

Meeting:	Cabinet
Meeting date:	20 July 2017
Title of report:	Corporate parenting strategy 2017- 2020
Report by:	Cabinet member young people and children's wellbeing

Classification

Open

Key decision

This is a key decision because it is likely to be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising one or more wards in the county.

Notice has been served in accordance with Part 3, Section 9 (Publicity in Connection with Key Decisions) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012

Wards affected

Countywide

Purpose

To approve and endorse the Corporate Parenting strategy.

Recommendation(s)

THAT:

- (a) the Corporate Parenting strategy and action plan at appendix A are approved.**

Alternative options

- 1 The council does not adopt a Corporate Parenting strategy. This would make it difficult to evidence the council's commitment to corporate parenting or to define what difference it was aiming to achieve and to evaluate what difference it had made in improving outcomes for looked after children and care leavers.

Reasons for recommendations

- 2 The Children and Social Work Act 2017 has recently been given Royal Assent and defines for the first time in law the expectations of councils in relation to their corporate parenting responsibilities. To be able to evidence the council's commitment and action in relation to these responsibilities it is necessary to have a strategy.
- 3 Corporate parenting is a responsibility of all elected members and officers within the council as well as statutory partners. A strategy enables the council and its partners to be clear about priorities, what needs to be done and by who if change is to be achieved. To be effective the strategy needs to be understood and owned by all councillors.

Key considerations

- 4 The council, incorporating elected members and all officers, has a special responsibility for all looked after children and care leavers in its care. Almost all children in care will have experienced trauma as a result of abuse and/or neglect. Although many children in care and care leavers are able to achieve well, overall outcomes for looked after children and care leavers in relation to educational achievement, emotional and mental health, offending and employment are worse than their peers. As corporate parents it is the council's responsibility to ensure that every effort is made to enable children and young people in care to succeed as well as their peers.
- 5 A needs analysis was completed to understand how children and young people in care in Herefordshire are achieving in comparison with their peers and those from other local authorities. This has enabled an analysis to be completed regarding what is working well and what needs to be improved to achieve the best outcomes. The needs analysis was used to develop the Corporate Parenting strategy. The strategy and action plan as attached at appendix a; sets out how change will be achieved.
- 6 Progress against all of the key priorities is expected in the first and each subsequent year. On an annual basis cabinet, and scrutiny will be provided with an update report that informs them of the progress on the implementation of the strategy. This annual report will also be presented to corporate parenting panel which includes members and external partners for their information and comment.

Community impact

- 7 The Corporate parenting strategy will support the achievement of key priorities within the corporate strategy including to enable residents to live safe, healthy and independent lives and to keep children and young people safe and give them the best start in life. The strategy will also support progress in achieving priorities within the Children and Young People's plan particularly that relating to children and young people in need of safeguarding.

- 8 Children and young people in care are members of our community and many will live within our community as adults. Therefore doing our best to support these children and young people to achieve happy, healthy and successful lives will benefit the community in the future. On the 29 May 2017 there were 310 children looked after by Herefordshire. A thorough needs analysis of our looked after children population (as shown in appendix b) has been completed and has informed the priorities for the strategy.

Equality duty

- 9 The corporate parenting strategy seeks to redress the impact of disadvantage due to being a looked after child and early life experiences of abuse and neglect.

"A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct ... prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it."

Financial implications

- 10 The strategy is largely cost neutral in that practice improvements can be achieved through existing resources. A reduction in the looked after children population would avoid significant costs for the council and partner agencies particularly in relation to the costs of placement and staffing capacity.
- 11 The strategy does not of itself commit resources but delivering any actions necessary to achieve the strategy's priorities will be subject to the relevant governance process.

Legal implications

- 12 There should be a strategy in place for Corporate Parenting which should be reviewed on a regular basis.
- 13 The purpose of such a strategy is to reaffirm and reinforce the Council's corporate responsibility jointly with our partner agencies.

Risk management

- 14 There are no risks identified to adopting a strategy for Corporate Parenting.
- 15 There are risks associated with having no clear strategy in place. There are expectations upon the council and its partners to act as responsible and ambitious corporate parents for looked after children and care leavers. The absence of a strategy is likely to be noted as a concern by Ofsted and would bring increased scrutiny regarding the level of commitment and leadership by the council in this area.

Consultees

- 16 The draft strategy was circulated widely for consultation between 17 February and 7 April 2017 to the Corporate Parenting panel who include members, officers, multi-agency partners, foster carers and young people; Herefordshire Safeguarding Children's Board; elected members, foster carers and the Children in Care council. Written responses were received from a number of organisations in addition to verbal feedback from a range of individuals. Consultation responses were received and reviewed and included suggested ideas and amendments that have been incorporated into the final strategy.
- 17 The Corporate Parenting panel recommended and endorsed a draft version of the strategy on 23 May 2017.
- 18 The draft strategy was discussed at the children's scrutiny committee on 5 July 2017; they are supportive of the strategy and associated action plan and have requested that an annual update on its implementation is presented to the committee. The recommendations have been considered by the cabinet member young people and children's wellbeing and as a consequence children's scrutiny is referred to in the action plan.

Appendices

Appendix A - Corporate parenting strategy

Appendix B - Corporate parenting strategy needs assessment

Background papers

- None identified.