

	<p style="text-align: center;">CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">13th September 2021</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Title</p>	<p>Annual Report from the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Report of</p>	<p>Chairman of the Committee, Councillor David Longstaff</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Wards</p>	<p>All</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Status</p>	<p>Public</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Urgent</p>	<p>No</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Key</p>	<p>No</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Enclosures</p>	<p>Appendixes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Corporate Parenting Annual report 2020/21 B. Adopt London North Annual report Oct 2019/2021 C. Barnet Virtual School Annual report 2020/21 D. Annual Independence Reviewing Service Report 2020/21 E. Annual Fostering report 2020/21
<p style="text-align: right;">Officer Contact Details</p>	<p>Brigitte Jordaan, Director of Children Social Care</p>
Summary	
<p>Our corporate parenting annual report 2020-21 seeks to inform the children and young people in our care or who have experienced being in care, our members and our partner agencies about the progress and outcomes achieved over the last year.</p> <p>In April 2020, we entered into the Covid-19 global pandemic. We very quickly shifted our thinking and planning to respond to the need to establish a new way of working that has, throughout the year, become embedded in our practice. Corporate Parenting proceeded without a blueprint for how to deliver services to ensure children and young adults continued to feel held, supported and being able to achieve as they lived through periods of home schooling, isolated from friends and activities that previously kept them connected. As a service, we efficiently and effectively adapted to the new ways of remote working to ensure children, young people and adults could safely remain in contact with their families and professionals virtually whilst also promoting direct contact where safe to do so, to ensure vulnerable children remained in connection with their families.</p>	

This report includes the Corporate Parenting annual updates; the annual report from the Regional adoption agency, Adopt London North; the annual Independent Reviewing Service report, the Virtual School annual report and the annual Fostering report.

Recommendations

That the Committee consider the reports and provide any comments on the annual report prior to final approval

1. Corporate Parenting annual update

- 1.1 Barnet has continued to have a stable figure of children coming into care over the last year. We had 327 children in care on 31st March 2021, a direct mirror of the 327 children in care in 2020, and slightly higher than in 2019 which was 312 children.
- 1.2 During 2020/21 the number of care leavers continued to increase month on month. On 31st March 2021 Barnet had 357 care leavers, a third of whom (120) were former unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. This is a shift from 2019/20 where 232 care experienced adults, 125 less than this year, received a service from the Onwards and Upwards service.
- 1.3 This year has been unprecedented and without a blueprint for how to deliver services to ensure children, young adults continued to feel held, supported and achieving as they lived through periods of home schooling, isolated from friends and activities that previously kept them connected.
- 1.4 As a service, we efficiently and effectively adapted to the new ways of remote working to ensure children, young people and adults could safely remain in contact with their families and professionals virtually whilst also promoting direct contact where safe to do so, to ensure vulnerable children remained in connection with their families.
- 1.5 In Barnet, we want the same things for our children and young adults as any good parent, that is, we want our children to be resilient, aspirational and independent.
- 1.6 At the start of 2021, we revised our Corporate Parenting Strategy to further our principles in our Children and Young People plan 2019 – 2023. The Corporate Parenting Strategy sets out our promise to our children and young people and says;
 - 1.6.1 We will support you to fulfil your dreams
 - 1.6.2 We will be there for you when you need us
 - 1.6.3 We will support your mental and physical health
 - 1.6.4 We will listen, communicate and make decisions together with you
 - 1.6.5 We will support you to become independent and prepare for adulthood

- 1.6.6 We will celebrate children and young adults, their achievements, identity and culture
- 1.7 Highlighted in the report is what has been achieved during the last year against each of these promises. We ensured children remained in their care arrangements with people who knew and cared for them, putting in additional resources and supports with our partners across the Council to ensure children continued learning and accessing education.
- 1.8 Children continued to see their families through telephone and video contact, as well as face to face contact continuing for children in care proceedings, and on occasions where it was appropriate and safe to do.
- 1.9 Care experienced young adults continued to be supported in the community by their workers, supporting them through period of isolation as the majority of services across the country and more widely across the world closed down.
- 1.10 We have continued our focus on pathway planning and careful matching, developing our 'Who We Place Where' protocol confirming our commitment to placement stability and ensuring we aim to have the right care arrangement for a child the first time.
- 1.11 The large majority of children and young people (241 children, 74%) remained in their same home throughout the year.
- 1.12 During the second half of 2020 Barnet saw the acquisition of 4 hotels by the Home office to provide contingency accommodation for asylum seeking young adults and families. This has resulted in a significant increase in UASC coming into our care and a demand on the system for age assessments which has been a particular challenge with Covid restrictions.
- 1.13 The Brightspots survey closed in May 2021 with participation of 176 (54%) of children and young people and initial findings indicate that the majority of children know and trust their social worker, feel involved in decisions made about their lives and feel safe where they live.
- 1.14 The annual reports of the regional adoption agency, the Independent reviewing service, the Virtual School and the Fostering service are shown at Appendix A-D.

2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Members are asked to consider and scrutinise the work of the Corporate Parenting Service, and to fulfil the council's statutory obligations in this regard.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

N/A

4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

N/A

5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

5.1. Corporate Priorities and Performance

5.1.1 Family Friendly is a key part of the Barnet Plan for 2021-2025 with the vision of “Creating a Family Friendly Barnet, enabling opportunities for our children and young people to achieve their best”.

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

5.2.1 There are no additional financial implications arising directly from this 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. Under the Children and Families Act 2014, local authorities must consider how the child or young person can be supported to

facilitate their development and to help them achieve the “best possible educational and other outcomes”.

5.4.2. Local authorities have specific duties to care leavers under the Children Act 1989 as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017. The corporate parenting duties and powers under the 1989 Act include:

- to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people;
- to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
- to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;
- 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;
- to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;
- for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and,
- to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

5.4.3. The Council’s Constitution, Article 7 notes that the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee has ‘Responsibility for all matters relating to children, schools and education.’

6. Risk Management

6.1. Specific risk management is being carried out for Children and Young People’s Plan. Any Family Services risks are recorded on the Family Services Risk Register and monitored each quarter by the Senior Leadership Team with escalations to CMT if necessary.

7. Equalities and Diversity

7.1. Under the Equalities Act 2010 a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to –

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it (i.e., between persons of different characteristics);
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The relevant protected characteristics are –

- age;
- disability;
- gender reassignment;
- pregnancy and maternity;
- race;
- religion or belief;
- sex;
- sexual orientation

7.2. In day to day social work this will include –

- removing or minimising disadvantages;
- taking steps to meet individual needs;
- encouraging participation in public life and other activities in which participation by those who share relevant protected characteristics is low;
- providing help and services sensitive to and responsive to relevant protected characteristics.

We continue to closely monitor this, as the reports appended note, in our performance data analysis.

8. Corporate Parenting Principles

8.1. 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.'

8.2. 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:

- to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people;
- to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
- to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;
- 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;
- to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;
- for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and;
- to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

9. Consultation and Engagement

9.1 Consultation and engagement with young people is central to social work practice and service improvement across Family Services. Within Corporate Parenting consultation and engagement occurs through the Children in Care

Council, annual survey, Strength and resilience group, Care experienced young adults' forums and celebration events.

10. Insight

- 10.1 Insight data will continue to be regularly collected and used in monitoring the progress and impact of the Corporate Parenting Strategy and Placement Sufficiency Strategy and to shape ongoing improvement activity.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None