

Corporate Parenting Select Committee Report

Progress to Date – February 2016

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: Work is ongoing to develop a guide for members that sets out key information relevant to their corporate parenting responsibilities. The guide will encompass general information from Local Government Association (LGA) documents with more Kent specific detailed signposting to key performance information and local contacts. A draft of the guide will be made available for members to consider at the May Corporate Parenting Panel.

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 quarterly Children in Care Scorecard is now 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 but can be made more widely available to all members.

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 Member Services to ensure that an introduction to corporate parenting forms part of induction training for new members. Significant changes to corporate parenting responsibilities will be addressed through additional training and guidance.

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 draft letter is being prepared for consideration.

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: Arrangements are in hand for the multi-agency Corporate Parenting Group and Corporate Parenting Panel to merge from April 2016 onwards. A revised Terms of Reference and proposed membership will be presented to Corporate Parenting Panel in March.

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: Area service managers for children in care have been briefed on the recommendations of the Select Committee and the strong wish on the part of members to become actively involved in events at a local level. Invitations have already been extended to members in respect of some recent events involving our children in care and full use will be made of the Member Bulletin to publicise further events in advance.

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: A dedicated Participation and Engagement Officer has been in post since October 2015. They are now progressing an agreed work programme, picking up on issues raised with the recent LILAC reassessment (Leading Improvements for Looked After Children), working alongside our care apprentices. Corporate Parenting Panel have been briefed on new initiatives including the use of an app-based facility (MOMO) to allow children and young people to engage more fully in their care reviews.

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 0-25 accommodation strategy. A consultation exercise has been launched to consider how best to develop a broader volume and range of supported accommodation options. Access to social housing via the District Councils will form part of this process.

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: Building upon initial diagnostic work undertaken with Newton Europe, a pathway planning process has been in progress in East Kent, focusing on how well care leavers are prepared with the skills necessary for independent living. This process has now concluded and the lessons learned are informing the development of a new, more young person friendly pathway plan which it is intended to trial from April 2016.

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 incoming Assistant Director for Corporate Parenting will be charged with undertaking a review of the fostering service within the timescale indicated, with a focus on service quality, sufficiency compliance and steps that can be taken to support placement stability in order to reduce numbers of placement moves.

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, 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: In addition to reporting arrangements that are in place for the monitoring of CAMHS services by HOSC, regular reports will also be 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 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: Work remains ongoing with EYPS to prioritise and address NEET outcomes for care leavers. The extended remit of the Virtual School Kent (VSK) up to the age of 18 is now having an impact upon outcomes and a specific focus is being placed on options for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) who will increasingly form the majority of care leavers. As requested, an update report will be brought to Corporate Parenting Panel in June 2016 updating progress on providing guidance and support to care leavers in respect of NEET outcomes.

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.

Progress to Date: We will continue to build upon the success of the apprenticeship scheme already in place within Specialist Children's Services to explore further placement opportunities across the Council and partner networks. Meetings have taken place with the Director of Highways, Transportation and Waste to develop apprenticeship opportunities for care leavers within the directorate and commissioned providers.

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 will be built with Public Health in relation to intelligence gathering, needs analysis and service delivery to meet the holistic health needs of children in care.

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: In line with the actions noted for recommendation 6, opportunities to attend events involving young people and staff will be extended members at a local level. An ongoing programme of district visits involving Lead Member and Director ensure that staff routinely have the opportunity to meet with

senior management to provide feedback that influences further service development.