

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Report

Committee:	Corporate Parenting Board
Date:	5 October 2022
Title:	Children In Care Council and Care Ambassadors
Report From:	Director of Children's Services

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Purpose of this Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Corporate Parenting Board with an update on the work that is being completed towards commissioning a Children in Care Council and a Care Ambassadors group.

Recommendation(s)

2. That the Corporate Parenting Board notes the report and supports the formation of the Children in Care Council and Care Ambassador Group.
3. That the Corporate Parenting Board consider and agree opportunities to engage with the Children in Care Council and Care Ambassador Group to assist in achieving their mutual aims, with reference to the discussion points set out at paragraph 13 of the report and whilst being mindful of the Board's own terms of reference.

Executive Summary

4. At the Corporate Parenting Board meeting on 15 June 2022, Board members considered a report on the Council's participation strategy, which outlines the priorities for 2022-20225, as well as some of the proposed actions to progress these priorities.
5. One of the priorities in the Participation Strategy is to improve opportunities for care experienced young people to have input into wider service development through the formation of a Children in Care Council and a group for care experienced adults. Significant preparation work has been ongoing for some time now, to ensure that the scope of the proposed group is fully understood, as well as its function and purpose. The decision has been taken to commission an external agency to develop and run the group, and the tender process is now commencing.

6. One function of these groups will be to support the Corporate Parenting Board in hearing the voices of care experienced children and young people. The department is seeking the views of the Corporate Parenting Board to ensure that this is outlined in the Terms of Reference for both groups.

Participation

7. Hampshire's Participation Strategy 2022-2025 contains a renewed focus on ensuring that hearing the voices of children and families about services and service delivery is a core part of social work practice, and of service development and planning.
8. Previously, the Local Authority has run a Care Ambassadors group, where care experienced young people were invited to represent the views of themselves and others in various events and forums. This group came to a natural end during Covid. In the Children in Care annual report presented to the board on 15 June 2022, it was outlined that this group would be reformed, as both a Care Ambassadors group and a Children in Care Council. The Local Authority has decided to commission an external agency to develop and run the group.
9. The Local Authority is seeking to offer the Corporate Parenting Board a wider range of engagement activities, these activities allow members to meet with care experienced young people and their carers, and to hear their voices. The Local Authority is seeking to further complement this by developing the relationship between the Corporate Parenting Board and the Children in Care Council & Care Ambassadors groups, to ensure that the voices of care experienced people are represented on the Board.

Parameters of the groups

10. Participation is embedded across the service and the views of children and families should be considered throughout service planning and delivery. These are gathered through a range of activities that seek the views of individuals, as well as wider groups. The Children in Care council and Care Ambassadors groups will be expected to engage in participation activities and will be supported to engage with groups including the Corporate Parenting board, to be the voice of the child. This should not lead to a reduction in other participation activity, and the group will not be expected to seek or represent the views of all care experienced young people – they are representative children, rather than representatives of children.
11. Recruitment to these groups will need to ensure that membership is diverse, and reflective of a range of views.

Questions for the Corporate Parenting Board to consider

12. The board is asked to consider several questions which will inform the tender process and the formation of the board. These questions relate specifically to the role that the Children in Care Council and Care Ambassadors groups will have with the Corporate Parenting Board.

13. The questions that the board is asked to consider are –

- What expertise can the Children in Care Council and Care Ambassadors groups offer the Corporate Parenting Board, which would assist the Board in achieving its objectives?
- What voices and views do the Board want to hear?
- How would the Board envisage the relationship between the Corporate Parenting board, and the Children in Care Council and the Care Ambassador group? What would this look like?
- What are the existing opportunities that could be used to develop and support this relationship?
- Are there new opportunities that need to be created?
- How can the Board provide the Children in Care Council and the Care Ambassadors group with assurance that their views have been heard and acted on? What expectations can the Children in Care Council and Care Ambassadors group have of the Corporate Parenting Board in this regard?

Summary and analysis

14. Hampshire County Council is committed to making sure that the views of children and their families remains central to all of the work that we do. The Children's Services department is planning to develop this further through a Children in Care Council and a Care Ambassadors group. The Terms of Reference for the group are still under development, and these will include the role that these groups will have in working with the Corporate Parenting board. Children's Services would value input from the Corporate Parenting Board in considering this matter, and providing some recommendations about how this will be formed.

Finance

15. The funding for the CIC Council and Care Ambassadors group has been agreed from within the existing participation budget.

Performance

16. No performance issues noted.

Consultation and Equalities

17. No consultation has been undertaken.

Other Key Issues

18. None

Any other headings (if required)

19. None

Conclusions

20. The Local Authority recognises the importance of this piece of work, and is keen to ensure that the work done to form the group is productive and provides clear structure and purpose from the outset. The Local Authority thanks the Corporate Parenting Board for considering this matter, and for making recommendations.

REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:

Links to the Strategic Plan

Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:	No
People in Hampshire live safe, healthy, and independent lives:	Yes
People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:	No
People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:	Yes
OR	
This proposal does not link to the Strategic Plan but, nevertheless, requires a decision because:	
<i>NB: Only complete this section if you have not completed any of the Strategic Plan tick boxes above. Whichever section is not applicable, please delete.</i>	

NB: If the 'Other significant links' section below is not applicable, please delete it.

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents	
<p>The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)</p>	
<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
None	

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

1. Equality Duty

The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

See guidance at <https://hants.sharepoint.com/sites/ID/SitePages/Equality-Impact-Assessments.aspx?web=1>

Insert in full your **Equality Statement** which will either state:

- (a) why you consider that the project/proposal will have a low or no impact on groups with protected characteristics or*
- (b) will give details of the identified impacts and potential mitigating actions*

The proposal will have a positive impact on people with protective characteristics as diversity is an integral element of the plan.