

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET

**CORPORATE PARENTING FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN
IN NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE**

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- Outline the Council's responsibilities as a Corporate Parent
- Propose that the Corporate Parenting Group refocuses its work to continue to ensure our looked after children are at the centre of all we do.

2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Children "looked after" by the Council must expect to be cared for as any good parent would do. The Children Act 1989 makes it clear that this is a responsibility for the whole Council, and not just for the directorate that delivers services for children and young people. This is known as "Corporate Parenting"
- 2.2 Locally we have made a commitment to ensure our children are central to the development of services to improve their outcomes. We want our children to be looked after within a stable family home, have support to do well in school, in further training and in employment. We want them to take part in positive activities that enable them to be playing an active role within their community.
- 2.3 We have a well-established and effective Corporate Parenting Group consisting of senior representation from all the council's directorates, as well as from other key agencies such as health. We can evidence that Corporate Parenting has supported our children and young people to experience improved life chances.
- 2.4 Children and young people have been supported in a number of activities. For instance, we have young people who have engaged in work experience opportunities at the Council and positive activities such as arts and crafts, drama and sports. They are also participating in preparation for adult life including, sports leadership, swimming

lessons, preparation for the driving theory test, interview skills and volunteering.

A full account of this work is captured within the Children and Young People in Care Strategy 2011/13.

- 2.5 More recently the Council has worked to recruit and secure more foster families. Corporate Parents have taken part in the recent recruitment campaign during “Fostering Fortnight”, where we were able to develop new and innovative ways to recruit foster carers. The campaign resulted in 23 enquiries expressing interest in fostering.
- 2.6 Elected Members have a responsibility to ensure that services for our children and young people are good and to ensure there are sufficient resources and accommodation choice. Elected Members also take part in visits to Children’s Homes, scrutinise services and have an overview of performance measures to ensure children are safe and services are effective.
- 2.7 All elected members are expected to undertake training to ensure they have the knowledge to fulfil their safeguarding and corporate parenting responsibilities.
- 2.8 The Councils overall commitment to our looked after children is contained within the North Lincolnshire Corporate Parenting pledge. The Council regularly reviews how we deliver these functions and ensure tangible outcomes through active and regular feedback from the children and young people.

3 OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 Overall the Corporate Parenting responsibilities fall into four categories: Oversight and support of elected members; Partnership working at a Corporate and inter agency level; Involving children and young people at the centre of all activity; and ensuring there are sufficient services that meet statutory and regulatory standards.
- 3.2 It is proposed that the Corporate Parenting Group is now held quarterly and an informal opportunity for “creative conversation” between the children, young people, the Cabinet Member for Adults and Children, Elected Members and Directors. This will be led by the children and young people and focus on the Elected Members and Directors role in fulfilling the Councils pledge to our looked after children. This will enable direct feedback and challenge from the children and young people. The aim will be to reach a wide range of children and young people in a variety of locations.
- 3.3 It is also proposed to create more opportunities to meet with foster carers to challenge how well the Council meets its commitments.

- 3.4 It is further proposed that the partnership and service management function are now overseen by an officer led multi agency partnership. It is proposed that this group reports through Cabinet Member process.
- 3.5 The work of the Children in Care Council (Bizz and GPK groups) will continue to underpin and support the success of the “creative conversation”.

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

- 4.1 Managing the Corporate Parenting agenda in line with proposals outlined will enable children and young people to have an increased role and be at the centre of the process. The Cabinet Member for Adults and Children will facilitate the new approach to the Corporate Parenting whilst ensuring performance and outcomes are overseen through Cabinet Member process.
- 4.2 Improved outcomes will mean that children and young people in care have:
- Better choice of placements in families
 - A relationship with a Stable adult who works with and supports them
 - Better access to leisure and positive activities
 - Better access to work experience
 - More jobs available to care leavers
 - More support for education and training and make progress
 - Appropriate accommodation and support when they leave care
 - The gap is narrowed between them and their peers.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)

- 5.1 Elected Members, officers and partners through the Corporate Parenting Group and Children’s Trust should ensure their pledge, support and activity is making a positive difference to improve the life chances of these children and young people.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS (STATUTORY, ENVIRONMENTAL, DIVERSITY, SECTION 17 - CRIME AND DISORDER, RISK AND OTHER)

- 6.1 This is a statutory role where a positive impact will ensure that our looked after children and young people experience better outcomes.

7. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION

- 7.1 Children and young people have expressed their desire to be involved in meeting/conversations that reduces bureaucracy (jargon and paperwork) and allows a process where their views can be freely encouraged, expressed and acted upon to build upon the foundations that have been already put into place.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 That Cabinet endorses the proposals regarding the reshape the Corporate Parenting Group which places children and young people at the centre of activity.

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Date: 1 July 2011

Background Papers used in the preparation of this report: Nil