



Haringey Council

Agenda item:

[No.1]

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

On 6 December 2010

Report Title: Scrutiny Review of Corporate Parenting	
Report of: Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Contact Officer : Robert Mack, Principal Scrutiny Support Officer Tel: 0208 489 2921	
Wards(s) affected: All	Report for: N/A
1. Purpose of the report (That is, the decision required) 1.1. To approve the draft scope, terms of reference and work plan for the scrutiny review on corporate parenting.	
2. Introduction by Cabinet Member (if necessary) 2.1. N/A	
3. State link(s) with Council Plan Priorities and actions and/or other Strategies: 3.1. Council Plan: A thriving Haringey and a caring Haringey Sustainable Community Strategy outcome: Economic vitality and prosperity shared by all	
4. Recommendations 4.1. That the scope, terms of reference and work plan for the review be approved.	
5. Reason for recommendation(s)	

5.1. Included within the body of the report.

6. Other options considered

6.1. Included within the body of the report.

7. Summary

7.1 The Committee has commissioned a review into corporate parenting. The review is proposing to consider how the Council and its local partners work together to address the full range of needs of children and young people. It will therefore focus on the role and contribution of a range of services, as well as that played by elected Members. It will aim to receive input from a wide range of sources including children and young people in care and those who have recently left care.

8. Chief Financial Officer Comments

8.1. The Chief Financial Officer has been consulted in the preparation of this report and comments that the recommendations do not give rise to any additional financial commitments.

9. Head of Legal Services Comments

9.1 *The Children Act 2004* which underpins *Every Child Matters* requires the Council to appoint a Director of Children's Services and to designate a Lead Member. The roles and responsibilities of the DCS and LM are set out in statutory guidance for local authorities issued under sections 18(7) (Director of Children's Services) and 19(2) (Lead Member for Children's Services) of the Children Act 2004. This means that local authorities must take the guidance into account and if they decide to depart from it have clear reasons for doing so.

9.2 This guidance aims to explain how the roles of the DCS and LM are both distinct and complementary and how working together as a team the DCS and the LM can be most effective in driving improvements in outcomes for children young people and families.

9.3 One of the key roles of the Lead Member for Children's Services at paragraph 2.7(h) of the statutory guidance is to contribute to and be satisfied that the local authority demonstrates high standards of corporate parenting in particular by encouraging Members to promote the educational achievement and health and well-being of looked after children and children leaving care.

10. Head of Procurement Comments – [Required for Procurement Committee]

10.1. N/A

11. Equalities & Community Cohesion Comments

11.1. A disproportionate number of looked after children come from ethnic minority backgrounds, and research shows that looked after children grow into adults suffering disproportionately from social exclusion

12. Consultation

12.1. Consultation will be an integral part of the review. The views of a wide range of stakeholders will be actively sought as well as current and past service users.

13. Service Financial Comments

13.1. The cost of undertaking the scrutiny review is provided for in the budget for overview and scrutiny. In addition, value for money issues and any potential financial implications arising from the review will be considered in liaison with the service finance lead.

14. Use of appendices/tables and photographs

14.1. None

15. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

15.1 Background papers are as follows:

- The Role of Councillors as Corporate Parents – Rotherham MBC Lifelong Learning Opportunities Scrutiny Panel
- Aspects Of The Council's Corporate Parenting Responsibilities – Middlesbrough Children and Learning Scrutiny Committee
- Children Looked After by Camden – Camden Corporate Parenting Scrutiny Committee
- Children and Young People's Strategic Plan – Haringey Council
- The Role of Councillors as Corporate Parents – Wakefield MDC Children's Services Scrutiny Working Group
- If This Were My Child – A Councillors Guide to Being a Good Corporate Parent – Department for Education and Skills/LGiU
- Show Me How I Matter; A Guide to the education of Looked After Children – LGA/IdEA

16. Report

Introduction

16.1 The term "corporate parent" is not one which has a formal legal definition. However, the term recognises that a local authority should have the same interest in the progress and achievements of children and young people in its care as a reasonable parent would have for their own children. The responsibility applies to the local authority *as a whole* and not just the Children and Young People's Services (C&YPS). For example, where looked after children and young people (LACYP) are in care via a court order, this states that they are in the care of Haringey Council and not merely C&YPS. It requires ownership and leadership at a senior level and includes a key role for elected Members. In addition, the needs of LACYP cannot be met by a single agency alone and local Councils need to work closely with key partners.

Outcomes

16.2 *Every Child Matters* identified the five outcomes that are of most importance for young people. These are that they:

- should be healthy
- should be safe
- enjoy and achieve
- make a positive contribution to society
- achieve economic well-being.

16.3 The new coalition government will be replacing the five outcomes with the term 'to help children achieve more'. However, since it is not yet clear what the detail of their thinking is beneath this change in terminology. It is proposed that part of the outcome of this review be to define the outcomes that Haringey Council would want to deliver for its LACYP and the values underpinning these. One particular key aspect that will be considered is stability and how this can be promoted.

16.4 LACYP have a right to expect the same life opportunities and outcomes as other children. Nevertheless, they may experience disadvantage and research indicates that they experience poorer outcomes across a range of measures, including health and education:

- Nearly 50% of LACYP have a diagnosable mental health disorder compared to 10% in the general population. Figures for those in residential care are even higher.
- Between a quarter and a third of rough sleepers have been looked after by local authorities as children
- Children who have been in care are two-and-a-half times more likely to become teenage parents.
- Young people who have been in care are disproportionately likely to become unemployed
- Young people who have been in care are disproportionately likely to end up in prison
- Twenty-six per cent of prisoners have been in care as children, compared with just two per cent of the total population

Performance

16.5 The National Indicator Set includes several performance indicators about LACYP and three specific targets are included within Haringey's Local Area Agreement:

- NI 99; Looked after children reaching level 4 in English at Key Stage 2 – current performance 58.0% (target 47.0%).
- NI 100; Looked after children reaching level 4 in mathematics at Key Stage 2 – current performance 63% (target 48.0%)
- NI 101; Looked after children achieving 5 A*- C GCSEs (or equivalent) at Key Stage 4 (including English and mathematics) – current performance 17.5% (target 11%)

16.6 In addition, the council completes a detailed annual return on looked-after children. Key information should include:

- Personal education plans (PEPs)
- School absenteeism
- Exclusions
- SAT scores
- The qualifications that looked-after children are achieving.

16.7 Education plays a particularly important in improving the life chances of LACYP. In 2008, only 14% of LACYP achieved 5 A* - C GCSE grades compared to 65.3% of all children. Disruption caused by constant placement moves can have a particularly adverse affect on performance. In such circumstances, eensuring LACYP have the right support to be able to participate fully in school life is very important.

16.8 The previous government brought in the following initiatives to raise the educational attainment of looked after children:

- Each local authority now has a “virtual school head” to champion the educational needs of all LACYP;
- Each school has a designated teacher for LACYP
- Children at risk of falling behind at school have a personal educational allowance; and
- One-to-one tuition is available if necessary for some looked after children

16.9 Although education is very important, LACYP have a range of other needs. For example, many can also experience poor health outcomes. They must:

- Be registered with a GP
- Have their immunisations up to date
- Receive a regular health assessment and dental checks.

16.10 They also have a right to expect the same leisure opportunities as other children and to take part in out of school activities.

16.11 LACYP face particular challenges when they leave care. The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 sets out local authorities' responsibilities to help children leaving

care develop a 'pathway plan' to independence with the help of a personal adviser. Assistance must be provided for care leavers up to the age of 21. The expectation is that Councils should provide the support a good parent would give on housing, education, training and employment. This can make the difference between achieving independence and requiring long-term help. Whilst Councils have a statutory duty to keep in touch with care leavers until they are aged 21, (and beyond that if they are in education), parents normally remain in touch and offer help and advice to their children throughout their lifetime.

16.12 Local Councillors have a particularly important role to play as corporate parents. This was emphasised in the launching of the *Quality Protects* programme in 1998 when the Secretary of State wrote to all councillors about their role and said:

"Elected councillors have a crucial role. Only you can carry it out. You can make sure that the interests of the children come first. You bring a fresh look and common sense. As councillors you set the strategic direction of your council's services and determine policy and priorities for your local community within the overall objectives set by Government."

16.13 The role of Councillors as corporate parents is defined in 'Think Child' (1999) as the following:

- **find out** – get the facts and follow them up
- **make decisions** – play your part in the business of the council
- **listen to children and young people** – find out from them how your council's services work for them and remember that children are citizens too
- **be a champion for children** – take a lead in your community in putting children first

16.14 Communicating with LACYP and obtaining their views is undertaken in a range of ways. The Care Matters White Paper required that every local authority set out a "pledge" to children and young people in its care. Every child and young person's care or pathway plan must reflect how the commitments made in the pledge will be delivered for that individual child. There was also a requirement to set up a Children in Care Council to enable regular dialogue and involvement from LACYP in developing and delivering services and to monitor the implementation of the pledge. There should also be mechanisms in place for involving young people in care in the recruitment of key staff members.

Scope of Scrutiny Review

16.15 The Council has in place a Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee which focuses specifically on the work of C&YPS and the Children and Families business unit. The Committee is chaired by the Lead Member for Children's Services and provides detailed and regular feedback on services by C&YPS. It is proposed that this scrutiny review has a wider focus than this and considers the contribution of other parts of the Council and the local public sector as a whole.

16.16 It is proposed that the review focus on how the full range of needs of children and young people are addressed and look in depth at the contribution of a range of services provided by the Council and its partners to the parenting of LACYP including:

- Housing
- Leisure
- Adults
- Health

16.17 In addition, the review will also look at the role played by Councillors and school governors. The corporate parental responsibility applies to *all* Councillors and it is proposed that the review considers how their involvement could be strengthened and enhanced.

16.18 One additional factor to be specifically considered will be how the impact of reduced resources can be mitigated and how, as budgets across the public sector shrink, vulnerable groups like LACYP and care leavers be protected. A key part of this will therefore be to look at commissioning arrangements and whether better value for money can be achieved by such actions as joint commissioning.

Terms of Reference:

16.19 It is proposed that the terms of reference be as follows:

“To consider how well the full range of parental needs of looked after children and young people are addressed corporately by the Council and to make recommendations on how this role could be strengthened”

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16.20 In undertaking this, the review will consider specifically:

- How the educational needs of LACYP are supported
- The promotion of health and well-being
- Preparation for leaving care, including support for housing and training needs
- The role of local Councillors and how this can be enhanced
- Commissioning for LACYP and value for money
- How the views of LACYP are taken into account

Sources of Evidence:

16.21 Suggested sources of evidence for the review are as follows:

- Research documentation, national guidance and targets
- Statistical evidence including relevant performance data and information on outcomes
- Comparison with other areas such as statistical neighbours

- Interviews with a range of stakeholders
- The views of children currently in care, and of those who have previously been looked after children.
- Some original research tracking the post care experience of an agreed selection of looked after Haringey children

Consultation/Service User Involvement

- 16.22 In undertaking the review, it will be important to gain a clear understanding of the views and concerns of LACYP. Opportunities will therefore be created to receive the views of young adults on the challenges that they face after leaving care and children currently being looked after on the expectations that they have of their “corporate parents”. These will be arranged through C&YPS.
- 16.23 In addition, the Panel will obtain the views of a range of local foster carers and their representatives on the challenges that they face and how they feel these are addressed.

Membership of Panel:

- Councillors: Ejiofor (Chair) Alexander, Gibson and Solomon
- Co-opted Members (statutory): Yvonne Denny, Marcelle Jemide, Sarah Marsh and Sandra Young

Co-opted Members

- 16.24 It is also proposed that two young people from C&YPS’s Leaving Care Review Panel be co-opted onto the scrutiny panel in order to ensure that the views of LACYP are fully incorporated into the review process and reflected in its outcomes.

Timescale

- 16.25 It is proposed that the Review Panel aims to finish its work by the middle of February 2011.

Evidence Sessions

- 16.26 As follows:

Meeting 1 – Introduction:

Proposed Date: 14 September 2010

Aim/Objective:

- To obtain an overview of corporate parenting and the role of the local authority and how this role is promoted across the Council and amongst elected Members
- To consider the forthcoming challenges facing provision for LACYP

Background Information:

Performance and other statistical data

Possible Witnesses:

Debbie Haith – Children and Young People's Service

Cllr Lorna Reith – Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

Meeting 2 – Educational Issues:

Proposed date: 5 October 2010

Aim/Objective:

The consider the following:

- The educational performance of Haringey's LACYP
- How these measure/compare these statistics against other children in Haringey and children living in comparable local authorities
- How well LACYP who are in placements outside the local authority area perform
- How the Council aims to raise attainment levels.

Background Information:

Relevant statistical data

Possible Witnesses

Debbie Haith - C&YPS

Attracta Craig - C&YPS

Meeting 3 – Feedback from foster parents/young people who have recently left care:

Proposed Date: 8 November 2010

Aim/Objective:

To obtain the views of a range of foster carers on the needs of LACYP, how they are addressed and the challenges that they face

Possible Witnesses:

Haringey Foster Carers Association

Foster carers

A young person or young people who have recently left care

Meeting 4 – Leaving Care and Outcomes:

Proposed Date: 13 December 2010

Aims/Objectives:

- To consider how well supported LACYP are in finding employment, training opportunities and housing.
- To look at what links there are to LACYP post legal duty and what is known about the life outcomes of children formerly in the Council's care.

Background Information:

Relevant statistical data

Possible Witnesses:

Adults, Culture and Community Services
Strategic and Community Housing Services
Job Centre Plus
Leaving Care team

Meeting 5 – Health and Well-being/Leisure:

Proposed Date: TBA

Aims/Objectives:

- To consider how health and well-being of LACYP is promoted and supported, including sexual and mental health
- To receive evidence on the availability and provision of leisure and recreational activities

Possible Witnesses:

C&YPS
Leisure Service
NHS Haringey

Meeting 6 – The Role of Councillors/Commissioning:

Proposed Date: TBA

Aims/Objectives:

- To consider the role of local Councillors and how this may be enhanced
- To receive evidence on current commissioning arrangements and consider how value for money can be improved

Background Information:

- Relevant data on overall cost/unit costs

Possible witnesses:

Local Councillors
C&YPS

Meeting 7 – Summing up, conclusions and recommendations:

Proposed Date: TBA

Aim/Objectives:

- To obtain any further information that may be required from C&YPS relating to evidence received in the course of the review
- To agree appropriate conclusions and recommendations for the review.

Background Information:

An issues paper summarising all the evidence received by the review and highlighting key issues will be produced.

Possible Witnesses:

Councillor Lorna Reith – Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

Debbie Haith – C&YPS

Other Activities:

- 16.27 In addition, a meeting will be arranged with a group of LACYP in order to obtain their views. Consultation will take place with C&YPS on how this can best be facilitated but this will not be through a formal meeting of the Panel.