

North Somerset Council

Report to the Council

Date of Meeting: 12 January 2021

Subject of Report: Corporate Parenting Responsibilities

Town or Parish: N/A

Officer/Member Presenting: Executive Member for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning

Key Decision: No

Reason:

Not an Executive Decision

Recommendations

Members are asked to consider:

- if there are any aspects that they would want to know more about either via briefings or at a future Council meeting.
- requesting a Corporate Parenting report following the visit to North Somerset, in March, of the National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers, Mark Riddell.

1. Summary of the report

1.1 The report provides members with links to a number of national publications which outline some of the challenges local authorities are facing in regard to their corporate parenting responsibilities. Along with North Somerset Council's Children's Improvement Plan, the soon to be started Care Review and the soon to be published SEND (Special Education Needs and Disability) Review, these will be areas of focus in the coming year.

2. Policy

2.1 Whilst the concept of members viewing themselves as the parents of all children who are looked after came from the Quality Protects initiative launched in 1998 by Frank Dobson, the then Secretary of State for Health, the Children and Social Work Act 2017 defined for the first time in law the responsibility of corporate parents to ensure, as faster as possible, secure, nurturing and positive experiences for 'our' children. This means that they should:

- act in their best interests, and promote their physical and mental health and wellbeing;
- encourage them to express their views, wishes and feelings, and take them into account, while promoting high aspirations and trying to secure the best outcomes for them;
- make sure they have access to services;

- make sure that they are safe, with stable home lives, relationships and education or work;
- prepare them for adulthood and independent living.

3. Details

3.1 In November 2020 Mark Riddell, the National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers, published his second report. The first section of the report highlights the progress that has been made with the implementation of the care leaver strategy - Keep on Caring - since it was published in 2016. Section two looks at the implementation of the duties introduced through the Children and Social Work Act, including:

- how local authorities have embedded the Corporate Parenting Duties across all of their services;
- how they have used consultations with care leavers to develop an improved 'local offer', which draws in support from key partner agencies; and
- how local authorities have got to grips with the new requirement to offer Personal Adviser support to age 25 for those care leavers who want it.

Section three includes Mark Riddell's view on what a 'good' local offer looks like, with examples from local authorities who have gone over and above the statutory offer. Many of these examples came from local authorities who secured an improved Ofsted judgement in their most recent inspection report. There are also some examples of how local authorities have adapted to address the unique challenges that the Covid-19 pandemic presented for care leavers.

The final section sets out his ambitions for the next year and his commitment to working with local authorities, alongside key partner agencies such as health, job centre plus and the business sector to make the ambitions a reality. We have invited him to visit North Somerset to advise us on how we can improve our services which are currently graded 'Good' by Ofsted as we aspire to deliver Outstanding services to our care leavers – he was due to visit last year but we are hopeful that he will be here in March.

3.2 In October 2020 the charity, Action for Children, produced a report, 'Giving Care Leavers the Chance to Stay' which called on the government to:

1. Commit to providing adequate funding to local authorities to deliver Staying Put for 2021/22 as soon as possible.
2. Carefully consider each of the options Action for Children set out, and develop a long-term funding model for Staying Put as part of the upcoming Care Review. This to be based on the option that has a high likelihood of affordability for carers, covering both fee payments and allowances.
3. Set minimum allowances for Staying Put carers supporting young people aged 18, 19 and 20, as they do for foster carers looking after children aged up to 17.
4. Update the guidance around Staying Put.
5. Explore the implementation of Staying Put, and the different experiences of young care leavers, as part of its upcoming Care Review

3.3 Towards the end of 2020 the Children's Commissioner, Anne Longfield, produced a number of reports which directly relate to the challenges that children and young people in care experience. The relevant reports are:

- The Stability Index 2020 - in previous years, this work examined rates of stability for children in care across three domains: placement changes, school changes and

social worker changes. The 2020 update, however, only covers placement and school changes; it does not include analysis of social worker changes, because of the disruption caused by Covid-19 pandemic. Members can view the North Somerset data within the second document.

- Private Provision in Children's Social Care - this report reviews the market for provision in children's social care and focuses on private provision, given its growth and consolidation in recent years. It explores the profits made by private companies and what their involvement means for children. It also raises questions about the way some large private providers are financed, potentially creating risks and instability for the functioning of the market – and ultimately for the children in their care.

4. Consultation

None.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 There continue to be financial pressures in regard to demand management in Children's Services, especially set in the context of being a local authority that is graded 'Requires Improvement to be Good' by Ofsted. There continues to be lobbying of government by all local authorities in regard to sustainable funding of children's services and this can be seen in areas such as SEND, children's placement costs and home to school transport.

5.2 The draft 2021/24 MTFP includes growth of £1.9m for Children's Services for 2021/22, along with an additional "one-off" allocation of £150k to fund further improvements.

Costs

None.

Funding

None.

6. Legal Powers and Implications

None.

7. Climate Change and Environmental Implications

None.

8. Risk Management

None.

9. Equality Implications

Have you undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment? No.

10. Corporate Implications

None.

11. Options Considered

None.

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Appendices:

None

Background Papers:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-implementation-adviser-for-care-leavers-second-report>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/joint-housing-protocols-for-care-leavers/joint-housing-protocols-for-care-leavers-good-practice-advice>

<https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/our-work-and-impact/policy-work-campaigns-and-research/policy-reports/giving-care-leavers-chance-stay/>

<https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/report/stability-index-2020/>

<https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/report/private-provision-in-childrens-social-care/>