



Corporate Parenting

Report of the Schools, Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Committee

1 The Inquiry

Purpose of the Inquiry

1.1 The Vulnerable Children O&S Committee presented their Corporate Parenting report to City Council on 1st November 2011. Councillors agreed the motion:

‘That the City Council recognises the important role of the Corporate Parenting Board and calls on all members to be pro-active in undertaking their individual and collective Corporate Parenting responsibilities’.

1.2 Since then children in care and corporate parenting has continued to feature prominently on the Committee’s work programme. This inquiry builds on the work of the previous Committee by providing a menu of involvement for Councillors in undertaking their corporate parenting role.

1.3 Attached as appendix 2 is the Corporate Parenting Report 2016; this provides a wealth of information including the City Council’s pledge and promises.

How we did it

1.4 In conjunction with Councillor Joe Calouri, Executive Member for Children, Young People and Families, Islington Council, the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) and the Local Government Association (LGA) the Committee undertook two sessions:

- To explore the role and function of the corporate parent for Councillors and scrutiny.
- To review current structures and processes to support the corporate parenting function including Corporate Parenting Board, Children in Care Council (CiCC), the corporate parenting pledge and overview and scrutiny.
- To consider ways to embed the voice of children in care and young people and establish a child-centred approach to corporate parenting.
- To explore good practice and case studies.
- To scope the inquiry.

1.5 The Committee held two evidence gathering sessions in January and February 2017 to better understand the services provided to children in care and explore how Councillors can assist with improving these. Discussions were also held with the District Corporate Parent Champions.

1.6 The Children in Care Council (CiCC) and Care Leavers Forum have been instrumental in supporting this inquiry and have provided Councillors with some steer and support along the way. For



instance, the CiCC provided questions we should ask social workers and have influenced our thinking by sharing their top issues and campaigns. We hope to strengthen our relationship and ensure that our role as corporate parents is as bespoke as our children and young people in the care of Birmingham would like it to be.

- 1.7 Also, all Councillors were asked to contribute to this inquiry by completing a questionnaire and 31 Councillors completed this.

2 Who Are Our Children in Care?

Who our Children in Care are:

- 2.1 The following table provides the national and Birmingham figures.

Table 1: Children in Care for England and Birmingham ¹

	England (31 March 2016)²	Birmingham (as of 1 March 2017)
Children in care	70,440	1,820
Under a care order	65%	71%
Voluntary Agreements(s20)	27%	21%
Placement order for adoption	8%	7%
In foster placements	74%	71%
Aged between 10 and 15 years	39%	37%
White British	75%	42%

- 2.2 As of the 1st March 2017 there were 1,820 children in care. The 1,820 are placed:

- 71% in foster care.
- 16% in residential homes.
- 8% in supported accommodation.
- 5% with parents.³

- 2.3 1,089 (60%) of the 1,820 children in care are placed locally within Birmingham, 86% are placed within Birmingham or within 20 miles of the boundary. Children in Care are placed outside of the city for significant reasons; for example, child sexual exploitation (CSE), complex family safeguarding issues or the need for more specialist therapeutic accommodation.

- 2.4 There are currently a total of 55 children's homes in Birmingham where the Council may place children in care. Five of these are residential homes for children with disabilities which continue to be managed by the Council (three provide respite / short breaks and two provide long-term placements). Diagram 1 depicts where the 55 children's homes are in each District.

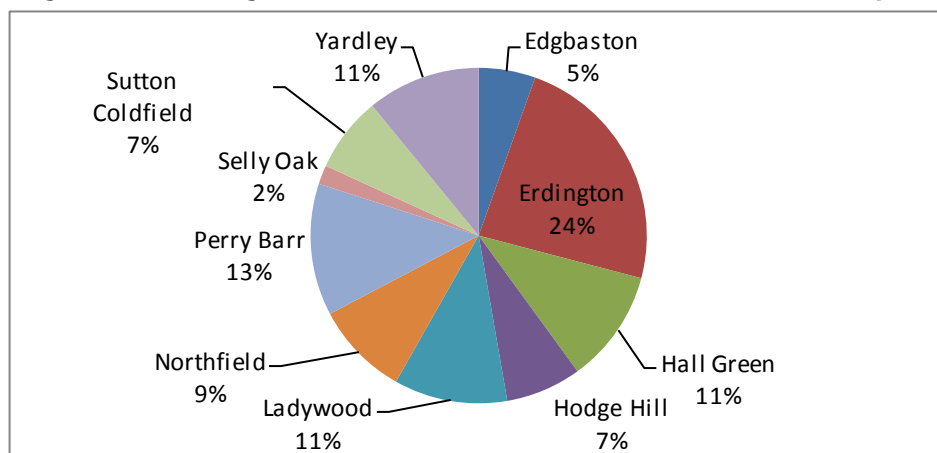
¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2015-to-2016>

² DfE: Children looked after in England (including adoption) year ending 31 March 2016 published 29 Sep 2016

³ Wherever possible the Council would prefer to keep children living with their families where the Council can be sure they are safe. A number of children the Council is working with will be on rehabilitation plans with support from children's services to ensure their safe return home. These children appear on the care first system as in care but are living at home.



Diagram 1: Birmingham Children's Homes where the Council may Place Children by District



Edgbaston	3
Erdington	13
Hall Green	6
Hodge Hill	4
Ladywood	6
Northfield	5
Perry Barr	7
Selly Oak	1
Sutton Coldfield	4
Yardley	6

- 2.5 The Council's 18+ Care Leaving Service is a city wide service that supports care leavers from the age of 18 to 21, or up to the age of 25 if they are in higher education. As of 1st March 2017 the service was supporting 636 care leavers. 91 care leavers are at university, which is approximately 14%, this is against a national average of 7%.

The City Council Services for Children in Care

- 2.6 The services for children in care are within the Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Schools portfolio. The Corporate Parenting Board is multi agency and 'works to champion the rights of children in care, and bring about change to ensure improvements in the outcomes for young people'.
- 2.7 Ofsted raised the City Council's rating for 'children looked after and achieving permanence,' including adoption performance and experiences of care leavers, to 'requires improvement' from 'inadequate'. The following are the areas the service has improved according to the Ofsted report published on 25th November 2016:
- Working with the courts and the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass).
 - Appropriate decisions are made for children to become looked after. Most children are enabled to have meaningful contact with their family.
 - Children benefit from regular review of their care plans.
 - When children are placed out of the local authority area, priority is given to securing a suitable placement, with education services identified as soon as possible. This includes appropriate use of both therapeutic and secure accommodation to meet needs and reduce risks for some children.
 - The education of children looked after is positive, with attendance, attainment and progress being supported effectively by a well-led virtual school. An increasing range of after-school activities are enabling children to become more self-confident.
 - The number of children attending good or better schools has increased.



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- For those children who struggle to sustain a place in mainstream education, a range of alternative provision is used.
- The vast majority of personal education plans are now completed within appropriate timescales and those sampled were generally of good quality.
- Risks for children who frequently go missing, and risks from gangs or sexual exploitation, are considered and reduced through robust plans.
- Most children live in stable placements.
- Children are engaged in decisions about their lives and social workers visit them regularly.
- Adoption is considered for children who cannot return home and they live with their new families more quickly than at the time of the last inspection.
- Care leavers enjoy positive relationships with their personal advisers and are supported into adulthood.
- The majority of children who have disabilities and who are in care are making tangible progress and are positively engaged with by their social workers.
- The local authority took practical and decisive action to review and improve the welfare of children living with special guardians and connected persons.
- Assessments for foster carers are thorough, include relevant checks and are appropriately challenging if concerns are identified. The large majority of foster carers spoken to by inspectors were very positive about the support they receive from their supervising social workers, describing them as 'amazing' and 'second to none.'
- The local authority has commissioned an effective service to support children aged 10 to 16 years who are moving from residential care to foster placements.
- The corporate parenting board now has a clear focus on issues for young people and is beginning to have an impact on improving services.
- The corporate parenting board's mentoring programme, for children looked after and care leavers in the city and out of area, is a positive development.

3 What is a Corporate Parent?

3.1 The definitions we were given were:

'As the corporate parent of children in care the State has a special responsibility for their wellbeing. Like any good parent, it should put its own children first. That means being a powerful advocate for them to receive the best of everything and helping children to make a success of their lives'.⁴

⁴ Statutory Guidance provided by AD, Children in Care Provider Services



‘A shared responsibility with all officers and members of the local authority to act as effective and caring corporate parents for looked-after children, with key roles in improving their educational attainment, providing stable and high quality placements and proper planning for when they leave care’.⁵

3.2 Or in other words:

‘Having the same aspirations and commitment to children and young people in care as any good parent would have for their own children’.⁶

3.3 All new Councillors appointed to the City Council sign a declaration of acceptance, this includes:

‘I affirm my commitment to Corporate Parenting in respect of the City Council’s children in care and will encourage others to do so. Furthermore I pledge to take every opportunity presented to me by virtue of my role as a Councillor to promote the wellbeing of children in care of the City Council’.

3.4 Councillors may be busy people, but as per the Local Government Association (LGA):

‘We can’t put enough emphasis on the role of elected members to ensure the Council acts as an effective Corporate Parent’.⁷

3.5 Guidance from the CfPS workshops advised that Councillors use the term ‘the Curious Corporate Parent’ and see their role as:

- Wanting to listen and learn from children and young people.
- Understanding who their local looked-after children are and where they live.
- Asking informed questions about all elements of children in care children’s services including strategies and frontline delivery.
- Demanding evidence of positive outcomes for local children.
- Searching for ways to overcome barriers to achievement. This is based on an understanding of the causes of the outcomes gap for children in care.
- Finding practical ways to engage with services and structures for children in care and corporate parenting.
- Asking how all elements of Council business are likely to have an impact for children in care.

⁵ CfPS provided: DFE 2013, Director and Lead Members for Children’s services – roles and responsibilities

⁶ AD, Children in Care Provider Services

⁷ AD, Children in Care Provider Services



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- Making connections and links between council plans, strategies and decision-making for children in care.
- Constantly asking 'would this be good enough for my own child?'

4 How can Councillors Play a Part in Improving the Lives of Children in Care – making a difference?

4.1 Members of the Committee highlighted the importance and value of being a corporate parent:

'Whatever your reasons for wanting to be an elected member, I don't think there can be a more important reason than that of wanting to be part of making change for children and young people who, for whatever reason, are in the care of Birmingham City Council.' Cllr Susan Barnett

'My most positive experiences since becoming a Councillor have been in the company of our children in care. I get far more from them than they get from me.' Cllr Barry Bowles

'Children in care have an entitlement to the best care, support, education and outcomes for their future. We all have a role and responsibility in that.' Cllr Sue Anderson

'The word 'corporate' in corporate parenting can have the effect of making it seem remote and less human. It is the role of elected Members to ensure that this doesn't happen and we always strive to make the system 'more human', delivering the best possible life chances for the children and young people in our care.' Cllr Matt Bennett

4.2 The 31 Councillors' responses to the questionnaire provided information on what Councillors thought their corporate parenting role was and what the barriers and opportunities were to this.

4.3 In addition, officers raised a number of 'asks' for Councillors to help them in improving services to children in care during the evidence gathering sessions.

How do Councillors see their Corporate Parenting Role?

4.4 The responses were broadly:

- To safeguard children in care.
- To visit children's homes in their wards.
- To seek advice if they come across an issue in their ward involving a child.



- To represent children in care in all areas of Council work e.g. should at all times be thinking "what does this mean for children in care" when carrying out Council business.
- To want to know about children in care outcomes, health and welfare issues in the same way as their own children.
- Be the advocate for children in care.
- By influencing in the community through networks and partnerships e.g. the police etc.
- Several Councillors thought there were mixed messages regarding the role and Councillors would all have different ideas of what a good parent would be.

What are the Barriers?

4.5 Several Councillors thought there were no barriers to fulfilling their corporate parenting role. However, other Councillors thought there were barriers and these fell into the following broad categories:

- Lack of clarity of the role and conflicting messages: Councillors are not like ordinary parents because they cannot all have the day to day involvement a parent has. Also, this is suggesting that Councillors be more hands on which is opposite to the strategic direction the Kerslake review suggested.
- Unreasonable expectations on Councillors who are not in an education or scrutiny role.
- Lack of time: Councillors are already busy and some have another job or caring responsibilities.
- Lack of training and understanding regarding visits to children's homes: Not sure where they are and not having the confidence to visit them.
- Lack of knowledge on what help is offered to children in care and in leaving care, or which officers to go to regarding children in care.
- Not all Birmingham children in care live within the city.
- There are no children's homes within their wards.

4.6 These barriers are addressed in chapters 5 and 6.

5 Councillor's Menu of Involvement

5.1 Councillors informed us that some are already engaged in a number of ways, such as in their role as a school governor, undertaken visits to children's homes, attended children in care and care leavers events, and invited children in care to participate in local activities, for example, joining in healthy activities in the local swimming pool. However, there appears to be some confusion as to what the corporate parenting role is and it is envisaged that the corporate parenting menu of involvement will enable all Councillors to make a valuable contribution to this agenda.

5.2 Also, during the evidence gathering officers were asked "how can Councillors support the service improvement journey for children in care through their role as corporate parents?" Therefore, in



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developing the menu of involvement we have included the officers 'asks' with the responses from Councillors regarding the 'opportunities' and what Councillors already do.

5.3 This is not to say all Councillors need to do all of the following, however, it provides a menu of involvement which can be developed. As the Assistant Director for Children in Care Provider Services stated:

'Being a corporate parent needs to be about the Councillors and what Councillors can do and not just about the list contained within the Corporate Parenting 2016 report [appendix 2]. The more Councillors speak to young people the more Councillors know how they want to be involved. This could be championing children in care interests and handing out fostering and adoption leaflets'.

5.4 Therefore, the following is a menu of how Councillors can be involved and the assistance available.

As a Ward / District Councillor

1	Seek opportunities to listen to the voices of children in care.
2	Carry out corporate parenting monitoring visits to the children's homes that have Birmingham children in them. Councillors can also visit children's homes outside Birmingham that have Birmingham children in and can liaise with officers to arrange these. Officer Contact: Louise Knowles
3	Attend events in children's homes to assist with raising aspirations. Officer Contact: Natalie Loon
4	Visit supported accommodation provision that have Birmingham children in them and build relationships with those providers. Officer Contact: Louise Knowles
5	Ask questions of all providers about young people's access to services e.g. health and leisure to help ensure children in care are fully integrated into the area.
6	In order to integrate residential and supported housing provision into the local community Councillors can ask the local partnerships and networks (e.g. including the police or health) to invite them to their meetings and events.
7	Where there are planning applications for new children's homes Councillors should balance the corporate parent role (e.g assisting officers in citizens understanding the impact of a children's home and by advocating the need for more children's homes) with the ward Councillor role of informing citizens and highlighting their concerns. Officer Contact: Andy Pepper



8	<p>Help with securing sponsorship support and reward partners.</p> <p>Officer Contact: Natalie Loon</p>
9	<p>If a school governor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help raise awareness that children in care are vulnerable and can ask what the school is doing to support the children in care. For instance, do Councillors know the number of children in care attending and is the school monitoring and focused on raising their educational attainment? • Ensure children in care are treated fairly, this includes access to activities, education trips and work experience. • Ensure that children in care are fitting into the school and achieving well on target. <p>Officer Contact: Andrew Wright</p>
10	<p>To ask about the outcomes for children in care when visiting local schools.</p> <p>Officer Contact: Andrew Wright</p>
11	<p>Make better use of connections to promote employment, volunteering and training opportunities. For example, to ask local partners or businesses if they could offer work experience / mentoring or help children in care secure volunteering roles.</p> <p>Officer Contact: Natalie Loon</p>
12	<p>Help to raise the profile and awareness in communities and at Councillors' surgeries for recruitment for foster carers and adopters. For example, Councillors could have literature and marketing material and / or invite officers to attend community groups and schools to discuss this.</p> <p>Officer Contact: Theresa Kane / Anita Earl</p>

As a City Councillor:

13	<p>At all times be thinking "what does this mean for children in care" when carrying out Council business. For example, Councillors being involved in developing the housing strategy and homeless transformation programme need to consider the needs of children in care.</p>
14	<p>Understand the needs, issues and complexities of the children the Council is caring for. For instance, nationally there are issues in finding places for children with very complex needs.</p> <p>Officer Contact: Andy Pepper</p>
15	<p>Help maintain a stable budget for Children's Social Care to assist with reducing agency staff so investment can be made in permanent staff that helps ensure stability for the child.</p>
16	<p>To celebrate success for children in care, including attending one or more of a number of</p>



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	celebration events. Officer Contact: Natalie Loon
17	Attend fostering and adoption recruitment events. Officer Contact: Theresa Kane / Anita Earl
18	As well as being in contact with Children's Social Care if something has gone wrong officers welcome positive feedback about families and children's experiences.
19	Ask social workers how well they know the children they are working with and evidence of whether the child's voice is heard and how they are involved in the decisions made.
20	Visit or buddy up with Councillors in areas that have a larger number of children's homes (as children's homes are not evenly distributed in the city).
21	Any other activities not outlined above you can commit to in 2017/18.

6 How will Councillors be supported in their Role?

- 6.1 According to the survey not all Councillors have accessed available training or support. However, the following is a list of training and / or support Councillors have had or were aware of:
- Frequent Corporate Parenting training provided by City Council officers. For example, Councillors' corporate parenting monitoring visits (previously referred to as a Regulation 44 visit).
 - District Corporate Parent Champions briefing and meetings.
 - Online PACE course on Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).
 - LGA training for Schools, Children and Families O&S Committee.
- 6.2 The LGA recognises that Councillors have many priorities, but at the same time emphasises the importance of the corporate parenting role. Although information has been shared regarding the corporate parenting role of Councillors, reinforced with specific training sessions and shadow opportunities, there is still much to do to embed the role.
- 6.3 The menu of involvement provides Councillors with examples of how they can undertake their corporate parenting responsibilities. A number of these can be undertaken when fulfilling the everyday role as a Councillor and does not necessarily require an additional commitment.
- 6.4 The commitment Councillors make will be published on the City Council's website and Councillor's progress evaluated in nine months. Officers will then develop the menu into a corporate parenting handbook for Councillors for May 2018. This handbook will incorporate a practical guide to help Councillors implement many aspects of the corporate parenting menu and key contacts in terms of officers of the council and partner organisations. This will include Frequently Asked Questions



(FAQs) and suggestions on questions Councillors could ask during the visits to children's homes. In the interim, Appendix 1 provides Councillors with key officer contact details.

- 6.5 Each District has a District Corporate Parent Champion. The District Corporate Parent Champion's role includes encouraging colleagues to visit children's homes and to promote a greater awareness of children in care. The District Corporate Parent Champions have helped facilitate the dissemination of information and will be integral in the ongoing developments. Further seminar sessions will be arranged to cover a number of aspects of children's services.
- 6.6 Councillors already receive monthly e-mails of the children's homes in Birmingham and the number of Birmingham children within them. Included within this e-mail will be the number of children in the ward/District who are:
- In care.
 - Living in foster homes.
 - Living in supported accommodation.
 - Care Leavers.
 - Attending schools in the ward.
 - Living outside of the Birmingham boundary.
- 6.7 If Councillors wish to visit a children's home and/or supported accommodation and would like guidance, then assistance is available from Children's Commissioning; District Corporate Parent Champions; and the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Schools, Children and Families O&S Committee.
- 6.8 In addition a quarterly bulletin will be sent to Councillors, to include invitations to events, training available for Councillors and successes on the mentoring scheme etc.
- 6.9 Information is available on the Members' portal regarding work experience and Councillors can email Workexperience@birmingham.gov.uk if they are aware of any children who would want work experience at the Council. However, if Councillors are aware of any children in care who would want work experience either with officers or Councillors then please email CorpParent@birmingham.gov.uk.



7 Recommendations

7.1 The aim of this inquiry was to build on the previous Committee's work and assist Councillors in fulfilling their corporate parenting role. The following recommendations will support this aim.

	Recommendation	Responsibility	Completion Date
R01	Councillors to commit to at least one activity from the 'menu of involvement'. This will then be published on the Council's website. A follow-up survey will be undertaken by the Scrutiny Office in nine months requesting an update from Councillors on this.	All Councillors	April 2017
R02	The menu of involvement for Councillors is developed into a corporate parenting handbook for Councillors for May 2018. This will include providing Councillors with examples of how they can undertake each task.	Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Schools	May 2018
R03	Training is offered to Councillors in the first couple of weeks of becoming a Councillor.	Deputy Leader	May 2018
R04	Every children's home in Birmingham that has a Birmingham child in care is visited by the end of July 2017 and the District Corporate Parent Champions ensure this happens.	District Corporate Parent Champions	July 2017
R05	Supporting documentation for completing cabinet reports includes a requirement that consideration is given as to any impact of the proposals on children in care. If there are likely impacts, the cabinet report should include this in the body of the report	Cabinet Member for Transparency, Openness and Equality	October 2017
R06	The Assistant Director, Children in Care Provider Services presents an annual Corporate Parenting Board report to the Schools, Children and Families O&S Committee.	Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Schools	February 2018
R07	Progress towards achievement of these recommendations should be reported to the Schools, Children and Families O&S Committee no later than October 2017. Subsequent progress reports will be scheduled by the Committee thereafter, until all recommendations are implemented.	Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Schools	October 2017

Motion

That the recommendations R01 to R07 be approved and that the Executive be requested to pursue their implementation.

Councillor Susan Barnett, Chair, Schools, Children and Families O&S Committee



Appendix 1: Officer Contact Details

Andy Pepper, AD, Children in Care Provider Services	
Corporate Parenting Board and District Corporate Parent Champions	Natalie Loon, Corporate Parenting Coordinator
Children in Care Council (CICC)	Lisa Carter, Head of Participation and Engagement
Fostering and Adoption	Theresa Kane, Head of Service
Birmingham Council Children's Homes	Melanie Page, Service Manager
Care Leavers & Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers Children (UASC)	Shankarbai Patel, Head of Service
Therapeutic Emotional Support Services (TESS)	Steve Mennear, Head of Service
Children's Commissioning: Children's Homes, Supported Accommodation and Fostering	Narinder Saggu, Head of Service, Children's Commissioning and Placements Rakesh Mistry, Commissioning & Brokerage Manager Louise Knowles, Senior Commissioning Officer (provides Councillors with details of the Birmingham children's homes with Birmingham children in them)
Lorna Scarlett, AD, North West Central	
Children in Care Social Workers	Manjeet Rai, Head of Service
Kay Child, AD East	
Children in Care Social Workers	Sivay Heer, Head of Service
Yvette Waide, AD, South	
Children in care Social Workers	Sally Craddock, Head of Service
Disabled Children's Social Care	Chris Bush, Head of Service
Debbie Currie, AD Child Protection, Performance and Partnerships	
Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO)⁸	Charles Greer, Head of Service
Yvette Waide, AD, South	
Disabled Children's Social Care	Chris Bush, Head of Service
Jill Crosbie, AD Special Educational Needs	
Virtual School	Andrew Wright, Virtual School Head ⁹

⁸ The Children & Young Persons Act 2008 requires local authorities to appoint an IRO for each child in care. Their role is to oversee the child's care plan, monitor the case and challenge the local authority if the plan is not meeting the child's needs or is not being implemented effectively.

⁹ Promotes the educational achievements of children in care & oversees their access to services and progress within the system.



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Summary Report 2016

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For further information contact

Natalie Loon
Corporate Parenting Coordinator
Birmingham City Council

Email: CorpParent@birmingham.gov.uk

1. Introduction to Corporate Parenting in Birmingham

Introduction from Andy Pepper,

Assistant Director of Children in Care Provider Services

Birmingham City Council

In my role as an Assistant Director, and strategic lead for corporate parenting, I have been in the privileged position to support this fantastic, resilient, diverse and unique group of individuals over the past year and help to develop and embed the corporate parenting agenda.

I believe that a city is defined by the way they treat their most vulnerable, and am proud of the work that has been done by our corporate parents – carers, partners, social workers councillors, officers, and other workers – who are working together to support our young people to become secure, productive, independent and happy members of our city.

We are all aware of how our children and young people in care, as well as care leavers, are more likely to experience poorer health and lower educational achievement, as well as having fewer employment opportunities. We strive to give them the same opportunities as any other child in this city, and work with them to provide services recognising their individuality.

Our Corporate Parenting Strategy has provided a blueprint for our responsibilities, commitment and aspirations for young people in care. This update is a reflection on the huge amount of work done in 2016 and the many achievements of our young people. It sets out in more detail the work that we have done to date, and also our visions and aspirations for the future of which there will be more.

This year has seen some really innovative work by the Children in Care Council (CICC), supported by the Rights and Participation (RAP) service. This group of motivated young people meets regularly and their highlights this year have included presenting to international events, sitting on interview panels and campaigning on important issues. You will see more about their work later in this report.

This work is driven by the revised Corporate Parenting Board, which has a key role in championing the rights of young people and thus focussing, challenging and supporting our corporate parenting work. A series of task and finish groups, working closely with the Children in Care Council (CiCC), meet to provide focussed support on specific tasks and really making sure we succeed.

Birmingham City Council, as a corporate parent, has developed and driven a number of corporate initiatives this year to raise the profile of corporate parenting and

highlight the responsibilities of all staff. The corporate parenting mentor scheme in partnership with Birmingham Virtual School has grown beyond all recognition and now supports over 100 young people. Exciting developments within the scheme include the work with Birmingham City University to develop academic mentors and support at corporate parenting events.

Our reward partners have been vital to the success of corporate parenting in the city and help to support our work with vulnerable young people in a range of ways. This can be anything from apprenticeships and work experience, tickets to the football to supporting career and raising aspiration events. This last year has seen a phenomenal amount of support from partners and this continues to grow.

We have also provided a number of laptops to support educational attainment in partnership with Service Birmingham, and will have provided 120 to young people in care and care leavers by October this year.

Although corporate parenting is the responsibility of all citizens in Birmingham, we have been very grateful for the continued support of our elected members in raising the profile of our campaigns and championing our corporate parenting work. Councillor Susan Barnett is our new corporate parenting lead and you will hear about her passion and drive to represent the young people in care in the city.

Part of my wider role this year has included work to implement new pathway plans – designed with and for young people in care, these are much more user friendly and have received great feedback. We have been improving policy and procedure around Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Missing, Private Fostering and Special Guardianship Orders and reviewing and improving the placements service, as well as supporting more effective social work interventions to make a child's journey through the care system as seamless as possible.

And finally, Children's Services has had a challenging year, and change is in the air with proposals to move towards a Children's Trust. However and wherever the service is governed, Corporate Parenting will remain an essential part of everyone's work – staff, partners and colleagues across the city. As the work with corporate parenting develops so does the realisation that we cannot do this alone, this is a citywide task and a citywide responsibility and I am proud and grateful for the help and support of the partners that has enable the great strides that we have achieved this year.



CORPORATE Parenting Strategy

2. Corporate Parenting Governance

The overall aim of the 2015/16 Corporate Parenting strategy is to reinforce the corporate responsibility of everyone in the Council

Introduction

The overall aim of the 2015/16 Corporate Parenting strategy is to reinforce the corporate responsibility of everyone in the Council, both elected members and staff, and of its partner agencies, to improve the life chances of children in care and care leavers and ensure they get the right support and services where they live.

2.1 Corporate Parenting Board

The Corporate Parenting (CP) Board aims to support and champion Birmingham's looked after young people. The Board is a multi-disciplinary, multi-agency group chaired by Councillor Susan Barnett, comprising of:

- Children in Care Council (CiCC) representatives,
- Elected members,
- Assistant Director Children in Care Provider Services,
- Head teacher, Birmingham Virtual School,
- Representatives from other Directorates,
- Rights and Participation service
- Children's Social Care;
- Birmingham Foster Care Association, representing the voluntary sector;
- Health
- West Midlands Police
- Other representatives where necessary to the agenda.

The CP Board meets every three months and works to champion the rights of children in care, and bring about change to ensure improvements in the outcomes for young people.

Our children and young people in care are best placed to tell us how services can be improved. That's why the members of our CiCC are the life and soul of our corporate parenting board. We listen carefully to what they have to say and do all we can to meet their expectations. We then feed back to them on a regular basis through attendance at CiCC meetings. A member of CiCC attends each CP Board meeting to present the work of the CiCC.

The CP Board provides governance to ensure outcomes for children in care improve.

Some of its areas of focus are:

- Consolidating practice, to avoid drift in the system and to ensure resources are used only where intended. The Board works to strengthen policy, practice and process to enable better planned and more appropriate placement in the first instance and, subsequently, more timely permanence planning, case progression and exits from care as appropriate.
- Supporting more children in care to succeed. Recently attainment of GCSE A* to C grades has improved, but the gap between children in care, in contrast to the wider Birmingham population, still requires improvement. Care leavers are still less likely to find education, employment or training in Birmingham than in similar areas.
- Supporting the Care Leavers Pathway Planning accommodation and support CSE and Children Missing from Care, Home and Education.

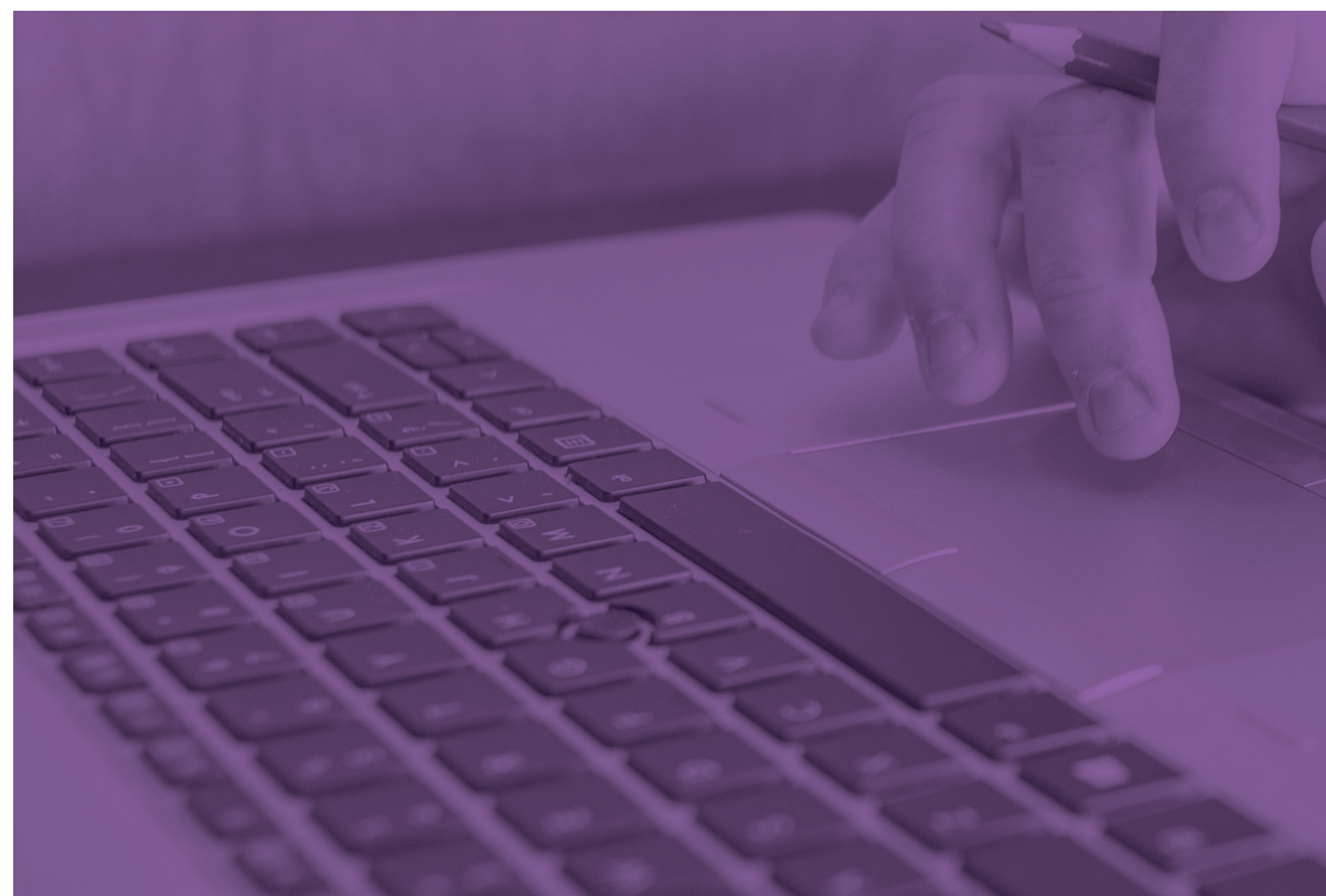
The role of the CP Board includes:

- Ensuring the corporate parenting role is understood by all elected members, officers working in the Council and in partner agencies
- Monitoring and overseeing plans, strategies or policies for children in care, young people and care leavers to ensure performance is maintained
- Monitoring and implementing the Corporate Parenting Strategy
- Reviewing Children in Care data set, identifying issues, then driving and monitoring how these are addressed

2.2 Corporate Parenting Task and Finish Groups

The working groups meet monthly and focus on discussion or activity around specific subject areas related to children in care.

The group's works closely with the Children in Care Council (CICC), hearing the views of children and young people





3. Children in Children Care Council (CiCC)

Introduction

Birmingham CiCC is a welcoming group of young people in care. We are friendly, energetic and enthusiastic. We are powerful, positive and amazing! We want to give children in care a voice and we want to tell you if you are in care your voice matters!

We are a group of young people that meet regularly to discuss being in care and we think about how we can help Birmingham City Council make improvements. We want to enable children and young people in care (and care leavers) to have a voice and be able to engage meaningfully at different times and in different ways and we want to ensure that corporate parents are listening to those views and showing genuine interest! With the support of Rights and Participation Service and the Corporate Parenting Board we have achieved so much this year! We have a new mission statement and we believe our profile is the best it has ever been. We have challenged, practised, shared our experiences and supported other children and young people to have their voice heard. We believe we support the corporate parenting agenda by making the board stay accountable to children and young people. We 'live' being in care and we experience being in care in a way that our corporate parents cannot. We believe we can work together to make improvements and evidence how children and young people's views can bring about change.

This year we have presented to international events, we have sat on numerous interview panels, we have presented to different professionals, we have campaigned on issues we believe are important, we have brought about change, we have met interesting people, we have grown as a group, we have supported The Rights and Participation service to launch a Care Leavers Forum. We have been away on a residential with each other. The pictures throughout this report are of us and we are proud to be YOUR Children in Care Council.

"I have sat on interview panels and met people like Lord Warner and Andrew Christie. When I first sat on a panel I was very nervous but I felt more confident as it went on and some of the candidates were more nervous than me! I felt very proud at the end when I fed back my views and Birmingham employed the person I thought was best. I am more confident about being involved in my care plan as well. Being a member of CiCC has helped me know my rights and given me the confidence to share my views with people."

Zoe from the Birmingham CiCC.

3.1 Pledges and responses

The Corporate Parenting Board prepared a Birmingham Pledge, making ten promises (see below) to make sure that children in care are supported to achieve and succeed. The Birmingham Pledge is based on what children have told the Board is most important to them. A response was produced to each pledge, explaining the work that is currently taking place and future initiatives in this area by the Assistant Director of Children in Care Provider Services. In 2016 the board will look at how to 'better' capture evidence of delivery against the pledges and build on what Children and Young People are telling us.

Promise 1 We promise to involve you in decisions that affect you and to listen to your views

Response: Children and young people should have their wishes and feelings taken into account. These should be captured by the social worker and the social worker should be able to evidence children and young people's views within their care plan. A range of creative techniques are used and championed with different approaches being added all the time. We are currently signed up to using a nationally recognised 'mind of my own' online application as well as creative arts based techniques. Where a child or young person does not feel listened to or requires support to express their views then we have an internal advocacy service (Rights and Participation) that will support the child with 'issue based' advocacy. As well as evidencing individual children and young people's views we ensure that children and young people have opportunities to talk to us about their care experience. We are currently undertaking research with a group of children to track their experiences in Care. Opportunities to hear children's voices are embedded within everyday practice. However our commitment to 2016 is to ensure that we develop a robust system to both evidence children and young people's influence within their care plan and also how we respond to children's experiences and potentially change practice as a result.

Promise 2 We promise that we will endeavour to find you the best possible place for you to live

Response: Children and young people should have their wishes and feelings taken into account. These should be captured by the social worker and the social worker should be able to evidence children and young people's views within their care plan. A range of creative techniques are used and championed with different approaches being added all the time. We are currently signed up to using a nationally recognised 'mind of my own' online application as well as creative arts based techniques. Where a child or young person does not feel listened to or requires support to express their views then we have an internal

advocacy service (Rights and Participation) that will support the child with 'issue based' advocacy. As well as evidencing individual children and young people's views we ensure that children and young people have opportunities to talk to us about their care experience. We are currently undertaking research with a group of children to track their experiences in Care. Opportunities to hear children's voices are embedded within everyday practice. However our commitment to 2016 is to ensure that we develop a robust system to both evidence children and young people's influence within their care plan and also how we respond to children's experiences and potentially change practice as a result.

Promise 3 We promise to make sure you have every opportunity possible to achieve at school

Promise 4 We promise to encourage you to take part in all available activities that the city has to offer to ensure that your talents, hobbies and interests are met and to support you to do the things you enjoy.

Response: As corporate parents we identify and look for opportunities that go above and beyond hobbies and interests and really try and offer (though relatively small numbers) opportunities and experiences that make lifelong memories (Olympic tickets/Wembley tickets etc.) however all IROs and SWs also encourage children and young people to pursue their interests. If a child moves placement then professionals should work hard to ensure that children do not abandon their hobbies and interests. Every effort should be made to ensure a child can continue with something they enjoy. A child and young person should know where to go to and complain if this doesn't happen.

Promise 5 We promise to take care of your health and encourage you to be healthy

Promise 6 We promise to provide you with a good and clear assessment of your needs, an up to date care plan and a PEP (personal education plan)

Promise 7 We promise that you will have your own social worker who visits you regularly and gives you details about how to contact them or someone else if they are away when you need them

Response: A new entitlements leaflet has been produced to help children and young people be more aware that they are entitled to see a social worker every 6 weeks.

Promise 8 We promise we will help you stay in touch with your family, friends and other people who are important to you

Response: Contact is an issue for children and young people in care. We should ensure that children and young people can stay in touch with people who are important to them. However, sometimes this is difficult. A child/young person should know and understand their contact arrangements. They should be fully explained to them and evidenced in their care plan (complaints happen when children/young people feel let down and out of the loop).

Promise 9 We promise to listen to what you have to say listen to what you have to say

Response: As a board we are exploring different ways to hear from children and young people and get a proper feel for their experience in Birmingham's care. We need to ensure that BCC fulfils its statutory duties but we also need to be ambassadors for our children and drive practice that is responsive to children's views. This is a common thread and children and young people experience things differently to adults. They are in receipt of our care and we can in error make decisions that we feel are in young people's best interests, without thoroughly exploring a child's view or appreciating the many different views there may be.

Promise 10 We promise to work with you and give you all the help and support you need to successfully move from care to adult life

Response: We would like your views as to how best the Birmingham Safeguarding Children Board Board (BSCB) can support the changes in approach and what can BSCB board members do as partners to support the work – e.g. through their agencies becoming foster friendly, or providing independent visitors. I think BSCB should identify their priorities and campaigns for 2016 and then come back to us to hear how these issues may affect children in care (different to how it effects non children in care). They should be working with scrutiny to ensure policy and process doesn't have an adverse effect on in care/care leavers. They should ensure that in care/care leavers have a particular focus and drive within any of their campaigns.

3.2 CiCC Priorities

2015 saw the CiCC go from strength to strength. The group has grown and tackled some very complex issues and campaigns. We believe a successful CiCC can achieve these things:

- Potential to contribute to transforming the lives of those involved
- Ability to show and evidence children and young people's views and how their engagement can bring about changes to services.
- A CiCC can support and add meaningful value to a corporate parenting approach

Birmingham CiCC want to enable children and young people in care (and care leavers) to have a voice and be able to engage meaningfully at different times and in different ways and we want to ensure that corporate parents are listening to those views and showing genuine interest.

The group is open to all children in care, the only criteria being that a member is in the care of Birmingham City Council or a Birmingham Care Leaver. As we have meetings in Birmingham it is obviously difficult if young people cannot get to Birmingham but we are always thinking about how CiCC can engage with more children and young people that are placed outside of Birmingham.

In 2015/2016 members of CiCC have attended several Corporate Parenting Board meeting and attended several national events for CiCC including those hosted by 'A National Voice'. Taken part in reviewing the IRO service, met with researchers involved in research with children in care and contributed to LGA/OFSTED consultations. Met with Lord Warner and Andrew Christie. CiCC have sat on a number of interview panels for a range of senior managers. CiCC have attended several high profile events and received praise, thanks and an award for their contribution to BCC.

CiCC have produced a number of resources that have been used to promote CiCC and also work has been used by the adoption and fostering team to raise their profile and recruit potential new fosterers. CiCC are particularly proud that the 'ideal social worker' resource has been so well received. CiCC would like every social worker to see the resource and use it to motivate them to do a better job. CiCC would like children and young people to see it and know its ok to expect your social worker to be honest and brave!

Our campaigns for 2016

- CiCC want to see meaningful and creative work experience opportunities for children in care/care leavers. This could be days, weeks or longer. It can be hard to get 'good' work experience if we come and ask our corporate parents to help us then you should!
- CiCC want to let young people and children know that they can attend their reviews. We want to work with the IRO team to ensure that children and young people can creatively and positively contribute to their care plans.
- CiCC will continue to share positive stories around being in care and we will work hard to tell everyone about the Children in Care Council. The group meet fortnightly and are also now linked to a new care leaver's forum. CiCC have produced a new logo and are busy promoting their work and recruiting new members.

3.3 Pocket Money and Savings and Reviews and Overnight Stays

The Corporate Parenting working group responded to a request from the CiCC who raised a concern that there was a perceived difference in the levels of personal pocket money paid to children and young people in care across the city, which appeared to change based upon whether or not the children or young person had been home fostered or living in residential accommodation.

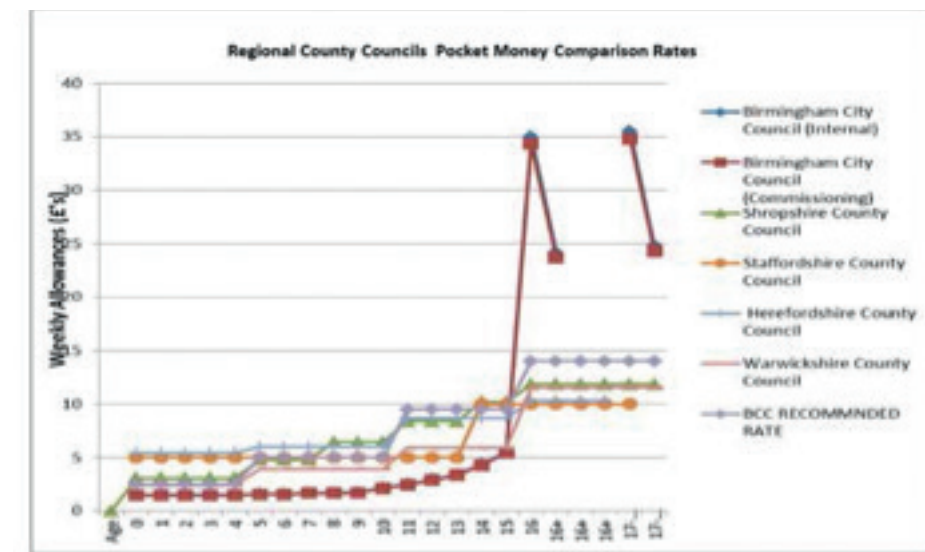
The Corporate Parenting working group listened and assigned a pocket money working group to investigate, made up of fostering team managers, finance team leads and Birmingham Foster Carers Association (BFCA). Firstly, the group was required to identify whether or not a standard policy for pocket money and savings existed across the service.

It then carried out the following tasks:

- Reviewing an ongoing consultation by the CiCC on pocket money rates paid to young people, and gathering feedback from them and their foster carers. The team then reviewed all the responses to get a clearer understanding of young people's perceptions.
- Reviewing the existing guidance on pocket money rates issued to children and young people within Birmingham, whether based in residential homes or foster carer homes.
- Identifying and analysing the national pocket money rates of Birmingham's statistical neighbours, Core Cities and Regional authorities.

- Once the feedback had been reviewed the working group proposed the recommendations to the Corporate Parenting Working Group for setting a new pocket money rate and savings policy comparable to statistical neighbours, Core Cities and Regional authority rates.
- Developing separate pocket money and savings policy documents which would standardise rates across all Birmingham's looked after service areas including Internal Fostering, Commissioning Services, Residential fostering, and other residential settings like schools or secure units/young offender institutions.

Regional Comparison Pocket Money rates:



The draft guidance on Pocket Money covers the distribution of pocket money to children/young people in internal foster care placements. It stresses that foster carers need to consider how to apply the policy in a fair way throughout their household and sets out how foster carers can encourage saving.

Recommended rates for children and young people at different age bands are included.

The policy will be expanded to cover other relevant groups of looked after children/young people not in internal foster care placements, in consultation with the Corporate Parenting Task and Finish group. In response to queries about young people in remand and whether they need to be included, Business Change have consulted with Legal Services, who have suggested amendments to maintain flexibility and avoid liability and legal challenges.

They also recommended no change to the levels of payment for 16-18 year olds who would otherwise face a reduction under the new recommended rates. In light of this, the working group will decide on changes to the guidance wording when they meet in October.

The pocket money working group recommended new comparable rates which on average equated to an overall increase in the weekly amounts of pocket money received by young people across the city. The policy is scheduled to go live in April 2016.

Overnight Stays

The CICC told the Corporate Parenting Board that young people in care were having difficulty arranging sleepovers or overnight stays with friends. They sometimes had to wait several weeks for social workers to agree to individual requests which meant they missed out on opportunities which were available to their peers who were not in care.

The Corporate Parenting Working Group listened and investigated the guidance which was being issued nationally by other similar local authorities and ensured Birmingham City Council's policy was consistent with this.

The guidance which followed stated that:

- The child's carer including Foster Care or Residential Care has the 'delegated authority' to agree to requests for overnight stays.
- This could be subject to certain exceptions which would normally be agreed with the social worker, carer and child and recorded in the placement plan.
- DBS checks are not normally required for overnight stays but may be needed for regular contact. Procedure Review: A new online children's social care procedure manual for social workers and carers was launched in July 2015. This contains a section on Social Visits and Overnight Stays which includes a definition of what might constitute an overnight stay and suggested guidelines and procedure.

Birmingham City Council procedures online reference link:

http://birminghamcs.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_overnigt_stays.htm



CORPORATE
Parent
Mentoring

Birmingham **Virtual School**
Going 4 Success

4. Birmingham Virtual School

The Virtual School for Looked after Children (LACES) team consists of a Head Teacher, three team managers, twelve teacher advisers and twelve mentors

Introduction

The Virtual School for Looked after Children (LACES) team consists of a Head Teacher, three team managers, twelve teacher advisers and twelve mentors, who support children based in the South Birmingham, North Birmingham and Out of Authority. These three teams support the 1815 children and young people aged 0-25 years of age who are in the care of Birmingham City Council to improve their attainment and attendance.

The staff ensure that all children have appropriate school places, all have a high quality (electronic) Personal Education Plan (e-PEP) and that their pupil premium plus grant is spent effectively to improve their progress. They work with a variety of agencies and professionals including schools and settings, alternative providers, colleges, residential homes, carers and families to promote achievement and progress. Training is delivered to a variety of professionals including teachers, early year's professionals, Designated Teachers/people(DT's), Independent Reviewing Officers(IRO's), carers, residential care staff, social care staff and further education staff.

4.1 Corporate Parenting mentoring scheme

The Corporate Parenting mentoring scheme began in 2015, based on the simple idea of pairing up Birmingham City Council's large, altruistic and dedicated workforce, and some of our 1,819 young people in care who need some extra support. The pilot focused on providing one to one mentoring support to a cohort of year 11 pupils supporting with GCSE's and the preparation to go onto further education and employment.

The scheme started off with a group of 16 mentors providing one to one support to young people in secondary schools in the city that were preparing for GCSE's and going into further education and employment.

In early 2016 the council appointed a Corporate Parenting Coordinator and one of the key tasks was to work in partnership with the Head teacher of Birmingham Virtual School to develop the bespoke mentoring scheme training package for staff, allowing mentors and partners to provide targeted support within all areas of educational attainment in schools and colleges throughout the city and also young people/adults placed out of authority.

In March 2016 due to the success of the scheme and the numbers of staff expressing an interest, the decision was made to expand the offer providing support from Key Stage 1 right through to 18 plus care leavers.

By August 2016 204 Birmingham City Council staff and reward partners including Birmingham City University, the NHS and Service Birmingham were trained as Corporate Parents.

Over 100 staff and partner mentors are now providing one to one support in a range of ways including support with coursework, homework, reading, and writing, securing apprenticeships, employment opportunities and life skills.

Mentors are also providing dedicated support with college and university enrolment, attending open days, supporting with the transition into independent living, mock interview and skills sessions and days out.

Other staff and partners that have received training are providing support in a number of ways including the Birmingham Virtual School raising aspiration programme careers events and participation in group activities with young people and adults.

The Birmingham Virtual School team continues to play a key role in providing dedicated support to Corporate Parent mentors through their mentoring journey. The team provides the background to the young person's educational position, arranges and attends the initial meeting and are there as a point of contact to support mentors. A bespoke training calendar will be available over the next year for mentors.

This will provide training sessions on a number of topics and a number of networking sessions allowing mentors to share experiences.

Corporate Parenting mentoring case study 1 - Sabrina

Sabrina's view

My name is Sabrina Robinson and I am 18 years old. Having a mentor has been a blessing. I'm saying this because I didn't realise how much I needed Heather until I had her working with me. She has been absolutely amazing, she definitely works above and beyond.

Heather has now been working with me for just over a year and she's been a great help. She found me two work placements, helped me sort out my portfolio (she literally didn't care how long it would take for it to be completed) as long as it was, (and when I say long, it took absolutely ages!) the persistence was real!

Shortly after we met, Heather realised that I needed help in order to move house. It wasn't an easy process but Heather went back and forth in her little car taking my things to my new house. For that I am ever so grateful. If Heather hadn't helped me, I don't know who would have. I think both of us sharing the same

faith has played a huge part in forming a relationship, I feel like I understand her, simply because I know she understands me.

Having a mentor is a blessing, and I can sincerely say, thank you Heather, thank you for everything!

Corporate Parenting mentoring case study 2 – Sally

Professional's view from a Birmingham Virtual School Education Advisor

I referred Sally to the Corporate Parent mentor scheme in the summer holidays of 2015. The reason being that Sally was facing a placement move, and this combined with returning to college was causing her a lot of anxiety.

Sally's mentor made contact with her very quickly. I met with Sally during the holidays and she was very dubious about why she was being contacted and how this was going to help her. I explained the role of the mentor and asked Sally to give her a chance. Sally's mentor and I kept in good contact and I encouraged her to persevere. Very quickly Sally's mentor proved to her that she was genuine, trustworthy, caring and consistent. She helped Sally in many practical ways - with her placement move, enrolling at college, and then later in the academic year, finding her a work placement for her Health and Social Care course. Sally would not have completed her college course, and been accepted on to the next level without her mentors input. Sally's mentor has been a huge and invaluable support for Sally, who struggles with independent living and personal organisation. I am hugely grateful to Sally's mentor for everything she has done for Sally and feel that her input has made Sally's experience of being in the care of the local authority a much more positive experience. Her intervention has also improved the prospects of Sally - who is now studying on a level 3 course and could progress to higher education in two years' time. Sally's mentor has enhanced the work of the statutory services by working alongside us, and she has given the time and care that Sally needs to move forward with her life at this time of transition.

4.1.1 Corporate Parenting Champions

To ensure that Corporate Parent mentors are given the best possible support to enable them to carry out and develop in their role three voluntary Corporate Parent Champions will be working with the Corporate Parenting Coordinator.

Quotes from Corporate parent champions:

Mark Cohen, Corporate Parent Champion, North Birmingham: "As a Corporate Parent Champion it is a privilege and honour to be able to support, advise and mentor other new and existing Corporate Parents. The role is so uplifting, though challenging at times, and nothing can match the sense of achievement once you have helped a young person to strive towards achieving their goals."

Heather Farrell, Corporate Parent Champion, South Birmingham: "I am passionate about helping young people to achieve their potential. It's been an incredible journey to be involved with Corporate Parent Mentoring from the initial stages as one of the first mentors. The programme has now grown offering more children/ young people the opportunity to have the support of someone who can make a positive input their lives."

Lourell Harris, Corporate Parent Champion, Out of Authority: "Whilst acknowledging that working at the corporate centre is just as important as any other job in the council, being able to experience working directly with our front-line staff, members of the public, and our own young people, makes my corporate role more 'real'. I feel very special being part of the original pilot in 2015, and being successful in helping my mentee to achieve her own goal of going to University. It's a blessing to be involved in such a worthwhile cause, with such wonderful and supportive colleagues from across the wider organisation, and I am very proud to be a Corporate Parent Champion."

4.1.2 Residential mentoring pilot

From October 2016 Birmingham Virtual School will be working in partnership with Birmingham City University and Communicate, a software-based literacy and communication teaching intervention designed specifically for use with people who have delayed literacy and communication skills.

The project is designed to focus on core communication skills along with building self-esteem and confidence. A Corporate Parent mentoring team comprising of a champion, lead mentor and academic mentors will be working with a residential home within the city.

The mentoring team will be working together to provide support to some of our young people in developing their literacy skills. They will also be providing support with homework and coursework. The pilot will initially focus on five residential homes and will develop further throughout 2016/17.

To find out more about Corporate Parent mentoring and how you can get involved contact Natalie Loon, Corporate Parenting Coordinator at: corpparent@birmingham.gov.uk

4.2 Raising Aspirations Programme

The Going For Success Raising Aspirations Programme is a targeted learning offer to help improve the outcomes of children in care. This programme is delivered out of school time in the evenings or holidays, with the active help of a number of our Reward Partners. The summer holiday supported 79 young people in the five-day summer event over three venues.

27 young people were on courses which offered a qualification of which 22 were successful in gaining their award (Sports leadership or Music Technology). A further small group of Year 9 pupils were targeted to help them in their transition to Key Stage Four in a Work Skills programme.

The purpose of this course which ran over nine days (Feb, Easter & Summer) was to develop the young people's skills around 'working with others', 'improving own learning and performance' and 'problem solving'. These skills are commonly needed for success in a range of activities in education and training, work and life in general. This will lead to the children gaining the ASDAN Wider Key Skills qualification. A third group of secondary aged young people were involved in a Hair and Beauty course.

Raising Aspirations In the primary age group, the Virtual School linked with the reward partner Birmingham Repertory Theatre to provide a 'Spy School' experience for 16 children. The purpose of the week was to develop the young people's oral literacy along with self-confidence. The young people (YP) spent the week with professional drama practitioners from The REP Theatre taking part in games, improvisations and drama workshops as be part of an exhilarating story about spies and espionage.

For further information on the Raising Aspirations Programme contact: Kathryn Holland, Virtual School Advisor at Kathryn.holland@birmingham.gov.uk

4.2.1 Going4Success careers events

The Going4Success careers events launched in autumn 2015 and two further events took place in the spring and summer term of 2016

The purpose of the events is to raise the aspirations and increase the vocational knowledge of our young people and their carers. The autumn term event had a multi vocational focus that comprised of a number of workshops including theatrical make up, public services, motor vehicle maintenance, construction and art and design.

The spring term event focused on careers in health and was delivered by reward partner HealthTec and hosted at North Birmingham Academy. The interactive workshops for young people included paramedics, first aid and medical engineering.

The summer term event was hosted and delivered by the REP theatre and the event included a number of interactive workshops for young people including wigs and make up, lighting and sound, backstage tours, set design and props.

Each event has a tailored interactive session for carers on a number of topics.

Over 260 young people and carers attended the 2015/16 careers events.

Moving forward the 2016/17 careers events will have a focus on higher education and apprenticeship will take place at venues across the city.

For further information on the Virtual School Careers events contact: Juliette Walton, Virtual School Advisor at Juliette.walton@birmingham.gov.uk

4.3 Laptops to support with educational attainment

In 2015 a successful application was made to the Service Birmingham staff benefit fund. The application was to provide 60 laptops for young people in care across Birmingham who are entering higher education and did not have access to a computer.

This project was put in place to meet a current funding gap for young people in care, giving them access to laptops in order to support their progression into continued education.

The project has been administered through the Birmingham Virtual School, who already have and continue to build up relationships and trust.

The safeguarding of the young people whilst online has been paramount to the success of the project. Policy Central Monitoring software was installed on all 60 laptops before they were distributed.

By installing Policy Central we have provided a comprehensive and automatic protection for each young person that has received a laptop. A monitoring process and team has been implemented within Birmingham Virtual School, the team take forward any captured identified by the system and action in line with the process.

The impact of this project to date has been huge, both for the individuals involved and for the wider service. For the individual having access to this technology has proven to be a fantastic resource for learning and education, it has enabled young people to feel connected and part of the wider world, and access resources. It has also proven to be a way of accessing job opportunities, completing application forms, paying bills, writing essays – all vital aspects of living in the modern world.

It is primarily an education resource that has helped in raising attainment and aspirations for young people thought this programme

Following the success of this project, a further application to the Service Birmingham staff benefit fund for 60 reconditioned laptops has been approved. By October 2016 120 young people will have laptops provided by Service Birmingham to support with their educational attainment.

Quote from Joanne Craig, Head of Recruitment, Learning & Development, Service Birmingham: "Service Birmingham is always delighted to be able to support local young people and strive to have an impact on their development in education and future careers. Because of our understanding of the importance of education, through our Staff Benefit Scheme we have, to date, given 120 laptops out to assist their learning and widen their research opportunities with access to this resource."

CASE STUDIES

Case Study 1: Afra

Afra has just completed her BTEC Level 2 First Diploma in Travel and Tourism South and City College Birmingham, Hall Green Campus. She has also achieved her Functional Skills Level 1 in English and Maths.

Afra lives in independent council accommodation with her one year old son and has no support from family. She attends college three days a week.

With daily struggles of keeping a house, budgeting and looking after a young child who was sometimes poorly and unable to go to nursery it was not easy for Afra to maintain her place at college and complete the work required to pass the course.

Having this laptop has enabled Afra to complete her coursework at home in the evenings at weekends, and also keep up with her peers by working from home when she has been unable to get to college due to personal circumstances out of her control.

The laptop has also enabled Afra to keep in contact with her Corporate Parent mentor by email and her college tutors and peers which she says has made her feel less isolated.

When Afra was asked for feedback she said, "I could not believe it when my Virtual School worker told me I would be getting this laptop; I never knew that people could be so kind to me.

"It has helped me with my studies and confidence and to be honest I would not have completed my level 2 in travel without being able to study online when my son sleeps in the day or goes to bed. Thank you so much."

Case Study 2: Simon

Simon is really committed to his studies and has aspirations to become an information technology teacher. Unfortunately Simon did not have access to his own computer.

Simon spent a lot of time traveling to his friends in the hope that he could use their PC which was not always possible.

Simon's Virtual School worker nominated him for a laptop to support with his education and also as a way of keeping touch with his fellow students. After three months of receiving the laptop Simon's tutors reported that he was now consistently submitting his assignments on time. Before he received the laptop, Simon was regularly submitting his work two weeks late.

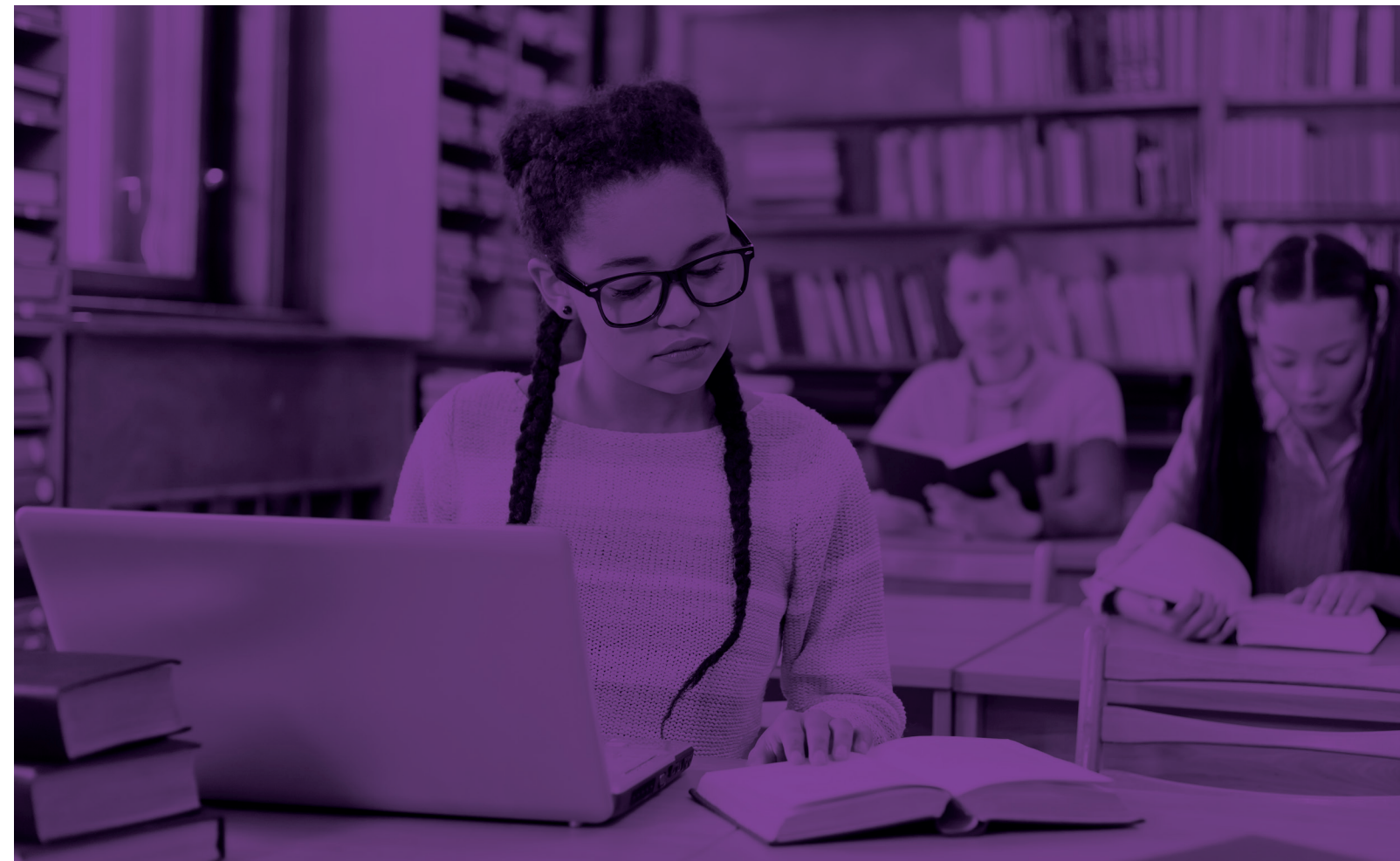
Simon, 18, from South Birmingham, said "Before I had this laptop, I had to go to my friends to do my coursework, talk to others and email my assignments which meant they were never in on time. Now I can do all these things in the privacy of my own home and can even talk to my friends online about coursework. I feel less isolated and my tutors are very pleased."

Case Study 3: Lucy

Having her own laptop has allowed Lucy to continue with her study through her pregnancy by completing work through the online portal at home, particularly in the later stages of pregnancy when Lucy would not have managed the long journey on public transport so frequently.

Lucy, 17, from North Birmingham, said: "As a pregnant mum to be I was still given the opportunity to have a laptop, something I never thought I would have. It has opened up lots of doors for me. I can now comfortably study at home and do not have to go to the library.

"It has also allowed me to look at baby groups that I could join and learn more about what awaits me over the coming months. I have been really thankful for the opportunity to be able to research about how I can continue with my education when my daughter arrives and never knew there were so many options available to me. I cannot thank you enough; the laptop has made a real difference."



5. Elected members responsibilities

Introduction by Councillor Susan Barnett,
Lead Corporate Parent

“Whatever your reasons for wanting to be an elected member, I don’t think there can be a more important reason than that of wanting to be part of making change for the children and young people who, for whatever reason, are in the care of Birmingham City Council.

“During my time as a Corporate Parent I have met some of the most brilliant, funny, enchanting children and young people – all of whom I would have been proud had I been their parent. But I can strive to be the next best as their Corporate Parent. I welcome the active participation of all our district corporate parent champions to join with us to try and make a difference in the lives of some of the nicest children you will meet. I look forward to meeting with you all regularly to further our joint task to represent these children to the very best of our combined ability.

“In 2016 the Corporate Parenting Board carried out a series of Corporate Parenting presentations at each of the 10 district meetings. The meetings set out Corporate parenting responsibilities to members, to enable them to get involved in corporate parent activities. Following the presentations each district elected a corporate parent champion to work as part of a team collectively to engage with and support all elected members in their role as Corporate Parents.”



CORPORATE
Parenting

5.1 Corporate Parenting District Champions

Duties and Responsibilities

- To be a member and attend monthly Corporate Parent Champion Sessions
- Representation of Children in Care voicing their concerns and successes. Working with all stakeholders to understand and prioritise issues for children and young people in care.
- To represent the views and interests of Birmingham's Children in Care in all aspects of your role.
- To promote a greater awareness and understanding of Corporate Parenting internally and externally.
- Proactively participate in Corporate Parenting development and its review across the district, directorates and agencies.
- To engage with other ward councillors to promote and develop the interest of Children in Care for your district
- To work with BCC officers and BCC partners to ensure successful delivery of Corporate Parenting initiatives for Children in Care.
- Develop an understanding of the care system and the application of threshold and risks.
- Attend appropriate training to ensure the effective understanding of the context and issues with the care system.

“We must continue unequivocally to ensure that all professional staff in the city working with children, and with families... walk in the shoes of a child, and see the world through the eyes of a child, whenever they do something that might affect the life of a child for the better. We want their decisions to be shaped by the children and young people they serve”
Penny Thompson, CBE –
Independent Chair BSCB

Corporate Parenting District Champions will also support elected members in the following areas:

- Build an understanding in all areas of Corporate Parenting
- Actively be more involved
- Receive more training on Corporate Parenting and Regulation 44.
- Support more engagement with children and young people
- Children and young people's themed and consultative events including raising attainment and careers.
- Focused events – on relevant serious issues
- Communication with young people – using technology
- In addition to attending CP board meetings members develop relationships with the frontline workers and with children and families

“We can't put enough emphasis on the role of elected members to ensure the Council acts as an effective Corporate Parent.”
Local Government Association

5.2 Regulation 44 and Elected member engagement

Ensuring the safeguarding and the quality of care in Birmingham Children's homes are at the core of the Regulation 44 task. The registered person of the residential home must ensure that:

An independent person visits the children's home at least once each month.

- The independent person must produce a report about a visit (“the independent person's report”) which sets out, in particular, the independent person's opinion as to whether:
 - a. children are effectively safeguarded; and
 - b. the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being.

Regulation 44 reports should be a reliable and regular source of external monitoring ensuring the home has the leadership, resources, skilled and supported staff to meet the needs of each child, and provide a safe, facilitating environment. Through the corporate parenting board many elected members of Birmingham City Council have taken on the responsibility of the independent person carrying out these monthly visits.

Role of a visiting member

- Get an understanding of what it is like to live in the home
- Explore the conduct of the home rather than its implementation of policy and procedure, guidance and regulations
- Explore the culture, and atmosphere of the home
- Seek young peoples' experience of living in the home
- Explore how the home is managed and staff approaches to young people
- Make a judgement on how well the home is meeting the needs of the young people living there.
- Get an understanding of how other agencies support the young people and the staff.

Rules for members visits

- Should hold no allegiance to adults working in the home
- Should focus the visit on the quality of care received
- Are not expected to have specialist skills
- Are not expected to be experts on legislation, childcare theories or the management of the home
- Should ask questions and explore the way the home is run
- Are free to ask apparently naïve questions – where staff cannot explain in simple words, either they do not understand it themselves or they are not being entirely open
- Should complete a report of their visit
- Should report any safeguarding concerns immediately

Following the visit by the members a report will be produced and e-mailed to the children's commissioning team. The report will be circulated to the Home Manager, Service Manager and Assistant Director for Children in Care Provider Services for a response. Finally, the responses will then be returned to the visiting Member.

Other seminars for members are being arranged to raise awareness of why children and young people come into care. The issues of CSE and children missing from home or care or education will be highlighted.



Foster Friendly Families and Friends

6. Foster Friendly Families and Friends

The Corporate Parenting Working Group investigated an initiative set-up by The Fostering Network called Foster Friendly Families

Introduction

The Corporate Parenting Working Group investigated an initiative set-up by The Fostering Network called Foster Friendly Families, where employees who foster within an organisation could have additional time off work to support them in their fostering.

The Corporate Parenting working group liaised with the Fostering Network Charity, the Department for Education (who are the government's first Foster Friendly employer) and BCC HR team to identify the initial requirements to adopt the initiative, and then to formulate a policy to implement it across the organisation.

6.1 Supporting Foster Carers and Family & Friends Carers

Birmingham City Council has become one of fewer than 30 councils across the country to establish itself as a Foster Friendly employer. A partnership has now been secured with the University of Birmingham where BCC Foster Carers are being used as mentors. There is no right in law to leave for fostering purposes; however, BCC is now making Fostering Leave available to support employees who are also Local Authority foster carers or family and friends carer. This is in addition to current annual leave provisions, public holiday leave, and flexi-leave where applicable. It is also separate from the current provisions for Special Leave.

Staff can access up to 10 days paid and 10 days unpaid foster carers leave per leave year if they are:

- BCC or other Local Authority foster carer, for example temporary, short term, long term, out of hours emergency or respite fostering
- Caring for a child under a residence or special guardianship order and the child would otherwise be a BCC or other Local Authority 'looked after' child (family and friends carer).

Care Leavers and Apprenticeships

7. Care leavers and apprenticeships

An apprenticeships pathway for young people in care was developed by Employment and Skills team in 2014

Introduction

An apprenticeships pathway for young people in care was developed by Employment and Skills team in 2014 and piloted with a group of nine care leavers, four of whom completed a full year apprenticeship within Birmingham City Council.

Review

The Corporate Parenting Working Group has since undertaken a review in 2015 of similar good practice within other local authorities including Trafford, Derbyshire, Glasgow and Newcastle to see how they are helping to support care leavers to access apprenticeships.

A paper on the good practice findings was presented to Councillor Penny Holbrook, Cabinet Member for Learning, Skills and Culture mid-December 2015 which built upon the previous recommendations from the pilot.

Ongoing actions include:

- To ensure a pathway of support through the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) for all care leavers who are NEET; this being an approximate cohort of 320 young people. The coordination of this work will be undertaken through a dedicated employed within 18+ service who will work with the successful commissioned organisations to deliver this support.
- A care leavers' forum has been established and has begun to meet regularly.
- The BCC Care Leavers 18+ Team are currently progressing an offer made by University Hospital Birmingham (UHB) to take on up to 60 young people in care or leaving care via their Learning Hub through a mixture of pre-apprenticeship training and apprenticeships.



Pathway Planning accommodation and support

8. Pathway Planning accommodation and support

In January 2016 the CP group alongside elected members co-chaired an initial presentation workshop regarding Care Leavers Accommodation

Introduction

In January 2016 the CP group alongside elected members co-chaired an initial presentation workshop held with a number of key stakeholders regarding Care Leavers Accommodation and the Support Framework around it. Feedback was collated from the workshop and has been used to shape and inform a proposed project approach and key deliverables.

A further joint session has been held with existing accommodation and support service providers for both the Placements service and young people Supporting People providers.

A stakeholder session is planned for the end of September 2016 with key stakeholders within health and the wider third sector commissioned providers particularly those providing services to young people in relation to their mental health and wellbeing and substance misuse.

The intention of this exercise is to:

- Inform and gain support of all stakeholders of Birmingham intention to embed the St Basils/Barnardo's Care Leavers Accommodation and Support Framework model in Birmingham.
- Gain intelligence of existing services to map the current service offers, determine the gaps that exist and inform any market re shaping that is required in order to embed the Pathway model in Birmingham.

Alongside this work a needs analysis and strategy document is being prepared with input from Public Health which will provide an evidence base for the future commissioning intentions.

To further support this development Birmingham has been successful in securing some Local Government Association funding under its efficiency programme.

The aim of which is to undertake a challenge of local authority systems, processes, commissioning arrangements and social work responses which currently result in some very expensive accommodation options for 16/17 year olds.

A second element to the LGA funding is to explore a resilience building skills programme for young people. Work is currently underway to explore this option with Birmingham University and St Basils.

In February 2016 the corporate parenting task and finish group chaired a project meeting to agree the scope for the re-design and improvement of the Care Leavers' accommodation pathway and to start building a clear project plan for the projects key objectives. This would include:

- A clear project structure
- Agreed products
- Agreed resources needed to deliver it
- To identify risks, issues and dependencies associated with the work

The project scope covers

- Young people (from 16 and 17 year olds in care and 18-25 care leavers) for whom we are the corporate parent.
- The pathway assumes that this is likely to impact on the 15.5+ age group.
- This will be an holistic view of all of the needs of young people who will be travelling the leaving care journey.
- The project covers the accommodation and support pathway.
- This project does not cover the wider pathway plan, unless identified for particular cohorts.
- The project does not cover the interim arrangements being put in place with 16+ supported accommodation providers

The project approach is based on Product-based planning:

- Core idea in PRINCE2 projects
- Iterative
- Looks at what needs to be produced to deliver the project



CSE and Missing young people

The potential of deliverables in service design include:

- An as-is summary
- Including current position relating to practice and commissioned services, data analysis
- Needs Analysis
- Future Delivery Options
- Agreed Design Principles
- Agreed Future Delivery Model including high-level processes

The potential deliverables in practice changes includes:

- Agreed Policies
- Agreed Procedures
- Agreed Staff Guidance
- Agreed Staff Changes (if any)
- Agreed Pathway Plan
- Agreed Electronic Form Changes
- Agreed Training Plan
- Agreed Training Content
- Agreed partnership arrangements

The project is now in the phase of initial scoping before a comprehensive project initiation document (PID) is compiled and presented to the service for discussion and project approval.

9. CSE and missing young people

Children who are Looked After by the Local Authority can be more vulnerable to exploitation

Introduction

Children who are Looked After by the Local Authority can be more vulnerable to exploitation. It is therefore important that all people who are involved in caring for children and young people are able to recognise the possible indicators of child sexual exploitation.

Child protection

Children in care are subject to the same child protection procedures as those who live with their own families, however their needs may be different and for this reason their Independent Reviewing Officer must be kept informed of any concerns relating to child sexual exploitation or any other form of suspected abuse. The child / young person's Care Plan must include a strategy to keep them safe and it must be updated and reviewed regularly.

CSE

There are specific concerns about the links between children running away and the risks of sexual exploitation. Many looked after children missing from their placements are vulnerable to sexual and other exploitation, especially children in residential care.

New policy and procedures have now been issued and the Corporate Parenting Board will be championing issues of CSE and Missing as one its 2016 priorities. These policies provide a framework for all agencies to do the following:

Prevent and Protect

We should all be aware of the risk indicators and factors to consider whether a child is at risk of sexual exploitation. This is a form of abuse and is everyone's responsibility to act upon which is in line with a child's best interests.

Vulnerability and Risk Management

Where it has been recognised that a child is at risk, has been targeted or is being exploited, services to work together to manage vulnerability and risk. This will usually be coordinated by Family Support Services or Children's Social Work Service and involves multi-agency partnership working.

Pursue

Services should work in partnership to disrupt perpetrator activity.

This will include sharing information between the police and services working with children and adults, the business sector and the wider community.

Children running away and going missing from care, home and education is a central issue for Birmingham Safeguarding Children Board. The board recently undertook an audit of a small number of children/young people who had an allocated social worker, some of these were children in care. The learning from the audit has been shared at the Executive Board held in August and highlighted the importance of all agencies working together effectively to safeguard children and young people.

In addition there is training available for all practitioners to raise awareness around CSE details of this can be found on the BSCB website.

To assist in achieving the above there are now three CSE co-ordinators in post who are currently chairing the Multi Agency Child Sexual Exploitation meetings and therefore have an overview of intelligence gathered which should assist with informing the strategies to be put in place by Missing Operational Group to address concerns in relation to perpetrators and/or places within the city. The co-ordinators are linked to the three areas- North/West Central, East and South and are building links with the family support and social work teams.

So what can you/we do:

- Listen to the voice of the child
- Ensure you are familiar with Right Service, Right Time document, the CSE and Missing Procedures and Policy
- Ensure you adopt the principles of these when working with young people
- Use the Force Information Bureau form- this is a form that anyone can complete and forward to the police. The aim is for the police to consider information/intelligence to inform the risks perpetrators may pose and to safeguard children. The information you have may help complete the jigsaw!
- If in doubt ask!

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