

THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CORPORATE PARENTS

To: **Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee**

Meeting Date: **13th December 2017**

From: **Sarah-Jane Smedmor
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Purpose: **This report outlines the roles and responsibilities of the
Corporate Parent.**

Recommendation: **The Committee is asked to note the roles and
responsibilities of the Corporate Parent for
Cambridgeshire's Looked After Children.**

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 A raft of legislation including the Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004 have successively strengthened public bodies' responsibilities to looked after children. Statutory Guidance issued by the Department for Education in 2012 also specifically laid out the statutory roles of Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children's Services to cover both the social care and education services of the local authority. These individuals should provide strong leadership and ensure that there is a clear line of accountability for children's well-being. They have particular responsibility for vulnerable groups of children, including those for whom they are corporate parents. The Lead Member should provide *political* leadership whilst the Director of Children's Services should provide *professional* leadership.
- 1.2 Although not a statutory requirement, most local authorities have established a group of elected members to oversee the corporate parenting function of the local authority. All councillors and council officers share corporate parenting responsibility and cannot abdicate this responsibility in favour of those they see as being more central, but this does not mean that everyone has the same role
- 1.3 Cambridgeshire County Council established a Corporate Parenting Board comprising elected members nominated by the Children and Young People's Committee, invited officers and representatives from the Voices Matter looked after children's group.

2. MAIN ISSUES

- 2.1 The Corporate Parenting Board has been re-constituted as the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee of the Children and Young People (CYP) Committee. This clarifies and strengthens arrangements for oversight and decision making in respect of corporate parenting by having clear accountability to the CYP Committee, a scheme of delegated authority and framework for decision making in respect of Corporate Parenting.
- 2.2 When a child comes into the care of the Local Authority, they become what is known as being Looked after Children and the County Council becomes the child's corporate parent. The term corporate parent means the collective responsibility of the council, elected members, employees and partner agencies for providing the best possible care and safeguarding for the children who are looked after and those who are care leavers, by the council. A child in the care of the Council looks to the whole Council to be the best parent it can be to the child. Every member and employee of the Council has the statutory responsibility to act for the child in the same way a good parent would act for their child.
- 2.3 Corporate parents champion every opportunity to help young people in care to achieve their full potential and to have a successful transition into adulthood. Corporate parents seek to provide the necessary life skills, experience and confidence for our young people to thrive.
- 2.4 To ensure Corporate Parents have the best possible information about all of the Children and Young People Looked After in Cambridgeshire and care leavers, it is essential to hear first-hand from those children and young people who have been Looked After, as to their experiences. Information regarding children's health and emotional wellbeing, education and accommodation will be provided by Officers.

- 2.5 Information from the Voices Matter Panel, who are an established and highly successful group of young people who have been or are still Looked After, will be shared on a regular basis with the Corporate Parenting Sub Committee.
- 2.6 The question for us all as Corporate Parents is, 'Would this be good enough for my child?' Our Looked After Children should feel cared about, not just cared for.

3. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Corporate Parenting activity needs to be strengthened by
- An increased effectiveness of the corporate parenting function through challenge, scrutiny and clear decision making supported by good performance data and outcomes reporting.
 - Consistent and clear engagement in the corporate parenting agenda by officers across the council (including other Directorates), Elected Members and partners.
 - Greater join-up by all parts of the Council and in all committees of the Council in thinking about how decisions affect those children in the council's care.
 - Greater consideration as to how the voices of children and care leavers are heard and considered as part of Corporate Parenting processes, including engagement by Elected Members and Officers with the Children in Care Council (Voices Matter).

SOURCE DOCUMENTS

| Source Documents | Location |
|---|--------------------------|
| Children Act 1989- in particular Care Planning Regulations for Looked After Children Working Together 2015 | Department for Education |