



Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2015/16

Overview and Background

The Corporate Parenting group (CPG) met on a six weekly basis throughout 2015/16, monitoring the overarching priorities set for 2015/16. 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 2012 and again in April 2014. 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 Voice4All (our children in care council) and the Corporate Parenting Group holds meetings so that representatives from Voice4All 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 2015/16, no members of the group formally attended the group, but this will be rectified in the coming year. Their views however were presented.

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.

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 2015/16 directly in relation to these statistics to give a wider explanation of these areas of practice, outcomes and areas of pressure.

Additional areas of consideration

The CPG considered the following areas during 2015/16 the following additional reports were presented in relation to:

- LADO report
- 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.
- Care leavers who are parents
- CM 16+ allotment project
- Work of the Special Guardianship Panel
- Placement Trends including the quality of provision both external and in-house
- Looked after children involvement in training, recruitment and service delivery
- Placements of looked after children in Southend from other local authorities
- The adoption scorecard
- The voice and influence annual report with regards to the Children’s commissioner takeover day
- Review of court processes and timescales
- LAC Permanency Panel report
- Transitions for disabled young people
- Update report on Leaving Care/Pathway Planning and NEET
- Report from the MH worker for LAC within the fostering service
- Foster carer training
- Outcomes and associated action plans from audit
- Annual Fostering and Adoption reports

Towards the end of 2015/16 the Corporate Parenting Group considered the **Terms of Reference** for the group and these were subsequently formally updated at the end of June 2016.

In addition, the **Overarching Strategic Corporate Parenting Priorities for 2016/17** were set by the group and these have been used to create the forward plan for 2016/17. 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

Appendix 1

- 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 2016/17 has been developed.

Training for Elected Members

During 2015/16 no training took place for Members in relation to their role as Corporate Parents.

Training will be undertaken in the coming year.

The way forward

The table below identifies the areas of strength and areas for improvement identified by the CPG during 2015/16. Areas identified as needing improvement will continue to be closely monitored during 2016/17

Areas of strength	Areas for further development
Adoption performance continued to be high. This will need to be monitored closely with changes to legislation proposed over the coming year	Increased recruitment and retention of foster carers. This has improved over the past year but needs to continue to be closely monitored.
Assessment timescales and continued recruitment of adopters - adoption	Increase quality and quantity of assessments to allow Southend 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.	Improve the quality and timeliness of Placement Agreement meetings for all foster placements. This has improved over the past 12 months but needs to continue to be monitored.
	Improve timeliness for all IHA's
Improvements in the work with missing and CSE	Monitor improvements in the work with missing and CSE and develop new strategies in line with this

Appendix 1

Growth of the Children in Care Council – 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.
	Improve educational attainment of LAC
	Ensure close monitoring of audit outcomes and of the Children’s Services Improvement plan

Services and outcomes for Looked after Children remains good and 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.

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Placements & Resources
2.8.16