



Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2013/14

1. Overview and Background

The Corporate Parenting group (CPG) met on a six weekly basis throughout 2013/14, monitoring the overarching priorities set for 2013/14. 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 clear terms of reference for the group which were reviewed and updated in 2012 and again in April 2014.

Membership of the group includes the Executive Member for Children & Learning 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 CPG 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 Voice4All (our children in care council) and the CPG holds meetings so that representatives from Voice4All are formally able to attend the group at least twice a 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 Council (SFFC), with a foster carer regularly attending CPG meetings to represent Southend foster carer's views.

2. Issues considered by the Corporate Parenting Group over the past year

Performance Information

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

- Numbers of Looked After Children
- Number of Looked After children placed for adoption
- Timescales for Looked After Children moving to adoption

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- Stability of placements
- 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 Looked After Children placed with in- house foster carers.

Additional reports were presented during 2013/14 directly in relation to these statistics to give a wider explanation of these areas of practice, outcomes and areas of pressure.

Service developments

The CPG considered the following areas during 2013/14:

- The Sufficiency Strategy- ensuring that Southend has sufficient local accommodation to meet the needs of Southend's Looked After Children.
- Risk Management Meetings – to ensure that those young people deemed at most high risk are monitored appropriately and that safeguarding issues are considered in full.
- Pledge Survey – to ensure that the views of young people are fully taken into consideration and influence changes to policy and practice.
- Dentist appointments – to ensure that all Looked After Children have appropriate dental care on a regular basis and looking at ways of supporting those care leavers who refuse ongoing dental care.
- Missing and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) – to ensure that Southend is fully aware of those young people whose behaviour place them at risk of CSE or who go missing from placements 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 Looked After Children and presenting a thematic review of issues raised during reviews.
- Work of the Virtual School- looking at the achievement of all Looked After Children work being undertaken to improve overall academic outcomes . In addition advising on changes in legislation which impact on Looked After Children.
- Regularity of visits– ensuring statutory compliance with respect to visits undertaken and appropriate recording of such visits in a timely manner.
- Stability of Placements– looking at those young people with three or more moves in any 12 month period with reasons for the moves and strategies put in place to prevent this.
- Recruitment and retention in fostering and adoption – looking at the work undertaken to recruit new carers and retain existing carers and the barriers to this.

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- Health Passport for care leavers – ensuring that all young people on leaving care have a full health history to take with them into adulthood.
- Advocacy services – quarterly reports from the National Youth Advisory Service (NYAS) to look at themes of concerns raised by Looked After Children.
- Delegation of health consent – reviewing a joint initiative with health to ensure that foster carers and residential establishments have appropriate delegation of consent and that documentation for this is agreed and recognised by our health partners.
- Healthy schools aware for the virtual school – regular reports were presented to inform on the progress of this application, which is now complete and healthy school status achieved.
- 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.
- Junior ISA's – reviewing implementation of new processes for Looked After Children and ensuring clear information provided to relevant parties to enable payments into the young person's ISA.
- Placement Provision and Quality – a report looking at the quality of in particular external provision to give assurance to Members regarding the safeguarding of young people placed in these external provisions.

Towards the end of 2013/14 the Corporate Parenting Group considered the Terms of Reference for the group and these were subsequently formally updated at the end of April 2014 (Appendix 3).

In addition, the Overarching Strategic Corporate Parenting Priorities for 2014/15 were identified by the group and these have been used to create a forward plan for 2014/15. 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
- Reduce delay in achieving permanence for Looked After Children
- Ensure sufficiency of high quality placements
- Consider legislation, national consultations and new performance and inspection frameworks

3. Members sub group

During 2013/14 there were regular meetings of the Members sub-group which has been running for the past few years. This group was able to scrutinise in more depth a number of areas such as:

- NEET (not in education, employment or training) – in depth scrutiny took place into the work being undertaken to support care leavers to access appropriate education, employment and training and the barriers to the successful implementation of such projects.
- Adoption performance – review undertaken following the full implementation of the adoption scorecard to look at the outcomes for Southend children against our statistical neighbours and nationally.
- Health Passport – this was a year long joint project with the full participation of some care leavers and health to ensure consistent and in depth health information for care leavers.
- Are we keeping our Pledge? – Members looked in depth at the responses from the consultation with Looked After Children and how their views were being considered in policy & process planning. Members asked as a part of this for information directly from the children.

Following a review of this group, it was decided by Members that given that attendance at both the full CPG and the Members sub-group was generally the same, this was a duplication of information and not serving a purpose on a regular basis.

It has therefore been decided that during 2014/15 the Members sub-group will be convened only when Members wish to scrutinise a particular area in more depth, rather than on a six weekly basis as previously.

This decision will be reviewed by Members towards the end of 2014/15.

4. Training for Elected Members

During 2013/14 a number of training sessions were held for Members in relation to their role as Corporate Parents. Level 1 training was open to all Members with Level 2 training being available for those Members with specific responsibilities for Corporate Parenting.

The training was not well attended, so in early 2014 an afternoon drop in event was held, showing “the journey of the child” and run jointly with partner agencies. The feedback from this event was very positive and will be repeated in the Autumn 2014. A report on the event

is attached as appendix 4. Further Level 1 & 2 training will also be arranged and it would be helpful if Group Leaders encouraged Members who have not yet had the training to attend.

Safeguarding induction training was held on 18th June 2014 to present information on all aspects of Children’s Services including Corporate Parenting and the Member role in relation to this. This was attended by 10 Members, both those new to the Council and established Members new to the CPG.

5. Link with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB)

Recent Ofsted guidance has made it clear the LSCB should include the evaluation of the effectiveness of work with Looked After Children in its remit. It has been agreed with the Chair of the LSCB that this responsibility will be undertaken by receiving reports from the CPG twice a year, and being consulted on the annual priorities. The LSCB has approved the priorities recommended here and this annual report will also be presented to the LSCB.

6. Evaluation

Overall effectiveness for Looked after Children remains good.

The table below identifies the key areas of strength and areas for improvement identified by the CPG during 2013/14. Areas identified as needing improvement are covered in the 2014/14 priorities and will be included in the work plan of the CPG.

AREAS OF STRENGTH	AREAS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT
Adoption performance is good and improving further	Improve choice of suitable placements and improve recruitment and retention of foster carers
Compliance with assessment timescales	Improve consistency in the quality of assessments
Early Permanency Planning	Improve educational attainment and reduce the number care leavers who are NEET
Stability of placements remains high	Improve the quality and timeliness of Placement Agreement meetings for all foster placements
Care leavers in higher education remains high	Improve timeliness for all Initial Health Assessments and ensure continued improvement in dental and health compliance for Looked After Children
100% of Looked After Children are allocated to a qualified social worker	Fully implement new systems to identify and support Looked After Children who go missing or who are at risk of sexual

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	exploitation
99% of reviews are on time and 99% of Looked After Children participate in them	Improve the identification of and support for care leavers who are parents

The Members of the CPG, representing all Members as corporate parents, were fully engaged in 2013/14 in promoting the interests of Looked after Children, with full cross party support being evident. Since the election in May 2014 there are several new Members on the CPG and they will take this work forward.

Sue Hadley
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Chair of CPG

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Placements and Resources

1.8.2014