



AGENDA

SELECT COMMITTEE - CORPORATE PARENTING

Thursday, 23rd February, 2017, at 3.00 pm Ask for: **Denise Fitch**
Medway Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Telephone **03000 416090**
Maidstone

Tea/Coffee will be available 15 minutes before the start of the meeting in the meeting room

Membership

Mrs Z Wiltshire (Chairman), Mr S J G Koowaree, Mr B Neaves, Mr M J Northey,
Mr R J Parry, Mrs P A V Stockell and Mrs J Whittle

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

(During these items the meeting is likely to be open to the public)

Apologies for absence

Corporate Parenting Select Committee Report - Update February
2017 (Pages 3 - 12)

EXEMPT ITEMS

(At the time of preparing the agenda there were no exempt items. During any such items which may arise the meeting is likely NOT to be open to the public)

John Lynch,
Head of Democratic Services
03000 410466

Wednesday, 15 February 2017

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From: Peter Oakford, Cabinet Member for Specialist Children's Services

Andrew Ireland, Corporate Director for Social Care, Health and Wellbeing

To: Corporate Parenting Select Committee – 23 February 2017

Subject: **CORPORATE PARENTING SELECT COMMITTEE REPORT – Update February 2017**

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway: N/A

Future Pathway: N/A

Electoral Division: All

Summary: The Corporate Parenting Select Committee conducted a review of Members' role as elected corporate parents. The report made 15 recommendations for improving Members' oversight role as corporate parents. There has been progress made on the action plan with the oversight of the Assistant Director for Corporate Parenting.

Recommendations: The Select Committee is asked to **NOTE** the content of this report.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Corporate Parenting Select Committee was established in February 2015 to review Kent County Council's corporate parenting arrangements and to make recommendations for the improvement of Members' oversight of their role.
- 1.2 The Corporate Parenting Select Committee ensures there is a focus on elected Member and officer corporate parent responsibilities. The scrutiny provided by the Committee enhances the focus on delivering the best outcomes for Children in Care and supports practice development.
- 1.3 The previous report and recommendations were agreed by the Corporate Parenting Select Committee on the 11 November 2015 and this was endorsed by the County Council on the 10 December 2015. The Scrutiny Committee reviewed the plan and progress in March 2016 and the Select Committee was required to reconvene to consider an update in February 2017.

2. Update and Progress for Looked After Children and Corporate Parenting

- 2.1 The Assistant Director for Corporate Parenting provides oversight for Looked After Children and Care Leavers, ensuring that Members are briefed about key issues. There have been reports to the Corporate Parenting Panel which also reflect the effectiveness of Member scrutiny, ensuring that officers report on key issues which arise. The reports to the Corporate Parenting Panel have included updates on placement stability; scrutiny of the annual report on the adoption service and also provided a review of fostering. Reports have also been provided to ensure the health services of Looked after Children and the needs of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children are appropriately met.

3. Conclusion

- 3.1 The Corporate Parent obligations that are legally placed on the Kent County Council require Members and officers to work together along with partner agencies to ensure that children in care are well looked after. The Select Committee's role provides the Member oversight required to ensure corporate parenting responsibilities are being met.
- 3.2 Following the Select Committee's consideration, the next formal step will be a reconvening of the Select Committee to review progress after 12 months in January 2018.

4. Recommendations

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| 4.1 Recommendations: The Select Committee is asked to NOTE the content of this report. |
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5. Background Documents

Corporate Parenting Select Committee Report, December 2015

http://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/51890/Corporate-Parenting-Select-Committee-report.pdf

6. Report Author

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Appendix 1 - Progress to Date – February 2017

Recommendation 1: KCC should adopt a simply-worded and practical corporate parenting guide (handbook) for all Members that clearly sets out what we need to know, including information about the fundamental areas crucial to running an effective children's services in fulfilment of our corporate parenting responsibilities. The handbook must include contact details of key officers within each division.

Progress to Date: A Members' Corporate Parenting guide is in production based on an existing Local Government Association (LGA) handbook which will be contextualised for use in Kent. A draft will go to Corporate Parenting Panel in May to be available for the new Member intake.

Recommendation 2: KCC should make available information about the fundamental areas of children's services such as education and health outcomes, placement stability and support for care leavers for all Members on a regular schedule starting from March 2016.

Progress to Date: A monthly children in care scorecard is produced by the Management Information Unit (MIU). This scorecard captures performance activity against a broad range of key indicators, including health and education outcomes.

The scorecard is presented to Corporate Parenting Panel on a regular basis. There is detailed scrutiny of specific areas at each Corporate Parenting Panel. Members have been provided with further information to understand the management information; this has included reports in relation to placement stability, the adoption service and issues in relation to the number of looked after children and also Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC). There have also been reports on the fostering service and also from health; the Virtual School provided its annual report in January 2017.

This performance management information is available in the Members area of Knet.

Recommendation 3: KCC should introduce a refreshed training programme for all KCC Members as part of their induction after every county council election or upon their appointment. In the event of significant changes to corporate parenting, KCC Members should be updated through additional training. All Members are strongly advised to take advantage of this training offer. Consideration should be given to the best option for overseeing and reporting on training attendance.

Progress to Date: Officers are working with Democratic Member Services and a comprehensive training plan is being developed. There will be a general induction for new Members following the local elections in May 2017 and this includes the relevant Corporate Director and the Director for Specialist Children's Services, both of whom will highlight the role and remit of Members in being corporate parents. Corporate parenting forms part of the half day induction training for new Members in July 2017 and a handbook will also be available for them to support understanding their role. An e-learning package is also being developed with a section on corporate parenting. Significant changes to corporate parenting responsibilities will be addressed through additional training and guidance.

The Members' section of Knet will also ensure that these documents and training dates with materials are available for Members to review with regular updates.

Democratic Services are working towards ensuring there is an accreditation for Members when they undertake training.

Recommendation 4: KCC should write to the Children's Minister to ask that a review of compliance to the new Regulations 2010 and the sufficiency duty should be carried out to ensure that responsible authorities are held to account in maintaining the welfare of the children in their care.

Progress to Date: A letter to the Children's Minister Edward Timpson was written in March 2016 and a response was received in April 2016. The issue has been raised with the Department for Education and the Lead Member for Specialist Children's Services also wrote to the Children's Commissioner in September 2016. In the letter to the Commissioner, Kent provided information on the numbers of children and the local authorities who have placed children in Kent, and also provided a case study to reflect the lack of compliance by local authorities with updated Care Planning Regulations 2015 when placing in Kent. The Association of Directors of Children's Services have also been made aware that local authorities should not be considering Kent as an area to place their looked after children and have been provided with an outline of the accompanying risks.

The impact of this work has not resulted in a reduction in the numbers of looked after children placed in Kent by other local authorities. In April 2016 there were 1,254 placed by other local authorities and in October 2016 this had increased to 1,294; this is a 12 month high. The placements are being monitored and challenged for appropriateness on a case by case basis. Where necessary, individual cases are raised by the Director of Specialist Children's Services with the Director in the placing authority.

Recommendation 5: KCC should adhere to the 'simplification' principle and merge the Corporate Parenting Panel and the Corporate Parenting Group to strengthen the focus on corporate parenting for a more powerful and streamlined oversight. This is to be backed by the development of a memorandum of governance between the new group and relevant existing groups to reduce any avoidable overlap and/or duplication.

Progress to Date: The officer led Corporate Parenting Group and Member led Corporate Parenting Panel were combined in April 2016 with a revised terms of reference and membership. The new format was reviewed in January 2017 and has been a positive change.

Recommendation 6: All KCC Members should commit to actively championing and engaging with divisional and countywide participation events (e.g. Virtual School Kent activities, Achievement Award ceremonies and organised foster carer events) to hear about the achievements of our children and young people as well as finding out about those emerging issues that concern those in our care. It must always be made the responsibility of the relevant service managers to extend an invitation to all Members to events and meetings and ensure that this automatically happens and that relevant information is included in the Member Bulletin (or the Members'

Calendar) to give all Members adequate notice and opportunity to attend.

Progress to Date: Calendar dates are made available for Members and to ensure these are available to all Members, Democratic Services will ensure the calendar of events is available on the Members' intranet area of Knet.

A number of events have been held which Members have attended along with the Director of Specialist Children's Services and the Assistant Director Corporate Parenting, including the summer participation activity with looked after children and care leavers, the summer awards ceremony with Virtual School Kent (VSK) and the autumn celebration event which acknowledges the achievements of looked after children.

These events have been excellent and the VSK young people undertaking apprenticeships have been key to delivering them.

There are a number of new dates available.



Participation - Events
2017.docx

Recommendation 7: KCC should identify a lead participation officer to coordinate how the views of children, young people and their carers are taken into account at the service level and for such information to be made available to Members annually.

Progress to Date: There is a full time participation officer in place who is working across the county to engage with all social workers to ensure that the views of children and young people are incorporated into all the work being undertaken. There are reports produced by fostering teams to ensure that the feedback from carers is available and incorporated into service development.

VSK report into the Corporate Parenting Panel and the key achievements are noted below:-

- Since the VSK Participation Team's conception in September 2012, VSK has supported 14 apprenticeships, 12 were in care who undertook or are undertaking a Level 2 or 3 qualification in Business & Administration and also studied Functional Skills Level 1 or 2 in Maths, English and ICT. A further four care leavers have recently been appointed and will be joining the team shortly.
- VSK has developed and is supporting forums for children and young people in care and care leavers Children in Care Councils, split into three age brackets. In 2016, 86 young people have attended.
- VSK organise Participation Activity Days with 23 events held in 2016 with 332 children and young people attending bespoke VSK activities with a further 250+ attending countywide children in Care events.
- Through consultation with Kent Corporate Parenting Group and children in care, the VSK Participation Team developed the concept of 'Challenge Cards'. These cards allow children in care and care leavers to challenge their Corporate Parents around issues facing them in care.
- The 'Kent Cares Town' website is a resource for children in care to access a wealth of information around being in care. A large part of the content for this site has been written and designed by the VSK participation apprentices.

- VSK apprentices create a junior and a senior newsletter 3 times a year which is distributed to children in care and colleagues and have also developed a newsletter for young people aged 16 and over.
- VSK Participation Team has developed a 'Recruit Crew' which supports children in care and care leavers' involvement in recruitment panels or inclusion on a professionals' panel. In 2016 this has resulted in 33 young people in care or care leavers being involved in supporting 53 interview panels and 16 Skills to Foster panels. We also offer Laser Accredited Training for Service User Involvement in Recruitment & Selection to the young people who become part of our Recruit Crew. This equips our young people with the skills to participate meaningfully in the recruitment of staff and also awards them credits that they can include on their CV's.
- Kent Pledge Cards have been developed in two age categories that take the essence of the Kent Pledge and delivers this in a pack of eight cards which have been designed with children and young people in mind.
- VSK participation team has led on the creation of a 'Coming into Care' pack so that essential information can be given by social workers both to children coming in to care and, in some cases, to those who are already in care.
- VSK Participation Team work hard to ensure children and young people have their voices heard by ensuring they have the opportunity to complete surveys relating to being in care or just being a young person.
- VSK Participation Team facilitate focus groups to ensure that Members, teams within KCC and partner agencies are hearing the views and opinions of children in care and care leavers and have recently supported the review of the Care Leavers' Pathway Plans.
- VSK work in conjunction with the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) service on the development of young people chairing their own reviews and increasing meaningful participation. They will also be involved in designing a transition programme for children who are in care and need to develop independence skills.
- In conjunction with the fostering service and a Practice Development Officer, VSK Participation and Engagement Care Leaver Apprentices are involved in the design and delivery of workshops focusing on improving Participation & Engagement, with 18 delivered up to June 2016 and more planned for the coming year.
- Formal and informal forums for children in care and care leavers to meet and inform commissioning, service design and delivery.
- VSK Participation & Engagement Team represent KCC at a variety of regional and national initiatives and recently, the Children's Commissioner acknowledged VSK in their 'A Guide to Good Practice CiCC'.
- The Participation Co-ordinator has completed and evaluated the trial of the Mind of My Own App (MOMO) in response to young people asking for a technology-based facility to prepare for meetings, voice concerns or to make a complaint. The findings were presented to DivMT December 2016 and the decision was made to roll this out in the financial year 2017/18.

Recommendation 8: KCC should continue to strengthen work with our district partners (through council leaders and Joint Kent Chief Executives) to prioritise the needs of care leavers in gaining access to social housing and support. This partnership work should consider district partners supporting corporate parenting

responsibilities in relation to the accommodation needs of care leavers through mechanisms such as the Kent Housing Strategy and the Joint Housing Protocol.

Progress to Date: This work remains ongoing as part of the 16-25 Accommodation Programme. Housing options for care leavers remain a priority for the 18plus service and for Commissioning.

Social Housing in Kent: Social housing is managed by Kent's 12 district and borough councils. Demand for social housing outstrips supply and social or 'affordable' housing is allocated as it becomes available.

All Kent district/borough councils use a similar but not the same 'banding' system to define who will have priority over the large number of people who apply for social housing. The district councils have recognised care leavers as having complex needs but this does not automatically mean that district councils will have sufficient accommodation of the right type available. There remains no agreement to prioritise care leavers. There is a work programme within KCC to ensure that there is increased joint working with the district councils to ensure ongoing sufficiency for care leavers.

Supported Housing: Options are being re-contracted to ensure that statutory responsibilities are met for all eligible groups across the county. Supported housing options are negotiated with the district councils who supply the housing to vulnerable groups; this includes care leavers as well as other vulnerable adults (offenders and adults with mental health issues). Kent is working to facilitate agreement with district councils that care leavers are treated as a priority group. Supported housing eligibility is being negotiated with district council housing departments and funding is being reviewed to ensure that care leavers' needs are met within the financial envelope available.

Kent County Council is also engaged with a number of private and charitable organisations who offer accommodation to care leavers. These organisations often offer a level of support as well as accommodation. These tenancies can also ensure smooth transition for young people achieving suitable long term accommodation. Whilst limited in the numbers of care leavers they can assist, they are a valuable contribution to meeting care leavers accommodation needs. Examples of this type of accommodation are the Trinity Foyer Project in Maidstone and the YMCA in Tunbridge Wells. KCC are also working very closely with Ashford Borough Council to develop The Limes Project (Belgic Court). This will provide eight purpose-built flats with support; four of the units will be dedicated to care leavers and there is matching for young people in progress.

Supported Accommodation in a Family Environment: (formerly Supported Lodgings). There is currently a contract with Catch 22 who provide supported accommodation for young people aged 16 years plus, both UASC and citizen young people. Through assessment and planning by their social worker or personal advisor some young people will be identified as appropriate for this type of accommodation. Catch 22 provide supported accommodation which ensures that a young person receives up to 14-30 hours of direct personalised support a week. They are helped to develop the life skills to live independently.

Staying Put Arrangement: Young people can stay in foster care beyond 18 years under 'staying put' arrangements. There is an expectation as noted in Ofsted reports that staying put is promoted and supported where the young person and the foster

carer wish to continue with the care arrangement.

Shared Accommodation: A significant number of UASC arrived in Kent in recent years and many are now either turning 18 or are already over that age and under the support of the 18+ Service. The Accommodation Team work in partnership with three contracted Property Providers to ensure that these young people are housed in safe and suitable shared accommodation, which gives them access to where they may be studying. There is agreement to extend current commissioning arrangements until 28 February 2018. Discussions and review are underway to consider if this commissioned service can be delivered by Gen² Property Limited at a reduced cost. This option is being reported to the Strategic Commissioning Board.

Recommendation 9: KCC should review the independent living skills support arrangements for care leavers (including the training provision and who care leavers should contact for support at whatever time).

Progress to Date: The new pathway planning process which has been in piloted in East Kent has been extended to all teams in the 18plus service. The new pathway plans will be available on Liberi from March 2017. This supports a focus on care leavers developing the skills necessary for independent living. Young people have provided their feedback on the pathway plans and they believe it will engage and prepare young people in their transition into adulthood and independence. There is a comprehensive training programme which is being delivered to social workers to implement the completion of the new pathway plans. This has been delivered to the 18plus service and personal advisors. This has reflected an improvement in the completion and engagement of young people in their care planning as well as relevant information recorded.

There is work in progress to ensure that there is a co-ordinated plan to support transition for young people aged 16 years plus across fostering, Access to Resources Team (ART), 18 plus and IRO service. This will ensure there is a response to the feedback from young people and foster carers who would like increased information about next steps as a young person progresses through their adolescences and into adulthood.

There is a need to focus on partnership working required between adults and Specialist Children's Services (SCS) to ensure that there is ownership of the corporate parenting responsibilities as care leavers with high needs progress into adulthood. A transition policy is being reviewed.

The Team Manager Accommodation 18plus is developing an outline of the housing options that are available for young people. This will support social workers whilst completing the pathway plans to discuss the housing that is available for young people that will best suit their needs.

Recommendation 10: KCC should conduct a review of the fostering service with the objective of improving the matching process and reducing the number of placement breakdowns. The review should take place six months after the county council has endorsed this Select Committee Report and report back to the Corporate Parenting Panel.

Progress to Date: The Assistant Director for Corporate Parenting has commissioned an independent review of the fostering service. The review was comprehensive and noted some areas of good practice as well as areas of practice that needed to improve; there is also a detailed RAG rated business plan which is delivering improvements. The review and the business plan were considered at Corporate Parenting Panel in September 2016.

Recommendation 11: KCC and its commissioning partners produce regular progress reports to the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding the provision of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), including evidence of the impact in relation to children in care – particularly the support offered to care leavers, disabled children and UASC and adopted children. Updates are to include key performance information, including waiting times and any geographical variances in access to services.

Progress to Date: 0-25 Health & Wellbeing Board (HWB) has been advised that the lead for partnership needs assessment is being progressed. This presentation was delivered by lead officer at the September 0-25HWB on the proposal for a partnership needs assessment and what it could be used for.

The current CAMHS contract is for children and young people up to their 18th birthday. (The service is not contracted to support care leavers over that age.) Disabled children with a mental health need can access the mainstream service. The average waiting time for assessment in the mainstream service is 8.6 weeks (Sept 2016) and for the dedicated children in care team the average waiting time is 5 weeks. In September 2016, 69% of assessments were carried out within 4 weeks, although a few children and young people were waiting longer for specialist assessments. The procurement of the new children and young people mental health service is being led by the NHS. It is on track with the new contract due to commence on 1 September 2017.

In addition to reporting arrangements that are in place for the monitoring of CAMHS services by HOSC, regular reports are made available to Corporate Parenting Panel in respect of services provided to children in care.

Recommendation 12: KCC should investigate what further measures can be adopted as part of the Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) strategy development to address the high numbers of care leavers not in education, training or employment and to improve the life skills 'offer' for the post 18s. Measures should be defined and implemented to address any areas in need of improvement. A report on progress should be brought to the Corporate Parenting Panel by June 2016.

Progress to Date: There has been significant work undertaken to ensure that there is a good partnership between the VSK and the Education & Young People's Service (EYPS). The extended remit of VSK up to the age of 18 is now having an impact upon outcomes and a specific focus is being placed on options for UASC who will increasingly form the majority of care leavers. A new policy is in place and a focus on the young people who are NEET has paid dividends with a reduction in the number of young people who are NEET in the last 12 months. There has also been a focus on ensuring there is a September offer for all young people so that young people and their next steps are planned. There is a transition education worker for

18plus who is assisting young people to move from NEET to in Education, Training or Employment (ETE). 27 care leavers were in apprenticeships in the year 2015/16 for those aged between 16 and 22 years. The progress with ETE was addressed in the VSK Annual Report which was considered at the Corporate Parenting Panel in January 2017.

Recommendation 13: KCC and our partner agencies should explore the viability of developing opportunities for care leavers to have apprenticeship positions with KCC and/or partners, thus increasing the range and access to further education and employment opportunities for young people in care who are in the NEET position.

There is a new apprenticeship policy which is supporting all care leavers to have access to apprenticeships across the Council as well as in local Kent businesses. Those care leavers who are NEET are prioritised with a new 18+ Employment, Training and Education officer in the care leaving team. There has been a focus on partnership panels which review young people and match them to work and traineeship opportunities. This is improving the overall reduction in NEET for over 18year olds.

Recommendation 14: KCC should ensure that work is undertaken to improve the information we collect regarding our children in care and care leavers and their health needs. The result of this work should be fully reflected in the revised Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and future commissioning arrangements.

Progress to Date: There are now two working groups in place with health partners to oversee both the strategic and operational aspects of the health needs of children in care. The work of these groups will serve to monitor service provision and inform future commissioning priorities. This will be further reinforced by the active participation of senior health representatives in the augmented Corporate Parenting Panel. A stronger link has not yet been built with Public Health in relation to intelligence gathering, needs analysis and service delivery to meet the holistic health needs of children in care but this will be progressed throughout 2017.

Recommendation 15: Processes need to be established to ensure all Members take an active role in getting to know our frontline staff and their concerns, informally as well as via formal consultation exercises. We should also ensure that feedback from our social workers is informing the development of activities and planning at all levels of the organisation. Protocols must be established to clarify this process.

Progress to Date: Members are involved in quarterly meetings which are led by the Assistant Directors. This provides an update on the key developments in SCS and an opportunity for Members to visit offices and meet staff.

As part of the Munro Report, SCS have completed a social work health check which has allowed social workers to report on their experiences of working in Kent. This report is available in the Members' area of Knet. An action plan is also in place to address the issues that have been raised by social workers and reviewed quarterly.

This is repeated annually.