

COUNCIL

Held 8 November 2001

388 Role of the Council as Corporate Parent – Report of Scrutiny

The Council received a short presentation and considered a report of the Director of Social Care on the Scrutiny of the Council's role as corporate parent.

Resolved: That the following proposals arising from the Scrutiny be adopted:-

- (1) The whole Council combines its resources to participate in an annual fostering campaign linked to National Foster Care Week.
- (2) Officers in the Social Care Department should finalise the development of a professional foster carer scheme for the approval by the Council.
- (3) Two annual events should be held for foster carers. One for foster carers, children and their foster children. One as an annual reception at Porters for all foster carers to enable their work to be valued including awarding certificates of long service.
- (4) The Chief Executive and Town Clerk to raise the issue of children looked after not having a local GP with the Health Authority and Primary Care Trust.
- (5) All reports to Council on educational attainment, exclusions, attendance and special educational needs contain specific references to looked after children.
- (6) Where Members are school governors they should be asked to raise the issue of educational attainment of looked after children within their schools
- (7) Further work be undertaken to explore how designated teachers for looked after children can be brought together for training and development around the subject of educational attainment for looked after children.
- (8) Officers should consider how older foster children could be enabled to use their Advantage Card facilities by themselves.
- (9) The use of the Advantage Card by foster carers and looked after children should be monitored.

- (10) The Assistant Director for Children & Young People's services to make contact with the Chamber of Commerce to discuss ways in which local businesses could support looked after children.
- (11) Officers to arrange for direct mailings on library facilities to be sent to all Southend foster carers.
- (12) A mobile library should be used to promote the services of the library to looked after children and foster carers by targeting existing groups or services ie; young people attending the Sounds of Southend group or those attending the Marigold Family Resource Centre.
- (13) Briefing seminars or leaflets should be produced for all staff across the Council with the purpose of introducing them to the facts and issues concerning children in public care and so heighten their awareness of the needs of this particular group.
- (14) Each Departmental Service Plan should explicitly highlight the contribution of that Department to meeting the needs of the Council's Looked After Children.
- (15) Officers from the Social Care Department prepare a report to be made twice a year to Cabinet and Social Scrutiny Committee on the Council's Looked After Children, giving:
 - Statistical trends since the last report
 - Information by placement type
 - Information by ethnicity and culture
 - Information by gender and age
 - Details of Children's Case Reviews held within the regulatory time framesAnd, as and when such data is available -
 - Details of formal medical reviews
 - Details of educational attainments
 - Comparative unit costs for services to our Looked After Children
- (16) We recommend that the existing arrangements by the Social Care Department for briefing Councillors on the Quality Protects Programme continue.

- (17) The Council should develop a Corporate Parenting Covenant including a mission statement to encapsulate the commitment of Councillors to their corporate parenting role.
- (18) A leaflet should be produced from Councillors to be given to children looked after at their case review (subject to their age and understanding) which includes:
- A simple message from them about our high hopes for Looked After children, highlighting the key elements of the 'Quality Protects' programme (social and educational achievement, being kept safe from harm, contributing to their Care Plan).
 - Explains in simple language the roles of Foster or Residential Care personnel, Social Worker, Reviewing Officer and others.
 - Says something about *how* Councillors monitor and support the Council's work with them.

The leaflet is accompanied by the Council's 'whose who' guide.

