

Children and Young People Select Committee			
Report Title	The Corporate Parenting Role		
Key Decision	No	Item No.	4
Ward	All		
Contributors	Ian Smith, Director, Children's Social Care		
Class	Open	Date:	4 th March 2014

1. Purpose

- 1.1. To advise members of the select committee on the work of the Corporate Parenting committee (CPG) over the last 12 months. The Ofsted report dated Feb 2012 recommended that a mechanism be established for elected members and senior managers to be consulted with regard to significant decisions and for any learning to be shared at a strategic level.

2. Summary

- 2.1 Corporate Parenting was last considered at CYP Select in October 2012 on that occasion officers advised of the plans to implement the Ofsted recommendations and strengthen Corporate Parenting in Lewisham.
- 2.2 During the last twelve months there have been three meetings held on 25/04/13, 10/10/13 & 08/01/14. The meetings have been conducted in accordance with the plan submitted.
- 2.3 The Corporate Parenting Group is chaired by the Lead Member for Children and Young People and attended by Members, Officers from CYP including the Director of Children's Social Care and Young people representing the Children in Care Council (CICC).
- 2.4 The Service Manager for Looked After Children, Leaving Care & Adoption and the Chair of the Children in Care Council both submit written reports to the Corporate Parenting Group.
- 2.5 Prior to the January meeting, the Terms of Reference were revised and accepted by the Corporate Parenting Group on that date. A copy of the new terms of reference are attached at Appendix one.
- 2.6 An annual workplan has also been devised to reflect key service planning and priorities. Additional agenda items will be added to reflect

any performance concerns and or changes as a result of new legislation/case law.

- 2.7 A copy of the current programme is attached at appendix two to illustrate the areas covered recently and the forward plan for the remainder of the academic year.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 The Select Committee is asked to:

- Note the report and appendices and discuss any issues arising from them.
- Specify the information it requires in the future to allow it to maintain its scrutiny and overview function in relation to the work of the Corporate Parenting Group.

4. Policy Context

- 4.1 The principle of the Corporate Parenting was first launched in 1989 as part of the Quality Protects programme.
- 4.2 In 2007 the government white paper Care Matters Time for Change set out the requirement for all local authorities to establish a Children in Care Council and to ensure young people are actively engaging in participation which allows them to understand the child's care experience. And, to use such understanding to review and shape services.
- 4.3 During 2011/13 A National Voice (ANV) in partnership with the Department for Education (DFE) produced a report which looked at the strengths and weaknesses of Children in Care Council's nationally.
- 4.4 It made 12 recommendations. Many of these are already in place in Lewisham and their impact will be reviewed over the next 12 months. The remainder will be discussed by the group and consideration will be given to including them in the 14/15 workplan.

5. Details

- 5.1 The Corporate Parenting Group continues to comprise of a number of elected members with a range of experience and expertise all of whom are active and committed attendees.
- 5.2 The Service Managers report to the Corporate Parenting Group gives information and data regarding the departments performance in the following key areas Adoption, Health, Education and Placement Stability. At the meeting in January the drop in placement stability was recognised as a concern which the Corporate Parenting Group will need to monitor over the coming 12 months. Officers are looking in

detail at individual cases considered 'fragile' to ensure all appropriate resources are being considered to prevent further breakdown.

- 5.3 This monitoring provides an example of the challenge the Corporate Parenting Group is expected to ensure occurs to satisfy itself the needs of the children for whom it is responsible are met.
- 5.4 Corporate Parenting is a collective responsibility across services and the example of how the group responded to concerns from care leavers about their housing needs, demonstrates good practice in this area.
- 5.5 The Lewisham Senior Children in Care Council is well established and has a core membership of young people who meet fortnightly during term times.
- 5.6 Members of the council are actively engaged in a variety of participation activities and representatives attend the Corporate Parenting Group to report on their activities and to give and receive feedback on agenda topics/items.
- 5.7 At each meeting they are also given an opportunity to raise any urgent matters.
- 5.8 For approximately four years we have had a contract with Barnardos for work pertaining to children's rights including participation for the younger age group known as the Junior Children in Care Council.
- 5.9 A decision was taken last year to end the contract and manage the work within the department.
- 5.10 The formal handover of this work will take place until March 2014 to ensure a smooth transition.
- 5.11 From April 1st 2014 the Junior Children in Care Council will be managed by the Lewisham Participation manager supported by a participation apprentice. The latter is a new role which commenced in November 2014.
- 5.12 It is anticipated that transferring the responsibility for the Junior Children in Care Council will increase membership and support transition between the two groups and encourage peer mentoring, one of the recommendations of the ANV/DFE Report.
- 5.13 The Children in Care Council have raised issues of concern which the Corporate Parenting Group have responded to.
- 5.14 At the meeting held on 25th April 2013 the Children in Care Council raised concerns about the impact of Welfare Reforms and changes in the LBL housing allocations procedures. They were particularly concerned about affordable rents. Housing Benefit Caps, Lack of

Properties and Multiple viewings. Members present gave recent examples of difficulties care leavers have experienced.

- 5.15 At the meeting held on 8th January 2014 the focus was on education. The Children in Care Council raised concerns about the funding of university courses and opportunities for work experience. A decision of the meeting was for the Director of Children's Social Care and the Service Manager Adoption, Looked After Children and Leaving Care to meet with the group to discuss this in detail. The outcome and recommendations will be discussed at the next Corporate Parenting Group in June 2014.
- 5.16 A Senior Officer from the housing department attended and explained the impact of Welfare Reforms and the measures the council is taking to protect vulnerable tenants including care leavers. A key issue appeared to be the loss of a designated housing officer to resolve the particular issues for Care leavers in a timely way.
- 5.17 At the request of the lead member for children this post has been re-introduced and the officer has re-established the practice of running a weekly surgery for care leavers at the office in Bromley Road.
- 5.18 This session is well used and there have been no further difficulties raised. The housing officer in attendance advised the department are only able to influence the 'affordable rents' within Lewisham homes and accepted that some rents considered affordable by housing associations are not accessible to care leavers.
- 5.19 Care leavers are therefore confining bids to properties to Lewisham homes to prevent further difficulties with rent arrears in the future.
- 5.20 As a consequence the bidding process is taking longer and the impact can be seen on the post 18 budget as the dept has a statutory duty to ensure the young people are housing in appropriate accommodation.
- 5.21 Children in Care Council members and care leavers have continued to contribute in the following ways:
 - They deliver training on the Induction programme for all new staff.
 - They deliver training on the skills to foster programme which is delivered to all new foster carers.
 - They sit on interview panels for social workers and managers. The recent recruitment to the Virtual heads post had a children's panel as part of the process.
- 5.22 The chair of the Children in Care Council is a regular member of the Fostering panel which is responsible for the approval and review of all Lewisham foster carers.

6. Financial implications

6.1 None.

7. Legal implications

7.1 The duty of the Council and Elected Members to act as corporate parents to looked after young people is described above.

8. Crime and disorder implications

8.1 None.

9. Equalities implications

9.1 None.

10. Environmental implications

10.1 None.

11. Background documents and originator

Ofsted final report into inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services.

Children in Care Councils; The London Picture 2010.

'If this were my child'...A Councilor's guide to being a good corporate parent LGIU 2003.

Appendix 1-Lewisham Corporate Parenting Group Terms of Reference.

Appendix 2-Lewisham Corporate Parenting Group Work Programme.

If there are any queries on this report, please contact Ian Smith on 0208 314 8140.



TERMS OF REFERENCE

CORPORATE PARENTING GROUP

1. Council Members of the Corporate Parenting Group

Membership of the Corporate Parenting Group will comprise:

- (i) The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People
- (ii) One other Cabinet Member
- (iii) The Chair of the Children & Young People Select Committee
- (iv) 5 other nominees representing the political balance of the council

2. Other Participants in Group Meetings

Other Group members will include:

- (i) A varying number of children and young people looked after by LB Lewisham to include the Chair and other representatives from the Children in Care Council
- (ii) The Director of Childrens Services; the Service Manager for Looked After Children, Leaving Care Services & Adoption, and the Service Manager for Business Strategy, Fostering, Placements & Procurement, or their nominated alternatives
- (iii) The Participation Manager
- (iv) An open invitation to the Young Mayor and/or Deputy Young Mayor
- (v) Guest presenters, as appropriate to the theme of each meeting
- (vi) Other appropriate persons who members or young people may wish to invite to participate in the Group
- (vii) Representatives of Lewisham Foster Carers Association

3. Chair of the Corporate Parenting Group

The Group will be chaired by the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

4. Aims of Group

- (i) To ensure that children and young people can make their views known on all aspects of the corporate parenting agenda.
- (ii) To advise the Mayor and Cabinet on corporate parenting issues.
- (iii) To establish an environment whereby Members and young people work together to address the needs, aspirations and future life chances of Lewisham's looked after children.

- (iv) To empower children and young people to be involved in decision making with adults.
- (v) To support the involvement of children and young people in the development and evaluation of services and to ensure their views are heard.
- (vi) To oversee the implementation of best practice principles in all aspects of service delivery, with the aim of producing positive outcomes for looked after children.

5. Frequency of Group Meetings

The Corporate Parenting Group meetings will be held three times a year to correspond with school terms.

6. Quorum

The quorum for a Group meeting will be a quarter of Councillor membership but not less than three members.

7. Reporting Lines

The Corporate Parenting Group will have the right to report to the Mayor and Cabinet which will include an Annual Report.

These revised Terms of Reference were formally approved and adopted by the Corporate Parenting Group meeting held on 8th January 2014.

Appendix 2

Lewisham Corporate Parenting Group Work Programme

Term	Meeting Date Scheduled:	Deadline for written reports	Main Theme of meeting	Additional Items
Summer Term	Thu 25 April 2013		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing and Benefit Issues Genevieve Macklin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback on International Volunteer Project to India
Autumn Term	Thu 10 Oct 2013		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health Outcomes for LACs Donal O'Sullivan and Beulah Lewis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback on Wellbeing Event
Spring Term	Wed Jan 8 th 2014	Thur 19 Dec 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education (including Higher Education) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider updated Terms of Reference
Summer Term	Wed - date to be confirmed (June-July 2014)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation in Looked After Reviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To consider ToR ? Feedback from young people on International trips Update from Donal O'Sullivan on Health Outcomes report
Autumn Term	Wed - date to be confirmed (Sep-Dec 2014)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employment (to include Vocational Training) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> tbc

Standard Agenda Items for each meeting:

- 1 Welcome and Introductions
- 2 Apologies
- 3 Minutes of the last meeting
- 4 Terms of Reference *

- ... Other items – from the work programme or as appropriate

- V Report on Participation from Chair of Senior Children in Care Council
- W Opportunity for Young People to raise issues
- X Report on other Participation Activities
- Y Report from Looked After Children (LAC) Service Manager
- Z Work Programme

* It is good practice to consider the ToR at the first meeting of each Civic year.