

Report of the Director for Children's Services to the meeting of Corporate Parenting Panel to be held on 22nd November 2023

Subject: Corporate Parenting progress and development

Summary statement:

In advance of the CPP led self-assessment detailed below, the Chair of CPP has requested an earlier evaluation to be led by the Interim Assistant Director for Improvement and Partnerships, Children's Services in August 2023 to highlight areas for development, ambition, and a vision for success. A document that has been produced setting out in detail our current position and where we aspire to be to meet the Corporate Parenting Principles required and more. This will support the soon-to-be held Corporate Parenting Partnership Event on 5th December 2023.

Background Information:

As part of the Local Government Association's (LGA) continuing work to support political and corporate leadership for children's services, they offer support to councils in improving their corporate parenting and in ensuring corporate parenting is a way of working across the council.

The Chair of Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP) / Portfolio Holder for Children and Families has approached the LGA to take up an offer of review and support. This will commence with a Peer Diagnostic, and based on the learning, a tailored and flexible training offer will be provided. This is likely to take place in January / February 2024.

The LGA have developed an 'Effective Corporate Parenting Self-Assessment Tool' to support Local Authorities to self-evaluate how effective arrangements are currently. The improvement process will commence with CPP completing the 'Effective Corporate Parenting Self-Assessment Tool' and sharing this with the Peer Local Authority diagnostic lead. This will likely take place in December 2023.

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY:

The Corporate Parenting Activity is required to consider equality objectives as set out in the Council's equality objectives. Therefore, as part of the Corporate Parenting development activity with our partners, all Equality assessments will be undertaken.

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Overview & Scrutiny Area:

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Background

The Corporate Parenting Panel was reviewed and refreshed with updated arrangements coming into place at the start of 2022 with new Terms of Reference to reflect the panel becoming young person led for every other Panel meeting. Prior to that there had been a hiatus through 2020/21 when the panel had not been meeting due to the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In September 2022, a visit to Bradford was carried out by the National Implementation Advisor for Care Leavers (Mark Riddell); recommendations from the Advisor include those which would improve Corporate Parenting and were detailed in a follow up letter to the Chief Executive. Although the Advisor acknowledged good buy-in from elected members and the introduction of a first phase of a Champion Model approach for themed areas, he highlighted the need to fully implement this approach, and to make other improvements:

- Themed subgroups are established and chaired by the Championing Elected Member including operational champions
- Review the membership of Corporate Parenting Panel
- Employ a number of Care Leaver Ambassadors/Champions in the Leaving Care Team to inform and drive the board.

In addition, following the Ofsted inspection (ILACS) which commenced in November 2022, the published report included an area for improvement around the need to strengthen corporate parenting, *‘Council and corporate senior leaders should ensure that they fully and effectively discharge their role as corporate parents, and ensure that children’s social care is provided with the resources and support required in a timely way to expedite sustainable improvements.’*

Furthermore, the report goes on to state, *‘the local authority is not acting as a strong and effective corporate parent. Although the corporate parenting board arrangements have recently been strengthened through the inclusion of children and identification of areas for priority action, the corporate parenting strategy remains incomplete and is not demonstrating how it impacts on the quality of services to children in care.’*

The Ofsted Action Plan was developed in response to the ILACS report and include the following relevant actions:

- A multi-agency process to produce a cross system Corporate Parenting Strategy
- Delivery of the shared and individual Corporate Parenting Objectives agreed by the Council Senior Leadership Team, and all services to have a Corporate Parenting Goal in their service plans.
- Strategic Directors to report on Corporate Parenting activities in their departments to the Corporate Parenting Panel
- Implementation of a training and development programme to bolster strategic support and challenge role incorporating Corporate Parenting.
- Collective commitment and implementation of the Foster Friendly Bradford, and Child Friendly Bradford approaches

- Implementation of a Care Leavers Apprenticeship Programme

As such, an urgent programme of improvement for Corporate Parenting is required.

From the 1st April 2023, social care services have moved to the newly initiated Bradford Children and Families Trust. The Local Authority Children's Services will work in partnership with the Trust to support improvements alongside the Corporate Parenting Panel around all aspects of corporate parenting.

2.2 Improving Corporate Parenting Panel

The Chair of Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP) / Portfolio Holder for Children and Families has approached the LGA to take up an offer of review and support. This will commence with a Peer Diagnostic, and based on the learning, a tailored and flexible training offer will be provided. This is likely to take place in January / February 2024.

2.3 Summary of early evaluation: Is there a vision that is good enough and ambitious enough for my child?

- 2.3.1 The Chair of Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP) and CPP panel members are strong advocates for robust and comprehensive corporate parenting across the Bradford district. They have an ambition for care experience to become a protected characteristic here.
- 2.3.2 CPP appears to receive very little in the way of data reports, apart from those which are provided annually. Once annual reports are ready to share, they may be 18 months out of date from the first week of activity they are reporting on. This does not support CPP to actively monitor what is happening now. Data provided should be provided quarterly as well as annually and in a standardised format which relates back to success measures (when agreed) for the Corporate Parenting Strategy
- 2.3.3 In order for improvements to be made, there needs to be genuine buy in, understanding and commitment of not only the Local Authority, but with partners too. This will also include harnessing the expertise, knowledge and support of the business sector. Activity must be characterised by going the extra mile and thinking beyond basic or universal approaches. This does not appear to be the case at present. Children and young people who are care experienced need more than this.
- 2.3.4 There seems to be slow or no progress against promises, pledges and intentions. There is recent evidence of SLT requesting updates on service plan intentions. However, it is unclear how progress will be monitored. Previous iterations of documents provide ideas and pledges in various formats. A document produced in July 2023 summarises CBMDC Service Plans contributions to corporate parenting but this is also for safeguarding and somewhat muddies the water for a strong focus on Corporate Parenting.
- 2.3.5 Taking all of this into consideration, it has been difficult when carrying out this early evaluation, to truly understand what is happening, when and by whom. This lack of clarity is hindering progress. To enable progress to be

tracked of the pledges and service intentions, alongside the recommendations of the National Implementation Advisor for Care Leavers and the improvement areas resulting from the early evaluation, a resourced improvement programme is required.

2.3.6 To support this, a draft programme plan document has been developed and is available with this early evaluation document. This programme plan currently uses the LGA headings for different areas for development and takes everything that has been recommended or pledged so that they can be seen in one place.

2.4 Where do we need to get to, what would good corporate parenting look like across Bradford district whole Council and whole partnership? What developments are needed to realise an ambitious vision for children in care and care leavers?

- Data and reporting to understand progress and quality.
- Service Planning and going the extra mile.
- Health and wellbeing
- Voice and influence
- Aspiration and Achievement
- Quality, Planning, Stability and Permanence
- Care Leavers and transition to adulthood

3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

➤ N/A

4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

➤

5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

The risk to not undertaking this work for Children and Young people would be significant. There are statutory duties and requirement to undertake this improvement work and such improvements contribute towards our inspection framework with DFE/OfSTED.

6. LEGAL APPRAISAL

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

None

7.2 TACKLING THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY IMPLICATIONS

N/A

7.3 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

None

7.4 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

The Children Act's 'backbone' is based on children's right and the broader legal area of Human Rights. It is however recognised that regular consultation with legal services will be key to the improvement activity.

7.5 TRADE UNION

At this early stage there are no specifics to consult and or draw in Union support. Should this change over time then the Unions will be approached accordingly.

7.6 WARD IMPLICATIONS

➤ N/A

7.7 AREA COMMITTEE LOCALITY PLAN IMPLICATIONS

7.8 IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

As specified in the Summary and detailed background of this report above

7.9 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESMENT

Undertake a Privacy Impact Assessment to determine whether you need to deal with data protection and information security matters arising from the Data Sharing Agreements are already in place between key partners for this 'Public Interest' activity- and would be regularly reviewed throughout the life cycle of the improvement project activity. Further careful consideration and or data sharing being reasonable, anonymised and other security measures will be standardised sharing requirements.

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

Much of the data held and or shared would not be for public viewing and remain project planning reports etc. However, we will be required to present varying forms of information and or data to young people. To enable this strict adherence to the GDPR/DPA requirements will be met and no personally identifiable data will be shared to such groups partaking in co-production activity.

9. OPTIONS

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The areas for development identified in this document and set out in the draft programme plan, are considered by the Corporate centre, Corporate Parenting Panel, Children's Services and BCFT.
2. Project resource is put in place to ensure the success of the necessary improvements identified. A plan will be developed for what can feasibly be achieved in the next quarter, in advance of the LGA peer diagnostic in the new year.
3. Progress report to report into Corporate Parenting quarterly.
4. A development event is being held with partners to identify strategic objectives for the Corporate Parenting Strategy. This is scheduled for 5th December 2023
5. Corporate Parenting Panel consider the LGA self-assessment by December 2023.
6. The LGA peer team carry out their assessment in January / February 2024.
7. The LGA, Corporate Parenting and the Local Authority, agree and implement a training and development programme for Corporate Parenting from February 2024 onwards.
8. A follow up self-assessment or peer diagnostic is carried out in 12 months' time (January / February 2025).

11. APPENDICES

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS