

Council

Tuesday 14 September 2010

Item 5.1

Report from Cabinet - 6 September 2010

5.1.1 – Barnet's Corporate Parenting Strategy

Report of Cabinet

6 September 2010

Cabinet Members:

* Cllr Lynne Hillan (Chairman)

* Melvin Cohen, LL B
Brian Coleman
* Richard Cornelius

* Andrew Harper
* Helena Hart
* Sachin Rajput

* Robert Rams
* Joanna Tambourides
* Daniel Thomas

* denotes Member present

BARNET'S CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY (Report of the Cabinet Member for Children & Families – Agenda Item 10):

Cabinet considered the report of the Cabinet Member (circulated separately to all members of the Council) outlining how the Council would discharge its collective responsibility to provide the best possible care, protection and opportunity for children and young people in care and leaving home.

Cabinet's approval of the Strategy, as proposed by the Cabinet Member, is recorded in their decisions of this date. The Cabinet Member pointed out, however, that the role of Corporate Parent was a responsibility shared by every member of the Council, and he asked that the Strategy should be referred to full Council for formal noting in acknowledgement of the significance of this role.

Cabinet accordingly

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND – That the Corporate Parenting Strategy be formally noted in acknowledgement that the corporate parenting role is a responsibility shared by every member of the Council.

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Meeting	Cabinet
Date	6 September 2010
Subject	Barnet's Corporate Parenting Strategy
Report of	Cabinet Member for Education, Children & Families
Summary	<p>Barnet's Corporate Parenting Strategy outlines how the council will discharge its collective responsibility to provide the best possible care, protection and opportunity for children and young people in care and leaving care.</p> <p>This report outlines the development of the strategy and asks members to approve the strategy.</p>

Officer Contributors	Marion Ingram, Deputy Director, Safeguarding & Social Care Lyn Owen, Service Manager, Safeguarding & Social Care Harris Lorie, Projects Officer, Safeguarding & Social Care
Status (public or exempt)	Public
Wards affected	All
Enclosures	Appendix 1 – Corporate Parenting Strategy (April 2010)
For decision by	Council
Function of	Council
Reason for urgency / exemption from call-in	N/A

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1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 That Cabinet approve Barnet's Corporate Parenting Strategy.**
- 1.2 That Cabinet understands the role of all Members in ensuring that the council discharges its corporate parenting responsibility.**

2. RELEVANT PREVIOUS DECISIONS

- 2.1 At the Council Meeting on 20 April 2010, Minute 168, Council agreed to establish a Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel.

3. CORPORATE PRIORITIES AND POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 The Corporate Parenting Strategy (CPS) supports Barnet's Corporate Plan priorities as follows:
 - In support of Barnet's vision as 'a successful London suburb', the strategy aims to actively promote the life chances of children and young people in care or leaving care, enabling them to contribute positively to the communities in which they live.
 - In support of Barnet's commitment to 'sharing opportunities and sharing responsibilities', the strategy aims to ensure that every child and young person in care or leaving care receives effective support to reach their full potential and lead successful adult lives.
 - In support of Barnet's aspiration to provide 'better services with less money', the strategy aims to redress at the earliest opportunity the multiple disadvantages experienced by children and young people in care or leaving care, with the objective of reducing further, more costly interventions.
 - 3.2 The CPS also contributes to the council's Future Shape thinking. Corporate parenting necessitates a collaborative 'one public sector' approach between council employees, elected members and partner agencies. It also requires a 'new relationship with citizens', taking a personalised approach to meet the needs of children and young people in care and leaving care and helping them to reach their potential.
- ## **4. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES**
- 4.1 The council has a statutory responsibility to act as corporate parent towards children and young people in its care or leaving care. Failure to develop, adopt and implement a strategy outlining how the council will discharge this responsibility would risk not securing the best possible outcomes for these children and young people. This may also result in non-compliance with legal

duties and have an adverse impact on the council's reputation. Adoption of the Corporate Parenting Strategy outlined in this report will help to mitigate this risk.

5. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 5.1 The council and all organisations working with children and young people in Barnet are committed to ensuring that all children and young people, regardless of ethnicity, religion, disability, economic status or other differences, are able to achieve positive outcomes (be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic wellbeing).
- 5.2 Children and young people in care or leaving care are liable to experience inequality of opportunity in achieving these outcomes. This is because of the multiple disadvantages they are likely to have experienced, for example harm or neglect, lack of support structures and poor access to educational and health facilities. The CPS seeks to offer appropriate support in addressing these disadvantages and enabling these children and young people to reach their full potential. For example, the strategy sets out Barnet's aspirations to:
- Ensure permanence and stability in accommodation;
 - Ensure that children and young people are prepared to start school, and that they attend and achieve at school;
 - Ensure the promotion of healthy lifestyles in relation to diet, exercise, alcohol and drugs;
 - Ensure access to leisure, fun and celebration;
 - Ensure that care leavers are prepared and supported to live independently.
- 5.3 The CPS also commits to providing personalized support to those children and young people with additional, specific needs, for example cultural, religious, sexual or disability-related needs.

6. USE OF RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS (Finance, Procurement, Performance & Value for Money, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)

- 6.1 The CPS will inform service plans in the council and support joint working with partner agencies to ensure that the needs of children and young people in care and leaving care are met. All activities in the strategy can be carried out using currently available resources and within budgetary constraints.

7. LEGAL ISSUES

- 7.1 Local authorities have a general duty under section 22 of the Children Act 1989 to safeguard and promote the welfare of any child in their care and to make such use of services available for children cared for by their own parents as appears to the authority reasonable. This duty was reinforced and strengthened by the Children Act 2004. A specific additional duty was inserted into the 1989 Act at section 22(3A) as follows: "The duty of a local authority ... to safeguard and promote the welfare of a child looked after by them includes a particular duty to promote the child's educational achievement."
- 7.2 Under statutory guidance, the lead political role for ensuring that children looked after by the local authority have their interests protected, their opportunities maximised, their educational achievement enhanced, their voices heard and care services shaped to meet their needs sits with the Lead Member for Children.¹

8. CONSTITUTIONAL POWERS

- 8.1 Constitution (Part 3) – Responsibility for Functions – Section 3.8

9 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 9.1 The responsibility of corporate parenting was first placed on councils by the Children Act 1989, and has been reiterated ever since, most recently in the Children and Young Person's Act 2008.
- 9.2 The role of a corporate parent is to seek for a child or young person in care or leaving care the same outcomes that every good parent would seek for their own child.
- 9.3 All Members have a shared responsibility for being aware of the needs of children in care and ensuring that the council fulfils its corporate parenting duties.
- 9.4 Barnet's Corporate Parenting Strategy (CPS) aims to ensure that the life chances of every child and young person in care or leaving care are enhanced through:
- Effective support that addresses disadvantage and enables them to individually reach their full potential in every way;
 - Reinforcing the corporate responsibility of the whole council and partner agencies;

¹ Statutory guidance: The roles and responsibilities of Lead Member for Children's Services and the Director of Children's Services, DCSF

- Ensuring that any additional needs of these vulnerable children and young people are effectively met with support that is tailored to them.

- 9.5 The CPS emphasizes that involving and hearing the voices of the children and young people themselves is key to helping the council and its partners to make good parenting decisions. The primary mechanism for this participation is the Children in Care Council, known as the “Role Model Army”.
- 9.6 As part of the strategy a Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel has been set up. This was agreed at the Council Meeting on 20 April 2010. The panel supports the strategy and ensures the development and monitoring of robust policies and procedures to assist the council and its partners in being a better corporate parent. The panel is chaired by the Lead Member for Education, Children and Families and includes proportional cross party membership, in addition to the Director of Children’s Service and key officers. It meets quarterly.

10. LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Legal: HP
CFO: CM

Corporate Parenting Strategy

April 2010



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Introduction

Corporate Parenting is the term used to refer to the collective responsibility of the council to provide the best possible care, protection and opportunity for children and young people in care and leaving care. Effective corporate parenting needs a commitment from all council employees, elected members and partner agencies and requires a collaborative approach.

This responsibility was first laid out in the Children Act 1989 and has been reiterated ever since. In 1998 Frank Dobson reminded councils, through Quality Protects, that they needed to actively promote the life chances for children and young people in public care and this impetus has persisted ever since through a range of government initiatives, guidance and legislation and most recently through Care Matters and the Children and Young Persons' Act 2008.

This responsibility has become known as corporate parenting in recognition that the 'parenting' task must be shared by the council as a whole and with partner agencies working with children in care and care leavers. Corporate parenting is more than just providing food and shelter. It is about doing the same, and expecting the same for children in care as caring parents do for their own children. For any council this is a challenge that needs to be embraced with commitment and energy.

This strategy sets out how the council, Members and all partners will ensure Barnet's children and young people in care and leaving care are enabled to achieve their potential and have the best possible outcomes. It will be reviewed on a yearly basis and updated to reflect changes in practice and legislation.

"Care Matters: Time to Deliver for Children in Care" (2007) states that:

"Lead members for Children's Services and the Director of the Children's Service have a crucial role to play in terms of leading local change. However, real change for children in care can only be achieved with the active involvement of a wide range of local partners."

Corporate parenting is more than just providing food and shelter. It is about doing the same, and expecting the same for children in care as caring parents do for their own children.

Aims of the Corporate Parenting Strategy

Children and young people come in to care as a last resort because they can no longer live safely within their families. They start from a position of increased vulnerability and disadvantage and need additional help and support to overcome the factors that contribute to unacceptably high levels of poor educational achievement, mental illness, criminal activity and homelessness.

Barnet will seek to ensure that any additional needs of these vulnerable children and young people are effectively met with support that is tailored to them.

The aim of this strategy is to ensure that the life chances of every child and young person in care are enhanced through:

- effective support that addresses disadvantage and enables them to individually reach their full potential in every way
- reinforcing the corporate responsibility of the whole council and partner agencies through a range of initiatives that reflect national and local policies and best practice to improve outcomes.
- ensuring that any additional needs of these vulnerable children and young people are effectively met with support that is tailored to them. Such additional needs include cultural, religious, dietary or a disability related issue.



Corporate Parenting principles and values

The principles underlying the strategy for children and young people in care to Barnet are that they have a right to:

- live locally in placements where they are protected from harm and neglect and feel safe both at home and outside the home
- enjoy the best possible physical and mental health and be supported to live a healthy lifestyle and make healthy decisions
- expect that they will be given every opportunity to redress the effects of the previous disadvantage that they have experienced
- be encouraged and given opportunities to learn, develop, enjoy and achieve both within and outside home and school
- be supported by their parents, carers and peers
- play a full and rewarding part in the community
- achieve successful transition into adulthood.

The key components of effective corporate parenting are:

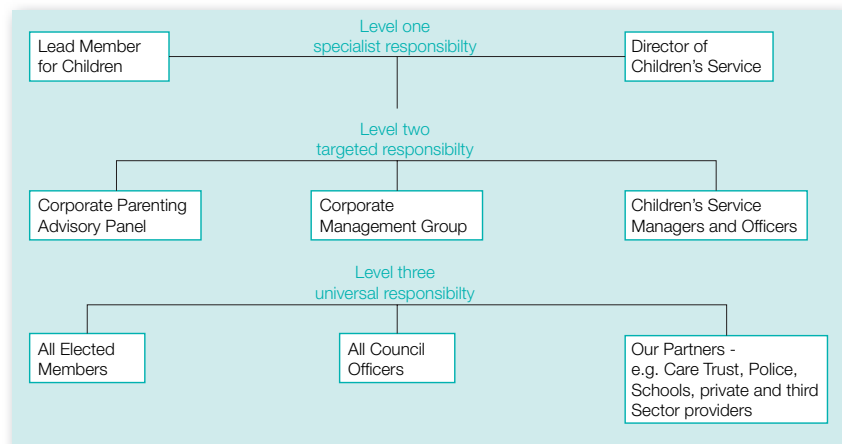
- hearing the voice of children in care and care leavers
- strong leadership
- good use of management information
- efficient and effective use of resources
- appropriate and robust scrutiny
- clear and embedded plans, policies, procedures and partnerships.

"Like any good parent we should put our 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."
(DFES 2006)

Corporate Parenting in practice in Barnet

The publication “Putting Corporate Parenting into Practice” (National Children’s Bureau, 2008) identifies three levels of responsibility in relation to corporate parenting. How this operates in Barnet is set out in the diagram below.

The three levels of Corporate Parenting responsibility



Level one will be achieved by the Lead Member for Children and the Director of Children's Service taking a robust lead and championing the corporate parenting agenda within the council and with partner agencies.

The Barnet Corporate Parenting Strategy will address the three levels described in the following ways.

Level one – specialist responsibility

Level one will be achieved by the Lead Member for Children and the Director of Children's Service taking a robust lead and championing the corporate parenting agenda within the council and with partner agencies. They will provide leadership across the authority in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in care and will ensure arrangements are in place to implement any key policy decisions regarding children in care. They will need to undertake an in depth analysis of the needs of the council's children in care and care leavers and be involved in reviewing services and leading change when needed.

Level two – targeted responsibility

Alongside on going social care activity and the work of partner agencies, level two will be achieved through the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel which will be chaired by the Lead Member (giving a powerful message about the importance of the corporate parenting role) and have cross party membership. Members of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel will be made aware of relevant issues, have access to qualitative and quantitative information about services and outcomes and will consider how they are going to hear the voice of the child and take action, in conjunction with managers and other agencies, to improve services.

This group has clear terms of reference, which are included as an appendix. It is responsible for ensuring the development and monitoring of robust policies and

procedures which will support children in care in being happy and healthy, fulfilling their potential and making successful transitions to adulthood.

In order to fulfil its role, the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel will be provided with a range of management and financial information in addition to ensuring that it hears the views of children in care and care leavers. Key officers will attend the group as needed to present information. The group will meet quarterly.

There are a range of issues that the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel may want to pay attention to in addition to the five Every Child Matters Outcomes. These might include areas in relation to young people in residential care, the participation of children and young people and their involvement in decision making, the specific care of minority ethnic children, specific needs in relation to disabled children, the use of out of borough placements, planning for leaving care and transitions, and the planning and care of young people in custody.

Level three – universal responsibility

This is the minimum standard, which requires all elected members and officers within the council and partner agencies to have an understanding of the needs of children in care and be aware of their corporate parenting role and shared responsibility for ensuring that the needs of children in care and care leavers are met. Elected members have a responsibility to take any action needed to address gaps in service and to consistently improve outcomes for children in care.

Level three responsibilities will be met through:

- annual induction and refresher training for Members on their responsibilities as corporate parents
- annual enhanced training for members of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel
- an annual report to Members on outcomes for children in care and those who have left care
- all officers being made aware of their responsibilities as a corporate parent through their induction, training and appraisals.



How the strategy will be delivered

Children in Care Council

Care Matters – Time for Change

This suggests that every local authority should have a Children in Care Council and that this should be the main mechanism by which councils and young people work together.

The Children in Care Council has been established in Barnet and consists of a number of strands of participation that are currently happening or being planned and developed. Any young person participating in the strands will become a member of the Children in Care Council.

The various participation strands will be fed back to the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel by officers on a regular basis to ensure that the views of children and young people in care and leaving care are heard and can be incorporated into service planning and development.

The London Pledge

Care Matters also introduced the London Pledge. This is a promise by the council to all its children in care and care leavers, detailing what will be provided to them in terms of services, care and support and is intended to strengthen the council's role as a corporate parent. Crucial to the success of the Pledge is that it reflects what children and young people say about what parenting means to them. Barnet officers and young people contributed to the development of the London Pledge. Barnet and the Children in Care Council have agreed initially to adopt the London Pledge as it stands. This position will be reviewed in April 2011 to consider whether changes should be made.



Aims and objectives

The council and wider partnership's commitments to ensuring the best outcomes for this vulnerable group are detailed below under the five Every Child Matters outcomes. We will apply the key components of corporate parenting, as detailed earlier in this document, in hearing the voice of children in care and care leavers; strong leadership; good use of management information; efficient and effective use of resources; appropriate and robust scrutiny; and clear and embedded plans, policies, procedures and partnerships – to ensure that we deliver on these commitments.

Staying safe:

- to recruit local foster carers who are trained and supported in keeping children and young people safe and supporting them to fulfil their potential
- to commission safe and well managed placements when using external agencies, ensuring that Barnet's corporate parenting principles are applied
- to plan for permanence and stability
- to involve children and young people in all aspects of planning
- to achieve successful transition to adulthood.

Be healthy:

- to ensure access to high quality planning and services that ensure that physical, mental and sexual health needs are met, including for those children and young people placed outside Barnet
- to ensure that the strengths and difficulties questionnaire is embedded into practice and used to inform thinking about emotional well being
- to ensure the promotion of healthy lifestyles and choices in relation to diet, exercise, alcohol and drugs.

Enjoy and achieve:

- to ensure that children, including those placed outside Barnet, are prepared to start school and when they do, ensure they attend, achieve and participate in extra curricular activities
- to ensure that all relevant children have an up-to-date Personal Education Plan (PEP)
- to ensure that the Head of the Virtual School for Children in Care tracks educational progress and ensures that the PEP, Personal Education Allowance (PEA) and any additional support is put in place as required and has a clear School Improvement Plan in place
- to continue to develop the Education Champions scheme
- to ensure access to leisure, fun and celebration.

Making a positive contribution:

- to ensure opportunities for engagement in law abiding and positive activities

Every local authority should have a Children in Care Council and that this should be the main mechanism by which councils and young people work together.

- to offer every opportunity to develop self confidence and self esteem
- to ensure children and young people participate in care planning and the development of pathway plans
- to ensure opportunities to participate and be involved in service development and delivery
- to ensure children and young people are given opportunities to be actively involved in their local communities.

Economic wellbeing:

- to ensure that young people leave care with qualifications appropriate to their abilities and are encouraged and supported to continue in a learning environment or employment
- to further develop the apprenticeship scheme for care leavers
- to ensure that young people are prepared and supported to live independently
- to ensure that care leavers move into suitable accommodation and, when appropriate, to their own Barnet tenancy
- to ensure a smooth transition to adult services for any young people with complex needs



Appendix

The Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel

Terms of reference

Membership of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel

- Chair- Lead Member for Education, Children and Families
- Proportional cross party membership
- Director of Children's Service
- Key officers will attend the group as needed to present information.

Purpose of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel

The group will support the London Borough of Barnet's Corporate Parenting Strategy and will assist the Council and its partners in being a better parent to children and young people in care and care leavers. The Panel will ensure that the whole Council and its partner agencies have a joint commitment to corporate parenting in order to achieve continuing improvements to outcomes for children in care and care leavers.

How this will be achieved

The Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel will meet quarterly and will have an annual work programme which will include:

- consideration of a range of management and financial information about children in care and care leavers
- consideration of policies that support children in care and care leavers to be happy, healthy, fulfilling their potential and making successful transitions to adulthood
- monitoring the progress of children in care and care leavers outcomes
- meeting with key staff
- hearing the views of children and young people
- being updated about any new government initiatives, guidance, examples of good practice.

The Panel will provide an annual report to the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committee or Sub-Committee.