

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Report

Committee/Panel	Children & Families Advisory Panel
Date	16 October 2018
Title	Progress report on Corporate Parenting Board
Report From	Director of Children's Services

Contact name: Steph How

Tel: 01926 891623

Email: stephanie.how@hants.gov.uk

1. Recommendations

- 1.1. The CPB has been established for one year, during this time the CPB members have fully embraced their role as corporate parents for our children in care and care leavers. The CPB is in its formative stages, but emerging into a productive and inclusive Board. The decision to move towards the engagement of those involved in a young person's journey in care has enabled the CPB members to have a real sense of a child's journey. It is recommended that CFAP support the CPB to undertake this work.
- 1.2. Through meeting with young people, foster carers, social workers, teachers the CPB are engaging with those that experience the care system, enabling the CPB to influence change and act as the corporate parent to improve outcomes for children and young people.
- 1.3. It is recommended that the CFAP support the ongoing role of the CPB who can ensure that all of the services to children in care and care leavers are of a high standard, and to ensure that they are being well supported in all aspects of their life, including:
 - support and encouragement to achieve in school;
 - support and encouragement to after their mental health and wellbeing;
 - having opportunities for positive social integration; and
 - enabling the most vulnerable children and young people in society to flourish into the successful adults they can become.
- 1.4. It is recommended that a further progress report is provided to CFAP in twelve months.

2. Summary

- 2.1. This is a report detailing the progress made by the Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) which was established a year ago. The report details the functions and set up of the CPB and the impact this has had on children in care and care leavers.
- 2.2. The work of the CPB is a significant factor in influencing change for children in care and care leavers, ensuring that the Council fulfil its duty to act as a corporate parent and provide the best care possible.
- 2.3. Whilst the CPB has been established for a year, and making good progress, it is still in its infancy, there have been positive relationships built and awareness amongst the children in care and care leaver population of the CPB and its purpose. This will only develop further over the next twelve months resulting in the CPB's influence over change intensifying. What is significant to note is how the young people who have met with the CPB members have felt listened to and how the members of the CPB are approachable. Equally the CPB members are open-minded and have made themselves available to children in care, care leavers and foster carers.

3. Background

- 3.1. A report on Establishing a Corporate Parenting Board was presented to the Children & Families Advisory Panel (CFAP) on 17 October 2017. The report outlined that whilst the role of a corporate parent has been introduced since the Children Act 1989, the Children and Social Work Act 2017 (s1.1) defined for the first time in law what corporate parenting should be looking at to ensure, as far as possible, secure, nurturing and positive experiences for children looked after and care leavers. The seven core principles of the CPB being;
 - to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, 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.

- 3.2. In order for Hampshire County Council to achieve its responsibility as a corporate parent, there was a need to create a sub-committee of the CFAP to act as a dedicated Corporate Parenting Board (CPB).
- 3.3. The role of the CPB would be to promote the best outcomes for children in care and care leavers and enable Councillor led engagement and advice to CFAP and the relevant Executive Member. The CFAP agreed to the formation of the sub-committee known as the Corporate Parenting Board and to the Terms of Reference also presented to the Board on 17 October 2017.
- 3.4. The questions that the CPB are to ask is “would this be good enough for my child/children” and the need to be aspirational in outcomes for our children in care and care leavers. Looking after and protecting children and young people is one of the most important jobs that councils do. Corporate parents have the responsibility to ensure that children in care, care leavers and other vulnerable children are supported well in order for them to achieve their full potential.
- 3.5. The CFAP appointed three Members to the Board, on a proportionate basis and identified one of them as Chairman and another as Vice-Chairman. In addition, the Children and Families Advisory Panel appointed a substitute member for each political group.
- 3.6. The Panel appointed Cllr Chadd (Chairman), Cllr Briggs (Vice-Chairman) and Cllr Wade alongside Cllr Carpenter (Conservative Deputy) and Cllr Porter (Liberal Democrat Deputy). It was agreed for the appointment of three co-opted Care Ambassadors as Members of the Board as set out in the Terms of Reference; Shannon Nicholls and Carla Wright and Dan Busby.
- 3.7. Those County Councillors on the CPB have a particular responsibility to review County Council policies effectively and improve corporate parenting within Hampshire. The CPB acts through recommendations to CFAP and the Executive Lead Member for Children’s Services, to ensure that all of the services to children in care and care leavers are of a high standard, and to ensure that they are being well supported in all aspects of their life, including:
 - support and encouragement to achieve in school;
 - support and encouragement to after their mental health and wellbeing;
 - having opportunities for positive social integration; and
 - enabling the most vulnerable children and young people in society to flourish into the successful adults they can become.
- 3.8. The Board meets with children in care and care leavers, frontline staff and foster carers / residential homes to enable it to inform CFAP of the standards of care offered to our children and young people.

4. Progress of the Corporate Parenting Board

- 4.1. The CPB sit four times a year, since its introduction there has been three Board meetings, 27 November 2017, 26 March 2018 and 13 July 2018, the next meeting is scheduled for 25 September 2018.
- 4.2. A programme of work was identified at the first meeting, (Appendix 1) enabling focus and ensuring that the CPB;
 - Review the outcomes for children in care and care leavers
 - Ensure that the Voice of children in care and care leavers is listened to, acted upon and incorporated into key plans, policies and strategies for children in care and care leavers
 - Ensures sufficient resources are available for the 'Care Ambassadors' to directly engage with all children in care and care leavers, and to commission and deliver agreed projects on behalf of the Hampshire County Council
 - Raise the profile of children in care and care leavers by promoting the role of Elected members as Corporate Parents with key responsibilities
 - Ensures that children and young people are clear about what they can expect from the County Council as corporate parents
- 4.3. The CPB first met on 27 November 2017, this was the introductory Board meeting where there was a presentation on the role and function of the CPB, the responsibilities as corporate parents to our children in care and care leavers and the Pledge was presented enabling CPB to have a great understanding of the functions and responsibilities of the Board.
- 4.4. The Protocol between the Hampshire Safeguarding Children Board and the Corporate Parenting Board was agreed due to an overlap in their responsibilities, this protocol outlined how the two Boards will exchange information and work together on areas of mutual interest. A report has recently been present to the Board reviewing this protocol and providing an update, which was well received.
- 4.5. The second meeting took place in March 2018; the agenda for this meeting was predominantly focused on the performance of children in care and care leavers and how this compared over the Hampshire area. This was statistical information with a narrative explaining the detail.

5. Data Performance:

- 5.1. Children's Services collate data and provide a return to Government to demonstrate the level of care we are providing our children who are looked after (CLA). A presentation detailed the number of children who were currently in care at that time. It is detailed of those children who

received their Health and Dental Reviews within 12 months, the number of children who had received their immunisations and the outcome of a Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire which considers the emotional needs of children in care. There is a designated nurse for children in care who works closely with Social Care to support and improve the health of this cohort of children and young people; they also attended the Board to share information on how plans are in place to continue to improve the health of CLA and Care Leavers. Information was also shared on the number of CLA reported Missing; the percentage of CLA with three or more placements in a year; the percentage of CLA who have been looked after continuously for two and a half years, or in the same placement for at least two years or placed for adoption and their adoptive and previous placement together lasted for more than two years; school attendance rates; the number of CLA who have an assessment to identify if they are at risk of Sexual Exploitation. This information was all noted by the CPB with a view to monitoring these in the future.

6. Education:

- 6.1. There was a presentation on the Education of Children in Care identifying that the results for Early Years, Key Stage 1, 2 & 4 are all improving and are similar to the results for the same demographic nationally. An overview of the Virtual School and its future priorities was given, alongside a plan for how the priorities will be met. It was highlighted the difficulties in ensuring CLA achieved on par with the rest of their cohort and the importance of ensuring they are in good schools was a factor to support children progressing.
- 6.2. It was highlighted that there is currently work being completed with all schools in Hampshire to increase their understanding of the educational needs of CLA and to help schools understand the challenges CLA have to overcome. It was also noted that there is ongoing work required to increase the ambitions for the educational outcomes of CLA.

7. Care Leavers:

- 7.1. The CPB received an update on Care Leavers with a focus on the Local Offer and the feedback received in relation to it. The Board heard that 525 Care Leavers had been consulted with and responses were received from 54 of them which is a good amount compared to usual survey response rates.
- 7.2. The CPB also heard how work is being undertaken with District Councils around Council Tax exemption, alongside charity involvement and support with Housing and Health for Care Leavers. There has also been a joint protocol established between Children and Adult's Services to ensure Care Leavers continue to be supported post 21 years, this was shared with the Board. In response to the mental health needs of

care leavers, and in line with Social Care's approach to develop more multi-agency working to enable a better response to the needs of all service users, Mental Health practitioners will be recruited to support care leavers experiencing mental health difficulties.

8. Feedback from Care Ambassadors:

- 8.1. The Care Ambassadors are currently reviewing The Pledge to ensure it focuses on the priorities of children in care and care leavers.
- 8.2. It was also shared how CPB had recently met with the Director of Children's Services and other Care Ambassadors and it was thought to be a beneficial experience for all involved. Care Ambassadors have also been involved in interviews for senior Children Service's staff, most recently the new Area Director. One Care Ambassador has visited Whitehall and shadowed a Civil Servant in the Department of Education. There followed a conversation about the possibility of similar opportunities being set up within Hampshire County Council. In addition to the Care Ambassador role a Care Mentor role has been established and there are currently 16 Young People in these roles.

9. Outcome of the Bright Spots Survey:

- 9.1. An overview of the outcomes of the Bright Spots survey in relation to Education for Children in Care, this was an anonymous questionnaire, set up by an independent agency. There was a positive response rate to this, likely due to the Independent Reviewing Officers encouraging the CLA to complete the survey at a CLA review.
- 9.2. The main aspect picked up on from the survey was the large number of respondents who said they were afraid to go to school due to bullying. This was not expected and has led to the creation of an action plan to respond to this concern. There were also concerns in relation to young people not knowing the detail of their plans and being unaware of why they have moved placements.

10. Use of technology to increase the engagement of CLA and Care Leavers:

- 10.1. It was shared that Social Care are reviewing the current use of technology with the aim to increase the involvement of young people & care ambassadors, different apps and social media sites are being considered. The current webpages were being refreshed to look more up to date, work on mobile devices and act as a hub for social media.

11. Workstyle:

- 11.1. Due to the pressures on practitioners to meet the needs of the children and young people the CPB heard that 'Social Worker Personal

Assistants' were being rolled out to assist Children in Care teams, this will enable practitioners to spend more time out of the office with children and young people. This is further supported through the issuing of new hybrid IT devices for practitioners that can be use for direct work with CLA and care leavers, but also create flexible working.

12. Structure of the meeting

- 12.1. It was identified within the meeting of 27 November 2017 that it was very formal and corporately driven, there was a lot of information shared that Social Care collate, but little sense of the individual experience of a child or young person through their journey in care. It was considered that due to the formality of the meeting, it was not enabling the engagement of children and young people. This second meeting was reflected upon and considered that in order to become child inclusive and enable the participation at a level where decisions are shared adult and child decisions, the structure needed to be adjusted.
- 12.2. It was felt that the formal reports would still be required, but would not be the main focus of the CPB, but that the CPB members would meet with different groups of young people or carers people prior to the CPB where they can share their experiences and journey, this would direct the agenda for the CPB.

13. Engagement of Young People

- 13.1. At the third CPB held on 13 July 2018, the CPB members shared feedback from an informal meeting that had taken place prior to the CPB. The CPB members had been available to meet the group of young people and to discuss their experiences from within the care system environment. Members had met with eight individuals, ranging in age between 12 and 17 years. Officers had also been present on the day to facilitate the discussion and to make introductions. All Members felt that the meeting had been extremely beneficial and they had valued the discussions with the young people and the feedback that they had received.
- 13.2. It was noted that the meeting had helped Members to understand how the transition through the care system had worked for each individual and Members were keen to learn more and to speak further with other young people to understand the experience from their perspectives.
- 13.3. It was highlighted the importance of an individual's initial experience of being placed in care and how this could be better supported, particularly when this is in an emergency. Furthermore, it was noted that leaving a care placement for an alternative placement was also an important time. Specific suggestions were proposed, such as creating a leaflet with relevant information for children entering into the care system, the possibility of video conferencing with future foster parents and producing welcome/leavers packs.
- 13.4. Arising from the meeting with young people, it had been agreed that:

- A second, informal meeting for Members would be arranged with the same group of young people.
- The Chairman would write to the young people to thank them and to provide an update on how their ideas and suggestions had informed future work.
- Another informal meeting with an alternative group of young people
- and an informal meeting with foster carers would be arranged to enable Members to gain further insight and understanding.

14. Future Board Meetings

14.1. From the information collated to date, it was considered that the future Board meetings should consider;

- A detailed update on foster placements – incorporating the number of placements across Hampshire and some background information to provide members with information about how placements are sought and allocated.
- An update on the ongoing strategy for the recruitment of foster carers.
- That the CPB members would hold an informal meeting with another group of CLA and Foster Carers to continue to understand the needs of CLA and Care Leavers.