

Report of the Strategic Director, Corporate Resources to the meeting of Corporate Parenting Panel to be held on 4 November 2019

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Subject:

Department of Corporate Resources Corporate Parenting Report

Summary statement:

The Department of Corporate Resources provides support and activities for Looked After Children and young people across a wide range of services. This report provides information on this work to inform panel members.

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Overview & Scrutiny Area:
Children Services

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Department of Corporate Resources provides support and activities for Looked After Children and young people across a wide range of services. This report provides information on this work to inform Panel members.

2. BACKGROUND

Following the implementation of the Social Work Act 2017 each Local Authority has responsibilities under the seven Corporate Parenting Principles. They are as follows:

- 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.

Corporate Resources as an enabling service does not directly deliver services to Children in Care, however we do deliver essential services directly or in support of other directorates to support Children in Care as outlined below.

2.1 Finance

The service works closely with other Council departments to ensure effective financial arrangements are in place and activity includes:

- Works closely with services to ensure budget allocations are effective and aligned to service demands and requirements. Ensuring budget provision is provided to meet service demands and best effective care for Looked After Children.
- Supporting with financial analysis/costing for grant bidding to attract funding into the district for Children and Young People (e.g. "B" Positive Pathways programme, Social Work Teaching Partnership)

- Completion of annual statutory returns in respect of budget and spend on Children and Young People (including Looked After Children by type of placement)
- The Service governs the Council's Strategic Risk Register which includes assessments on the Council's Children's Safeguarding processes.

2.2 Procurement

Procurement Services ensures third party providers of goods, works and services are sourced in an effective manner, activity includes:

- Ensuring third party providers deliver the requirements of any contract to the required standard.
- Third party providers are asked as part of their social value offer through the procurement process to improve the employability of young people by committing a;
 - Number of hours dedicated to support young people into work (e.g. CV advice, mock interviews, careers guidance)
 - Number of weeks spent on meaningful work placements or pre-employment course;
 - Meaningful work placement (internships)
 - Employment taster day (s) for those interested in working in the particular industry

Latest returns from suppliers across these indicators (January to July (which is January to March in reality given COVID)) indicate that **232** young people in the district have been supported across these indicators.

2.3 Information Governance and Data Protection

- Children need particular protection when their personal data is collected and processed because they may be less aware of the risks involved. When processing children's personal data the need to protect them from the outset, and design systems and processes is paramount.
- Compliance with the data protection principles is central to all processing of children's personal data in order for the Council to meet the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).
- The Corporate Information Governance Team and the Data Protection Officer provide advice and guidance so that the Council:
 - Complies with all the requirements of the GDPR specifically relating to children.

- Designs processing with children in mind from the outset, and use a data protection by design and by default approach.
- Ensures that processing related to children is fair and complies with the data protection principles.
- That Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs) are used to help assess and mitigate the risks to children - If processing is likely to result in a high risk to the rights and freedom of children then a DPIA is always completed.
- Children's views are taken into account when designing any relevant data processing activity.

2.4 HR Services

Human Resources provides a range of services that directly and indirectly impact on young people, such as recruitment, career support and training, work experience/shadowing opportunities for young people.

All apprenticeship posts are sent to the Leaving Care team in order to enable children in care to be encourage/supported to apply for LA apprenticeships. Any child in care or care leaver who applies for an apprenticeship and who meets the basic English and Maths criteria is guaranteed an interview. At present there is one care leaver in an apprenticeship with the council. Two other care leavers commenced apprenticeships in 2018 but were unable to maintain these.

Additional Human Resources capacity is working with Children's Services to enhance the support provided as part of the improvement journey, across workforce design and planning, attraction and recruitment, on-boarding and induction, career development and management.

With specific regard to Corporate Parenting, Human Resources are:

- Reviewing our approach to reward and recognition taking account of voices of young people and what they seek from employment
- Continuing to include a 'children at the heart of all we do' award category for our Service Excellence Awards
- Working with partners across the District (most notably Health and Social Care) on workforce, Ambassadors network (careers toolkit deployed by volunteers at career events in Schools) attraction and apprenticeships
- Working with our employment and skills team to develop work experience, placements, pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship routes for our young people

2.5 Legal Services

The Legal Teams provide a wide range of support:

- The Social Care Team provides
 - Specialist legal advice and representation to Children's Social Care, to support them in the corporate parenting role. This includes:
 - Overview of the conduct of care proceedings; permanency planning for looked after children, including placement, adoption, special guardianship and discharge of care orders and issues around children's contact with family members.
 - Input into training for those directly involved with looked after children including social workers, family centre workers and foster carers, to support better court evidence and care planning.

The support provided has significantly increased over the past year. This is due to the large increases in numbers of cases being referred to legal for pre-proceedings input, care and discharge proceedings and also the continuing improvement journey within Children's Social Care.

- The Education, Employment and Litigation Team provides advice to Children's Services in respect of all aspects of the local authority's education duties including, for example, special educational needs which impact on, and may involve, looked after children, including appeals to the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) tribunal. The team also provides employment law advice to Children's Services related to the corporate parenting role when needed.

2.6 Revenues and Benefits

Revenues and Benefits service provides support to care leavers with their Council Tax liabilities:

- Any care leaver, who is liable for Council Tax, is exempt from paying until the year after their 21st birthday. The Council currently exempt 94 care leavers under this provision
- Care leavers are also disregarded for the purpose of assessing the number of adult residents in a property for the calculation of Council Tax. This means if a care leaver has joined a single household, that household wouldn't lose the 25% single person discount. This disregard was recently extended to include care leavers up to the age of 25
- In addition to direct support, the Council's care leaver team have direct access to housing benefits experts, so that issues can be resolved at the earliest opportunity

2.7 IT Services

IT Services work closely with other Children's Services to deliver a number of key IT projects including:-

- Completed the configuration and roll-out of over 2,000 Chromebooks / iPads for vulnerable students across the District.
- Provides a wide range of systems and databases to support the delivery of service to children eg Child Protection, ContrOCC Children's & Provider Portal, Early Help, digital Process for Admissions - In year, annual and appeals (On line application automation) etc.
- Mobile Working to support Social Workers – (supporting working outside of the office, improve access to LCS, email and other essential information)

2.8 Estates & Property

The estates and property team are directly involved in a number of areas in providing the property infrastructure facilities for Children in Care.

- Providing property advice and assistance to ensure that the estate is properly managed, works effectively and meets the service's needs.
- The asset management team are working closely with the service to ensure that sufficient capacity is available throughout the Looked After Children service projects like 'staying closer' and addressing need to provide children homes fit for the future like the project '2 bedded homes for children.'
- Assisting with the sourcing and selection of appropriate properties to deliver peripheral projects whereby Looked After Children are working with our partners to deliver projects like the 'up-cycling shop'
- Provide support to assist in the proposed refurbishment of the TFD centre in Holmewood to enable a full family hub to be created at the site

3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

➤ None

4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

4.1 All activities and actions outline in paragraph 2 are funded from within existing Department of Corporate Resources budgets

5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

Not applicable

6. LEGAL APPRAISAL

- No legal issues arising

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

- Not applicable

7.2 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

- Not applicable

7.3 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

- None

7.4 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- Not applicable

7.5 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

- Not applicable

7.6 TRADE UNION

- Not applicable

7.7 WARD IMPLICATIONS

Actions outlined apply across the whole District and there are no specific ward implications

7.9 IMPLICATIONS FOR CORPORATE PARENTING

Activities and actions outlined in paragraph 2 are intended to improve outcomes for Looked after Children.

7.10 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESMENT

Not applicable

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

- None

9. OPTIONS

➤ None

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 The views of Panel Members are sought on the range of activities and actions outlined in Paragraph 2 of this report and on areas for further development.

11. APPENDICES

None

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS