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# Corporate Parenting Panel – Supporting Information

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## 1 Introduction/Background

- 1.1 Corporate parenting is a statutory function of the Council. The leadership and commitment of Elected Members in their role as Corporate Parents is of critical importance to the Council in achieving good outcomes for children and young people in care.
- 1.2 The Ofsted inspection of Children’s Services undertaken in March 2015 provided an overall judgement that Children Services in West Berkshire was inadequate. The inspection concluded, amongst other things, that the characteristics of good leadership were not in place but acknowledged that the local authority had recognised this and were taking steps to address this.
- 1.3 One of the comments made by the Ofsted inspection team was that there was a need to “ensure that the Corporate Parenting Panel and Children in Care Council consistently contributed to improved outcomes for looked after children”.
- 1.4 A review of the current Corporate Parenting Panel arrangements has taken place and this report recommends proposals for strengthening those arrangements to ensure robust challenge and improved outcomes for Looked after Children (LAC) in the district.
- 1.5 The review has therefore looked at membership, objectives, scrutiny mechanisms that are in place, performance monitoring and reporting mechanisms in order to provide a robust governance structure for the future.

## 2 Key Changes

- 2.1 When the Corporate Parenting Panel was first introduced it was done so on the basis of a having a small and defined membership of Elected Members and other partners. Given that all Elected Members have Corporate Parenting responsibilities it was later decided that the membership should be extended to all Elected Members.
- 2.2 In the event this change did not have the desired effect of strengthening the role and involvement of Members and this was something which was subsequently identified in the recent Ofsted inspection of Children’s Services.

## 3 Options for Consideration

- 3.1 The option of doing nothing to review the current model of Corporate Parenting for West Berkshire was discounted given the Ofsted inspection.
- 3.2 The aim of the Corporate Parenting Panel is to ensure that Local Authorities meet their duties under the relevant legislation and statutory guidance that require Local Authorities to provide for, safeguard and promote the welfare of Children in Care, act

corporately in relation to this role and ensure that all Members are aware of, and contribute to, their responsibilities in this area.

- 3.3 The Corporate Parenting Panel acts to assist the Council in continuing to fulfil its legal obligations and responsibilities towards children who are looked after and leaving care and provide the strategic direction to ensure that they are effectively supported to reach their potential through the provision of excellent parenting, high quality education, opportunities to develop their talents and skills, and effective support for their transition to adulthood.
- 3.4 The Panel has a responsibility to monitor and review the quality and effectiveness of services for children who are looked after delivered by Corporate Parents; the council, partner agencies and commissioned services; to ensure that every child and young person looked after is supported to be safe, happy, healthy and to achieve their full potential. In addition, it has a key role in listening to the voice of children and young people looked after and leaving care.

## **4 Proposals**

- 4.1 The proposal is to develop a new governance framework for the Corporate Parenting Panel that strengthens those arrangements to ensure robust challenge and improved outcomes for Looked after Children in the district. The review has therefore sought to address a number of issues and propose new aims, objectives, scrutiny mechanisms, performance monitoring, membership and reporting mechanisms.

## **5 Aims**

- 5.1 The aim of the Corporate Parenting Panel is to ensure that the Council and its partners are carrying out their responsibilities towards the children and young people in their care including care leavers.
- 5.2 To uphold the statutory responsibilities as defined by law and our moral responsibilities as defined in the West Berkshire Pledge to Looked After Children.

## **6 Objectives**

- 6.1 The key objectives of the Corporate Parenting Panel are to:
1. Ensure West Berkshire has a Looked After Children's strategy which links its priorities to The Pledge made to our Children in Care and aligns with the Council's overall primary Aims.
  2. Scrutinise key performance indicators to help inform the Council's effectiveness as a corporate parent and when necessary give effective challenge to ensure positive outcomes for our children.
  3. Improve the life chances of children and young people in care in line with their peers.
  4. Ensure the voice and views of our children and young people in care are heard either through attendance at Corporate Parenting Panels or in Children in Care Council meetings by the Panel Chair or other Panel members both elected and partners by their attendance.
  5. Ensure children have the opportunity to attend the Corporate Parenting Panel to present key topics in order to seek the support of Members.

6. Review the Council's Pledge to children and young people in care and leaving care on an annual basis to ensure its focus is retained on the needs of our children.
7. Ensure effective communication between Panel members, the wider group of corporate parents, the Children in Care Council and our Looked After Children population alongside their parents/carers.
8. Consider arrangements for Panel member information and training.
9. Make recommendations to the Council's Executive Committee as and when appropriate regarding matters to do with children and young people in Care.

## 7 Scrutiny Mechanisms

- 7.1 The Corporate Parenting Panel will make use of the following scrutiny mechanisms to assist with maintaining and improving the standards of services for children and young people who are in the care of West Berkshire Council.
- 7.2 Including the examination of the following key statutory performance measures:
  - LAC health assessments
  - LAC dental checks
  - LAC access to Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
  - LAC reviews held on time
  - LAC educational attainment
  - Numbers of Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) and adoptions
  - Adoption timescales
  - LAC placement stability
  - LAC placements out of area/>20 miles
  - LAC in non-family based settings
  - Complete of Pathway Plans
  - Completed Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQs)
  - Average SDQ score
- 7.3 Analyse and understand data relating to our looked after children and compare these findings to National Averages to ensure we are as a minimum comparable but aspire to be better
- 7.4 Use of anonymised case studies to highlight key national or local policy and practice issues Furthermore, approve on an annual basis the Statement of Purpose for Castle Gate.
- 7.5 Service Users should also be encouraged to attend the Panel.

## 8 Performance Monitoring

- 8.1 It is proposed that the Panel take a broad approach to monitoring the Council's performance. This will help to build knowledge and understanding of the wide range of issues involved. The panel is in place to satisfy themselves that the Service:

1. Provides Looked After Children and their parents with opportunities to express their views and feed these into service developments and improvements.
2. Has taken steps to secure a range of care placements which deliver care and support and develop children and young people's cultural, religious and linguistic heritage.
3. Provides feedback from statutory inspections and that they are acknowledged and acted upon.
4. Ensures looked after children's health needs are addressed.
5. Makes sure looked after children are supported to achieve their full potential educationally.
6. Ensures looked after children have access a range of cultural and leisure activities.
7. Ensures looked after children are prepared for leaving care and are supported thereafter.
8. Uses the National Care Standards as a basis for scrutiny of services through Panel Members involvement in a sample of reviews and working groups.
9. Monitoring should also pick up on any areas of concern identified through discussions at Panel with children and young people, carers and staff as part of the research work of the Panel.

## **9 Membership**

9.1 The Panel shall comprise of 9 Members, which should include the following:

- Lead Elected Member for Children and Family Services (Chairman)
- Shadow Lead Elected Member for Children and Family Services
- Foster Carer representative
- Health representative
- Educational partner
- 4 additional District Councillors
- 2 substitute District Councillors

9.2 Members of the Panel will be required to attend appropriate training and be subject to a check by the Disclosure and Barring Service. Arrangements will be made by the Panel for the direct and indirect involvement of looked after children and young people.

9.3 Nominations for individuals to represent Foster Carers, Health and Education will be sought from the appropriate organisations.

## **10 Officer Attendance at Panel**

10.1 Attendance will be by appropriate senior Council Officers and statutory partners and will include the:-

- Director of Children Services
- Head of Children & Family Services
- Children & Family Services Manager for Looked After Children
- Virtual Head Teacher
- Other officers and partners as necessary.

## 11 Reporting Mechanisms

- 11.1 The Corporate Parenting Panel to meet, as a minimum, every three months.
- 11.2 The Corporate Parenting Panel, along with the Life Chances Team, will hold an annual event to celebrate our children and young people in care successes.
- 11.3 The Panel will have no direct decision-making powers but will make recommendations to the service and the Executive where appropriate.
- 11.4 The Chair will publish a quarterly newsletter to keep all Corporate Parent's updated on key issues, trends and support needs for our children.
- 11.5 The Panel will submit an Annual Report to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) and Full Council on its work for the year.

## 12 Training

- 12.1 As part of developing this new governance framework it is also proposed that the scope and detail of the mandatory training for Members be reviewed to ensure that it is up to date and fully reflects the responsibilities that Members have as corporate parents.
- 12.2 In addition, it is considered to be important that officers also fully understand the implications on them as corporate parents. It is therefore suggested that an online training module in relation to corporate parenting responsibilities be added to the corporate list of online mandatory training for officers.

## 13 Conclusion

- 13.1 In response to the Ofsted inspection of Children's Services held in March 2015, it is considered appropriate to review the governance of the Corporate Parenting Panel. This report proposes a new governance structure that strengthens and provides a robust challenge and improved outcomes for Looked after Children in the district.

## 14 Consultation and Engagement

- 14.1 This report is in response to an Ofsted inspection which recommended changes to the governance around Looked after Children. It is not proposed to undertake formal consultation with stakeholders over governance changes although Ofsted will be advised of the changes proposed in this report as will the appropriate partners.

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**Subject to Call-In:**

Yes:  No: X

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval

X

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**Wards affected: All**

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**Strategic Aims and Priorities Supported:**

The proposals will help achieve the following Council Strategy aims:

**X BEC – Better educated communities**

**X P&S – Protect and support those who need it**

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the following Council Strategy priority:

**X P&S1 – Good at safeguarding children and vulnerable adults**

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## Appendix B

### Equality Impact Assessment - Stage One

We need to ensure that our strategies, policies, functions and services, current and proposed have given due regard to equality and diversity.

Please complete the following questions to determine whether a Stage Two, Equality Impact Assessment is required.

<b>Name of policy, strategy or function:</b>	Corporate Parenting Panel
<b>Version and release date of item (if applicable):</b>	
<b>Owner of item being assessed:</b>	Andy Day
<b>Name of assessor:</b>	Andy Day
<b>Date of assessment:</b>	12 February 2016

<b>Is this a:</b>		<b>Is this:</b>	
<b>Policy</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>New or proposed</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Already exists and is being reviewed</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Function</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Is changing</b>	<b>Ye</b>
<b>Service</b>	<b>No</b>		

<b>1. What are the main aims, objectives and intended outcomes of the policy, strategy function or service and who is likely to benefit from it?</b>	
<b>Aims:</b>	To review the governance arrangements of the Corporate Parenting Panel to ensure that they are fit for purpose going forwards.
<b>Objectives:</b>	To create a governance framework which is robust and one which challenges and improves the outcomes for Looked after Children in the district.
<b>Outcomes:</b>	To improve the outcome for Looked after Children in the District.
<b>Benefits:</b>	Improved governance will ensure that the Looked after Children in the district get the support that they deserve and are entitled to.

<p><b>2. Note which groups may be affected by the policy, strategy, function or service. Consider how they may be affected, whether it is positively or negatively and what sources of information have been used to determine this.</b></p> <p>(Please demonstrate consideration of all strands – Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race,</p>
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Religion or Belief, Sex and Sexual Orientation.)		
Group Affected	What might be the effect?	Information to support this
Young People in care	The purpose of reviewing and proposing changes to the governance framework for the Corporate Parenting Panel is to improve the lives of our Looked after Children.	
<b>Further Comments relating to the item:</b>		

3. Result	
<b>Are there any aspects of the policy, strategy, function or service, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could contribute to inequality?</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Please provide an explanation for your answer:</b>	
<b>Will the policy, strategy, function or service have an adverse impact upon the lives of people, including employees and service users?</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Please provide an explanation for your answer:</b> The changes to the governance of the Corporate Parenting Panel are aimed at improving the outcomes for our Looked after Children.	

**If your answers to question 2 have identified potential adverse impacts and you have answered ‘yes’ to either of the sections at question 3, or you are unsure about the impact, then you should carry out a Stage 2 Equality Impact Assessment.**

**If a Stage Two Equality Impact Assessment is required, before proceeding you should discuss the scope of the Assessment with service managers in your area. You will also need to refer to the Equality Impact Assessment guidance and Stage Two template.**

4. Identify next steps as appropriate:	
<b>Stage Two required</b>	
<b>Owner of Stage Two assessment:</b>	
<b>Timescale for Stage Two assessment:</b>	
<b>Stage Two not required:</b>	

**Name:**

**Date:**