

APPENDIX 1

City of Bradford Metropolitan
District Council

**Improving the support for young
people in care/care leavers**

Our role in Corporate Parenting

Future Leaders Programme 2016 -
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Content

Section	Page Number
---------	-------------

Section One	2
-------------	---

Introduction

Section Two	4
-------------	---

Setting the Scene

Section Three	7
---------------	---

Key Findings

Section Four	8
--------------	---

Concluding Remarks

Section Five	9
--------------	---

Summary of Recommendations

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Terms of Reference.

Appendix 2 – Service Context

Section One

Introduction

Background

Bradford Councils Future Leaders Programme 2016, was designed to contribute to the Council's talent management approach. It also forms part of a wider strategy that seeks to embed leadership skills, mindsets and behaviours across the organisation.

We, as part of Bradford Councils Future Leaders Programme, are five members of the team, who expressed a wish to work with Children's Services Department. This includes receiving individual mentoring from the Senior Leadership Team.

A challenge was set by Michael Jameson, around Looked After Children;

- How do we support young children in care?
- What is our understanding; what's the current landscape?
- What do we currently deliver and commission?

We have called ourselves, "Michael's Challenge Team."

Areas Explored

Following this, a desktop exercise was undertaken to start scoping in relation improving the support for children and young people in care, in seeing the local and national landscape.

Listed below are the key areas that we as a team were keen to explore as part of this task.

- What support is available?
- What are your priorities for looked after children?
- What's your understanding of corporate parenting and what do you see your role as being?
- What do you see as the challenges, barriers, solutions and opportunities for your service, for doing things differently?
- If your child or other family member had to access care services, what would you want to see and experience?
- Today you will receive a 12 year old in your care – where do you see them in six years' time?
- As part of our scoping exercise, which local authorities / or organisations would you suggest we contact, to understand more about children in care?
- We'd like to set up a small focus group with C&YP – is this a good idea and if so, will you help us to broker conversations with key people we need to talk to?

Who we have spoken to:

The Children in Care Council.

As part of this task we have also engaged with key officers and councillors and they include:

- Michael Jameson: Strategic Director Children's Services
- Jim Hopkinson: Deputy Director Children's Specialist Services
- Jenny Cryer: Assistant Director Children's Performance, Commissioning and Partnerships
- Helen Serlin: Team Manager, Leaving Care
- Mick Nolan: Coordinator of Bradford's Children In Care Council and Participation
- David Byrom: Head of Service, Children's Services
- Di Watherston: Head of Service, (Social Work), Children's Services
- Andrew Burns: Business Development Manager Sport & Culture
- Cllr Val Slater: Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder;
- Cllr Carol Thirkill: Chair of Corporate Parenting Panel

We have also had conversations with the following West Yorkshire Authorities:

- Calderdale;
- Leeds

Section Two

Setting the Scene

The vision for the Bradford district which both the Council's Children's Services and the Children's Trust share, is:

Our children and young people are the future of Bradford. We want them to grow up in a Family Friendly City where every child, young person and family is safe and well. We want them to realise their full potential, have high aspirations for themselves and their neighbourhoods and to become adults who help to drive the prosperity of our District.

Bradford's Children, Young People and Families Plan sets out the priorities for children, young people and families; how we plan to achieve these, who is responsible, and what success will look like.

- Priority 1: Ensuring that our children start school ready to learn;
- Priority 2: Accelerating education attainment and achievement;
- Priority 3: Ensuring our children and young people are ready for life and work;
- Priority 4: Safeguarding the most vulnerable and providing early support to families;
- Priority 5: Reducing health and social inequalities, including tackling child poverty, reducing obesity and improving oral health;
- Priority 6: Listening to the voice of children, young people and families and working with them to shape services and promote active citizenship.

Bradford has five key District priorities which are "owned" by different strategic partnership groups in the District. It has been developed alongside the District Plan which looks at the priorities for all areas including for children.

- Better Skills, More and Better Jobs and a Growing Economy
- Great Start and a Good School for all Our Children
- Better Health, Better Lives
- Safe Clean and Active Communities
- Decent Homes that People Can Afford to Live in

A number of clear targets have been set within the local looked after children and care leavers strategy. These cover:

- Improve permanency for children through adoption and special guardianship orders
- Improve outcomes for looked after children and young people through improving placement stability;
- Improve the health and wellbeing of children and young people being looked after;
- Ensure looked after children and care leavers are safe in their home and in their community;
- Improve education and enjoyment outcomes for looked after children;

- Improve positive contribution outcomes for looked after children. Make sure all looked after children are listened to so their views can help plan what we do and make it better;
- Support and develop our Children in Care Council;
- Strengthen the corporate parenting role;
- Improve access to work, education and training and ensure young people who leave care have access to a safe place to live.

The number of Children and Young People in Care is 922 and the age ranges from birth to 18+ years old. There are 451 females and 471 males.

There are approximately 428 Children and Young People in Fostering placements within the District and there are 59 children being looked after by another Local Authority.

Table 1 – Number of Looked After Children, by age and ethnicity.

Age	
0 – less than 1	51
01 – 04	147
05 – 09	187
10 – 15	367
16 – 17	163
18+ and in Community Home	7

Ethnicity	
White British	576
White Other	33
Gypsy/Roma	24
Asian/British Asian – Bangladeshi	6
Information Not Yet Obtained	16
Other Ethnic Group	11
Mixed – Other	19
White - Eastern European	7
Asian/British Asian – Pakistani	71
Mixed - White/Black Caribbean	31
Traveller of Irish Heritage	4
Mixed - White/Asian	85
Mixed - White/Black African	10
Black/Black British – Caribbean	2
Black/Black British – African	17
Asian/British Asian – Indian	3
Asian/British Asian – Other	4
Black/Black British – Other	2
Refused	1

Who looks after our Looked After Children:

392 Our Foster Carers

217 Friends and Family

91 Placed with Parents

58 Our Residential Care

83 External Residential/Foster Care

Others

(Adoption orders, hospital, secure etc)

Statistics as of December 2016.

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Section Three

Key Findings

This section presents the findings of this working group, into improving the support for children and young people in care and care leavers.

Following engagement with key stakeholders, a number of key findings and gaps were identified, which included:

Key Finding 1

Comparative work undertaken also identified that Leeds City Council has a multi-agency LAP, using a multi agency approach with Looked After Children. This has proved to be very successful as key agencies formed part of the approach and services appear more co-ordinated, thus addressing the needs of Looked After Children more effectively.

Identified Gap

There does not appear to be a multi-agency LAP partnership approach in Bradford, hence there appears to be a gap in Bradford Council.

Recommendation

To develop a multi agency approach to work with Looked After Children, which would improve the coordination and delivery of services and support to Looked After Children. The multi agency partnership should be accountable to Bradford Council's Corporate Parenting Board. Representation would be expected from Leisure and Cultural Services, Third Sector partners, including key representation from the businesses Community. Other key stakeholders will be identified as the project progresses.

Key Finding 2

With regards to communication, messages are delivered through the Children in Care Council; however there is no overall communications plan which could be used to deliver key messages in relation to Looked After Children.

Identified Gap

There appears to be no overall Communications Plan in place to not only deliver key messages in relation to Looked After Children but also to provide Opportunities to raise awareness, promote and buy in regarding the Corporate Parenting role, especially in expanding this across Council and Stakeholders.

Recommendation

A development of a robust communications plan which ensures that Looked After Children/leaving care are given specific consideration within existing plans around priorities and development of services for children and young people, for example the Children,

Young People and Families plan) and that key organisations are held to account in relation to equality of access for Looked After Children.

Key Finding 3

During the information gathering process it became apparent that the offer to Looked After Children in terms of Corporate Parenting support was not clear. There also appears to be opportunities to look at developing raising awareness sessions with Councillors in terms of fulfilling the Corporate Parenting role.

There was consensus amongst Senior Councillors, Council Officers and Looked After Children, about the need to strengthen this area further, by ensuring that within Bradford Councils Report template; a further heading be included to be called, "Implications for Corporate Parenting". This would further reinforce the importance of Corporate Parenting, whilst also demonstrating that this is a cross-cutting issue.

Identified Gap

Opportunities to raise awareness, promote and buy in regarding the Corporate Parenting role, especially in expanding this across the Council and key stakeholders.

Recommendations

There is a need to communicate a clearer understanding of what the role is of the Corporate Parent, who these are and the responsibilities surrounding this. There is opportunity to enhance the role of the Corporate Parent and we would seek to embed the role wider, and would like to pilot an initiative with Future Leaders, in taking a mentoring role with Looked After Children.

Council Management Team will clarify with each Council Department, their role as a Corporate Parent. We will ask each department to run an annual event for Looked After Children. Each Council Department will be responsible to design and publicise what their event is and the dates of each event should be coordinated so there is an even spread over the year.

It is recommended that all elected members receive as part of their member introduction training sessions that there is inclusion of the expectations around the role of being a Corporate Parent, focusing specifically on accountability and responsibility. This should also be extended to Council Staff.

It is recommended that a new section be included in Bradford Councils Report template called, "Implications for Corporate Parenting".

Key Finding 4

Discussions with Looked After Children indicated that they are offered free tickets/offers and they felt that 'this is good, but that there is a flaw and that this can fall short as some families may not be able to get involved due to cost and need to be bespoke for each young person and as a family.'

Identified Gap

The need to encourage Looked After Children to make the most of the cultural offer and developing systems to ensure that the services available to young people meet their needs and are accessible.

Recommendation

Working collaboratively, alongside representatives from the Children in Care Council, the new cohort of Future Leaders will work with a number of key partners in the District to develop a cultural offer to our Looked After Children. It is anticipated that they will develop the scheme and in term will aim to develop a discreet swipe card/potentially linked with an app, for discounts or free. This will include retail and leisure outlets.

Key Finding 5

Dialogue with Officers and Councillors revealed that more could be done, in terms of developing and promoting the cultural offer for Looked after Children. Bradford Council has many facilities such as swimming pools, theatres and museums; where access could be made available to Looked After Children free of charge and to include businesses.

Identified Gap

The cultural offer, or lack of; that is currently available across the District for Looked After Children.

- We undertook some comparative work relating to the cultural offer within neighbouring authorities and below are the key points. It is clear that there are differing offers:
 - **Bradford Council** are currently piloting an initiative, that started in September, of initially 60 membership cards, for free access for care leavers for gym, swimming and fitness classes. Passport to Leisure passes are also available for half price access for younger children. This is in the early pilot stage and at the last count, approximately 30 care leavers had signed up. A number of those had not attended a gym/swim/class before
 - **Calderdale Council** offer passport to leisure and MAX cards that are given to carers and special guardians that enables them to get discounts in certain places, eg Eureka, bowling, free/discounts and recreational offers
 - **Leeds Council** offer Looked After Children and care leavers, free access to swimming pools and gyms through Leeds City Council Sport & Active Lifestyles

Recommendation

It is recommended that a separate piece of work be undertaken to explore the costs associated with providing all Looked After Children free access and free Passport to Leisure cards and to make use of facilities at the disposal of the Council; swimming pools, theatres

and museums. This would ensure opportunities for young people to use these facilities, this creating more social, cultural and learning opportunities.

Key Finding 6

Further discussion with Council officers and Councillors highlighted that there are not enough apprenticeship opportunities for Looked After Children from Bradford Council's apprentice scheme.

Identified Gap

Places on Bradford Councils apprenticeship scheme are not currently targeted to Looked After Children.

Recommendation

We recommend that Bradford Council prioritises places on the Councils apprentice schemes to Looked After Children (and to include 'professional' shadowing opportunities, similar to takeover challenge day but more regularly and consistently).

Key Finding 7

During the information gathering stage, it became clear that there needed to be greater clarity in relation to what is in place for Young People who are leaving Care Leavers. Moreover, in our role as Corporate Parent, it is crucial that we know once Young People leave the care of the Council, that they are correctly signposted to organisations and services that will continue to assist them in their life development.

Identified Gap

Not signposting and supporting Young People, once they have left Bradford Councils Care.

Recommendation

To talk to care leavers before they have left responsibility of the Local Authority in more detail as to what level of signposting/support they would/or would not like to receive, in terms of the Council tracking their progress to help fulfil our Corporate Parenting role.

Section Four

Concluding Remarks

Providing support, guidance and care to Looked After Children in the District by Bradford Council, is complex and one that requires a multi-faceted approach. It was clear from our information gathering, that the commitment from Bradford Council Children's Services Staff and Bradford Councillors was exceptional.

It has been clear from the information gathered, that whilst there are good practices that exist to support young children in care, it is also clear that more can be done. Moreover, we have seen a commitment to ensuring children and young people in care do receive the highest possible care.

Members of the Children in Care Council felt that Looked After Children should have similar opportunities and positive life experiences as all children. They said that they "don't want to be identified as kids in care." The Children in Care Council said that they all want young people in the District, to be well rounded, resilient and leading citizens, equipped with the skills and tools to be what they aspire to be.

Members of the Children in Care Council told us they do not feel that they currently have the same opportunities as young people who are not in care. They feel children in care should have similar opportunities."

As key stakeholders, we are seeking to continue to work inclusively and collaboratively with members of the Children in Care Council to further co-create, develop and shape further, an area of work. This supports and encourages an ethos of working with the voices of children and young people. This is our commitment beyond this report.

Bradford Council needs to fulfil our role as a Corporate Parent, from the point at which children and young people come into our care to not just when they leave care, but also after care. As a Corporate Parent, we need to be treating Looked after Children, as if they were our own children and in the words of one of our young people, "we want someone to make sure we are doing okay."

Next Steps

In relation to the next steps and progressing forward with this work, it is vital that the momentum is not lost and that an action plan be developed which sets out how the recommendations for this review will be implemented and taken forward. The action plan will also include areas of accountability and timescales for delivery.

The draft report will also be considered by Bradford Councils Corporate Parenting Panel, on Wednesday 8 March 2017.

Section Five

Summary of Recommendations

The recommendations set out below have come from the desk top research, discussions with the Children and Care Council, Bradford Council Children Service's Officers, Councillors and comparative work with the other West Yorkshire Authorities.

Recommendation 1

To develop a multi agency approach to work with Looked After Children, which would improve the co-ordination and delivery of services and support to young people in care. The multi agency partnership should be accountable to Bradford Council's Corporate Parenting Board. Representation would be expected from Leisure and Cultural Services, Voluntary and Community Sector Agencies as well as key representation from the businesses Community. Other key stakeholders will be identified as the project progresses.

Recommendation 2

A development of a robust communications plan which ensures that Children in care/leaving care are given specific consideration within existing plans around priorities and development of services for Looked After Children, for example the Children, Young People and Families plan) and that key organisations are held to account in relation to equality of access for children in care.

Recommendation 3

There is a need to communicate a clearer understanding of what the role is of the Corporate Parent, who these are and the responsibilities surrounding this. There is opportunity to enhance the role of the Corporate Parent, we would seek to embed the role wider, and would like to pilot an initiative with Future Leaders, in taking a mentoring role with young people in care.

Recommendation 4

Working collaboratively, alongside representatives from the Children in Care Council, the new cohort of Future Leaders will work with a number of key partners in the District to develop a cultural offer to our Looked After Children. They will develop the scheme and will then aim to develop a discreet swipe card/potentially linked with an app, for discounts or free. This will include retail and leisure outlets.

Recommendation 5

Council Management Team will clarify with each Council Department, their role is as a Corporate Parent. We will ask each department to run an annual event for Looked After Children. Each Council Department will be responsible to design and publicise what their

event is and the dates of each event should be coordinated so there is an even spread over the year.

Recommendation 6

It is recommended that all elected members receive as part of their member introduction training sessions that there is inclusion of the expectations around the role of being a Corporate Parent, focusing specifically on accountability and responsibility. This should also be extended to Council staff.

Recommendation 7

It is recommended that a new section be included in Bradford Councils Report template called, "Implications for Corporate Parenting".

Recommendation 8

It is recommended that a separate piece of work be undertaken to explore the costs associated with providing all Looked After Children free access and free Passport to Leisure cards and to make use of facilities at the disposal of the Council such as swimming pools, theatres and museums. This would allow young people to use these facilities, this creating more social, cultural and learning opportunities.

Recommendation 9

We recommend that Bradford Council prioritises places on the Councils apprentice schemes to Looked After Children (and to include 'professional' shadowing opportunities, similar to takeover challenge day but more regularly and consistently).

Recommendation 10

To talk to care leavers before they have left responsibility of the Local Authority in more detail as to what level of signposting/support they would/or would not like to receive, in terms of the Council tracking their progress to help fulfil our Corporate Parenting role.

Recommendation 11

That an action plan be developed which sets out how the recommendations for this review will be implemented, including areas of responsibility and timescales for delivery. Progress against the action plan should be presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel in six months.