

	<p style="text-align: center;">CHILDREN, EDUCATION and SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">29 November 2018</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Title</p>	<p>Annual Report from the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Report of</p>	<p>Chairman of the Committee, Councillor David Longstaff</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Wards</p>	<p>All</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Status</p>	<p>Public</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Urgent</p>	<p>No</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Key</p>	<p>No</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Enclosures</p>	<p>Appendix 1: Corporate Parenting Annual Report</p>
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Summary

This report provides an overview of the progress and outcomes for children in care and care leavers in Barnet for the period April 2017- March 2018.

This report incorporates the Annual Independent Reviewing Officer report, the Annual Adoption Report and the Annual Fostering Report.

The report outlines progress made following Barnet's Single Inspection Framework undertaken by OFSTED in April 2017, which resulted in a rating of 'inadequate'. The Council fully accepted the findings of this inspection and have worked to improve at pace since the report's publication.

Recommendations

1. That the Committee note the work of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel in 2017.

1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

- 1.1 This report seeks to highlight progress made within the Corporate Parenting Service, update on improvements within 2017/18 and outline plans for 2018/19.
- 1.2 The annual report highlights the following areas of improvement:
 - Governance – improved attendance at Member training on corporate parenting and multi-agency corporate parenting group set up;
 - Strategy – corporate parenting strategy approved;
 - Practice improvement:
 - additional staff capacity;
 - improved training;
 - improvements in effectiveness of virtual school;
 - increase in number of foster carers and adopters;
 - Introduced exemption from council tax for care leavers;
 - Renewed pledge for care leavers, including improving life story work;
 - Established charity to support looked after children and care leavers
 - Audit – regular auditing has shown positive progress.
- 1.3 Areas for development include:
 - Create stable workforce;
 - Continue to improve quality of assessment and planning;
 - Ensure Independent Reviewing Officers support looked after children, particularly in relation to tracking and escalation of any concerns;
 - Improve timeliness of permanence planning and annual assessment of all looked after children;
 - Continue to improve assessment of risks associated with our vulnerable adolescents;
 - Continued practice development activities;
 - Ensure continued management supervision and swift progress in responding to improvement actions;
 - Increased compliance with statutory visiting timescales and social worker contact with children between statutory visits;

- Promote availability of supported lodgings for adolescents.
- 1.4 The Annual Report sets out areas of focus for the future and data on the Council's looked after children and care leavers.

2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Members are asked to note progress to ensure scrutiny by elected members and improve the effectiveness of the local authority in fulfilling their corporate parenting responsibilities and delivering services to children in care and care leavers.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

- 3.1 Not applicable.

4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1 Not applicable.

5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

5.1.1 Barnet Council and its partners will deliver the Family Friendly Barnet vision to be the most family friendly borough in London by 2020.

5.1.2 This supports the following Council's corporate priorities as expressed through the Corporate Plan for 2015-20 which sets out the vision and strategy for the next five years based on the core principles of fairness, responsibility and opportunity, to make sure Barnet is a place;

- Of opportunity, where people can further their quality of life
- Where people are helped to help themselves, recognising that prevention is better than cure

5.2 Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)

5.2.1 Resource implications associated with the Ofsted Improvement Action Plan and Family Services operations are outlined within the Ofsted Update and Q2 Performance Monitoring Report.

5.3 Social Value

5.3.1 The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2013 requires people who commission public services to think about how they can also secure wider social, economic and environmental benefits. Before commencing a procurement process, commissioners should think about whether the services they are going to buy, or the way they are going to buy them, could secure these benefits for their area or stakeholders.

5.4 Legal and Constitutional References

- 5.4.1 Local authorities have specific duties in respect of children under various legislation including the Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004. They have a general duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need in their area and, if this is consistent with the child's safety and welfare, to promote the upbringing of such children by their families by providing services appropriate to the child's needs. They also have a duty to promote the upbringing of such children by their families, by providing services appropriate to the child's needs, provided this is consistent with the child's safety and welfare. They should do this in partnership with parents, in a way that is sensitive to the child's race, religion, culture and language and that, where practicable, takes account of the child's wishes and feelings.
- 5.4.2 Section 1 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 introduces corporate parenting principles, which comprises of seven principles that local authorities must have regard to whenever they exercise a function in relation to looked after children and care leavers. These principles apply to every part of the local authority, not just to children's services.

- 5.4.3 The Council' Constitution Article 7 sets out the terms of reference of the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee which includes responsibility for all matters relating to children, education and schools and to receive and consider reports from the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel.

5.5 Risk Management

- 5.5.1 The nature of services provided to children and families by Family Services manage significant levels of risk. An inappropriate response or poor decision-making around a case could lead to a significant children's safeguarding incident resulting in significant harm. Good quality early intervention and social care services reduce the likelihood of children suffering harm and increase the likelihood of children developing into successful adults and achieving and succeeding.

5.6 Equalities and Diversity

- 5.6.1 The 2010 Equality Act outlines the provisions of the Public-Sector Equalities Duty which requires Public Bodies **to have due regard** to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
- advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups
- foster good relations between people from different groups

- 5.6.2 The broad purpose of this duty is to integrate considerations of equality into day business and keep them under review in decision making, the design of policies and the delivery of services

- 5.6.3 The Annual report contains data on the Council's looked after children and care leavers. This can be summarised as follows:

- The majority of looked after children are from black and minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds. This is an over-representation when compared with the local population of children and young people. The figures are affected by the numbers of unaccompanied minors in care.
- There are more boys in care than girls which, when compared with age profiles, is largely due to the high number of 16+ year olds who are unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC). However, there is also an increase in younger children in care, which may be associated with a greater focus on intervening earlier in a child's life;
- 11% of looked after children are recorded as having a disability. Of these the majority live in external residential placements.
- The majority of care leavers are from BME backgrounds (58%), which is slightly higher than the figures for young people in the borough as a whole (52%). This appears to be linked to a rise in UASC coming into the Council's care;

- 12% of care leavers were recorded as having a disability, the majority of whom are living with former foster carers in staying put arrangements.

5.6.4 In response to this data, the Annual Report identifies the following as areas of focus:

- There is a need to ensure that services are sufficiently diverse to meet the needs and reflect the rich diversity within Barnet's looked after children population;
- Develop and consult on a local offer for care leavers that takes account of their diverse needs;
- Ensure that housing options are suitable for care leavers through a refresh of the joint housing protocol and the staying put policy;
- Improve the offer to support care leavers with their emotional wellbeing and mental health through working with therapeutic organisation Terapia;
- Conduct ongoing needs analysis to ensure this is built into future service design.

5.6.5 Further information on the data pertaining children in care and care leavers can be found in Appendix 1, along with further information about what this indicates about the needs of this cohort.

5.7 Corporate Parenting

5.7.1 In July 2016, the Government published their Care Leavers' strategy *Keep on Caring* which outlined that the "... [the government] will introduce a set of corporate parenting principles that will require *all departments* within a local authority to recognise their role as corporate parents, encouraging them to look at the services and support that they provide through the lens of what a reasonable parent would do to support their own children.'

5.7.2 The corporate parenting principles set out seven principles that local authorities must have regard to when exercising their functions in relation to looked after children and young people, as follows:

1. to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people;
2. to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
3. to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;
4. to help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;
5. to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;
6. for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and;
7. to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

5.7.3 As part of the Ofsted improvement journey and to ensure that Barnet has due regard to the Principles and improves on the delivery of corporate parenting to children in care and care leavers in Barnet, we:

- submit an annual report on performance of the corporate parenting advisory panel.
- commit to supporting children and young people to achieve their best in childhood, adolescence and adulthood within the Corporate Parenting Pledge for children in care and care leavers, as approved by full council on 29 January 2016. The Pledge can be found in section 6.3.
- provide learning and development for elected members and senior officers to understand their duties and responsibilities to children and care and care leavers and ways in which the Principles can be embedded and sufficient challenge provided regarding work and decisions of the council. The next training session is scheduled for 31 May 2018;
- ensure elected members, senior officers and partners can monitor and challenge the performance of the council and its partner agencies pertaining to consideration of the Principles and outcomes for children in care and care leavers through the appropriate channels. This includes the Children, Education, and Safeguarding Committee (bi-monthly), Corporate Parenting Advisory (quarterly) Panel and Corporate Parenting Officers' Group (monthly).

5.8 Consultation and Engagement

- 5.8.1 Consultation and engagement with children and young people is central to social work practice and service improvement across the Safeguarding Partnership. A service user experience strategy has been developed and was launched on 19th February 2018. The strategy ensures that how we work with children and young people is child centred, that we know, understand and can capture the lived experience of children and feed lessons learnt into service improvement. We have nominated Voice of the child champions across partner agencies and within Family Services to promote and lead on the Service User Engagement agenda within their respective areas.
- 5.8.2 Our Voice of the Child Strategy Group enables the wider engagement of children and young people in service design and commissioning of provision across the partnership. This includes youth forums such as Barnet Youth Board and Youth Assembly, the SEN forum (to co-design services) and Children in Care Council (to improve the support children in care receive). The team have been working closely with UNICEF UK to deliver the Child Friendly Communities and Cities initiative. This is a global programme that aims to advance children's rights and well-being at the local level. More recently the team have had a change in staff with a newly appointed Voice of the Child Coordinator and Child's Rights Lead. The team are reviewing the current Youth Voice Offer to develop a structured action plan to focus on increasing reach and impact for children and young people in Barnet.
- 5.8.3 The new Voice of the Child Strategy currently being drafted outlines our vision for meaningful participation that sets out Core Standards when engaging with Children and Young People. To underpin our work to ensure we are complying within Article 12 of the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and our core standards, we will embed Lundy's (2007) Voice Participation model.

- 5.8.4 The Voice of the Child team is aware that there is still a need to continue increasing our engagement numbers and to reflect on creative methods of engaging our looked after children and capturing their feedback. There is also a need for the Children in Care Council (CICC) to move towards having a stronger input into service design, voice recommendations and have more opportunities to meet senior officials.
- 5.8.5 The Barnet Children's Services Improvement Action Plan looks to improve children's participation to ensure that all decisions and planning that affects them is influenced by their wishes and feelings. The action plan also includes actions to strengthen how the views and experiences of children, young people and their families influence service design. This feedback will also help monitor the impact of improvement activity.
- 5.8.6 Improving the quality of services to children is a key partnership and corporate priority and collective work is needed across the partnership and the council to drive improvements. The action plan was completed in consultation with various stakeholders. Staff engagement activities have included monthly staff briefings, team meetings, staff conference. Partners have been engaged through the safeguarding partnership board. Senior leaders are members of the Improvement Board and their continued engagement is assured through core multiagency groups and specific forums such as head teacher's forums.

5.9 Insight

- 5.9.1 Data is analysed from a range of services, both internal and external, to identify needs, trends and good practice to drive improvement and meet the need of Barnet's children in care and care leavers.

6. BACKGROUND PAPER

- 6.1 Barnet's Corporate Parenting Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers (2016)
[https://www.barnet.gov.uk/dam/jcr:c33f12a5-86d9-4215-9c89-a8c82675fba4/Pledge%20for%20Children%20in%20Care%202016%20\(digital\).pdf](https://www.barnet.gov.uk/dam/jcr:c33f12a5-86d9-4215-9c89-a8c82675fba4/Pledge%20for%20Children%20in%20Care%202016%20(digital).pdf)