

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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COMMITTEE	Corporate Policy and Performance
DATE	25 November 2010
DIRECTOR	Fred McBride
TITLE OF REPORT	Corporate Parenting Policy
REPORT NUMBER:	SCW/10/101

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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The Scottish Governments report 'Looked After Children: we can and must do better', published in 2007 clearly sets out the responsibilities of all local authorities as corporate parents.
- 1.2 In response to the report, Aberdeen City Council approved a Corporate Parenting Policy 2007-2010.
- 1.3 The report sets out the process to engage with services across the Council and key stakeholders of the Aberdeen City Integrated Children's Services Partnership to develop a revised policy to be approved by the Corporate Policy and Performance Committee in January 2011.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that Committee:

- i) Note the process to develop the Policy within the Council's wider services and with key stakeholders of the Integrated Children's Services Partnership.
- ii) Instruct officers to report back to the Corporate Policy and Performance Committee by 27 January 2011.
- iii) Approve initial training dates for the delivery of Corporate Parenting briefing on 15 and 26 November 2010 and a full programme of training on the policy from January 2011.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no direct financial implications for the revenue or capital budget at this time. Any additional implication arising from the development of the policy will be included in the final report to Committee in January 2011.

#### 4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 4:1 There are no other implications identified at this stage. Any additional implications arising from the development of the policy will be included in the final report to Committee in January 2011.

#### 5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

- 5.1 The Scottish Government report 'Looked After Children: We can and must do better' published in January 2007 clearly sets out action to be taken across five key themes to ensure improved outcomes for those young people looked after by their local authority.
- 5.2 In response to the report, Aberdeen City Council approved a Corporate Parenting Policy to ensure an effective and consistent approach to the role of elected members, council services and associated agencies across the City in contributing to the delivery of improved outcomes for looked after children.
- 5.3 Since the approval of a local policy, the Scottish Government has issued further guidance detailing the roles and responsibilities across universal services and community planning partners to contribute to improving the outcomes for looked after children.
- 5.4 The revised policy will set out the expectations for effective formal and informal local partnerships to ensure all Council Elected Members, local authority services, and associated agencies, are responsible for working together to ensure we meet the needs of our looked after children and young people for whom we have a duty of care and protection.
- 5.5 Corporate Parenting' means the formal and local partnerships needed between all local authority departments and services, and associated agencies, which are responsible for working together to meet the needs of looked after children and young people.
- 5.6 Being a good corporate parent means we should; accept responsibility for children in the Council's care; make their needs a priority; seek for them the same outcomes any good parent would want for their own children.
- 5.7 It outlines that a corporate parent will do at least what a good parent would do to ensure they safeguard and promote the child's health, development and welfare. Responsible parents hold together many strands in their children's lives: they care about their safety and their health, their education and their leisure interests, their friendships and their futures. They have continuous knowledge of their children's

development, and are aware of their particular talents, achievements and problems. They listen and talk to their children so that they are aware of their needs and concerns.

- 5.8 Once a local authority has taken the decision to remove a child, short or long term, from his or her family, it is the duty of the whole local authority to 'safeguard and promote his welfare'. The responsibility of the corporate parent towards a child in their care may (depending on how long they have been looked after) continue up to the age of 21 years and in some cases beyond this age if the young person is engaged in a continuing course of higher education.
- 5.9 There is also a wider responsibility placed on our community planning partners to contribute towards improving the outcomes of looked after children.
- 5.10 The Policy Vision is to reach a position where there is no discernible difference between the education, health and employment and other life outcomes of looked after children and care leavers who have experience the care system and their peers who have not.
- 5.11 The overarching outcome is to be ambitious for looked after children and care leavers and ensure young people who have experienced the care system will be successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors whose life outcomes mirror those of their peers.
- 5.12 The specific outcome relating to the function of corporate parenting is that the Council and our Community Planning Partners will fully understand and accept our responsibilities as corporate parents and that governance arrangements within the Council, Integrated Children's Service Plan and Community Planning partners is child centered and focus on achieving the outcome.
- 5.13 In assessing the local picture and determining the content of the policy the Council will seek to ensure it clearly understands how many children are looked after, the reasons for this and how well they are doing in all aspects of their life. The policy will specifically set out the roles and responsibilities of:
  - Elected Members e.g. to Champion the rights of looked after children in the development of policy and allocation of resources
  - Chief Executive of the Council e.g. to provide leadership and direction across the Council to ensure the interest of looked after children are taken into account in major decisions
  - Corporate Governance e.g. to ensure we are demonstrating best value in commissioning and clarity of key messages in corporate training and development.
  - Social Care and Wellbeing Services e.g. to provide high standards of care for our looked after children.

- Education, Culture and Sport Services e.g. to ensure high aspirations for our looked after children and ensure they are not disproportionately represented in poor attendance or exclusion
- Housing and Environment Services e.g. to ensure care leavers are a priority for supported accommodation and housing allocation.

It will further set out the role of elected members and officers to work alongside the following stakeholders to ensure we deliver improved outcomes:

- Community Planning Partnerships including; the Police, Health Services
- Children's Hearing System
- The Independent Sector

#### 5.14 Case Study Examples

Looked after children and care leavers need the same from their corporate family as they need from their birth family – security, safety, positive regard, support and boundaries. The Policy will set out clearly how we can work across corporate services and with our community planning partners to ensure we are doing what every good parent would to ensure the best possible outcomes for their own children. The following examples set out how the policy will work in practice (these are just a few examples and are not exhaustive):

##### Wellbeing Outcomes

Social Care and Wellbeing Services (including Foster Care Services) will ensure that everyone working with looked after children and care leavers have been trained using We Can and Must do Better Materials to ensure high standards of care across all care settings.

Services will supported looked after children to develop Life Story materials to we understand how the feel about their experience of separate from their family and living in a care setting. This will include transition planning 12 months in advance of significant changes in the lives of looked after children and care leavers.

Services will be able to evidence service user engagement in the development and review of all services and demonstrate where we have taken account of the views of young people and changed services as a result of their feedback.

We will encourage young people to remain looked after until they are 18, where it is in their best interest.

Making sure that looked after children have opportunities to experience new things such as sport, music, drama, arts and culture.

Social Care and Wellbeing Services will work in partnership with Housing and Environment to ensure that young care leavers are a priority within the housing policy and receive additional support where required to enable them to sustain their tenancy and independent living.

This will include ensuring that the circumstance of looked after children and care leavers are considered in the development of all housing and antisocial behaviour policies.

#### Educational Outcomes

The Social Care and Wellbeing Service will work in partnership with colleagues in Education, Culture and Sport and Residential Schools to ensure the lead Designated Manager for Looked After Children in each school have developed appropriate plans for all looked after children in need of additional support and that we can demonstrate where this support has been provided that we are improving the education attainment and achievement of these young people.

Ensure that all policies and strategies e.g. Parenting Policies, Anti Bullying Policies, Exclusion Policies, Positive Behaviour Strategies take account of the needs of looked after children, corporate parenting roles and carer engagement.

#### Health Outcomes

The Council will work in partnership with NHS Grampian to ensure that all looked after children and care leavers have had their health needs assessed in a timely manner and that they have access to the right services to improve their health outcomes.

#### Economic Outcomes

The Council will work with agencies in the More Choices More Chances Partnership and the Scottish Government to ensure that we know the intended destination of all looked after children approaching their statutory school leaving age. This will include working in partnership with community planning partners and the local business to develop a range of pre support options, additional support to attend further or higher education, develop supported training opportunities as supported routes to part or full time employment to ensure they can take up and sustain positive destination in education, training and employment.

- 5.15 The policy will be supported by clear guidance, training and a process for evaluating the implementation of the policy to ensure we achieve our vision for looked after children.

5:16 We will know we are making a difference when we can demonstrate improved outcomes for looked after children including:

- Regular attendance school and achieve academically
- Find and sustain education, employment or training when they leave school, find somewhere suitable to live and manage to sustain independent living
- More families are supported to stay together in their own communities
- Staff report they feel confident they have done a good job in supporting our looked after children
- Carers report they feel supported and valued
- Internal scrutiny and self evaluation processes demonstrate that outcomes for looked after children are improving
- When good practice is identified within future Inspection reports.

5.17 The policy will be reviewed annually to ensure we are progressing towards our vision to reach a position where there is no discernible difference between the education, health and employment and other life outcomes of looked after children and young people and care leavers and their peers.

5:18 The development of materials and the delivery of training will be delivered in partnership with Who Cares Scotland. The organisation has received Scottish Government funding to assist local authorities in the development and delivery of such training.

5:19 In February 2010, all relevant Committees and The Aberdeen City Alliance approved the governance arrangements for the planning and delivery of Integrated Children's Services. To ensure collective ownership to effectively deliver the commitments to be set out in the policy the lead officer will seek to engage with other Council services and key stakeholders of the Integrated Children's Services Partnership in the development of the Corporate Parenting Policy.

5:20 Progress on the implementation will be reported to both the Council's Corporate Policy and Performance Committee and the Integrated Children's Services Partnership.

## 6. IMPACT

6.1 The contents of the report link to policies identified within 'Vibrant, Dynamic and Forward Looking' – namely 'the care and support of more vulnerable members of our community'.

6.2 The Policy also supports action towards meeting City Challenge 1 – Social Inclusion and sustainable development, City Challenge 2 – Integrated services planning and delivery, Community Challenge 2 – Safety, Community Challenge 4 - Social Care, Organisational Challenge 2 - Evolving to meet Change.

- 6.3 The policy will contribute to the delivery of outcomes 3, 5 and 8 of the Single Outcome Agreement.
- 6.4 A Human Rights Impact Assessment will be undertaken of the policy in advance of being submitted in January 2011.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Scottish Governments 'Looked After Children: We Can and Must do Better' 2007
- Aberdeen City Corporate Parenting Policy 2007-10
- Scottish Government's Core Tasks for Designated Managers in Education and Residential Establishments in Scotland' 2008
- These are our Bairns: A Guide for Community Planning Partners 2008
- Scottish Governments Draft Guidance Family Firm, November 2010
- Aberdeen City More Choices More Chances Strategy 2010

8. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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