

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Report of Deputy Chief Executive (People)
to
Cabinet

on

7th November 2017

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Services
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Annual Report on Corporate Parenting Group
People Scrutiny Committee
Executive Councillor: Councillor James Courtney
A Part 1 Public Agenda Item

1. Purpose of Report

To provide an annual report for Cabinet on the work of the Corporate Parenting Group (CPG) in regards to the progress and outcomes of children who are looked after by the Council.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That members note the annual report as at Appendix 1
- 2.2 That members approve the overarching priorities set for 2017/18 in Appendix 2
- 2.3 That members approve the Corporate Parenting Strategy for Looked After Children 2017/18 as at Appendix 3

3. Background

- 3.1 On 1st April 2016 the council looked after 262 (up from 229) children and young people. Of these 66.3% (an increase from 56.5%) were placed with, in house foster carers including kinship carers. 15.7% (a decrease from 22.6%) were placed with external foster carers and 9.4% (a decrease from 11.9%) were in residential establishments. The remaining were either placed at home; placed for adoption or living independently.
- 3.2 During 2016/17, the number of looked after children increased to 282 by the end of March 2017. The impact of this has been monitored closely by the Corporate Parenting Group throughout the year to include the impact of this on staff within children's services.

3.3 Performance monitoring is a central role of the Corporate Parenting Group. This report provides information in relation to the range of indicators considered. The Corporate Parenting Group monitors at every meeting those areas that either performed above or below the corporate targets set.

3.4 Following the OFSTED inspection 2016, the nature of the Corporate Parenting Group became more strategic and took a role in monitoring the Improvement Plan actions.

4. Other Options

There are no other options to consider in relation to this report.

5. Reasons for Recommendations

None

6. Corporate Implications

6.1 Contribution to Council's Vision & Corporate Priorities

This report contributes to the Council's priority to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and young people and is linked to the Children & Young People's Plan 2016/17.

6.2 Financial Implications

Whilst services to looked after children plan to be delivered within the council budget agreed, the increase in looked after children numbers and associated costs has had a significant impact on the ability to support the children within the budget available for 2017/18. This must also be considered in view that increased in looked after children numbers is both a national issue as well as local.

As previously agreed in the council budget setting plans for 2017/18, there was a recognition of expected funding pressures for 2017/18 which resulted in additional £0.6m budget funding awarded to Children Services to assist with those cost pressures for Looked after Children, and also included the creation of a one off £2m Children Social Care reserve to be called upon, recognising the high risk of being able to deliver Children Services within the allocated budget.

However, due to continuing cost pressures as a result of the increased looked after children numbers, capacity issues and associated costs, 2017/18 has continued to be an increasingly challenging year to deliver within the council's budget allocation available, and therefore due to this funding pressure, on an on-going basis an additional funding investment bid will be put forward for Council consideration when setting the 2018/19 budget.

6.3 Legal Implications

Corporate Parenting Group will continue to monitor any impact of changes. This framework includes the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England regulations 2010 (updated 2014), Adoption scorecard, Sufficiency Guidance,

Staying Put guidance and Local Authority responsibilities towards young people on remand.

6.4 People Implications

Delivering high quality outcomes for children in care requires commitment from all partner agencies. They demonstrate this through their contribution to the Corporate Parenting Group, which is a sub group of the Success for all Group.

Particular workforce challenges remain in recruiting qualified and experienced social work staff on the front line and continuous attention is paid to implementing the workforce strategy to achieve a fully staffed and suitably trained workforce.

6.5 Property Implications

None

6.6 Consultation

The revised Corporate Parenting Group Priorities and Corporate Parenting Strategy have been considered and agreed by the CPG. Voice4All. National Youth Advisory Service (NYAS) and the Southend Foster Families Community continue to inform the CPG and the Executive Member, of areas they wish to see change or develop.

6.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications

The needs of children in care are diverse. There is a higher population of significantly disabled children and those with special educational needs (25% of all LAC). White British children (86.2%) are over represented in the care population compared to other ethnicities in Southend's population. There are 56% boys and 44% girls in care.

6.8 Risk Assessment

None

6.9 Value for Money

Over the past year the number of LAC had shown a steady increase, there has been an increase during that period of 7% following on from a 14% increase the previous year. The numbers of children placed in external provision over the same period has shown proportionately a decline. As a result savings were secured in 2016/17 in external purchasing. The most recent Audit commission report showed Southend children's services as high performing at low cost.

Due to rises in the cost of some external provision along with the rise in care numbers leading to capacity issues, there is currently an estimated deficit in purchasing budgets for 2017/18 which will be monitored closely over the coming year.

The increased numbers of young people placed in house is adding additional pressure on the in house fostering budget.

6.10 Community Safety Implications

None

6.11 Environmental impact:

None

7. Background Papers

None

8. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Annual Report 2016/17

Appendix 2 – Overarching priorities 2017/18

Appendix 3 – Corporate Parenting Strategy for looked after children 2017/18