

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Council
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REPORT TITLE	Corporate Parenting: Annual Update 2016 - 17
REPORT NUMBER	ECS/17/040
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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 responsibility under Part 9 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, for the benefit of care experienced children and young people.
- 1.2 Corporate Parenting work is also fed into the Integrated Children's Services Outcome Groups and is included in the Integrated Children's Services Plan 2017 – 2020.
- 1.3 This report highlights our corporate parenting achievements over the last twelve months and details next steps and actions that will be undertaken over the forthcoming year.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 It is recommended that Council:
 - i. Agree that all Councillors commit to attending a corporate training session within the next twelve months.
 - ii. Note the Action Plan for the development of the Champions Board.
 - iii. Instruct the Lead Officer for Corporate Parenting to report back to Council in 2018. This will ensure that all Councillors have a broad overview of the activities undertaken to ensure Aberdeen City Council is meeting its Corporate Parenting responsibilities ahead of the first report due to the Scottish Government.
 - iv. Agree to continue to promote the corporate parenting agenda in Council business by raising awareness of the issues affecting care experienced young people and encouraging sustainable change for the benefit of our care experienced young people in the city.

3. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

- 3.1 Corporate Parenting refers to the collective responsibility of the Council, its community partners and other public bodies to provide good parenting for our care experienced young people. The Statutory Guidance on Corporate Parenting defines it as: “An organisation’s performance of actions necessary to uphold the rights and safeguard the wellbeing of a looked after child or care leaver, and through which physical, emotional, spiritual, social and educational development is promoted.” By ensuring that the needs of our care experienced young people are being met they are more likely to achieve positive outcomes irrespective of their care experience.
- 3.2 The term looked after children (LAC) is the legal term used in the legislation to describe children and young people who have experience of being in care. In recent years, the term care experienced young people (CEYP) is increasingly being used nationally to describe looked after children and young people as well as care leavers.
- 3.3 As at May 2017 we have 587¹ looked after children under the age of eighteen. Of these 19% are looked after at home; 20% are in kinship arrangements; 48% are looked after in foster care settings; 2% are with prospective adopters; >10% are looked after in children’s homes (in and out of the city); and <1% are in secure accommodation.
- 3.4 With the new legislation, Aberdeen City Council, like other local authorities throughout Scotland, has a duty to provide support, advice and guidance to children who are looked after and specified young people leaving care, up to their 26th birthday. The increase in entitlements, highlights the need to have meaningful intervention, change and opportunities to ensure that they have positive outcomes and are supported to be successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors.
- 3.5 The Act also extends the range of public bodies required to act as Corporate Parents as well as introducing new responsibilities on Corporate Parents to plan and collaborate to promote the wellbeing of care experienced young people. The Act requires local authorities to develop a corporate parenting plan detailing how it intends to deliver on its responsibilities. The action plan for the development of the Champions Board and associated areas provides the basis for Aberdeen City Council’s initial corporate parenting plan.
- 3.6 Under Part 9 of the Act, Section 61, Corporate Parents have a responsibility to report on how they are meeting their corporate parenting responsibilities under section 58, their planning and collaborating functions under sections 59 and 60, and its other functions, detailed in the Act. A corporate parenting report should be published at least once every three years. In addition, under Section 62 Corporate Parents have a duty to provide information to the Scottish Ministers. Such a request was received and completed in July 2017.

¹ ECS Looked After Children monthly Lead Service Managers data, May 2017, Covalent.

3.7 Life Changes Trust Funding

- 3.7.1 The Life Changes Trust (LCT) is an independent Scottish charity established with an endowment of £50 million from the Big Lottery Fund to improve the lives of two key groups in Scotland: care experienced young people and people affected by dementia. In 2015 Aberdeen City was successful in its application to receive funding of £219,117, from the Life Changes Trust to help further develop our Champions Board and associated activities over three years from April 2016.
- 3.7.2 The application process helped us produce an ambitious three year action plan for both developing the Champions Board and consolidating Corporate Parenting duties over three years². The plan details the strategy for our local Corporate Parents to build on young people's participation and to ensure that it is making a meaningful contribution to improving outcomes for individual young people.
- 3.7.3 This has been an exciting year for Corporate Parenting. Since the LCT award was announced there has been a renewed enthusiasm, momentum and commitment. For example, this year has seen the achievement of significant milestones from our plan as well as opportunities to strengthen participation in the city with a growing network of professionals working together to support care experienced young people.

3.8 Champions Board

- 3.8.1 The foundations of Aberdeen's Champions Board were established in 2013 with the inaugural meeting held in January 2014. It was based on the Dundee model which aims to provide care experienced young people with an opportunity to talk directly to decision makers about how best to remove complex barriers to multi-agency working so that innovative solutions could be agreed and implemented in a timely manner.
- 3.8.2 The Aberdeen City Champions Board has met three times in this reporting period; November 16, March 17 and June 17. Please see Appendix 1 for more detail.

3.9 Young People's Participation

- 3.9.1 An essential element of our Champions Board Action Plan has been to develop participation in the city that will help empower our care experienced children and young people and provide them with opportunities to develop their confidence, leadership and teamwork skills. Activities were arranged from August 2016 onwards with the aim of building participation in the city prior to the first annual residential.
- 3.9.2 Empowering care experienced young people to participate, contribute and lead is a crucial element of the Champions Board. Following the first annual week-long residential³ seven young people consistently supported and attended a fortnightly group. The group branded themselves as A.C.E. (Aberdeen's Care Experienced). The A.C.E. group is essential to

² Please see the *Champions Board Action Plan 2016 – 2019*, available in the Member's Library.

³ Please see '*Cromdale Report*' by Jasmine Urquhart – available in the Members library.

the success of the Champions Board and is working to present the issues and areas for improvement to its subsequent meetings. Our young people continue to inspire and impress us with their commitment and enthusiasm.

3.10 Appointment of Who Cares? Scotland Development Officer

3.10.1 With the support of the LCT funding Aberdeen City Council in partnership with Who Cares? Scotland recruited a Development Officer. The Development Officer is the nucleus for young people's participation; the facilitator to empower young people to take the Champions Board forward; and an inspiration for all corporate parents in the city to develop participation within their own organisations. The Development Officer facilitates regular meetings of the A.C.E. group; supports and empowers young people to participate in the Champions Board; links with other corporate parents in the city; and arranges and facilitates activities to raise awareness and encourage participation.

3.11 Children's Rights Service

3.11.1 The Children's Rights Service continues to hear and champion for looked after children. The two full time Children's Rights Officers within Children's Social Work contribute to building relationships with young people and encouraging them to attend activities. The Children's Rights Officers manage and coach the Children's Rights Development Assistants (CRDAs) to develop their confidence, knowledge and skills. The Children's Rights Officers and CRDAs work closely with the Who Cares? Scotland Development Officer in order to strengthen participation and the views of young people in the city.

3.12 Appointment of Children's Rights Development Assistants

3.12.1 LCT funding has also enabled the appointment of the three CRDAs who themselves must be care experienced young people. The CRDA contracts are fixed-term for one year and are for six hours per week.

3.12.2 The CRDAs are given projects and tasks related to the Corporate Parenting action plan and the Champions Board.

3.13 Raising Awareness

3.13.1 Over this reporting period young people have participated in several other events to inform policy and practice. There has been Community Planning Partnership wide interest in the A.C.E. group and in the CRDAs with many requests for them to be involved in consultations on service policy and practice. Please see Appendix 2 for further information.

3.14 Positive Destinations / Education

3.14.1 Aberdeen Guarantees continues to be a useful resource where young people and professionals can access information and support to encourage post school transitions into positive destinations.

3.14.2 Activity Agreements continue to be vital in developing the skills of some of our care experienced young people. The Activity Agreements team

provides support for children and young people in their transition journey from school to employment. There were 65 young people supported in Activity Agreements in 2016/17. Care experienced young people represented 34% of this cohort.

- 3.14.3 The latest data set for 2015/16⁴ is continuing to show improvement in looked after children's attainment and school leaver destinations. The data shows that 71% of looked after children achieved positive follow up destinations compared with 40% in 2009/10. Although, the outcomes for looked after children have improved there are still large gaps compared to all pupils. For example, for all pupils 91% achieved positive destinations, compared with the 71% of looked after children.
- 3.14.4 The Virtual School was established in December 2015. The Virtual School acts as a local authority champion to improve the education of our looked after children and to promote their educational achievement as if they were in a single school. The school does not exist in real terms. Children who are part of the Virtual School remain the responsibility of the school at which they are enrolled. The Virtual School is a term time provision and an organisational tool which has been created for the effective co-ordination of support for this vulnerable cohort at a strategic and operational level.
- 3.14.5 Since the creation of the school, there have been a number of developments to support our looked after children in education. Key to these developments has been the partnership between colleagues in Education, Social Work, Health and the Third Sector.
- 3.14.6 The Looked After Children Teacher continues to work closely with our care experienced young people, their social workers and carers to improve their educational attainment and attendance.
- 3.14.7 Another incentive that will contribute to the long term positive outcomes for looked after children is the implementation of the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library⁵. Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is monthly book gifting for looked after children aged under five. It is supported by the Dollywood Foundation and the Scottish Book Trust. Of the 138 eligible looked after children aged under five, 75% are enrolled in the Library and are receiving an age appropriate book every month.

3.15 Family Firm

- 3.15.1 Family Firm opportunities continue to focus on the Keen4Work programme that is delivered by Aberdeen City Council in partnership with Action for Children⁶. The programme offers twelve week work experience opportunities in addition to an Employability Award qualification for care experienced young people.
- 3.15.2 Last year 39 care experienced young people were supported by Keen4Work, eight of whom have completed placements and three young people gained employment. Some of the young people who are

⁴ Education Outcomes for Looked After Children 2015/16, <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/06/2978/1>

⁵ For more information on Dolly Parton's Imagination Library: <http://uk.imaginationlibrary.com/>

⁶ Please see the *Keen4Work Annual Report 2016* - available in the Members library.

participating in Keen4Work have taken an interest in other participation opportunities and vice versa. The generation of engagement helps add value to the Keen4Work programme.

- 3.15.3 Family Firm opportunities are interlinked with the aim of Aberdeen Guarantees in promoting positive destinations to the most vulnerable groups at risk of negative destinations. In developing Family Firm opportunities the links and communication to the Aberdeen Guarantees team has proved vital in getting the right opportunity for the right young person. In addition, Family Firm opportunities are advertised and included on the Aberdeen Guarantees website.

3.16 Individual Grants

- 3.16.1 The individual grants scheme funding for care experienced young people was launched in September 2016. In year one £6000 was allocated to the Fund. £3000 was from the Life Changes Trust match funded by Aberdeen City Council. It is managed by ACVO, the local Third Sector Interface, who are responsible for the launch, administration and management of the grants. There was a six week timeline for applications to be received between September and October 2016. Young people aged 14 – 25 could apply for a grant of up to £500 if they were looked after by Aberdeen City Council and had had at least three months care experience.
- 3.16.2 There were 90 applications in total. 43% of these were for driving lessons; 21% for clothes; 20% for furniture/decorating; 10% for laptops/college equipment; and 5% for miscellaneous. A decision panel consisting of two young people from A.C.E. and representatives from Education, the Children's Rights Service; Who Cares? Scotland; and ACVO itself, was created to assess and decide on the applications.
- 3.16.3 Given the high number of applications and the limited funds available alternative resources had been sought for some of the requests. For example, the Cash in Your Pocket Partnership ("CITPP") and other organisations were approached to help with a request for furniture or baby items.
- 3.16.4 There were 43 awards of funding made, ranging from an award of £500 for the strongest driving lesson application, to £50 for a provisional licence.

3.17 Communities, Housing & Infrastructure

- 3.17.1 The joint working protocol between the former Social Care and Well-being Directorate and Communities, Housing and Infrastructure Directorate continues to ensure that young people preparing to leave care receive an effective assessment for the allocation of appropriate housing. This ensures a planned move on for the individual and where possible, avoids the need to resort to homelessness legislation.

3.18 Wellbeing and Health

- 3.18.1 A joint working arrangement with NHS Grampian continues to ensure that all looked after children and young people have access to health

assessments and a GP. The NHS Grampian Looked After Children team report that 100% of all children and young people who are looked after and for whom information is forwarded to them continue to be offered an assessment.

- 3.18.2 In 2016, 97% of all children and young people who were looked after and for whom the relevant information and consent was received had health assessments carried out. The team actively contact parents, kinship carers, foster carers and key workers to help facilitate looked after children's health assessments being carried out.

3.19 Next Steps

- 3.19.1 The priority is the development of the Champions Board. The action plan identifies individuals and teams as having responsibility for specific tasks and their achievement will contribute to the successful delivery of the Council's corporate parenting responsibilities.
- 3.19.2 The second year of the action plan focuses on building and consolidating capacity. Activities that will help achieve this include the recruitment of more Children's Rights Development Assistants; commitment from the Champions Board partners to review their own services to better support care experienced young people; and raising the voice of care experienced young people.
- 3.19.3 The action plan provides an ambitious framework that will help ensure that we are meeting the needs of our care experienced children and young people under our corporate parenting responsibilities. A robust monitoring and evaluation process will be developed based on the Aberdeen 21, a tool developed within Children's Social work that is based on the GIRFEC SHANARRI outcomes. In addition, the voice of care experienced young people will be crucial in evaluating how well we are doing.
- 3.19.4 The last Corporate Parenting training for Councillors was delivered in 2012/13 with a one off session offered in 2014 by Who Cares? Scotland. This was before the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. The Scottish Government has made funding available to Who Cares? Scotland to deliver further training to local authorities. As there are newly appointed Councillors this would be a great opportunity for all the Councillors to attend Corporate Parenting training and demonstrate their commitment to Aberdeen's care experienced young people. Training dates will be circulated in due course.
- 3.19.5 The development of the Champions Board is helping to better understand what works to reduce poor experiences and improve outcomes for care experienced young people. Ensuring that Champions Board members have a clear understanding of care experienced young people's needs, is enabling them to identify future commitments that will lead to sustained change. This will further develop with the inclusion of additional corporate parents as a result of the 2014 Act.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications for the revenue or capital budget at this time.
- 4.2 However, with regard to developing opportunities for care experienced young people through the associated Family Firm policy, a business proposal was approved at Education & Children's Services Senior Management Team in February 2015 to allow funding from within existing budgets for 40 care experienced young people per year to participate in the Keen4Work 12 week work experience opportunities. As described above, this funding has supported the Keen4Work project in partnership with Action for Children to provide intensive support for those participating in Keen4Work. This initiative has been jointly funded with contributions from Inspire Scotland and the EU and is in its final year of funding.
- 4.3 With regard to developing Aberdeen City's Corporate Parenting Champion's Board a proposal was submitted to attain funding from the Life Changes Trust in 2015. As highlighted above, £219,117 funding was granted to allow for the development of the Champions Board over three years. The funding is now in its second year and the implications of this funding beyond March 2019 will need to be considered within the next twelve months.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 With regard to legal implications, the Corporate Parenting duties included in Part 9 of the Children & Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 Act are designed to ensure that the attention and resources of various publicly funded organisations are explicitly focused on the task of safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of looked after children, young people and care leavers. This Part extends the duties of corporate parents and the reporting responsibilities of local authorities. Aberdeen City Council now has a duty to report to Ministers every three years on how it is meeting its corporate parenting responsibilities detailed in the Act. Although the Scottish Government have recently requested information about the development of the local Action Plan the first formal submission is not required until 2018.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

Financial

- 6.1 There are no risks identified at this time.

Employee

- 6.2 There are no risks identified at this time.

Customer / citizen

- 6.3 There are no risks identified at this time.

Environmental

6.4 There are no risks identified at this time.

Technological

6.5 There are no risks identified at this time.

Legal

6.6 Although, there are no specific risks identified in relation to this report the Council has a responsibility to comply with its statutory corporate parenting duties and responsibilities. The Council will continue to monitor and report annually on corporate parenting to ensure that we mitigate any breach of our statutory responsibilities.

Reputational

6.7 A failure of Aberdeen City Council to comply and meet its Corporate Parenting statutory duties and responsibilities would reflect negatively on the Council.

7. IMPACT SECTION

7.1 An Equalities and Human Right Impact Assessment (EHRIA)⁷ has been completed for this annual report that seeks to inform Elected Members on the progress of the corporate parenting programme of work.

Economy

7.2 Not at this time.

People

7.3 The programme of work contributes to the Council's commitments set out in the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) under the Prosperous People theme. The priorities of this theme are that children are our future and that people are resilient, included and supported when needed.

Place

7.4 Not at this time.

Technology

7.5 Not at this time.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS (Available in the Members' Library)

- Champions Board Action Plan 2016 – 2019, Aberdeen City Council

⁷ Please see EHRIA form Corporate Parenting 2017 – available in the Members library

- Keen4Work Annual Report 2016, Action For Children
- Cromdale Report by Jasmine Urquhart, October 2016.
- Champions Board Discussion Leaflets – March and June

9. APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Champions Board 2017 Summary

Appendix 2: Raising Awareness Activities 2017 Summary

10. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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APPENDIX 1 : CHAMPIONS BOARD 2017 SUMMARY

With the Life Changes Trust funding there is now a renewed sense of optimism amongst Corporate Parents in Aberdeen. Our current Board members consist of care experienced young people and eleven executive level professional members representing Aberdeen City Council, the Police, NHS Grampian, the University of Aberdeen, the Robert Gordon University, North East of Scotland College and the Third Sector through ACVO. This membership has grown to include representatives of those groups to which the corporate parenting duty was extended in the 2014 legislation. There are plans to extend this invitation further to other Corporate Parents in the city once the Board is fully established and has a clear direction of travel.

The Aberdeen City Champions Board has met three times in this reporting period; November 16, March 17 and June 17.

The first substantial meeting on 29 November 2016 was very much an introduction and regroup with a focus on moving forward. It was held at the Amusement Centre at Aberdeen Beach and was kindly provided free of charge by the management. It was opened with a game of bowling followed by food and a formal meeting. The opportunity to meet and take down barriers was welcomed by all even if the games were more competitive than friendly at times! The meeting was a recap of what had happened previously and a focus on future plans. The young people had put together a draft Champions Board pledge document that was discussed. It was reaffirming to see everyone around the table full of enthusiasm and excitement about the future direction of the Board.

The Champions Board held on 29 March 2017⁸ was attended by four young people, eight executive professionals, three guests and two support staff. The focus of this meeting was education. A young person and a professional Champions Board member co-chaired the meeting. A short video designed by the young people illustrating how they felt about the stigma attached to being care experienced in the education system was shown. This was followed by three workshops aimed at encouraging discussion and generating action points. The A.C.E. group developed the workshops that focused on different aspects of care experienced young people's experience of education and provided a safe space to explore these issues together. Four action points were agreed by the Champions to be taken forward and the progress was reported back at the meeting in June.

The Champions Board held on 28 June 2017 was attended by nine young people, seven executive professionals, three guests and three support staff. The focus of this meeting was aftercare and was again co-chaired by a young person and a professional Champions Board member. The University of Aberdeen hosted the meeting, provided the venue, activity and food. The discussions from the workshops led to six action points being agreed that will be reported back to the following meeting in September.

⁸ Please see CB Discussions, Issue 1, 29/03/17 – available in the Members library

APPENDIX 2: Raising Awareness Activities 2017 Summary

Over this reporting period young people have participated in several other events to inform policy and practice. There has been Community Planning Partnership wide interest in the A.C.E. group and in the Children's Rights Development Assistants with many requests for them to be involved in consultations on service policy and practice. A.C.E. members were asked to present at Aberdeen's Integrated Children's Services Conference in November 2016. As described in more detail below four young people from the group participated in a questions and answer session with Aberdeen City Council's Director of Education and Children's Services in front of an audience of over 200 practitioners from across the city. This opportunity helps raise awareness of corporate parenting responsibilities and some of the issues affecting care experienced young people with regard to education.

Six Keen4Work (programme described below) participants took part in the consultations for the Integrated Children's Services plan. The plan also includes information on Corporate Parenting and the Champions Board action plan.

A.C.E. members have helped lead on consultations with children in residential services to gain their views on the use of young people's logs. The feedback from this has helped inform the review and subsequent changes to the policy.

A.C.E. members have also helped train members of the Children's Panel through the Robert Gordon University and Who Cares? Scotland. A.C.E. members have also had the opportunity to feed into a Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) young person's board in Inverness regarding the Children's Hearing Service.

Young people have been involved in interviewing staff for residential services and have helped inform the decision of who was appointed to the positions. Members of the A.C.E. group have attended and delivered a workshop at a Celebration Residential event that was attended by most of Aberdeen's residential staff.

An A.C.E. stall was included amongst over 50 exhibitors at Aberdeen's Learning Festival held in February 2017. Two Children's Rights Development Assistants and the Development Officer ran the stall and were available to talk with practitioners and answer any questions. The Children's Commissioner for Scotland was also a visitor to the A.C.E. stall and was keen to talk to the two Children's Rights Development Assistants about A.C.E. and the Champions Board work in Aberdeen.

For Care Day in February 2017 some of the A.C.E. group attended a breakfast, arranged by Who Cares? Scotland, with the Minister for Childcare and Early Years. The young people got the opportunity to talk to the Minister about some of their experiences, issues facing young people in Aberdeen and what the future plans were to effect change in Aberdeen. This event received press coverage and aided raising awareness of the issues facing care experienced young people locally and nationally.

Information packs have been developed by the Development Officer to raise awareness of A.C.E., Who Cares? Scotland and what is going on in the city regarding participation. These information packs will be sent to all Aberdeen's care experienced young people within and out of the city. The aim is to provide all Aberdeen's care experienced young people with the information on the existing support, for young people to feel less isolated, especially for those out of the city; and to encourage young people to get involved.