

North Somerset Council

Report to the Children and Young People Policy and Scrutiny Panel

Date of Meeting: 24 February 2023

Subject of Report: Corporate Parenting

Town or Parish: All

Officer/Member Presenting: Carrie Yeates, Head of Corporate Parenting & Beth Swann, Young Director

Key Decision: No

Reason:

This report provides an update on the development of the Council's Corporate Parenting responsibilities.

Recommendations

For Members to note the progress since 2019 and take the opportunity to consider what more this Panel could contribute in its role as a Corporate Parent.

1. Summary of Report

The report outlines some of the progress that has been made since the last Ofsted inspection.

2. Policy

While 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 far 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 Following the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services in March 2020 work was undertaken to refresh the Corporate Parenting Board in terms of membership and focus. Importantly the chairing role was taken on by the Lead Member for Children's Services and agendas were reshaped. The Board has become a Panel, recognised constitutionally, and it has benefited from two visits from the DfE's national implementation adviser who gave advice which North Somerset has implemented.
- 3.2 The Lead Member has encouraged all members to learn more about their unique role as corporate parents for our children and young people in care and our care experienced young people through a regular report to Full Council. On occasion this has been enhanced by the work of our Young Director who attended two Council meetings to talk about the work underway – this was very well received by members, some of whom went on to attend the Corporate Parenting Panels.
- 3.3 Every other Panel has a focus on business, actions and reports and includes our Young Director, leaders from Children's Services (including the director) colleagues from Health, CAMHS and Education, importantly the Virtual School Head Teacher. In between those meetings there are topic-based meetings which are facilitated by the Lead Member and the Young Director, with the topics chosen by our young people. Recent meetings have been very well attended by care experienced young people:
- One focused on housing and accommodation which a number of housing providers attended alongside our young people and members, including the Leader. This has resulted in an Action Plan being developed to address some of the issues raised, particularly the need for move on from supported accommodation in a timely manner.
 - The most recent one heard from our young people about their views on services that improve their physical and emotional health and wellbeing. It was attended by ten young people, four members and colleagues from Children's Services, CAMHS, Adult Mental Health and the Integrated Care Board. This has resulted in plans to update our Offer for care experienced young people and a greater awareness of some services that weren't hugely visible to young people.
- 3.4 The DfE adviser's revisit happened in September 2022 and his letter is an appendix to this report: he was very positive about the progress that had been made alongside the continued commitment to our care experienced young people.
- 3.5 Within Children's Support and Safeguarding the Fundamentals have been launched in the last year, supported by our Young Director, with a focus on 'language that cares.' There is more information about this in the appendices of the Improvement report at this Panel meeting.
- 3.6 During the meeting members will have the opportunity to hear from the Head of Corporate Parenting and our Young Director in relation to what has been achieved to date and their plans for the future.

4. Consultation

There is significant consultation with children and young people both individually and collectively. In addition we undertake the Bright Spots and Your Life, Your Care surveys, the findings of which influence our continuing improvement of services.

5. Financial Implications

N/A.

Costs

N/A.

Funding

N/A.

6. Legal Powers and Implications

N/A.

7. Climate Change and Environmental Implications

None.

8. Risk Management

N/A.

9. Equality Implications

No.

10. Corporate Implications

N/A.

11. Options Considered

None.

Author:

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Appendices:

Letter from DfE Adviser.

Background Papers: