DEVELOPING FLINTSHIRE'S CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY.
2.01	On 24 March 2016 Scrutiny Committee endorsed the development of refreshed Corporate Parenting Strategy which sets out Flintshire's commitment to looked after children and care leavers.
2.02	The need to develop effective and meaningful approaches to Corporate Parenting has been recognised at a national level. This is welcomed as it provides an opportunity to ensure that we can learn from, and shape good practice. In developing our local approach to Corporate Parenting we have been mindful of national developments to ensure that we are consistent and ambitious in our undertaking for Flintshire children.
2.03	As part of the work programme for the National Fostering Framework (NFF) it was agreed that best practice in corporate parenting across Councils and other public services would be reviewed in 2016/17, with a view to improving outcomes for children and increase the resilience of foster carer placements. Voices from Care and AFA Cymru were commissioned to co-design and host 3 regional events on Corporate Parenting. In addition two young people's residential events were held for young people looked after and care leavers. This work fed into a National Corporate Parenting Event held in March 2017. The event brought project findings together and provided an opportunity to hear from innovative projects across Wales. The national event was chaired by Flintshire.
2.04	Locally, we have taken the findings and themes arising from these events and brought these together with the information already given to us by looked after children, and care leavers, through our Participation Group

	and Children's Services Forum. This information has helped shape a set of statements which we intend to use to help open discussions with looked after children and care leavers in Flintshire. We will use the statements to explore what is important to them and what they would like to see in a Corporate Parenting Strategy.
2.05	Our proposal is that we produce a brief and informative Corporate Parenting Strategy that centres on what is important to children and young people in our care. An Action Plan will be created to set out in further detail how Flintshire will deliver our Corporate commitments.
2.06	Drawing on the national, and local work, it is proposed that the Strategy will set out Flintshire's Corporate commitments under the following themes (these are the statements referred to above):
2.07	<p><u>Home</u></p> <p>To provide looked after children with good quality, stable placements where they feel safe, valued and cared for by excellent carers. Flintshire will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to ensure that looked after children are able to sustain the family and personal relationships most important to them, where appropriate. • Give children the opportunity to become involved and become a part of the local community. <p>As part of commitment to ensure that children and young people have stable, loving places to live we will set out in our action plan how we will support young people aged 14-18. This age group can often present with very challenging circumstances and can result in a number of different placements in short succession. We also set out how we will enhance our accommodation offer to care leavers.</p>
2.08	<p><u>Education and learning</u></p> <p>Looked after children will have the best possible educational outcomes and have opportunities to fulfil their potential.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring the stability of the educational setting is paramount for looked after children, a new school environment can be intimidating. Flintshire will work to strengthen understanding between social services staff and educational settings to best support looked after children in their educational placements. • Looked after children have the right to aspire to receive further education and training just as any other child. Financial support and information will be available to support children to achieve these goals. • Ensuring that 100% attendance to education is encouraged and supported at all times, by both staff and carers. • Ensuring that young people have the skills needed for independent living as they move to adulthood
2.09	<p><u>Health and well-being.</u></p> <p>To improve the health outcomes of looked after children in Flintshire and to</p>

	<p>provide them with appropriate health care and advice. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking care of children's physical, mental health and emotional well-being • Ensuring all looked after children have a clear and central voice in how their health needs are met. <p>We know that looked after children share many of the same health risks and problems as their peers, but they frequently enter care with poorer health due to the impact of poverty, abuse and neglect. National research also suggests that looked after children are more likely to have mental health problems. As part of the underpinning action plan we will work with CAMHS to set out their plans and commitments to supporting looked after children and care leavers.</p>
2.10	<p><u>Leisure</u></p> <p>Supporting and encouraging looked after children to enjoy a wide experience of leisure, cultural, sport and social activity to fulfil their potential.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give looked after children information on ways to engage in the local community and become involved. • To provide ample opportunities to play. • Enable looked after children to become involved in local sport and leisure activities. • Create a friendly environment to support them to form and develop strong social relationships.
2.11	<p><u>Employment Opportunities</u></p> <p>We will provide opportunities to help looked after children and care leavers develop the skills and experience to pursue employment. This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offering apprenticeships within the Council and within the business that we work with • Offering work experience and 'taster' sessions for young people • Providing support to ensure that young people are 'work ready' including building their confidence and self esteem <p>These commitments are important in ensuring that we attend to the social and economic well-being of our looked after children, which includes taking measures to ensure that they do not live in poverty</p>
2.12	<p><u>The Next 12 Months</u></p> <p>Over the next 12 months, it is Flintshire's ambition to complete a number of tasks to develop, and deliver our, Corporate Parenting Strategy. The key tasks ahead are to:</p>
2.13	<p><u>Produce a Corporate Parenting Strategy and Action Plan</u></p> <p>This strategy will be created in conjunction with the views of the looked after population as well as Elected Members. The strategy will be in place for at least the next 5 years to ensure consistency and giving a manageable timeframe to make a positive difference for looked after children and care leavers. It will also serve to further recognise the</p>

	responsibility that elected members and Flintshire staff have in supporting looked after children.
2.14	<u>Develop a strategy for the engagement and participation of the looked after population</u> This strategy will be closely linked to the Corporate Parenting Strategy and will lay the foundations for Flintshire's aims to engage with the looked after population.
2.15	<u>Review of existing Participation Forums</u> It is paramount that the voice of the children is at the heart of what we do, and we need to continuously ensure that we listen to, hear, and act on what children and young people are telling us.
2.16	Flintshire has a well-established Participation Forum that provides an important opportunity for looked after children and care leavers to meet together, to share experiences, and speak out with a group voice about their care and aspirations.
2.17	A review of the Participation Forums will take place to ensure that we are working in a way that meets the needs of children and young people, and that our approach provides a range of ways that are effective in enabling a voice for all looked after children.
2.18	<u>Review of the Children's Services Forum</u> Flintshire has a well-established Children's Services Forum, with strong links to the Participation Forums. A review of the Children's Services Forum will complement the review of Participation Forums as the two approaches are inter-dependent. This approach will ensure that the Children's Services Forum is well placed to maintain its effectiveness in listening to the experiences and views of looked after children and holding agencies accountable for their responsibilities, commitments and approaches in supporting looked after children and care leavers.
2.19	<u>Appoint New Participation Officer</u> Flintshire is in the process of recruiting a new Participation Officer who can enthusiastically engage with, and act as a bridging professional between the Children's Services Forum and the Participation Group. This role will be essential in supporting our children to have a clear voice in how they are supported in Flintshire. The Officer will have a central role in reviewing the existing participation Forums and supporting in the formulation of the Engagement Strategy.
2.20	<u>Review of Pride of Flintshire</u> Pride of Flintshire is a highlight in the calendar for Flintshire's looked after population. The event has proven to be a great success for Flintshire in recognising the achievements of looked after children in Flintshire and their carers. It is vital that this event continues to be adaptable and is able to evolve to continue reflecting the desires of the looked after population and how they wish to be recognised.
2.21	<u>Links with services</u> Greater links with Statutory and Third Sector Partners is vital for involving

	looked after children in community based initiatives. This will ensure that looked after children have a number of opportunities to become a part of their local community. These links can be built up through the participation officer as well as being the responsibility of the corporate parent to advocate for looked after children's rights to engage in leisure and community activities.
--	---

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	Corporate Parenting is a core responsibility of everybody who works for the Local Authority. Delivering the commitments contained within the report are within existing human and financial resources.
2.02	Some resources will be required as part of the consultation process, these may include stationery equipment as well as access to Council meeting rooms.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED
3.01	The statements that have been developed to initiate consultation on the Corporate Parenting Strategy have been developed on from the themes that have emerged from national work and engagement on Corporate Parenting and the issues that local children have raised.
3.02	Consultation and engagement in developing these statements into a Corporate Parenting Strategy, with an underpinning action plan, will take place with looked after children, care leavers and key partners who support this population including Education and Health.
3.03	The Children's Services Forum will have a specific role in overseeing the development of the Strategy and the delivery of the commitments, and actions, that are made.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	There are no specific risks arising from this report and subsequent actions.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	None.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>None.</p> <p>Contact Office: Neil Ayling Telephone: 01352 702500 E-mail: Neil.J.Ayling@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	<p>Care Leaver: Any adult who spent time in care as a child (i.e. under the age of 18). This care would have been approved by the state through a court order or on a voluntary basis. Such care could be in foster care, residential care (mainly children's homes) or other arrangements outside the immediate or extended family. The care could have been provided directly by the state (mainly through local authority social services departments) or by voluntary or private sector organisations. It also includes a wide range of accommodation. For example, it would include secure units, approved schools, industrial schools and other institutions that have a more punitive element than mainstream foster or residential care.</p> <p>National Fostering Framework (NFF): The National Fostering Framework is a collaborative framework aimed at ensuring greater service quality, more consistency of outcomes, greater transparency about performance, increased collaboration and co-operation by all key stakeholders. This includes economies of scale where appropriate and better links to evaluation and research. There is no intention of creating a national fostering service, managed by any one sector or organisation. The approach is to maximise and enhance All-Wales, Regional and local approaches to Fostering. It is about sharing and developing the best Fostering service for Wales.</p> <p>Voices from Care: Voices from Care are a charity who support and promote the views and experiences of those who are or have been looked after in Wales.</p> <p>AFA Cymru: The Association for Fostering and Adoption Cymru (AFA Cymru) is a Welsh charity working to improve outcomes for children and young people in all types of permanency arrangements – rehabilitation, kinship care, Special Guardianship, fostering and adoption.</p> <p>Neglect: Neglect means a failure to meet a person's basic physical, emotional, social or psychological needs, which is likely to result in an impairment of the person's well-being (for example, an impairment of the person's health).</p> <p>Permanence: Achieving 'permanence' will be a key consideration from the time a child becomes looked after. Permanence includes emotional permanence</p>

(attachment), physical permanence (stability), and legal permanence (who has parental responsibility for the child). Together these give a child a sense of security, continuity, commitment and identity.

Wellbeing:

The following areas embody the notion of wellbeing:

- Physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing
- Protection from abuse and neglect
- Education, training and recreation
- Family and personal relationships
- Involvement in the local community
- Securing rights and entitlements
- Social and economic well-being, including not living in poverty.
- Living in suitable accommodation.