

REPORT OF CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

FULL COUNCIL 24 JULY 2017

Chair: Councillor Elin Weston

INTRODUCTION

This report provides information to Full Council on the Haringey Pledge for Looked After Children and Care Leavers and seeks agreement to implementing the proposals in the delivery of the Haringey Pledge. All councillors are corporate parents to our looked after children, and we take this responsibility very seriously. Ensuring that our looked after children are able to influence and shape the services provided for them is a priority for us. This Pledge was therefore informed and developed by Aspire the looked after children and care leavers group. It was presented by Aspire members to the Corporate Parenting Panel at its meeting on 18th April 2017.

A number of authorities have adopted similar pledges.

CORPORATE PARENTING PLEDGE

For many years local authorities have been responsible for looking after children and young people who for different reasons cannot be cared for by their own families. Sometimes this is a temporary arrangement, for others it is a long term need.

Corporate Parenting is the term used to describe the collective responsibility of the Council towards looked after children and care leavers. As the corporate parent of children in care, the whole of Haringey Council is responsible for their well being. Like any good parent this means being a powerful advocate for them to get the best of everything and helping them become successful well rounded adults.

Like any good parent who would ask their own children's view, being informed by looked after children and young people about what they consider they need to achieve a secure and satisfying life is an accepted part of the role of the corporate parent. Young people attend the corporate parenting panel (CPAC) to offer insight and advice about what it is like being in care in the borough and what could be done differently.

In addition to meeting our statutory requirement, agreeing the Pledge is a way for the Council to make a commitment to meet identified needs and respect the views of the young people who took part in the development of the Pledge.

Statutory guidance on the roles and responsibilities of Directors of Children's Services (DCS) and the Lead Members for Children's Services (LMCS) states that the DCS 'should have regard to the General Principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and ensure that children and young people are involved in the development and delivery of local services' (Department for Education, April 2012, Statutory guidance on the roles and responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services and Lead Members for Children's Services).

The Government White Paper 'Care Matters: Time for Change (2007) set out the importance of the corporate parenting role for looked after children. Each Local Authority is expected to promote nurturing, supportive and ambitious care for looked after children that provides stability and promotes resilience. In addition, each local area is expected to develop a pledge that states the standard of care that can be expected.

Following consultations across London, when the views and priorities of young people with experience of being in care were obtained, London Councils launched the London Pledge for Looked After Children in November 2008. The purpose of the Pledge is to provide a set of promises to all looked after children in London that are meaningful, focused and deliverable

Since then, each local authority will have begun the process of developing their own individualised pledge which incorporates the views, priorities and wishes of their own looked after children and care leavers and from this local consultation activity the Haringey Pledge has now emerged. It is anticipated that the pledge will form the core part of a coming into care pack so that young people can understand what to expect from those who care for them day to day or have an interest in their wellbeing such as corporate parenting panel members. It will also be used by Children's Service to ensure that looked after children's needs and wishes are being met, and will inform the service's work and Members should be reassured that these pledges are part of frontline practice and can be or are being delivered

ASPIRE'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE PLEDGE

Aspire is a youth-led group for young people in care and leaving care in Haringey. The Leadership Team, all young people who have been in care in Haringey, meet weekly to plan events, discuss emerging themes for young people in care with local decision makers, and consult with groups and services who work with young people in care/leaving care and try to represent their voices.

Lead by the Participation Worker, twelve Aspire members worked to update the Haringey Pledges over a three month period in 2016. They did this through a series of meetings as part of the regular Aspire sessions, took part in activities such as using scrabble pieces to create words on areas of concern for them as individuals and then used this as a basis for further discussion. The group looked at the care proceedings video they had made earlier and read the report that preceded the video.

The group looked at the London pledges in detail, which consists of 47 promises that 33 local authorities including Haringey have signed up to, and reviewed other Pledges in similar boroughs to check and compare their offer to children in care and care leavers with the Haringey Pledge.

Finally, the Aspire leaders met and spent time putting together all the information and simplifying the language. Once the Pledge was finalised the Aspire members presented it to CPAC for approval.

Statutory Officers comments (Chief Finance Officer (including procurement), Assistant Director of Corporate Governance, Equalities)

Under the Children Act 1989, the Council owes a number of duties to looked after children (i.e. children subject to a care order or provided with accommodation under Section 20 of the Act). The duties include: to safeguard and promote their welfare; to maintain them in other respects apart from the provision of accommodation; to ascertain their wishes and feelings and to give consideration to those wishes and feelings; to ensure that they are medically examined in accordance with regulations and to provide a complaints procedure. For care leavers, the duties include to take reasonable steps to keep in touch; to appoint a personal adviser, to maintain a pathway plan; to give assistance to the extent that his welfare and education and training needs requires it by contributing to the expenses incurred in living near the place where he will be employed or will be receiving education or training. Also, there is the 'Staying Put' duty that requires the Council to support a care leaver to remain with their foster carer until 21 years old where both the young person and the carer want the arrangement to continue. The corporate parenting pledge enables the discharge of the Council's statutory duties to looked after children and care leavers.

The pledges also in most parts reflects the corporate parenting principles in the Children and Social Work Act 2017. Section 1 of the Act (yet to be in force) introduces seven key needs (collectively known as corporate parenting principles) which the Council must have regard to whenever they exercise a function in relation to looked after children and care leavers. These are: i) to act in their best interests and to promote their physical and mental health and well-being; ii) to encourage them to express their views, wishes and feelings; iii) to take account of their views, wishes and feelings; iv) to help them to gain access to and get the best use of the services provided by the Council and by its relevant partners; v) to promote high aspirations for them and to secure the best outcomes for them; vi) for them to be safe and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and vii) to prepare the them for adulthood and independent living.

Adopting the pledges is symbolic of Councillors and the Council's commitment as a corporate parent to its looked after children and care leavers.

WE RECOMMEND

That Councillors and the Council as corporate parent endorse and adopt the Corporate Parenting Pledge attached as Appendix 1 in respect of looked after children and care leavers.