

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **JOINT LIFELONG LEARNING AND SOCIAL & HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

DATE: **FRIDAY, 2 MAY 2014**

REPORT BY: **DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES**

SUBJECT: **CORPORATE PARENTING**

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.01 To advise and report on the progress of corporate parenting within the Local Authority.

2.00 BACKGROUND

2.01 Corporate parenting is the term used to refer to the collective responsibility of the Council to provide the best possible care and protection for children and young people who is looked after.

2.02 This was first established in the Children Act (1989) and the Welsh Government's guidance 'If This Was My Child' as enshrined in the legislation of the Children Act (2004).

2.03 The term looked after refers to any child or young person for whom the authority has or shares responsibility. Corporate parenting is a core statutory responsibility and the Local Authority has established a number of mechanisms to ensure our compliance.

These include the following:

1. The Children's Services Forum (CSF)

The Children Services Forum (Established in 2005) remains at the core of our corporate parenting activity. This is made up of young people, members, a foster care representative, a secondary head teacher and attendance by a range of officers. During the year the agendas have covered a diverse range of subjects including:

- Post 18 year old housing arrangements
- The looked after children's educational arrangements
- Presentations from CAFCAS
- Visits from CSSIW Inspectors
- Review of our Pride of Flintshire Awards

The Forum provides the opportunity for information sharing and at the same time rigorous cross-examination by its members to challenge current and future plans and to assist in the shaping of better outcomes for our looked after children.

Inspection feedback from our Fostering and Child Care inspections suggested the need for a better location and structure of the meeting to be reflected upon. The next scheduled Children's Services Forum is addressing these issues with a new venue to be finalised.

2. The Pride of Flintshire

The Pride of Flintshire was held over two nights (Autumn 2013) with in excess of 400 children, young people, carers, parents, friends and county representatives who were enthralled by the joy of our children's many tales. It provides the most vivid display of the talent, success and positive outcomes.

The event takes up to a year to prepare for, is facilitated by our Participation Officer in conjunction with representatives of the young peoples groups and volunteer members of staff.

The Children's Commissioner has been a regular attendee over the last several years and his concluding remarks at the end of the evening are inspiring in their wisdom and their appreciation of the children and young people's challenges to overcome adversity and their resilience to achieve such triumphs.

3. A Review of our Looked After Children's Educational Outcomes

Continuing concerns have been recorded in relation to our Year 11 students (aged 15-16) and the poor performances in obtaining GCSE and equivalent qualifications at the completion of their statutory education.

A formal working group was established (October 2013) and has identified 5 areas for review.

- Refreshing the Corporate Parenting Strategy
- The introduction of a Performance Management System
- Reviewing the key role of Carers in education matters.
- The use of Grants/ Funds to support curriculum and learning.
- A review of Personal Education Plans and related support.

4. Participation Groups

We operate two active participation groups, Care Leavers Support Network (CLSN) and Speaking Out for Children in Care Group (SOCC). These groups are facilitated by our Participation Officer.

These groups provide feedback, insight and review topics of interest and importantly that children and young people have an active voice and say in decisions which impact upon them.

The CLSN is composed of young people who have moved on from statutory care at post 18 and will focus upon issues in relation to

Access to welfare benefit support
Accommodation provision and availability
Guidance in relation to education, training and employment.
On going support from the Local Authority.

The SOCC group is made up children and young people up to the Age of 18 and address the following common themes.

- Rights and entitlements as Young People in Care
- Access to additional support to pursue hobbies etc.
- Preparation for Post Care arrangements.

A2A Card

This continues to roll out to all young people in care. This provides young people with a simple card which identifies them as being in care and avoids delay or unnecessary requests for information from Reception staff or when a young person requires time out in a school setting.

All secondary schools (excluding our Specialist Secondary provisions) are fully committed to the scheme. The evaluation of the first full year (commencing in September 2013) indicates a low usage rate. The feed back from young people indicates that whilst it is not frequently used having such a card provides them with a valuable safety net in times of adversity or uncertainty.

The current number of young people who have been offered the card is 100% with an up take of 80% as of April 2014.

5. Corporate Parenting Policy Document

A revised and refreshed corporate parenting document which sets out the aims and objectives is currently being reviewed and will be presented to the CSF for consideration and scrutiny.

This forms part of the review of Education for Looked after children noted in (3). This will provide the key outcomes in relation to.

- The Local Authority's Obligations for LAC.
- Members accountability to up hold these obligations
- Compliance to Welsh Governments aims and objectives.
- Future developments in Corporate Parenting actions.

6. The Health of Looked After Children and Care Leavers

The role of the looked after Nurse / Leaving Care is to provide medical and general health care guidance. All children and young people are subject to annual health reviews, GP registration and dental checks. Services are also provided to support young people's emotional well-being alongside CAMHS and other related providers.

There continues to be year on year increase in the number of Health Assessments completed in time (2012/13 at 43%) with an estimated increase to 50% for 2013/14. This however remains below National targets (set at 70%) and requires ongoing dialogue with our colleagues from Health and associated agencies to increase these out turns.

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.01 The range of activity demonstrates the responsibilities to which the corporate parenting body has accountability and overview for.
- 3.02 The Children's Service Forum represents the core group to ensure compliance and adherence to these objectives are being met and sustained.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.01 That the Committee consider the report and recognise the value of the work being undertaken to ensure we are meeting our corporate parenting aims and obligations.

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.01 Since 2009 a budget of £20,000 per annum has been allocated to support corporate parenting activity within and by the County Council.

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

- 6.01 Children and young people in the care of the Local Authority remain free from disadvantage and this commitment fulfils our Welsh Government obligations.

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- 7.01 None directly as a result of this report.

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 8.01 To ensure that looked after children are given equal opportunities and parity of esteem with their non-looked after peer groups.

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.01 None directly as a result of this report.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

10.01 None directly as a result of this report.

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

11.01 That members of the CSF and respective young people's group are involved in respective decisions.

12.00 APPENDICES

12.01 None.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985
BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

**Contact Officer: Neil Ayling
Telephone: 01352 702500
Email: Neil.Ayling@flintshire.gov.uk**