

**CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

24 JANUARY 2023

CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY 2022-25

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

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to present the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee with the revised draft Corporate Parenting Strategy 2022 – 2025 and to seek its views on this as part of the approval process.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. 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, which includes 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.
3. Local authorities in England need to have regard to the 2013 Statutory guidance on the roles and responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services (DCS) and the Lead Member for Children's Services (LMCS) in relation to their appointment/designation. This guidance describes how those roles set the tone for the local authority to be an effective corporate parent.
4. The previous Corporate Parenting Strategy covering 2019-2022 was presented to the Committee on 5 November 2019. The renewed Corporate Parenting Strategy which is effective for 2022 – 2025 is appended to this report.

Background

5. When a child comes into care, the local authority becomes the Corporate Parent. Corporate parenting refers to the collective responsibility of all elected members, council officers and partner agencies to provide the best possible support and safeguarding for those children in care. Leicestershire's Corporate

Parenting Board brings together all of these individuals and provides a welcoming forum for children and care leavers to discuss and influence the full range of services available to them. The Strategy outlines the Council's priorities for supporting looked after children and sets a framework for the Council and its partners to be held accountable on these promises. The Corporate Parenting Board is a forum in which members are held accountable against the delivery of the Strategy.

6. As of 13 December 2022, Leicestershire County Council is currently the corporate parent to 709 children and 265 Care Leavers. As a corporate parent, the County Council has a collective responsibility to be a good parent to children and young people in its care and is expected to do what any responsible parent would do for their children.
7. Leicestershire has a strong corporate parenting ethos which recognises that the care provided for children is not just about keeping them safe. It recognises the importance of stability for children and the Permanence Policy sets out the commitment to children in the care of the County Council and the ambition to secure emotional attachment, physical stability, and long-term commitment to children. It also aims for all children in care to have the ability to receive access to appropriate, stable education placements and positive educational experiences.
8. There are seven corporate parenting principles, introduced by the Children and Social Work Act 2017, which comprise of seven needs those local authorities in England must have regard to whenever they exercise a function in relation to looked-after children or care leavers. The seven corporate principles are:
 - To act in the best interest, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and young people.
 - To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings.
 - To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people.
 - To help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners.
 - To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people.
 - For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships, and education or work.
 - To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.
9. These 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.
10. The seven principles are embedded in Our Promise to children in care and care leavers, which was signed up to by the County Council in April 2019, including Elected Members, and a range of its partner agencies. These promises include:

- We will support you
- We will respect your identity
- We will listen to you
- We will believe in you
- We will support you to find a place you can call home
- We will inform you
- We will be a lifelong champion

Engagement

11. The voice of children and young people is fundamental to the delivery of services, ensuring children and young people are given opportunities to share their views is paramount and promoted within many forums, including the Children in Care Council, Supporting Young People After Care, Out in Care and also their statutory Review of Arrangement Meetings.
12. The Service has ensured that the Strategy continues to reflect feedback from children and young people, including their views on the important factors of corporate parenting, which have been captured in the Strategy. One way this is evidenced is in the Corporate Parenting Board structure, with children and young people having representatives of both Children in Care Council and Supporting Young People attending the Corporate Parenting Board meetings and contributing to setting the agenda. The young people have said that although it is important for a range of issues to be discussed, they also want to work on themes that can be developed over the year. This is to enable issues to be identified by the young people with an opportunity for this to be fully explored with board members, that actions can then be taken, and that improvements can then be fed back firstly to the Corporate Parenting Board and then the Children in Care Council and Supporting Young People After Care (SYPAC). The theme for 2023 is the Language in Care.
13. Children in Care and care leavers took part in an engagement session for this update in early 2022.

Timetable for Decisions

14. The outcome of the engagement and the final revised draft Strategy will be presented to the Corporate Parenting Board in February 2023. As the changes made to the Strategy are only minor, in accordance with the Council's Constitution these will be approved by the Director of Children and Family Services.

Conclusion

15. The Committee is asked to comment on the revised draft Corporate Parenting Strategy.

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

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

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

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

16. None

Equalities Implications

17. In Leicestershire, the Council strives to ensure that all children and young people are supported to reach their full potential and that their protected characteristics are promoted and advocated for and are central to care planning considerations. All children and their families are entitled to equal access to services which do not discriminate on the grounds of age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, ethnicity, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy, and maternity. The Council will not tolerate individuals being discriminated against because of their ethnicity, sex, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, or any other disadvantaged social group.
18. The Service promotes equality, equity, and justice for all and ensures that services are provided according to individual need and seeks to ensure that all children and young people can voice their concerns, be their best selves and feel confident in who they are. The Council's Equality and Diversity Guidance launched in February 2022, provides advice for practitioners to ensure that all those that support and work with children are aware and equipped to provide inclusive services. The guidance sets out a vision for ensuring the core values held by Leicestershire County Council (Aspirational, Being Curious and Collaborative) underpin all practices undertaken with children and families. The Service aims to ensure that children and their families can truly see equality in the experience they receive.
19. Fairness and equality are not just rooted in the Council's legal responsibilities but are a moral obligation for all officers across a wide range of services – whether delivering front line social care, environment, education, health, transport and waste services or community and heritage facilities – to meet the needs of a diverse population across the County.
20. Equitable treatment reduces barriers of access and opportunity that people with protected characteristics experience either as individuals or as groups that are less likely to enjoy positive outcomes due to discrimination, prejudice, or other reasons such as socio-economic, health or educational factors. As Corporate Parents, the aim is to create an environment that ensures that all children and young people receive the right support, guidance, and intervention to ensure that they have equal opportunity to be aspirational and reach their goals. The service has ensured that this commitment is reflected within the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

21. An EIA is not considered necessary.

Human Rights Implications

22. There are no Human rights implications arising from the recommendations of this report

Appendix

Revised draft Corporate Parenting Strategy 2022-25.

Officer to Contact

Jane Moore, Director of Children and Family Services

Tel: 0116 305 2649

Email: Jane.Moore@leics.gov.uk

Sharon Cooke, Assistant Director, Targeted Early Help and Children's Social Care

Tel: 0116 305 7441

Email: Sharon.Cooke@leics.gov.uk

Kelda Claire, Head of Service, Children in Care, Fostering, Adoption and Virtual School

Tel: 0116 305 9084

Email: Kelda.Claire@leics.gov.uk

Hayley Binley, Service Manager, Safeguarding and Performance Service

Tel: 0116 305 7566

Email: hayley.binley@leics.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank