



Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2016/17

Overview and Background

The Corporate Parenting group (CPG) met on a six weekly basis throughout 2016/17, monitoring the overarching priorities set for 2016/17. This is a multi-agency group and has been running in its current form since 2006. The Group was established to ensure that outcomes for looked after children are scrutinised and improved using a multi-agency approach. There are a clear terms of reference for the group which were reviewed and updated in June 2016. These were further updated in March 2015 along with the completion of a full Corporate Parenting Strategy.

Membership of the group includes the Executive Member for Children's Services and elected members from other political groups, senior officers from children's services, education and health, foster carer representatives and community partners. Our commissioned advocacy service for looked after children, the National Youth Advisory Service (NYAS), are invited to attend regularly to ensure that the group can be made aware of issues that young people have raised and take action to address the issues.

The Corporate Parenting Group has also given consideration to themes raised by young people in other Local Authorities and reported by NYAS in order to benchmark against other Local Authorities.

The group has links with the YEGS (Young Experts Group, our children in care council) and the Corporate Parenting Group holds meetings so that representatives from YEGS are formally able to attend the group at least twice a year wherever possible and their views are regularly fed back to the group. Unfortunately during 2016/17, no members of the group formally attended the group, but this will be rectified in the coming year.

The CPG monitors a range of performance data and activity relating to looked after children. Its focus remains to ensure actions are put in place to improve outcomes for looked after children and to be able to measure the impact by how well children are doing at school; whether they are in good health and their potential life chances once they leave school.

There are links between the CPG and the Southend Foster Families Community)(SFFC), with a foster carer regularly attending CPG meetings to represent Southend foster carer's views.

Achievements for 2016-2017

Outcomes for children looked after

The *Children & Young Person's Plan 2016-17* and the *OFTED Improvement Plan*, identified a number of targets and actions. There have been significant achievements in relation to the plan that include:

- Improvements in the general stability of placements
- An increase in the numbers of children with permanent placements through Special Guardianship Orders or Adoption
- A improvement in timescales for children between entering care and being placed with an adoptive family
- An increase in the number of young people with a permanency plan in place by the second review
- An increase in the number of young people long term linked with their foster carers
- More children with up to date health assessments and dental checks
- The virtual school took a group of young people on a sailing trip to support working together as a team
- An improvement in timescales of Placement Agreement meetings
- An increase in the number of in house foster carers offering local placements to Southend children
- A video completed by YEGS on the importance of long term linking to a sense of belonging

Local Standards and Targets

In terms of local standards and targets, Southend is doing well in the following areas:

- Placing children with relatives and friends
- The proportion of looked after children placed locally with Southend foster carers (75.5%, and increase from 56.6%)
- Long term stability (65.7% an increase from 64%).
- Timescales for children being placed for adoption

Being healthy

- 84.6% of children looked after had completed Health assessments
- 89.8% of children had attended in the dentist in the previous 12 months

Staying Safe

- 80.6% of the looked after population have good school attendance. 19.4% missed more than 10% attendance in the last academic year.

Enjoy and achieve

At Key stage 2

- In reading, 21.4% achieved the expected standard in the tests, compared to 40.8% nationally
- In writing teacher assessments, 21.4% of the cohort achieved the expected standard, against 45.9% nationally
- In the maths tests, 21.4% achieved the expected standard in the tests, compared to 41.9% nationally.
- In grammar, punctuation and spelling 28.6% of Southend's LAC achieved the expected standard, compared to 44.3% nationally.
- In the combined reading, writing and maths measure, 14.3% of the cohort achieved the expected standard in all 3 subjects, compared to 25.7% nationally.

At Key stage 4

30 pupils were in Southend's cohort for all looked after children at KS4 in 2016. 14 of these pupils had special educational needs. 4 pupils had more than 8 placement moves whilst in care. Southend performed in line with the national average for LAC in terms of attainment, but the progress outcomes were below national. However, 2 of the cohort did make positive progress compared to the national average for all pupils with similar prior attainment.

- In the Attainment 8 measure, Southend's cohort achieved an average score of 20.0, compared to the national average of 20.9 for LAC pupils.
- In the Progress 8 measure, Southend's score of -1.81 indicates that on average, Southend's LAC pupils made less progress than their peers who had similar prior attainment. This is also true nationally where the figure was slightly above Southend's (-1.46). Southend's results were statistically significant.
- 10% of the cohort achieved A*-C in English and Maths, compared to 15.9% nationally.
- 10% also achieved 5 or more A*-C including English and Maths (the old headline measure at KS4), compared to 12.1% nationally.

In the past year we have been able to see the positive impact of having a permanent Virtual Head teacher in post and can already see the positive work being undertaken to support our looked after children through the education system.

Positive Contribution

- The proportion of care leavers aged 19 & 20 living in suitable accommodation has increased.
- The proportion of care leavers in staying put placements has increased

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- The proportion of care leavers aged 20 in employment, education or training continues to increase- although it should be acknowledged that this remains above the national average.
- we are also exploring an exclusive CM16+ app for our young people to communicate effectively with us

The outcomes demonstrate a trend of continuous improvement over recent years. Most formal performance indicators show performance within the higher bands nationally

Issues considered by the Corporate Parenting Group over the past year

Statistics

Performance monitoring is a central role of the Corporate Parenting Group. There are a range of indicators considered including:

- Numbers of Looked after Children(LAC)
- Number of LAC placed for adoption
- Timescales for children moving to adoption
- Stability of placement
- Timeliness of reviews; health assessments and PEP's
- Progress of care leavers at age 19, 20 and 21
- School places and exclusions as well as overall education attainment at all key stages
- Percentages of LAC placed locally with in- house foster carers.

Additional reports were presented during 2016/17 directly in relation to these statistics to give a wider explanation of these areas of practice, outcomes and areas of pressure.

Over the past year the performance information presented to the group has developed to ensure that members have a clear picture of the impact on the lives of young people of the work undertaken. It is too early at this stage to be able to identify the impact that this is having on the lives of our looked after children.

Additional areas of consideration

The CPG considered the following areas during 2016/17 the following additional reports were presented in relation to:

- LADO report

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- The Sufficiency Strategy- ensuring that Southend has sufficient local accommodation to meet the needs of Southend's young people in care.
- Missing and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) – to ensure that Southend is fully aware of those young people whose behaviour places them at risk of CSE or who go missing from placement and that strategies are in place to support them and reduce levels of risk.
- Work of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) service – ensuring independent oversight for all LAC and presenting a thematic review of issues raised during reviews.
- Work of the Virtual School- looking at the achievement of all LAC and work being undertaken to improve overall academic outcomes for LAC. Including the LAC awards evening feedback.
- Regularity of visits to LAC – ensuring statutory compliance with respect to visits undertaken and appropriate recording of such visits in a timely manner.
- Recruitment and retention strategy in fostering and adoption – looking at the work undertaken to recruit new carers and retain existing carers and the barriers to this.
- Advocacy services – quarterly reports from the National Youth Advisory Service (NYAS) to look at themes of concerns raised by LAC.
- Timeliness of Initial health assessments (IHA)– monitoring of timescales with our health partners in achieving IHA's within 20 working days of a young person becoming looked after.
- Placement Provision and Quality – a report looking at the quality of in particular external (PVI) provision to give assurance to members regarding the safeguarding of young people placed in these external provisions.
- Work of the Special Guardianship Panel
- Placement Trends including the quality of provision both external and in-house
- Placements of looked after children in Southend from other local authorities
- The adoption scorecard
- LAC Permanency Panel report
- Update report on Leaving Care/Pathway Planning and NEET
- Outcomes and associated action plans from audit
- Annual Fostering and Adoption reports

Due to the OFSTED inspection of children's services at the beginning of 2016/17, much of the work over the past year has related to the Children's Services Improvement Plan and as such, focus has shifted this year and less concentration has been given to the key priorities set at the beginning of the year and more focus on the key elements identified as requiring improvement within the inspection.

Due to the unexpected General Election, there was a delay in setting the **Overarching Strategic Corporate Parenting Priorities for 2017/18**. These were considered by the last CPG meeting and these have been used to create the forward plan for 2017/18. The key priorities for the group in the coming year are recommended as:

- Reduce the need for children to become or remain looked after
- Experience of the child and family
- Narrow the achievement gap for looked after children
- Support the emotional and physical wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers
- Reduce delay in achieving permanence for looked after children
- Ensure sufficiency of high quality placements for looked after children
- Ensure looked after children are safeguarded

From this a Corporate Parenting Strategy for Looked after Children 2017/18 has been developed.

Training for Elected Members

During 2016/17 training took place for Members in relation to their role as Corporate Parents. This was undertaken through an open event “The Journey of the child” and was well attended by councillors and other members of the council and helped to explain the roles of various parts of children’s services.

Several Elected Members have spent time in various children’s social work teams over the past few months, looking at the work undertaken and in particular how this work impacts on the experience of the child. This will continue over the coming year.

Further training will be undertaken in the coming year. There will be specific Training for Members who attend the Corporate Parenting Group in November 2017 and a further “Journey of the child event” after the May elections in 2018.

In addition, a further more general training session on the role of the corporate parent will be held for all councillors in early 2018.

The way forward

The table below identifies the areas of strength and areas for improvement identified by the CPG during 2016/17. Areas identified as needing improvement will continue to be closely monitored during 2017/18

Areas of strength	Areas for further development
Adoption performance continued to be high. This will need to be monitored closely with the on-going work towards creating a Regional Adoption Agency	Increased recruitment and retention of foster carers. This has improved over the past year but needs to continue to be closely monitored. The Sufficiency Strategy targets were exceeded in the past year however capacity in house continues to be running around 110%
Assessment timescales and continued recruitment of adopters - adoption	Increase quality and quantity of assessments to allow Southend children to remain with Southend families - fostering
Permanency Planning for LAC	Reducing the number care leavers who are NEET
Stability of placement remains high- on-going monitoring of this required to ensure that themes and barriers are identified to improve practice further.	Edge of Care service will continue to develop over the coming year with two new staff being recruited to specifically support foster carers where a placement is at risk of disruption.
Edge of Care has proven a strong support to foster carers and has prevented some young people from becoming LAC	Improve timeliness for all IHA's – this remains a challenge, but close working with health will continue in the coming year
Improvements in the work with missing and CSE	Monitor continued improvements in the work with missing and CSE and develop new strategies in line with this
Growth of the YEGS group – work to continue on the involvement of this group with the CPG and ensure twice yearly presentations to the group	Monitor care leavers who are in education, employment or training
Duration of care proceedings	Sufficiency of suitable placements available and where external provision required, ensure quality and safeguarding within these provisions.
A video completed by YEGS on the importance of long term linking to a sense of belonging	Improve educational attainment of LAC
	Ensure close monitoring of audit outcomes and of the Children's Services Improvement plan

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	Ensure that where a decision is made to long term link a fostering placement, this must completed within 6 months of it being agreed that this has reached the point of this being an appropriate plan
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This has been a challenging year with a full OFSTED inspection and the subsequent Improvement work undertaken. Elected members, as corporate parents have remained fully engaged in promoting the interests of Looked after Children over the past year, with full cross party support being evident.

Diane Keens
Group manager
Placements & Resources
2.8.17