

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Council
DATE	14 May 2014
DIRECTOR	Liz Taylor
TITLE OF REPORT	Corporate Parenting: Annual Update 2013 - 14
REPORT NUMBER:	SCW/14/005
CHECKLIST RECEIVED	Yes

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide an annual update to Elected Members on the progress of the implementation of the Corporate Parenting Policy and Action Plan 2012 - 2015.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 It is recommended that Council:
- (i) Note the progress set out in the annual update for 2013 - 2014.
 - (ii) Instruct officers to report back on the implementation and review of the policy to Council in May 2015.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no direct financial implications for the revenue or capital budget at this time. The policy will be delivered within existing resources.
- 3.2 The recent Children & Young People's (Scotland) Act 2014 Act (see below), which will be introduced from April 2015, extends the definition of corporate parent and the reporting responsibilities of local authorities. The Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICE)'s briefing of the legislation at the Bill stage notes that there are acknowledged additional costs associated with producing reports every three years. No additional costs were identified in relation to the delivery of corporate parenting duties.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no legal, resource, personnel, property, equipment, sustainability and environmental, health and safety and/or policy implications and risks relating to this update.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

- 5.1 Corporate Parenting refers to the collective responsibility of the Council and its community partners to achieve good parenting to children who are looked after and care leavers. Currently Aberdeen City Council has a duty to provide support, advice and guidance to children who are looked after and young people leaving care up to the age of 19 and power to do so up to the age of 21. However, with the recent passage of the Children and Young People's (Scotland) Act 2014, from 2015 this will be extended up to and including the age of 25. The Act also extends the range of public bodies covered by the concept of corporate parent and introduces new responsibilities on corporate parents to plan and collaborate to promote the wellbeing of looked after children and young people and care leavers.
- 5.2 The Aberdeen City Council Corporate Parenting Policy 2012 - 15 sets out clear principles to guide Elected Members and Council Officers to ensure that effective formal partnerships are built that will improve the outcomes for children who are looked after and young people leaving care.
- 5.3 The main body of the report below highlights significant achievements within the last twelve months as well as noting next steps and actions that will be undertaken over the forthcoming year. It also includes a section on the Children & Young People's (Scotland) Act 2014 Act passed earlier this year and considers the implications of this for corporate parenting.
- #### **5.4 Elected Members and Chief Executive**
- 5.4.1 The previously approved Corporate Parenting Champions Board, with the authority to make decisions to achieve systemic change in the way services are delivered, and comprising Elected Members and Chief Officers from the Council, Chief Officers from NHS Grampian, Police Scotland and the Third Sector has been established. After approval for elected member representation in June 2013, its inaugural meeting was held in January 2014. It provides an opportunity for looked after young people to talk directly to decision makers and agree innovative solutions to issues that they present.
- 5.4.2 The Young People's Participation Group has also been established, as described below at para 5.7.8. Supported by the Children's Rights Officers, it allows young people in the council's care to identify areas for discussion with the Champions Board.

5.4 Corporate Governance

- 5.4.1 A framework to recruit and support young people preparing to leave care to take up internships and apprenticeships within the Council or with community planning partners was previously developed. Through the recently launched Aberdeen Guarantee scheme, notifications of all opportunities are regularly circulated to those working with looked after young people or in contact with those previously looked after.
- 5.4.2 Aberdeen Guarantee is a new commitment to provide all young people between 14 and 25 with opportunities to participate in learning, training or work. Organisations in the public, private and third sector can each make a significant contribution to developing young people's skills for life, learning and work and can assist in maintaining the city's position as having one of the lowest youth unemployment rates in the UK.
- 5.4.3 An outline Introduction to Corporate Parenting training course that would be mandatory and available on the Council's On-line Interactive Learning (OIL) was developed during 2013. This will be completed during the next year to take account of new national Corporate Parenting Guidance which is anticipated as a consequence of the passing of the Children and Young People's (Scotland) Act 2014.
- 5.4.4 There is no specific corporate budget to support the delivery of the Corporate Parenting Action Plan. This was because the commitment and collaboration across the Council was felt to be sufficient enough without the need to pool resources.

5.5 Housing and Environment

- 5.8.1 The joint protocol between Social Care and Well-being and Housing and Environment Services ensures that young people preparing to leave care receive an effective assessment for the allocation of appropriate housing without the need to resort to homelessness legislation.
- 5.8.2 Aberdeen Community Safety Partnership has implemented the Community Safety Hub. Partners involved in the hub, including Council, Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, are committed to working with Children's Services to deliver solutions in respect of young people involved in community safety incidents that have occurred in the previous 24 hours.

5.6 Education, Culture and Sport

- 5.6.1 We know from research that the educational outcomes for children who are looked after can be poorer than their peers who have not experienced the care system. In order for them to achieve their potential, the Education Culture and Sport Service assess and

provide targeted support where appropriate. The Service has systems in place to support children, quality assure the services at school level and monitor the overall position at authority and community planning level. The individual education position of children who are looked after and receiving an education in city schools is monitored at school level. All schools have a designated manager who is responsible for supporting and encouraging children who are looked after by the local authority on the school roll.

- 5.6.2 Children and young people who are looked after continue to be a priority group within the Education Culture and Sport Service Plan and Inclusion Review.
- 5.6.3 Education Culture and Sport continues to deliver a range of training to class teachers, designated managers, adoptive parents and foster carers, to support them to fulfil their roles and improve the educational outcomes for looked after children. Examples include:
- We Can and Must Do Better - Designated manager for looked after children in school and residential establishments.
 - Readiness to Learn - Class teachers.
 - Loss, Trauma, Attachment and Brain Development - Class teachers.
 - Supporting the education of children in their care - Foster carers and adoptive parents.
- 5.6.4 In addition Education Culture and Sport has worked with CELCIS (Centre for Excellence for Looked after Children in Scotland) to research the educational experiences of children and young people looked after at home.
- 5.6.5 Education Culture and Sport completes an annual snapshot in the autumn term of the position of looked after children within Aberdeen City Council educational establishments. The purpose of the report is to get an overview of attendance, exclusions and of whether the young people are achieving their potential.
- 5.6.6 It should be noted that as the looked after children population is transient with children receiving and being discharged from supervision requirements throughout the year making conclusive statements is difficult because of the changing cohort. However, as at December 2013 there were 241 looked after children within ACC educational establishments (Nursery, Primary, Secondary, Special).¹ This represents 1.1% of the school population.² Compared with the last report (December 2012) this is a decrease of 34 looked after children within schools.
- 5.6.7 Of the 241 looked after children, 127 (53 %) are looked after at home³ and 114 (47 %) are looked after away from home (ie. in residential units, foster care or with relatives) within Aberdeen City.

¹ : Special schools = Cordyce, Hazelwood and Woodlands

² : There were 21,669 school pupils as of the school census date (13/09/2013).

³ : The supervision requirement whilst still living at home is unique to Scotland. These children's education outcomes are poorer than children looked after away from home.

The “other” 337 looked after children not in ACC educational establishments, are either under 5, over sixteen and left school or in out of authority placements⁴. There were 23 in pre-school provision, 93 in primary school, 103 in secondary school and 21 in special schools. One child was also registered with the Vision Support Service. There has been an increase from 10 to 23 looked after children within pre- school provision, compared with last year. Of the 241 children who are looked after, 128 had educational psychology support, representing 53% of the total cohort.

- 5.6.8 In the recent snapshot, 66.6% of pupils who were looked after children in the primary sector and 55% in the secondary sector were performing at or above expectations. A total of 12 looked after children had episodes of exclusion. This is a reduction from the previous year.
- 5.6.9 The most recent national educational outcomes for looked after children were published for children looked after continuously during the entire 2011 - 12 academic year. These were previously reported to Committee. The educational outcomes for looked after children 2012 - 2013 will be published in July 2014.

5.7 Social Care and Well-being

- 5.7.1 The Social Care and Well-being Directorate remain responsible for leading the delivery of the Corporate Parenting Policy and Action Plan. Staffing vacancies within the service during the year have meant that it has not been possible to provide the previous level of input to the corporate parenting agenda. Recent appointments will address this and a full overview of the Policy and Action Plan will be undertaken within the next three months.
- 5.7.3 Training on the Getting it Right for Every Child practice model continues to be provided locally incorporating key messages from the Corporate Parenting Policy. This training is available to all staff and carers.
- 5.7.4 Internship and apprenticeship opportunities in Aberdeen City Council continue to be provided through the Family Firm Policy and Procedure. These have been made available in a wide variety of work settings offering a valuable experience, skills and knowledge to the young people. Owing to the staff changes identified above a full evaluation of placement outcomes was not completed by March 2014 as previously reported. This will now be undertaken during 2014 - 15.
- 5.7.5 Each year Social Care and Well-being are in contact with those looked after young people who are due to leave school to record their interests in the Family Firm opportunities in the Council as these become available. Last year, construction and maintenance were again the most popular opportunities. Young people were also

⁴ : There were 578 looked after children for whom Aberdeen City Council held corporate parent responsibility (December 2013).

interested in opportunities in care work, catering and administration. Work will be being undertaken shortly to identify this year's group of school leavers and their interests at the same time as working with each directorate to identify internship opportunities in line with their business needs.

- 5.7.6 All internships and apprenticeships are offered following a competitive selection process. Each young person is then supported and mentored throughout their placement. However, what has become clear over the last twelve months is the need for more general support for young people working within the Council, not just those for whom it has corporate parent responsibilities. Social Care staff will be working with HR colleagues over the next twelve months to identify what support is needed and may be provided.
- 5.7.7 67% of the 18 looked after young people who left school during 2011 - 12, the last year for which information is available, were in a positive destination at the time of both the initial and follow up surveys. These figures compare to national positions of 75% and 67% respectively. The 67% who were in a positive destination at the follow up survey was an improvement on the 50% achieved in the previous year and 47% a year earlier.
- 5.7.8 Based within the Social Care and Well-being Directorate, one of the aims of the Children's Rights Service is to support young people aged 7 or over who are looked after away from home, to express their views about the service they receive. The feedback is recorded and reported to ensure their views inform service planning. The two part-time Children's Rights Officers also support young people in care to attend local and national events to inform policy development. The CROs within the Directorate are supplemented by a part-time worker employed by Who Cares Scotland, the national agency working with young people in care.
- 5.7.9 During the last year, the Children's Rights Officers have led the establishment of both the Young People's Participation Group for looked after young people and the Corporate Parenting Champions Board. The Participation Group has met on three occasions and amongst a range of concerns, identified two key issues to present to the Champions Board. These were:
- Access to the internet within Children's Homes
 - Perception of looked after children and young people within the broader community.
- 5.7.10 At the first meeting of the Champions Board these issues were debated and a commitment was given to installing domestic broadband facilities within all Children's Homes in Aberdeen within three months. The Board also considered how it could improve the perception of looked after young people by educating both the staff of each organisation as well as the general public. This objective is in line with a national initiative led by Who Cares Scotland to promote a

positive care identity for Scotland's care experienced children, young people and adults which is due to be launched in May 2014.

- 5.7.11 A joint session of the Young People's Participation Group and the Champions Board is being planned for July 2014 facilitated by Who Cares Scotland to further develop and promote the concept of corporate parenting in light of the recent legislative changes (see below, paras 5.9.1 – 5.9.4).
- 5.7.12 Work is currently being undertaken to develop an on-line service for looked after young people, including the use of social media, whilst training materials for staff and foster carers to ensure they can support young people to use the internet safely are also being produced.
- 5.7.13 A joint working arrangement between the NHS and Social Care and Wellbeing ensures that all looked after children and young people have access to health assessments and a GP. The NHS Grampian Looked After Children team (NHSG LAC team) report that 95% of all children and young people who are looked after and for whom information is forwarded to them continue to be assessed. The team also actively contact the parents of looked after children to offer assessments.
- 5.7.14 The NHSG LAC team are currently working in conjunction with School Nurses and Education to increase the number of young people who are outwith mainstream education completing the immunisation schedule. This includes 505 young people who are looked after and the aim is to offer the service directly to Children's Homes.

5.8 Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure

- 5.8.1 Internships for young people who are looked after have been provided by the service. The future employment prospects for young people who are preparing to leave care will be improved through the development of new business in the city.

5.9 The Children and Young People's (Scotland) Act 2014

- 5.9.1 The Children and Young People's (Scotland) Bill was passed in Parliament on 19 February 2014 and became an Act on the 27 March 2014. It includes provision from April 2015 for young people in residential, foster or kinship care who turn 16 to gain new rights to remain 'looked after' up to the age of 21, and extended entitlement to aftercare up to their 26th birthday.
- 5.9.2 The Act also re-defines corporate parenting and significantly extends the number of public bodies, health boards and local authorities subject to a legal duty as 'corporate parents' of looked after children and care leavers. It also introduces new responsibilities on corporate parents to plan and collaborate and requires them to be "*alert to*

matters which, or which might, adversely affect the wellbeing” of looked after children and care leavers, and to:

- promote their interests,
- assess their needs for the services which that public body provides, and
- provide opportunities to participate in activities.

5.9.3 ‘Corporate parent’ public bodies are required to produce a plan for how they would perform these functions, to report on progress, to have regard to Ministerial guidance, to provide information to Scottish Ministers and to collaborate with other corporate parents.

5.9.4 The new duty is far more specific than the previous duty to ‘promote and safeguard welfare’ as it includes requirements to assess needs and promote interests. According to the SPICE (Scottish Parliament Information Centre) briefing at the Bill stage, the financial memorandum estimates the cost of preparing corporate parenting plans, but does not address whether there will be any financial cost for assessing and promoting the needs of looked after children. Whilst some of the listed organisations will already be doing this (eg. local authorities, SCRA), many will not (eg. Bord na Gaidhlig, Creative Scotland, Fire service).

5.10 Next Steps

5.10.1 By defining ‘corporate parenting’ in a way that will signal a move away from ‘corporate’ thinking to acting more like a ‘parent’, the Act aims to ensure that all looked after children and young people receive the same level of services and opportunities as those who are not looked after. By extending corporate parenting across the public sector to include 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 and care-leavers, the Act therefore presents additional challenges to the council and its corporate parenting responsibilities.

5.10.2 The consolidation of the recently established Corporate Parenting Champions Board is therefore critical to the fulfilment of the Council’s corporate parenting responsibilities and this is being taken forward with expertise from Who Cares Scotland during the forthcoming year. This will ensure that the revised Corporate Parenting Action Plan for 2015 and beyond will be led by the experience of young people who have experience of being looked after by Aberdeen City Council as well as taking into account the recent legislative changes.

5.10.3 In light of the recent legislation it is proposed that rather than just updating what was previously included within the accompanying Action Plan, that this is fully reviewed and revised during the next year to anticipate the changes that will be required from April 2015. This will also ensure that it is part of the local Integrated Children’s Services (ICS) Partnership strategic planning framework.

5.10.4 During 2014 it is also anticipated that the Life Changes Trust will announce its plans for supporting young care leavers. These are likely to include:

- direct grants to individuals.
- opportunities for organisations or consortia to apply to the Trust for funding to more effectively support young peoples' preparation for leaving care and young care leavers through initiatives and innovations.
- funding for the development of proposals which will improve empowerment, participation and influencing opportunities for looked after young people and care leavers.
- exploring of ways in which the Trust might support improvements to the quality of care and support provided to looked after young people and young care leavers by supporting learning and development of the paid and voluntary workforce.
- improving an understanding of the needs, challenges and solutions for looked after young people and care leavers, to support improved policy and practice, as well as the Trust's funding decisions.

The council will need to be prepared along with its partner organisations to bid for these opportunities as they arise. A working group in conjunction with colleagues in the third sector is in place and ready to respond to further communication from the Trust which is expected shortly.

5.10.5 In summary, the Council continues to make progress against the Corporate Parenting agenda. The aim during 2014 - 15 will be to evaluate the impact of what has been achieved so far across all directorates, including the implementation of the Family Firm Policy, and, as noted above, to fully review and revise the Corporate Parenting Action Plan.

6. IMPACT

6.1 The programme of work contributes to the Council's commitments set out in the Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement - Outcome 8 (to improve the life chances of children, young people and families at risk); and 5 Year Corporate Business Plan - SCWB 6 (review of workforce/skills mix) and SCWB 14 (reduce use of Out Of Authority Placements).

6.2 An Equalities and Human Right Impact Assessment (EHRIA) has been conducted for the Corporate Policy and Action Plan. This report is an update report that seeks to inform Elected Members on the progress of the corporate parenting programme of work and therefore does not require an EHRIA to be completed at this time.

7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

7.1 No specific risks were identified in relation to this report.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Aberdeen City Council Corporate Parenting Policy 2012 - 2015.
- Family Firm Guidance 2012 - 2015.

9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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