

MEMO



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Corporate Parenting

Corporate parenting represents the principles and duties on which improvements can be made for looked after children and care leavers. Guidance accompanying the Children & Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 defines 'corporate parenting' as:

An organisation's performance of actions necessary to promote and support the wellbeing of a looked after child or care leaver, including their physical, emotional, spiritual, social and cognitive development.

It also emphasises that corporate parenting is about listening to the needs, fears and wishes of children and young people, and being proactive and determined in our collective efforts to meet them. The recent legislation built on previous policy and also extended corporate parenting duties to a wider group of public bodies as well as establishing requirements for corporate parents to plan and report on their activities.

Section 58 of the 2014 Act sets out the responsibilities of those public bodies defined as corporate parents. These are to:

- *be alert to matters which, or which might, adversely affect the wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers,*
- *assess the needs of those children and young people for services and support that public bodies with a corporate parenting responsibility provide,*
- *promote the interests of those children and young people,*
- *seek to provide those children and young people with opportunities*
- *participate in activities designed to promote their wellbeing,*

- *take such action as the public bodies, consider appropriate to help those children and young people -*
 - (i) *to access opportunities they provide,*
 - (ii) *to make use of services, and access support, which they provide,*
- *take such other action as they consider appropriate for the purposes of improving the way in which they exercise their functions in relation to those children and young people.*

The Guidance makes clear that although corporate parents will fulfil these duties in a variety of ways, in view of their varied other functions, they are not a menu from which corporate parents can pick and choose. They are interrelated: good 'corporate parenting' depends on each of the duties being fulfilled.

The Keen4Work Scheme

The Keen4Work Scheme is one initiative that aims to meet a number of these duties by recognising the difficulties that care experienced young people may have in getting into and sustaining training or employment. It is alert to how this can affect their wellbeing; seeks to promote their interests; provides them with training and employment opportunities; helps them to access those opportunities; and supports and mentors them to sustain their involvement in them.

The Scheme began as a 12 week programme designed initially around blue collar opportunities with the City Council. This was simply a starting point and work is well underway to replicate the model in such a way as it can be parachuted into any service within any directorate.

It is being developed as part of the review and re-launch of the Council's Family Firm Policy and is aimed at better preparing young people to take up internship and apprenticeship opportunities as they arise within the council. A draft booklet is being prepared in order to readily show our young people what is on offer, and also show Heads of Service/Service managers the format of the programme in order to encourage their buy-in to hosting placements. NHS Grampian has also shown an interest in the scheme and it has the potential to become a model widely championed throughout the council and amongst those public bodies who have a corporate parenting responsibility under the recent legislation.

Social Cost

Young people have always had a tough time finding work. Historically, the unemployment rate for those ages 15 to 24 in advanced economies has been two to three times higher than for older age groups. But since the global crisis began in 2008, young people have suffered a much sharper rise in joblessness than older workers, and structural issues - especially in Europe - have exacerbated youth employment problems. This position is further exacerbated for young care leavers who traditionally have been less successful in achieving positive destinations.

Unemployment can exact a big personal toll on young people. Failure to find a first job or keep it for long can have damaging long-term consequences on their lives and career prospects. But youth unemployment also has broader social

consequences and contributes significantly to growing income inequality in advanced economies.

In addition to the short-term problems unemployment causes for young people, it has long-term debilitating effects. Studies have shown that those who experience unemployment early in their life are more likely to be unemployed again in later years. Moreover, they are likely to earn less over their working life than are their peers who find jobs more easily. Experts call the negative long-term consequences of early unemployment “scarring effects.” Those scarring effects are the result of such factors as deterioration of skills and forgone work experience. But they can also come from potential employers’ belief that these workers will not be productive. The longer a person is unemployed, the longer the scarring effects are likely to last. The earnings penalty can be as high as 20 percent compared with their peers who find employment early, and the earnings deficit can persist as long as 20 years.

In addition to harmful effects on future wages and employability, studies find evidence that spells of unemployment for a young person often hurt the individual’s happiness, job satisfaction, and health for many years thereafter.

Youth unemployment can also lead to high economic and social costs for society. Underutilization of young people in the labour market can result in a vicious circle of intergenerational poverty and social exclusion. Lack of employment opportunities may trigger violence and juvenile delinquency. Recent high youth unemployment has contributed to social unrest in many countries - advanced, emerging, and developing. Youth unemployment contributes significantly to rising income inequality.

There is therefore a substantial cost incurred by both local and central government every time one such young person finds them self unemployed, engaged in the justice system, subject to substance abuse, or medically ill (including depression). The relatively small investment proposed below, even if it changed the outcome of one or two young people would, in terms of finances, outweigh the total cost of the project.

Collaboration

The Keen4Work scheme in and of itself is a laudable project, but it is only a part of the puzzle and not the complete jigsaw. In order to reap the greatest benefit from the scheme there needs to be an additional layer of support which deals with issues such as:

1. Preparing the young person for the “structure” of a working day
2. Managing interpersonal skills
3. Time management
4. Money management
5. Debt advice
6. Coping mechanisms
7. Orchestrating which young people best fill which opportunity
8. Out of Hours safety net

To that end this proposal includes working with Action for Children to deliver a team of 4 full-time workers that will service the above functions.

Action for Children has previous experience in this area having established a joint programme with Glasgow City Council's Care Leavers Employability programme (CLES). The Action for Children Transitions project takes a holistic approach to employability with project staff working together with young people to carry out a needs assessment looking at all aspects of their life including an understanding of the risk factors relating to social, health, identity, emotional behavioural development or family and care circumstances.

Clear plans with intensive support to overcome personal and practical barriers to young people to access and sustain appropriate employment/training are produced with young people who then receive support from a dedicated key worker with one to one support, advice and guidance to enable the young person to make a smooth transition into employment or training. Staff work flexibly around service user needs and outwith core working hours to support them in training/employment without impacting on their working environment. There is an understanding, throughout the process that for some young people, this may take significant time and that many other factors in their life need addressing before they can seriously engage with structured programmes. Therefore many young people may engage with the service for some considerable time (average 9 months to a year).

The project will also link in with *Aberdeen Guarantees*, which was launched in autumn 2014 and is a partnership commitment to providing learning, training and employment opportunities to all 14 - 25 year olds, with a particular focus on those groups at risk of falling into negative destinations. Identification and co-ordination of young people to participate in the project will be retained within Children's Social Work.

Request for funding

Action for Children have proposed to extend the Transitions Project to Aberdeen and have identified two sources of match funding through central government (ie. inspire Scotland) and European Social Fund, both of which, if successful, would contribute £50K per year for three years. The City Council's commitment would be a similar £50K, plus costs of payments to young people whilst undertaking the 12 week programme (currently £15 per day plus meal allowance). In return, the project would employ four staff to support and mentor young people through both the 12 week programmes and Internships & Apprenticeships. The project's aim would be to work with up to approximately 200 young people over 3 years, including 40 per year commencing the 12 week programme.

In order to fund all of the above, the total cost to the council for 3 years, would be not more than £74300 per year (ie. £50K plus payments to young people). This budget has been identified from within existing resources and is now earmarked in unique cost centre **S59163 65111**.

Commitment for funding at this level will create a managed environment designed at best placing 40 vulnerable care experienced young people per year into a better position to find their positive destination in life. This enriches their lives, improves their long-term future, and decreases the potential burden to the public purse in the long-term whilst also fulfilling, in part, a number of the council's corporate parenting responsibilities.

To proceed with this initiative, although funding has been identified within the existing service and agreement in principle has been indicated to Action for Children to enable them to continue with their funding applications, it needs to be formally sanctioned within the Directorate to enable formal negotiations to be entered into with Action for Children. If required, a further update can be made to the DLT before any final commitment is given.

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