

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF SAFEGUARDING

LINK TO WORK PROGRAMME: Corporate Parenting

Strategic Priority 4: Learning City

Strategic Priority 5: Attractive and Inclusive City

**Corporate Improvement Priority: Delivering Customer Focused Services,
Improving Partnership Working to Delivery 'One City'**

1. Why has this report come to Committee?

- 1.1 To provide Review Committee with a statement about the establishment of the Corporate Parenting Board and its subsequent progress and business.

2. Background

- 2.1 A Corporate Parenting Review was conducted by the Council in 2003. Amongst the proposals in the final report was the establishment of a Corporate Parenting Board. The specific recommendations of the report were:
- 2.1.1 Consider the establishment of a Corporate Parenting Board - involving key Portfolio Holders to be responsible for children and young people who are looked after.
- 2.1.2 The Corporate Parenting Board considers, as an integral part of its early business, a requirement that all services of the Council and its partners develop policies, practices and protocols to ensure that access to services by Looked After Children is not impeded by the consequences of being in care.
- 2.2 The Council Constitution was revised in July 2005 and included provision in its 'Responsibility for Functions' for a Corporate Parenting Board to be established. Part 3 of the constitution states the terms of reference of the Board to be an advisory role to the Council, and that ".it shall:
- 2.2.1 Oversee the exercise of the Council's responsibilities as Corporate Parent and ensure that the interests of Looked After Children are appropriately reflected in all Council policies and the work of the Children's Trust
- 2.2.2 Inspect Children's Homes and make and consider reports on such visits."

- 2.3 The Corporate Parenting Board first met in September 2006 and has met quarterly since that date. At the first meeting the terms of reference were confirmed as set out in the Council Constitution and it was further agreed that the Board would report to the Children's Trust.
- 2.4 The Audit Commission Corporate Assessment report for the Council published in December 2007 made reference to a general need to improve scrutiny functions, and in particular noted that "the Corporate Parenting Board is underdeveloped and lacks representation from children and young people" It is to be noted that this report was based on assessment undertaken early in 2007, and by the time it was published in December 2007, arrangements had been implemented for young people to attend the board.

3 Current Position

- 3.1 The Corporate Parenting Board has met on 11 occasions and has received reports from the Head of Safeguarding in relation to:
- Best Value Performance Indicators and Performance Assessment Framework Indicators for Children Looked After and Care Leavers
 - Report from Multi Agency Looked After Partnership
 - Independent Advocacy Quarterly Report
 - Improvement Issues Identified by Young People
 - Children in Care Council
 - Reports of OfSted Inspections of Children's Homes
 - Involving Young People in Improving Participation in Reviews
 - Children Looked After: Prevention and Placement Strategy 2007 – 2009
- 3.2 Presentations delivered by other Safeguarding and Children's Services personnel include
- Anti-Bullying
 - Care Matters: Time for Change – Presentation on the Children in Care White Paper
 - Children Looked After and Offending
 - Process Towards Adoption
 - Engaging Young People in Leisure Activities
 - The Role of the Virtual Head Teacher for Looked After Children
 - Health needs of Looked After Children
- 3.3 The Advocacy Quarterly report and reports on Inspections of Children's Homes have been standing items for the Board's Agenda. The regular reporting on the Performance of Children's Services has covered a wide range of issues concerning outcomes for looked after young people.
- 3.4 Issues raised at the Board by young people have included:

- The need for less obtrusive security provision in some of the children's homes (A resultant review led to the decision was taken to replace bars on windows in Children's Homes with less obtrusive security devices)
- The desire to be more involved in staff, and particularly carer, recruitment and selection. (Draft guidance re staff recruitment has been since been produced by a young people's working group including young people in care. Practice in recruitment of Residential staff now includes young people's involvement.)
- The need for stability in relationships (An issue addressed in the Children's 'Prevention and Placement Strategy 2007 - 2009' and which continues to be an ongoing focus of the service)
- The desire for more contact with their Social Workers (A local reflection of the nationally-reported concern identified within 'Care Matters', the Children and Young Person's Act 2008, and to be addressed in the implementation of the Care Matters Action Plan and strategies to improve recruitment and retention of social work staff)

3.5 In June 2007 the Corporate Parenting Board received a report proposing an initial framework for the involvement of young people at the Board. It is an encouragement that their involvement has progressed from initially attending to make presentations, to currently attending the full meeting, and with the exception of March 2007, when the late alteration of the meeting date and consequent diary clashes prevented their attendance, between four and seven young people have attended every board meeting since September 2007. The concept of the young people's involvement has evolved from one of 'attendance' to one of 'representation', in line with the observations made by the Audit Commission Report

3.6 In August 2008 '4UM' the young people's consultation group completed the first phase of establishing the Children in Care Council as required in response to 'Care Matters: Time for Change'. This group has adopted the name '**Change**' and has been meeting regularly since September 2008. Whilst Children in Care Councils are not specifically referred to in the Children and Young Persons Act 2008, the Government has indicated that maintaining such a council will be a statutory requirement from 2009, and arrangements for supporting this will be subject to OfSted inspection. Young people's representation at the Corporate Parenting Board is drawn from members of 'Change'

3.7 Members' involvement in inspection of children's homes was already in place, through a rota of Members involved in Regulation 33 monitoring visits, prior to the establishment of the Board. Members who sit on the Board are offered the opportunity to participate in the rota.

4 Summary

- 4.1 The Board has now met on 11 occasions, and is still developing. Since September 2008, arrangements have been in place for young people's representation at the board, and this has been a growing element in the conduct of the board's business. Advice from legal services has been useful in considering the development of the young people's role with the board, and with the development of 'Change', there will be a need to consolidate the relationship between Change, the Board, and links to the Lead Member and Director of Children's Services
- 4.2 Almost all of the reports to the board are presented by or on behalf of the Head of Safeguarding and with few exceptions have been concerned with the performance of Children's Services in relation to young people in care.
- 4.3 Whilst some inter-agency involvement has been reflected in reports from the Multi-Agency Looked After Partnership (MALAP), and key portfolio holders are represented in the membership, to date the Board has largely focussed on the performance of Children's Services, particularly the Safeguarding Service, in relation to Looked After Children. Corporate Parenting responsibilities of other Directorates of the authority have not been reflected in the actual business of the board.

5 Future Steps

- 5.1 Now that the Board has a structure and process established, there is a good opportunity for further development to widen awareness of the responsibilities of the whole authority for Corporate Parenting.
- 5.2 It will also be an opportunity to clarify the Advisory functions of the Board and help identify how the Board's advice can be relayed to the council as a whole and in particular:
 - 5.2.1 Clarify the expectation of the board's role in relation to the Children's Trust, which, as it emerged through a series of Officer meetings within MALAP and Safeguarding, was not an original element of its terms of reference, and has not been reflected in the business of the board to date.
 - 5.2.2 Clarify the constitutional relationship between 'Change' (the Children in Care Council) and the City Council as a whole, including consideration as to whether arrangements can be made for young people to be considered members of the Board.

5.2.3 Review whether officer attendance at the Board should remain as at present, or should reflect the same range of functions as do the Members.

5.2.4 A review of the Board’s functions against the original terms of reference would be timely. This would avoid the risk that the Board could function simply as a proxy sub-committee concerned only with the work of Children’s Services, and ensure that the Corporate Parenting responsibilities of other directorates are reinforced.

Background Papers:

Corporate Parenting Review 2003
Care Matters: Time for Change
Putting Corporate Parenting Into Practice: understanding the councillor’s role

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