



Report to Policy Committee

Author/Lead Officer of Report: Isobel Fisher,
Assistant Director, Children & Families

Tel: 07557755548

Report of: Meredith Dixon-Teasdale, Strategic Director of Children's Services

Report to: Education, Children and Families Policy Committee

Date of Decision: 8th February 2024

Subject: Corporate Parenting Strategy 2023-26

Type of Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) undertaken	Initial <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Full <input type="checkbox"/>
Insert EIA reference number and attach EIA	2507	
Has appropriate consultation/engagement taken place?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Has a Climate Impact Assessment (CIA) been undertaken?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If YES, give details as to whether the exemption applies to the full report / part of the report and/or appendices and complete below:-		
<i>"The (report/appendix) is not for publication because it contains exempt information under Paragraph (insert relevant paragraph number) of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended)."</i>		

Purpose of Report:

Corporate Parenting is the term used in law to describe the collective responsibility to provide care for and support children in our care and our care leavers to ensure they have every opportunity to reach their full potential.

The Corporate Parenting Strategy 2023-26 demonstrates the Council's commitment to ensuring that the life chances of every child and young person in its care are improved in line with their peers. We will act as strong advocates to ensure their needs are met in the best way possible, and to prioritise access to resources. We believe that every child and young person in Sheffield should have the best possible start in life and the opportunity to thrive. We want to ensure that care experienced children and young people receive the right support, at the right time and in the right place.

When providing a service for our children and young people in care, we will challenge ourselves by asking, '*would this be good enough for my child?*'.

This strategy outlines our commitment to ensure that children are at the centre of our practice, that they feel safe and secure, have stability in their lives, that they are emotionally well and that we help them to achieve their full potential by supporting them in fulfilling their ambitions and aspirations.

Recommendations:

The Education Children and Families Policy Committee is recommended to

1. Approve the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2023-26 as set out at Appendix 1.

Background Papers:

None

Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Corporate Parenting Strategy 2023-26

Lead Officer to complete:-		
1	I have consulted the relevant departments in respect of any relevant implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist, and comments have been incorporated / additional forms completed / EIA completed.	Finance: <i>Kayleigh Inman</i>
		Legal: <i>Patrick Chisholm</i>
		Equalities & Consultation: <i>Bashir Khan</i>
		Climate: <i>Kathryn Warrington</i>
<i>Legal, financial/commercial and equalities implications must be included within the report and the name of the officer consulted must be included above.</i>		
2	SLB member who approved submission:	<i>Meredith Dixon-Teasdale</i>
3	Committee Chair consulted:	<i>Cllr Dawn Dale</i>
4	I confirm that all necessary approval has been obtained in respect of the implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist and that the report has been approved for submission to the Committee by the SLB member indicated at 2. In addition, any additional forms have been completed and signed off as required at 1.	
	Lead Officer Name: <i>Isobel Fisher</i>	Job Title: <i>Assistant Director, Children & Families</i>
	Date: <i>23/01/24</i>	

1. PROPOSAL

- 1.1 'Corporate Parenting is the term used to refer to the responsibility of the council, to provide the best possible care and protection for children and young people who are 'looked after'. At the core of this responsibility is the moral duty to provide the kind of support that any good parents would provide their own children. This includes enhancing the quality of life of looked after children as well as simply keeping them safe.' - House of Commons Children, Schools and Family Committee March 2009.
- 1.2 In February 2018 the Department for Education published Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities for applying Corporate Parenting Principles for children in their care and care leavers. As corporate parents, elected members and council officers have a statutory responsibility for the wellbeing of looked after children. Elected members play a large part in holding officers and partners to account as well as being proactive in the corporate parenting role themselves.
- 1.3 This Corporate Parenting strategy describes how the local authority and its partners, such as housing, health services, police and schools, will act as 'responsible parents' to children and young people living within their care. Effective corporate parenting requires everyone involved to recognise their role as corporate parents and understand what they can contribute to enable us to be the best corporate parents we can be to all children and young people in our care.
- 1.4 When providing a service for our children and young people in care we should always challenge ourselves by asking, 'would this be good enough for my child?'. It is our responsibility to make sure that children and young people for whom we are responsible feel safe and secure, have stability in their lives, and that they are supported to achieve their full potential and fulfil their ambitions and aspirations.
- 1.5 This strategy demonstrates our commitment to ensuring that the life chances of every child and young person in our care are improved in-line with their peers. This requires us all to be strong advocates to ensure their needs are met in the best way possible, and to prioritise access to our resources, in order to improve outcomes of children and young people in care and care leavers

2. HOW DOES THIS DECISION CONTRIBUTE ?

- 2.1 The Committee's endorsement will allow the local authority and its partners to deliver the key aims for care experienced children and young people to:
- a) To help develop their relationships and their sense of belonging
 - b) To keep them healthy
 - c) To support them in their education and to develop their social skills
 - d) To give them a voice and ensure they understand their history and journey
 - e) To provide stability and promote resilience
 - f) To keep them safe and free from bullying and discrimination due to their care status

3. HAS THERE BEEN ANY CONSULTATION?

- 3.1 Key to children and young people's voice in Sheffield is the Bright Spots survey. The Bright Spots programme is a partnership between Coram Voice and the University of Oxford, funded by the Hadley Trust. It supports local authorities to systematically consult with and listen to the looked after children and care leavers, about the things that are important to them. The surveys also include some core well-being measures that are used in other national surveys so that we can compare the wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers to the wellbeing of children and young people in the general population.
- 3.2 This Corporate Parenting Strategy 2023-26 is fundamentally based on the findings of the 2023 Bright Spots survey. Two surveys were conducted with children looked after (Your Life, Your Care) and care leavers (Your Life After Care). Bright Spots identify four domains that are important to children and young people. Our corporate parenting priorities in the Strategy are based around these domains. We have added a fifth domain which focusses on improving the experience of carers so they are best placed to provide a nurturing home:

Priority 1: Relationships – the people in your life

Priority 2: Resilience – parity of opportunity growing up

Priority 3: Rights – entitlements, voice and participation

Priority 4: Recovery – being and feeling healthy and happy

Priority 5: Caring for those that care: Children and young people are nurtured by carers and workers who are well-resourced, valued and supported.

4. RISK ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

4.1 Equality Implications

4.1.1 Decisions need to consider the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty contained in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010.

4.1.2 This is the duty to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

4.1.3 The Equality Act 2010 identifies the following groups as a protected characteristic: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex and sexual orientation. Also identified and considered is care experience which is now treated as a protected characteristic in Sheffield.

4.1.4 An equality impact assessment has been carried out. The Corporate Parenting Strategy sets out how the Council will fulfil its role as a Corporate Parent and meet its statutory duty by ensuring that all our children and young people in and leaving care in Sheffield are given the best life chances in line with their peers in the general population, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief or sex and sexual orientation.

4.2 Financial and Commercial Implications

4.2.1 Where there is a need for the Council to commission services from third party organisations to deliver the Strategy, this must be done in compliance with the Council's own Financial and Procurement Procedure Rules and the Public Contracts Regulations. Early consideration needs to be given in the development of any commissioned services to ensure the chosen delivery vehicle includes the flexibility to meet the requirements of the Strategy.

4.3 Legal Implications

4.3.1 *'Corporate Parenting is the term used to refer to the responsibility of the Council, to provide the best possible care and protection for children and young people who are 'looked after'. At the core of this responsibility is the moral duty to provide the kind of support that any good parents would provide their own children. This includes enhancing the quality of life of looked after children as well as simply keeping them safe.'* (House of Commons Children, Schools and Family Committee, March 2009).

4.3.2 In order to thrive, children and young people have certain key needs that a good parent generally meets. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 introduced a set of Corporate Parenting Principles for looked after children and care leavers up to the age of 25 that set out Corporate Parents should undertake:

- a) To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and young people;
- b) To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
- c) To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;
- d) To help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;
- e) To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;
- f) For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and
- g) To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

4.3.3 Section 10 of the Children Act 2004 sets out the responsibility to make arrangements to promote co-operation between 'relevant partners' with a view to improving the well-being of children in their area. This should include arrangements in relation to looked-after children and care leavers. Section 10(5)

of the 2004 Act places a duty on relevant partners to co-operate with the local authority in the making of these arrangements, therefore promoting and ensuring a joined-up approach to improving the well-being of children in their area.

4.4 Climate Implications

4.4.1 No direct climate implications arise from this report. The Sustainability and Climate Change Team has been consulted and are in agreement no further action is required on CIA.

4.5 Other Implications

There are no specific other implications for this report

5. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

5.1 Alternative option not to approve the new Strategy, is rejected. This would mean the Council does not have an accurate and up to date strategy that sets out its commitment in line with the corporate parenting duty. Governance of the delivery of the strategy will not be articulated and understood and may result in failure to escalate issues as they arise.

6. **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

6.1 Approval of Corporate Parenting Board to undertake the monitoring and oversight of progress against the delivery plan, and annual review of the aspirations, will ensure consistent oversight of the delivery of the strategy and escalation as appropriate if issues arise.

6.2 We are accountable for the delivery of our strategy to:

- Sheffield Children in Care Council and Sheffield Care Leavers' Union
- Young People's Reverse Scrutiny Panel
- Sheffield Corporate Parenting Board

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