

**PROPOSALS FOR FUTURE ENGAGEMENT WITH CHILDREN IN CARE AND CARE LEAVERS AND IN RELATION TO THE CORPORATE PARENTING SUB-COMMITTEE FORMAT**

- To:** Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee
- Meeting Date:** 15 July 2020
- From:** Nicola Curley  
Assistant Director Children's Services
- Electoral division(s):** All
- Outcome:** To report on the developing Participation offer to Children in Care in Cambridgeshire, and to propose amendments to the Corporate Parenting Committee format that will facilitate increasingly effective engagement with children and young people.
- Recommendation:** The Sub-Committee is recommended to:
- a) note the information within the report relating to the Participation Offer.
  - b) Agree the proposed meeting changes to facilitate increasingly effective engagement with Children in Care and Care Leavers.
  - c) Agree the new reporting format of a Corporate Parenting Scorecard

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## Summary:

- The participation service have been, and are continuing to look at how children in care and care leavers can be involved more in the decisions made on their behalf.
- This will include changes to the Children in Care Council and a Care Leavers drop in being organised.
- Members of the Children in Care Council will be given the opportunity to attend the Corporate Parenting Committee at informal meetings to be able to speak to Members about what they would like.
- Children's Services have been working with colleagues in Health to look at making changes to processes around Initial and Review Health Assessment referrals.

## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1.1 This report focuses on providing an update on the progress of the expanding Participation Offer in Cambridgeshire and the role of the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee following the Focused Visit in respect of Children in Care by Ofsted in February 2020.
- 1.1.2 The specific recommendation made by Inspectors was that we needed to improve "*the impact of children's involvement and participation, so that children are told what is being done in response to their views and wishes, both for their own individual case plans and when contributing to strategic service planning.*" It is intended that the proposals in this report will contribute to addressing the issues around strategic service planning specifically.

## 2. MAIN ISSUES

### 2.1 The Blended Participation Model

- 2.1.1 Significant work has been undertaken by the Participation Service in adapting our work with Children in Care and Care Leavers to enhance their opportunities to be involved in both their own individual Care Plans and to have a meaningful role in influencing strategy and policy across the Corporate Parenting arena. There has been the opportunity afforded by the greater joint working with colleagues in Peterborough to enhance the Participation Service and to consider a wider, stepped approach to participation going forward. This is still in development, and the Participation report will explain this in more detail, but will include three

tiers of participation activity that would ultimately feed into the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee, such as:

- Virtual participation activity offered to all Children in Care – keeping in touch; carrying out surveys; asking specific questions on topics; feedback on proposals/documents from the Service; and critically ensuring that we deliver feedback to young people on what they have told us or asked us to do.
- Social activities – holiday events where groups of children get together for an event and there is some low key consultation undertaken or awards are presented. Members would be warmly encouraged to attend events such as these.
- A more formalised Children in Care Council. This would meet possibly bi-monthly, and be attended by the Heads of Service for Corporate Parenting. Guests could be invited to address specific topics as requested by the young people. This group would consider key items in more depth; create the survey questions for the virtual group; make virtual content; and decide what they wanted to ask the Corporate Parenting Committee to scrutinise at the informal meetings. We would like to work towards a shared Children in Care Council across the two Authorities but this will take time to develop.
- Care Leavers drop in – this will be used as a parallel activity to the CIC Council.

## 2.2 **Facilitating More Effective Engagement with Children and Young People**

2.2.1 In order to assure Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee members of their opportunity to continue to scrutinise the activity of officers and the Service effectively, but also to dovetail with the various children's participation groups in order to be able to fully engage with young people, the following recommendations are made:

- That the Sub-Committee continues to hold six meetings a year, but, due to the special circumstances of young people attending the meeting, that it arranges its business over three formal and three informal meetings. The meetings would be themed around Placement, Education and Health, and the formal and informal meetings link to each other and provide different perspectives on the same issues. This would provide an opportunity for a single topic to be considered in depth to enable councillors to fully understand the complexity of the issue in the round, have a proper opportunity to scrutinise the information before them and challenge officers in a timely and thorough manner. The formal

meetings remain public fora, where formal reports are received and officers are held to account for service delivery and outcomes.

- That the informal meetings are held alternately, and are co-chaired by Councillor Every, Chair of the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee, and a member of the Children in Care Council as the model develops. Officers would report back on promised activity, but there is little other formal reporting as this is seen as an opportunity for Corporate Parents to listen to young people to talk freely about their experiences in care and as care leavers, and discuss ways to improve services going forward. Case studies could be provided to enable more detailed discussion of particular areas, and to support contributions by the young people attending.
- That a bespoke reporting scorecard is developed for the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee that enables Members to receive key information in a format that highlights areas of success or concern quickly.
- That provision is made for informal briefing notes to be circulated to Sub-Committee Members when required in response to emerging situations or concerns due to the potential gaps between the formal Sub-Committee sitting. A draft pro forma is attached at Appendix 1 for information.
- To support the Sub-Committee in enhancing their current ways of working and ensure that Members' feedback is included in the new model, it is proposed to deliver a workshop to the Sub-Committee to facilitate the adoption of the changes.

2.2.2 This is felt to be an effective way to address the issues raised in the last Ofsted visit and move structures forward, but most importantly to reassure the Sub-Committee that they are able to spend purposeful time with the Children in Care that they are so passionate about supporting, hearing their concerns and being able to act upon them in a timely manner.

### **3. UPDATE ON NEW HEALTH PROCESSES FOR INITIAL AND REVIEW HEALTH ASSESSMENTS**

3.1 Since the last time the Sub-Committee met, there has also been significant progress made in developing new systems to trigger Initial and Review Health Assessments, since the implementation of the LiquidLogic case management system in January 2020. This had been a challenging area historically due to the previous system in Cambridgeshire County Council and the lack of alignment with colleague health systems, resulting in less effective performance than we would like.

3.2 I am very pleased to report that a joint working group has been able to create a new process where requests for assessments are triggered automatically when children come into care, and a pro forma within the system pre-populates information to ensure that health colleagues have all the information they need in order to be able to carry out effective medicals. This was implemented on the system on 21 June 2020 due to some understandable delays in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic, but staff have already reported how helpful it is to structure their work.

3.3 It is important to note that during the pandemic, all assessments have been completed virtually, unless concerns identified a need for a specific face to face assessment. Our current performance stands at 88% for initial health assessments (IHAs) for children placed within Cambridgeshire and 0% for children outside the County, giving an overall percentage of 58%. As Members are aware, we continue to be unable to influence other areas to prioritise our children, and this is an on-going national issue that will impact on local performance until it is resolved.

#### **4. ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

##### **4.1 A good quality of life for everyone**

It is our view that these recommendations enable more direct and meaningful engagement for the Sub-Committee with the issues of importance to our Children in Care and Care Leavers, and so will enhance its ability to contribute to the corporate priority.

##### **4.2 Thriving places for people to live**

There are no significant implications within this category

##### **4.3 The best start for Cambridgeshire's children**

These proposals will support the Sub-Committee in its goal of repairing and enhancing new best starts for our most vulnerable children and young adults.

#### **5. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS**

##### **5.1 Resource Implications**

*There are no significant implications within this category*

##### **5.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications**

*There are no significant implications within this category*

##### **5.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications**

*There are no significant implications within this category*

**5.4 Equality and Diversity Implications**

It is hoped that this model will improve the access of our Children in Care and Care Leavers to the decision making bodies in the Council, and will ensure that all service activity is more rigorously scrutinised through this lens as well as others.

**5.5 Engagement and Communications Implications**

We aim to significantly improve engagement with our Children in Care and Care Leavers with the adoption of this new model of working.

**5.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement**

*There are no significant implications within this category*

**5.7 Public Health Implications**

*There are no significant implications within this category*

Source Documents	Location
None	