

Title of report: Corporate Parenting Board

Meeting: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Meeting date: Tuesday 12 March 2024

Report by: Victoria Gibbs - Service Director, Early Help, QA and Prevention

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

For the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to consider this report, which provides an overview and update in respect of the Corporate Parenting Board.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) **The committee considers the report; and**
- b) **The committee determine any recommendations it wishes to make to relevant bodies to secure further improvement in corporate parenting in in Herefordshire.**

Alternative options

1. The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee could choose not to review information contained in this report; this is not recommended as the Corporate Parenting Board is one of the council's priorities.

Key considerations

2. The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee requested this report and helpfully provided a briefing note setting out the focus areas and questions to which the Committee seeks answers:
 1. What is the current composition of the board?
 - What has been the attendance rate of elected members?
 - Who attends from West Mercia Police and Wye Valley Trust?
 2. Is there a corporate parenting strategy and action plan?
 3. What management information on our looked after children does the corporate parenting board currently receive?
 4. What are the identified priorities for the corporate parenting board?
 - Does the board have an agreed work programme?
 5. How does the board monitor and support the education of its looked after children?
 6. How does the board ensure that our looked after children in residential care are in good accommodation and are well looked after?
 - How does it ensure children leaving care have suitable accommodation?
 7. How has the board heard from looked after children about their aspirations and concerns? How does it address their concerns when it hears them?

Officer's Response:

3. Following the local elections in May 2023, the Corporate Parenting Board reviewed their terms of reference and membership which were endorsed by the board at its meeting on 16 August 2023.
4. There have been three meetings since August 2023 which have seen good attendance at board meetings, including by elected members. The Named Nurse Children in Care attends as representative for the Wye Valley Trust.
5. Historically, police have not been standing members of the Corporate Parenting Board. The terms of reference have since been amended and a police representative is being identified, it is expected that there will be police representation from the next Corporate Parenting Board onwards.
6. As part of the Local Government Association's (LGA) offer, the board has undertaken a self-assessment and 2 workshops have taken place. To underpin the workshops, a survey was circulated to establish how confident members of the board felt in discharging their duties as corporate parents.
7. The LGA will also be observing the July board in order to support and strengthen our development of the board.
8. A draft of the corporate parenting strategy is attached (appendix 1) and the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee is requested to consider the document and provide their views. The strategy is due to be further reviewed following feedback from the fourth monitoring visit in order to ensure that it reflects the most up-to-date needs for Herefordshire.
9. The strategy sets out seven priority outcomes for our children and young people:
 - Homes and Housing

- Health and Wellbeing
- Learning, Development and Having Fun
- Relationships, Identity and Belonging, Listening, Hearing and Understanding
- Being Safe and Protected
- Independence and Adulthood

10. A thematic work programme has been developed for the board so that there is an opportunity for the board to focus on various areas in a systematic way. The first thematic focus took place in January 2024 and was in connection with placement sufficiency. The March 2024 meeting will focus on health.
11. Underpinning the corporate parenting strategy is an action plan. The action plan is updated by the corporate parenting operational group which has been established and sits under the Corporate Parenting Board. The operational group is chaired by the Head of Service for Corporate Parenting.
12. The purpose of this operational group is to work together to turn the corporate parenting strategy into a reality, delivering good services and the best outcomes for our children in care and care leavers.
13. The operational group will ensure that the voice of children in care and care leavers influences both policy and the service provision, and that young people are engaged with any action intended to develop and improve services or to recruit key staff members
14. The timing of the Corporate Parenting Board meetings have been changed so that young people can attend to provide their views and to participate in the board. This area is still being developed and it is hoped that it will be embedded by the July 2024 meeting.
15. In the interim, the Participation and Engagement Lead has attended the January board meeting where a “You said, We did” item was tabled providing an update to the aspirations and concerns previously voiced by children and young people.
16. The Participation and Engagement Lead facilitates a quarterly child in care and care leavers Challenge Panel with corporate parents to influence decision making and service delivery.
17. For every meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board, a number of routine reports are presented and considered including a service update from the Head of Corporate Parenting, a health update and a performance dashboard.
18. The performance dashboard incorporates the number and profile of the cohort of looked after children, including unaccompanied young people, and care leavers including data in respect of Suitable Accommodation and on Employment, Education and Training.
19. As well as the usual performance dashboard additional data is requested by the board as is deemed appropriate. For instance the January 2024 board saw a breakdown by age group on the length of time young people have been in care.
20. To monitor and support the education of children in care, the Virtual Head Teacher is a standing member of the Corporate Parenting Board. The Virtual School is also represented at the corporate parenting operational group.

21. This provides the board with information in respect of the educational attainment of children in care. As noted, information in respect of the Employment, Education and Training status of young people is part of the performance dashboard.
22. Representatives from Housing, Fostering & Placements, and All Age Commissioning are members of the Corporate Parenting Board with the latter two also being represented at the corporate parenting operational group. This provides updates and assurance to the board that our children in care and care leavers are in good accommodation and are well looked after.
23. A local joint housing protocol was endorsed by the Corporate Parenting Board in January 2024 which, combined with a placement sufficiency strategy and a strengthening of relationships with local and independent placement providers, has increased the availability and breadth of suitable accommodation for children in care and care leavers.
24. The Corporate Parenting Board, supported by the operational group and through the delivery of the Corporate Parenting Strategy will continue to ensure children and young people will be supported to thrive and get the most out of life.

Community impact

25. The Corporate Parenting Board and Strategy has a direct and indirect effect on the lives of both current and future children and families in Herefordshire.
26. The County Plan 2020–2024 includes the ambition to ‘strengthen communities to ensure everyone lives well and safely together’.
Specifically, the council aims to:
 - a. Ensure all children are healthy, safe, and inspired to achieve;
 - b. Ensure that children in care, and moving on from care, are well supported and make good life choices; and
 - c. Protect and improve the lives of vulnerable people.

Environmental Impact

27. There are no environmental impacts associated with providing this report to the children and young people’s scrutiny committee. .

Equality duty

28. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the ‘general duty’ on public authorities is set out as follows:

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

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;

- b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

24. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. Whilst this is an update to the scrutiny committee and will in itself have minimal equalities impacts, consideration has been made in the consideration of Executive decisions and the Executive Responses provided by the Cabinet.

Resource implications

- 25. There are no resource implications associated with providing this report to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Legal implications

- 26. It is the function of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to consider the Corporate Parenting Board and its role in the required improvement journey.

Risk management

- 27. There are no risk management implications associated with providing this report to the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee.

Consultees

- 28. None.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Corporate Parenting Strategy

Background papers

None

Report Reviewers Used for appraising this report:

Please note this section must be completed before the report can be published

Governance	Simon Cann	Date 04/03/2024
Communications	Luenne Featherstone	Date 02/03/2024

Procurement	Lee Robertson	Date 04/03/2024
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Risk	Chris Tindell-Jones	Date 04/03/2024
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Approved by	Darryl Freeman	Date 01/03/2024
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