



**CABINET – 13<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2019**

**CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES**

**PART A**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to request the Cabinet's approval to consult on the draft Corporate Parenting Strategy, which sets out the Council's statutory duties and corporate parenting responsibilities for children in care (also known as looked-after children) and care leavers. A copy of the draft Strategy is appended to this report.

**Recommendations**

2. It is recommended that
  - (a) The Cabinet approves the draft Corporate Parenting Strategy for consultation;
  - (b) A further report is submitted to the Cabinet in December regarding the feedback from the consultation and submitting the final Strategy for approval.

**Reasons for Recommendations**

3. The Corporate Parenting Strategy will set out the statutory duties and the corporate parenting responsibilities of the County Council for its children in care and care leavers.
4. Consultation will ensure that the Strategy has incorporated the voice and views of its children in care and care leavers, ensuring that it is a relevant and holistic strategy. Consultation with relevant partners will support future engagement and application of the Strategy and better outcomes for the children and young people.

**Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)**

5. A report will be presented to the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 5 November 2019 as part of the consultation.

6. Consultation responses and the final strategy will be presented to the Cabinet on 17 December and to the Council on 19 February 2020.

### **Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

7. In May 2019 the Cabinet agreed the Council's approach to support for care leavers - following on from the launch of its 'Promise to children in care and care leavers' in April 2019.
8. In June 2019 the Cabinet received a report of the Scrutiny Review Panel on Corporate Parenting and accepted its recommendations.
9. The Corporate Parenting Strategy supports the Council's Strategic Plan outcome for wellbeing and opportunity and keeping people safe.
10. The Corporate Parenting Strategy sits alongside the Children and Family Services Department Care Placement Strategy 2018-2021 and the Children and Family Services Continuous Improvement Plan 'The Road to Excellence'.

### **Resource Implications**

11. There are no resources implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

### **Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure**

12. None. A copy of this report will be circulated to all members of the Council.

### **Officers to Contact**

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## **PART B**

### **Background**

13. When a child comes into care in Leicestershire, the County Council becomes the 'Corporate Parent'. The term refers to the collective responsibility of the Council - its elected members and employees - and partner agencies to provide the best possible care, opportunities and safeguarding for the children who are looked after by the Authority.
14. There are 7 corporate parenting principles introduced by the Children and Social Work Act 2017, which comprise seven needs that local authorities in England must have regard to whenever they exercise a function in relation to looked-after children or care leavers. These are:-
  - having an understanding of the profile and needs of the children in the care of the local authority
  - being aware of the impact on looked-after children of all council decisions
  - considering whether this would be good enough for your own child
  - ensuring that the council has a focus on improving outcomes for looked-after children.
  - acting as an advocate for looked-after children in your local community.
  - supporting the Member Champions in their role
  - being aware of the work and aims of the Corporate Parenting Board.
15. The corporate parenting principles are intended to secure a better approach to fulfilling existing functions in relation to looked-after children and care leavers and for the local authority to facilitate as far as possible secure, nurturing, and positive experiences for looked-after children and young people and enable positive outcomes for them.
16. The Corporate Parenting Strategy is the framework for the role of Local Authorities and their relevant partners (as defined in section 10 of the Children Act 2004) in the application of the corporate parenting principles as set out in section 1 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017. Local authorities must have regard to the seven needs identified in the Children and Social Work Act when exercising their functions in relation to looked-after children and care leavers (relevant children and former relevant children). It should be read and applied alongside the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2: care planning, placement and case review and The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 3: planning transition to adulthood for care leavers.
17. The approach is also informed by 2013 Statutory guidance on the roles and responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children's Services (in Leicestershire these duties lie with the Director of Children and Family Services and the Cabinet Lead Member for Children and Families) which describes how those roles set the tone for the local authority to be an effective corporate parent.

### **Corporate Parenting Strategy**

18. The draft Corporate Parenting Strategy sets out the Council's commitment to inspire, support and enable children in care and care leavers to be ambitious and successful.
19. The Strategy describes the Council's Corporate Parenting role for the 613 children and young people in care and 229 care leavers who are currently in the care of the Authority (as at August 2019) and the importance of voice and choice, safety, achievement and self-esteem in raising the aspirations for these children.
20. The Council's "Promise" to children in care and care leavers sets out its commitment and that of partners such as the district councils, the health sector and voluntary organisations, to provide the best support, guidance and care to children in care and care leavers. This was signed by elected members and officers from the Council and partner agencies on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2019.
21. The draft Strategy sets out clear roles for the elected members (councillors) and officers of the Council including the statutory responsibilities of the Cabinet Lead Member for Children and Families and the Director of Children and Family Services.
22. Ensuring that the voice of children in care and care leavers is heard and responded to and that opportunities are available for them is of paramount importance. The Children in Care Council and Supporting Young People After Care (SYPAC) are important forums where children's voices are heard as well as able to influence service delivery and policy development.
23. On 18<sup>th</sup> July 2018, the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Commissioners appointed a five member panel to consider the strengths and weakness of the County Council's approach to Corporate Parenting, in particular the role of elected members as corporate parents. A Scrutiny Review Panel concluded its review in a report to Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June 2019. The report made a number of recommendations including:-
  - i. A clear description of the role of members as a corporate parent for children and young people in care to be included in the refreshed Corporate Parenting Strategy.
  - ii. Regular reporting to Members on Corporate Parenting
  - iii. The appointment of three Member Champions relating to Education, Training and Work, Accommodation and Housing and Health.
  - iv. That all elected members receive training on their corporate parenting role when first elected.

**Consultation**

24. Consultation on this strategy will take place with all key stakeholders including children and young people in care, families, partners (Health, Police, District Councils, Education Settings) and elected Members. Opportunities to engage in consultation will be made online and in face-to-face sessions.
25. As part of the consultation the draft Strategy will be submitted to the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 5 November 2019.

**Equalities and Human Rights Implications**

26. Whilst the draft Strategy proposes no changes to the Council's policy or procedures, equality and human rights implications are integral to the strategy as the aim is to improve standards and outcomes for all children and young people in care, including disabled children, young children and those from minority and harder to reach groups.
27. A full EHRIA will be undertaken following the consultation.

**Background Papers**

The Children and Social Work Act 2017

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/16/contents/enacted>

Statutory guidance on the roles and responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children's Services

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/271429/directors\\_of\\_child\\_services\\_-\\_stat\\_guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/271429/directors_of_child_services_-_stat_guidance.pdf)

Children Act 1989: care planning placement and case review

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/441643/Children\\_Act\\_Guidance\\_2015.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/441643/Children_Act_Guidance_2015.pdf)

Children Act 1989: planning transition to adulthood for care leavers

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/397649/CA1989\\_Transitions\\_guidance.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/397649/CA1989_Transitions_guidance.pdf)

Report to the Cabinet on 25 June 2019 - Report of the Scrutiny Review Panel on Corporate Parenting - and minutes of that meeting.

<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=5604>

**Appendix**

Draft Corporate Parenting Strategy

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