

**Report for:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Title:** Corporate Parenting

**Report authorised by:** Jon Abbey, Director of Children Services

**Lead Officer:** Neelam Bhardwaja, Assistant Director - Safeguarding and Social Care

**Ward(s) affected:** N/A

**Report for Key/  
Non Key Decision:** Not applicable

## **1. Describe the issue under consideration**

1.1 To review how the Council performs its corporate parenting responsibilities.

## **2. Cabinet Member Introduction**

2.1 I welcome this scrutiny report into the Council's role as corporate parent. This is a role that all councillors take on when elected. Councillors have a duty to take an interest in the wellbeing and development of the children the local authority looks after, as if they were their own children. The lead member has particular responsibilities, but all councillors are required to act as corporate parents. This function is one of the ways we ensure that all of our children and young people, including our most vulnerable, are taken care of and have the chance to reach their full potential.

2.3 In Haringey, the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee (CPAC) is responsible for the Council's role as corporate parent for children and young people in care. It seeks to ensure that the health, education and access to employment of children in care is maximised, monitors the quality of care provided and also ensures that children leaving care have sustainable arrangements for their future. I look forward to working collaboratively with Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the future to ensure that our approach to corporate parenting is robust and is carried out in the best interests of our looked after children.

## **3. Recommendations**

1. That the report is noted.
2. That the committee considers its effectiveness in holding CPAC to account for the discharge of the corporate parenting function on behalf of the council.
3. That the committee considers opportunities for scrutiny involvement in corporate parenting moving forward.

#### **4. Background information**

4.1 The Council has an important duty in making sure that looked after children (LAC) have the same opportunities as other children.

4.2 In October 2003 the Department for education and skills and the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU) published a guide “if this were my child – a councillor’s guide to being a good corporate parent”.

4.3 This guide has been revised jointly by the Local Government Improvement and Development unit and the centre for public scrutiny under the heading of “10 questions to ask if you are scrutinising services for looked after children” (Appendix1).

4.4 In May 2011, the overview and scrutiny committee undertook an extensive review of the council’s corporate parenting function and made a number of recommendations.

4.5 Peter Lewis, the Director of Children Service at the time provided a cabinet report on 4<sup>th</sup> October 2011 in response to the OSC review of corporate parenting along with an action plan and the recommendation that the cabinet agrees both the report and the action plan.

4.6 The action plan was reviewed and updated in September 2013. The examination of the updated action plan in 2013 in preparation for this report indicates that majority of the actions have been achieved and some are incorporated in current practice, for example, the lead member and the DCS receive weekly report on children missing from care and what actions are being taken to find them and all Haringey’s LAC be provided with a free Haringey Active Pass offering 70% discount for use in Haringey leisure centres, irrespective of where they live. This is indeed the case and a contract is in place with the current provide Fusion.

#### **5. The voice of the child/young person and how this might be strengthened**

5.1 The Children & Young People’s Service (CYPS) funds a full time participation officer to work with LAC to increase and to improve their participation in matters that affect them.

5.2 The CYPS supports and encourages activities of “Aspire”, LAC’s council. Every quarter the lead member and senior managers from CYPS meet with representatives of Aspire. The notes of these meetings are captured in the format “you said and we did” (Appendix 3). The issues of concerns that have been responded to have included more help and training with becoming independent, greater input from Homes for Haringey in bidding for tenancies and help with publicising the work of Aspire to LACYP and foster carers. In addition to these regular meetings, the DCS and the Lead Member have also joined the regular meetings of Aspire to interact with a larger membership rather than just the representatives.

5.3 Recently, the CYPS has renewed its contract for "Viewpoint" which is a system used for eliciting YP's views. Efforts are being made to ensure that a YP has the opportunity to express their views prior to each statutory review if they are either not attending the meeting or do not wish to do so in the meeting. Foster carers are also being encouraged to involve the LACYP being looked after by them in Aspire and using the Viewpoint.

5.4 Last year Aspire with input from a number of young people produced an animated video about what a young people can expect when they come in to care. This was made available both on line and as a DVD and was much appreciated.

5.5 Aspire along with LAC care council from Enfield carried out an inspection of the Barnet family court about young people's experience of care proceedings. The recommendations made from this "inspection" were accepted by all stakeholders including judges and these have been gradually implemented.

5.6 Aspire along with input from Virtual school has been engaging more LACYP and younger LAC to hear their views by organising outings to amusements parks and the theatre etc.

5.7 There is a well established annual award ceremony to celebrate the educational achievement of LACYP. This provides an opportunity to interact with young people and as well as acknowledging their efforts to also thanks carers and others who contribute to the educational success.

## **6. Performance Management in relation to LAC YP**

6.1 There are national indicators in relation to LACYP. At every quarterly CPAC meeting, performance related information for LACYP is presented, for example, how many LAC have up to date care plans, up to date personal education plans and dental checks etc. For full details please see appendix 2.

6.2 The Head of Service holds a weekly performance meeting to examine LAC related performance and the take remedial action in case of poor performance.

6.3 This information is shared and discussed more widely at the monthly CYPS performance meeting to ensure that all senior managers in the service are aware of the LAC related performance and play an active role towards improvements.

## **7. Learning from Lessons of Rotherham**

7.4 Deputy Chief Executive, Zina Etheridge's report to this committee on 27<sup>th</sup> July 2015 provided detailed information about the much publicised report about the failings of Rotherham Council to protect young people in the area from sexual exploitation.

7.5 Although the Rotherham report was not specifically in relation to abuse of LAC, a number of YP sexually exploited were in Rotherham Council's care. There is, however, well documented evidence that children in care are at much greater risk of child sexual exploitation and being caught up in crime. LAC are also more likely to be vulnerable in not having stable and trusting family relationships and therefore more susceptible to grooming and exploitative relationships.

7.6 It is therefore essential that all those exercising corporate parenting responsibilities are aware of these risks and vulnerabilities of LAC and there are clear pathways in place to work with LAC who go missing and are at risk of CSE.

7.7 Haringey LSCB has protocols in relations to young people who go missing and those at risk of CSE. A multi– agency missing panel is held every three weeks where YP missing from home, education and care are tracked. As mentioned earlier, the DCS and the Lead Member are provided information about missing LAC every week. YP at severe risk of CSE are also considered at the multi agency sexual exploitation meeting jointly chaired by the police and the CYPS.

## **8. Statutory Officers comments**

### **8.1 Finance and Procurement**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

### **8.2 Legal**

8.2.1 The Council's role as a corporate parent is to act as the best possible parent for each child they look after and to advocate on his/her behalf to secure the best possible outcomes.

8.2.2 The functions (including powers and duties) of the Council in relation to children who are looked after are set out in the Children Act 1989 Act as amended. Section 22(3) of the Act sets out the general duty of the local authority looking after a child to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child. This duty underpins all activity by the Council in relation to looked after children.

8.2.3 A child is looked after by the Council if s/he is in Council's care by reason of a care order or is being provided with accommodation under section 20 of the 1989 Act for more than 24 hours with the agreement of the parents, or of the child if s/he is aged 16 or over.

8.2.4 There is a crucial role for Overview and Scrutiny Committee to ensure that the Council is effectively discharging its corporate parenting responsibilities.”

### **8.3 Equality**

8.3.1 The Council has a public sector equality duty under the Equality Act (2010) to have due regard to:

- tackle discrimination and victimisation of persons that share the characteristics protected under S4 of the Act. These include the characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex (formerly gender) and sexual orientation;
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share those protected characteristics and people who do not;

- Foster good relations between people who share those characteristics and people who do not.

8.3.2 In October 2016, Haringey had 436 looked after children (LAC) for which the Council's corporate parent duty applies. The LAC cohort ranges from ages 0-17, and 55% of LAC in Haringey also have special educational needs.

8.3.3 Data shows that LAC as a group are facing multiple disadvantages compared to children who are not looked after. Whilst Haringey's LAC cohort outperform London and England averages for GCSE attainment, there is still a very significant attainment gap between LAC student and non-LAC students. Data shows that LAC have a higher conviction rate, risk of substance misuse and risk of becoming not in education employed or training after the age of 16 than non-LAC.

8.3.4 The Council is committed to improving opportunities and outcomes for LAC, and effective corporate parenting forms a critical part of this. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a critical role to play in holding the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel to account for the discharge of the corporate parenting duty on behalf of the Council.

## **9. Use of Appendices**

Appendix 1: 10 Questions – link attached

[http://www.local.gov.uk/c/document\\_library/get\\_file?uuid=dd2b4d45-a687-4c82-9737-fd31fb8a1c7c&groupId=10180](http://www.local.gov.uk/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=dd2b4d45-a687-4c82-9737-fd31fb8a1c7c&groupId=10180)

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Appendix 2: LAC related performance report

Appendix 3: You Said We Said – report from 4 July 2016 CPAC meeting

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