

## Children and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee

2 February 2012

### The County Council's responsibilities as Corporate Parents

#### Recommendations:

- (1) To consider the review of the existing arrangements for monitoring the Local Authority's corporate parenting responsibilities through the Elected Member Corporate Parenting Steering Group
- (2) To support the annual delivery of training for elected members on Corporate Parenting
- (3) To recognise and give continued support to opportunities to enhance the internal Fostering Service as the key service through which corporate parenting duties and aspirations are delivered

#### 1.0 Key issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on the current position in respect of looked after children and young people. It reiterates the County Council's position with regard to its Corporate Parenting duties and responsibilities, considers current activity and outcome data, and summarises some of the key issues emerging from the Ofsted Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children Services, published on 16 December 2011.
- 1.2 The Committee is asked to consider the recommendations above, which are designed to strengthen existing arrangements and to address areas for service improvement as highlighted in the recent Ofsted inspection. Corporate parenting is the responsibility of all elected members and it is proposed to reinforce that responsibility through the introduction of an annual training event.

#### 2.0 Corporate Parenting

- 2.1 The responsibility of Local Authorities in improving outcomes and actively promoting the life chances of children they look after has become known as 'corporate parenting', in recognition that the task must be shared by the whole Local Authority and partner agencies.
- 2.2 The role of the corporate parent is to act as the best possible parent for each child they look after and to advocate on his/her behalf to secure the best possible outcomes. However, they cannot fulfil this responsibility without the

full co-operation and support of a range of other agencies that provide services to children and their families. All partners in the Children's Trust should share responsibility for narrowing the outcomes gap for looked after children, and Children's Trust Boards should regularly review services for looked after children to ensure that they are effectively safeguarded and provided with the opportunities they need.

- 2.3 The Care Matters White Paper in 2007 gave further impetus to work already started by Warwickshire County Council to secure better outcomes for looked after children and young people. The County Council first approved its Corporate Parenting Policy, Strategy and Action Plan on 12 December 2006. This provided a firm foundation for making on-going improvements in the provision of services and support to children and young people who are in care or who have been in care. The policy is overseen by a steering group of elected members.
- 2.4 During 2007, further work was completed with young people in developing the Warwickshire Pledge and arrangements for its Children in Care Council. The Pledge is essentially a statement of 'promises' to ensure that children and young people in care are aware of their rights and are supported and consulted in all matters that are significant to them. Endorsed by Cabinet on 31 July 2008, the Pledge was approved by Warwickshire County Council on 9 September 2008.

### 3.0 Current position of Warwickshire's Looked After Children and Young People

- 3.1 During the period April 2008 – March 2011, there was an 18.7% increase in the looked after population in Warwickshire. Since April 2011, this has increased further – rising from 630 to 670 looked after children on 30 November 2011. At any one time, 80-90 of the looked after population will be unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people.

**Number of children looked after by District at end of year, 2008 to 2011**

District	31 March 2008	31 March 2009	31 March 2010	31 March 2011
North Warwickshire	41	57	56	62
Nuneaton & Bedworth	142	159	167	197
Rugby	65	67	82	99
Stratford	55	59	66	68
Warwick	119	114	115	104
Integrated Disability Service	19	19	21	17
Asylum Seekers	37	60	66	87
Youth Offending	3	1	1	2
No Allocated Team	1	0	0	0
<b>Warwickshire Total</b>	<b>482</b>	<b>536</b>	<b>574</b>	<b>636</b>

### LAC Population Demographics Summary at end of year, 2008-2011

Number of Children Looked After	31 March 2008	31 March 2009	31 March 2010	31 March 2011
	<b>482</b>	<b>536</b>	<b>574</b>	<b>636</b>
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	271	316	341	382
Female	211	220	233	254
<b>Age</b>				
Under 1	20	24	37	26
1 - 4	66	66	65	112
5 - 9	96	114	114	100
10 - 15	231	227	246	248
16 - 17	69	105	112	149
<b>Other Demographics</b>				
Disability	39	41	39	31
Asylum Seekers	37	60	66	87

### Legal Status of Looked After Children at end of year, 2008 to 2011

Legal Status	LAC March 2008	LAC March 2009	LAC March 2010	LAC March 2011
Interim Care Order	80	68	108	154
Full Care Order	212	215	202	203
S20 Accommodation	164	208	225	245
Freed for Adoption	6	6	5	2
Placement Order	19	35	31	31
On Remand or Committed for Trial/Sentence	1	3	3	1
Police Protection	0	1	0	0
<b>Warwickshire Total</b>	<b>482</b>	<b>536</b>	<b>574</b>	<b>636</b>

### Number of children starting to be looked after during years, 2008 to 2011

Age	2007/8	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11
Under 1	30	35	48	50
1 - 4	35	45	43	57
5 - 9	35	40	28	30
10 - 15	115	125	117	96
16 - 17	30	15	22	57
<b>Warwickshire Total</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>290</b>

- 3.2 The data shows overwhelmingly that children and young people become looked after due to abuse or neglect or the impact of family stress and dysfunction or absent parenting. Neglect, domestic violence and emotional and mental health issues also feature significantly as secondary needs factors.

- 3.3 There has been a corresponding increase in the number of children made subject of legal measures (Interim Care Orders) due to child protection concerns.
- 3.4 The largest number of looked after children are within the age range of 10 to 15, and the number of young people who are looked after at ages 16 to 17 has seen an increase, up by 8.5% between 31 March 2009 and 31 March 2011. These now account for 20% of the total looked after population. This is the result of Warwickshire's Right2BCared4 and Staying Put initiatives that have appropriately allowed young people to remain in foster care for longer, as well as the impact of the Southwark Judgment which gave 'looked after' status to homeless young people aged 16+. As a result, there are a higher number of care leavers who will require support in terms of training and employment and the transition into independent living arrangements.
- 3.5 The majority of looked after children are placed with Warwickshire approved foster carers, with the service having 341 approved fostering households on 30 November 2011. 83% of children who require a foster placement are placed with Warwickshire approved carers, with other children living with parents, in residential care, with Independent Fostering Agency placements or within other supportive environments. The Fostering Service was inspected by Ofsted in June 2011 and was judged as 'good with some outstanding features'. Foster carers were seen to contribute effectively to the overall corporate parenting role of the Council, and those seen by the inspectors believe social worker practice is effective in ensuring children and young people are safe. Foster carers receive good levels of training and regular support.
- 3.6 Warwickshire is banded highly in relation to the outcomes for looked after children against the national indicators. It also has a range of targeted support services in place for looked after children and their carers, such as the Virtual School, a designated doctor and nurse, and Journeys – which is a targeted emotional health and well-being service (see Appendix A).

#### **4.0 Ofsted Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children's Services**

- 4.1 The recent Ofsted Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children's Services gave the Local Authority an overall rating of Grade 2 - Good, with good capacity to improve. This means that in both areas, the service exceeded minimum requirements. The inspection found that:
- 'The overall effectiveness of services for looked after children and young people are good. The needs of looked after children and young people are prioritised well by the council, the health service and other partners and are effectively championed by the lead member.'
  - 'The Fostering Service has good evidence of all round improvements... there is an improving picture of placement stability'. However short term stability (judged by the number of children who experience three or more

placement moves) has also improved over the past four years, and while being the same as similar councils remain higher than nationally.'

- 'Performance across performance indicators for looked after children and young people continues to be good, and in most cases better than similar councils or nationally.'
- 'The Care4Me survey shows that the vast majority of looked after children and young people feel safe...The After Care survey is not as positive, with almost half the respondents indicating they were not living in the right place or not believing they had had sufficient help in preparation for leaving care.'
- 'The achievement of looked after children and young people is good and improving. GCSE results showed an improving trend and in 2011 were above the national average in the proportion of care leavers achieving five A\*-C including English and Maths and five A\*- C overall. Younger looked after children exceeded the targets set, although most did not reach the national expectations for their age group – these results are linked to special educational needs and/or disabilities and behavioural and emotional difficulties. Overall, the educational gap for looked after children and young people is narrowing, although this is at a slower rate in key stage 2'.
- 'A close relationship is maintained by senior managers and elected members and members of the Children in Care Council by means of their regular meetings to discuss issues arising for looked after children, young people and care leavers... this dialogue has improved their awareness of the experiences of looked after children and young people.'

4.2 The evidence shows that the County Council is overall doing well as a corporate parent. However, this must be seen in the context of looked after children's still under performing and having higher levels of need and difficulties when compared with their peers who are not looked after. It also recognised that the County Council has essentially delivered its corporate parenting responsibilities through the investment in Foster Care Service. This has provided the majority of looked after children and young people with a secure basis from which the best possible outcomes can be achieved.

4.3 Ofsted identified 10 areas for improvement (see Appendix B) and the following three are significant within the context of this report:

- Elected members should ensure that they are familiar with the key priorities established by the Corporate Parenting Board in order to ensure good outcomes for looked after children and young people, and the development of the apprenticeship schemes.
- To develop the work of the Tiffin Club to ensure that strategic support for the Council's corporate parenting role is improved, including the promotion of apprenticeship opportunities within the council and with local business partners (see Appendix C for the Terms of Reference for the Tiffin Club).

- Ensure that there is sufficient appropriate housing to meet the needs of care leavers and that any temporary accommodation offered is in a safe environment.
- 4.4 An Action Plan has been developed in response to the inspection findings. The areas for improvement suggest that better outcomes for looked after children and young people could be secured through the formal establishment of a Corporate Parenting Board. The current governance arrangements for corporate parenting are found in the inter-relationships between the Elected Member Corporate Parenting Steering Group, the Corporate Parenting Development Group and the Children in Care Council. Ofsted has identified that elected members should ensure that they are familiar with the corporate parenting priorities and, on reflection, this might be achieved more effectively through the setting up of a formal Corporate Parenting Board with a link to the Children's Trust and with strengthened relationships with elected members across the Council.
- 4.5 A Corporate Parenting Board in Warwickshire would set the priorities for looked after children and, as a formal structure, would maintain oversight and might assist the Local Authority further in the execution of its responsibilities in bringing services together and coordinating their activity. The Board would potentially have a stronger influence across the Council and partner agencies through the Children's Trust Executive Board arrangements.
- 4.6 In addition, the importance of maintaining and enhancing the County Council's commitment to and support for the Fostering Service is required to ensure that Warwickshire remains competitive in being able to recruit a suitable range of people to foster. This will require our fostering allowances and fees to be in line with recommended rates, and for the service to have the scope to provide more placement choice with the opportunity to develop further a range of placements to meet the particular needs of children and young people in care. It is also intended that short-term placement stability levels will improve.

## **5.0 Proposals**

- 5.1 It is proposed that:
- The lead member for Children and Young People's Services and the Elected Member Corporate Parenting Steering Group consider the Ofsted inspection report and make recommendations regarding the establishment of a Corporate Parenting Board. The existing Elected Member Corporate Parenting Steering Group should give consideration to its membership, purpose, aims and objectives, business support and reporting arrangements. The proposals would be presented to Cabinet in due course.
  - All Elected Members are conversant with their responsibilities as corporate parents through an annual training event and receive Corporate Parenting Briefings as determined by the Board.
  - Members recognise and support the maintenance of the Fostering Service in Warwickshire as the primary vehicle through which the County Council

fulfils its corporate parenting duties and secures the best possible outcomes for looked after children and young people.

## 6.0 Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

- 6.1 For the review of the Elected Member Corporate Parenting Steering Group to be reviewed within 3 months, by April 2012, and the proposals presented to Cabinet thereafter.
- 6.2 For Elected Member training to be delivered in the spring each year.

### Background papers



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CP Strategy 09 -  
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**Children's Performance Support Data for Social Care Operational Teams**  
**Warwickshire Performance Summary Sheet**

●●●●● VERY GOOD	●●●● GOOD	●●● ACCEPTABLE	●● ASK QUESTIONS	● INVESTIGATE
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Indicator	07/08 Outturn	08/09 Outturn	09/10 Outturn	10/11 Outturn	Banding (Using 2007/8 PAF bands)
Number of Children in Need per 10,000	Not collected	242.0	337.5	286.9	N/A
Number of Looked After Children per 10,000	43.2	48.0	51.3	57.2	N/A
NI 62 – Short term stability	12.2%	11.9%	11.8%	11.8%	●●●●● VERY GOOD
PAF B79 – LAC in family placements	93.4%	95.3%	94.4%	91.9%	●●●● GOOD
NI 63 – Long term stability	69.7%	68.60%	66.1%	73.1%	●●●●● VERY GOOD
PAF C63– Participation in LAC reviews	99.5%	98.7%	98.9%	97.6%	●●●●● VERY GOOD
NI 66 – Timeliness of LAC reviews	94.3%	93.3%	92.6%	91.0%	●●●● GOOD
PAF C69 – Distance placed from home	5.9%	7.9%	10.6%	8.5%	NOT BANDED
NI 58 – Emotional & Behavioural Health of children in care	Not collected	12.8	13.9	12.3	NOT BANDED
Annual Health Assessments of Looked After Children	76.8%	78.4%	79.0%	80.2%	NOT BANDED
NI 147 – Care Leavers in suitable accommodation	89.8%	89.7%	89.7%	93.2%	NOT BANDED
NI 148 – Care Leavers in E, E or T at 19	67.3%	65.5%	51.3%	61.4%	NOT BANDED
PAF A2 – Educational qualifications of LAC	64.9%	62.5%	60.3%	71.8%	●●●●● VERY GOOD
A3073SC – Care leavers with 5+ GCSEs A*-C	5.3%	5.0%	5.9%	14.1%	NOT BANDED
PAF C23 – Adoptions of LAC	7.4%	9.4%	9.5%	7.8%	●●●● GOOD
NI61 – Timeliness of adoptive placements	90.0%	78.6%	72.4%	84.0%	NOT BANDED



**Inspection of safeguarding and looked after children's services**

**31.10.2011 – 11.11.2011**

**Areas for improvement**

126. In order to improve the quality of provision and services for looked after children and young people in Warwickshire, the local authority and its partners should take the following action.

**Immediately:**

- ensure that all statutory visits to looked after children and young people are completed by qualified social workers. Where cases are held by practice leaders they should attend the review
- ensure that children and young people are routinely consulted about
- the timing and venue of their review and that care planning targets
- have timescales clearly specified.

**Within three months:**

- elected members should ensure that they are familiar with the key priorities established by the Corporate Parenting Board in order to ensure good outcomes for looked after children and young people, and the development of apprenticeship schemes
- ensure consistency in the application of sleepover policies
- improve the quality of case file audits within children's social care services to ensure they robustly address the quality of practice and inform service improvements
- ensure that the complaints service is effectively promoted and is readily accessible to looked after children and young people
- ensure that there are sufficient independent visitors, in order to meet the needs of all looked after children and young people
- NHS Warwickshire should ensure that health staff involved with looked after children and young people have access to supervision, support and advice in a timely manner.

**Within six months:**

- develop the work of the Tiffin Club to ensure that strategic support for the council's corporate parenting role is improved, including the promotion of apprenticeship opportunities within the council and with local business partners
- ensure that there is sufficient appropriate housing to meet the needs of care leavers and that any temporary accommodation offered is in a safe environment.

**Extract from proposed constitution**

**Background**

The Tiffin Club was formed in 2009 to raise the profile of our corporate parenting role and to support those children and young people who are in our care. It is also about adding value to Warwickshire's Virtual School and the formal charity will be known as 'The Warwickshire Corporate Parent's Association'.

Our areas of support are for those looked after children and young people that volunteer to be engaged with us, helping them to realise their potential and to find a positive destination when they leave our care:

1. 1:1 tuition and other learning opportunities that enhance the existing support for Looked After Children and Asylum Seekers currently in schools
2. Mentors that support Looked after Children and Young People, Foster Carers and the Social Workers, focusing on Personal Education Plans – supporting progress through school and into a positive destination.
3. Work experience for Looked after Children and Young People in the public sector, recognising that this is their 'family firm'.
4. Pursuit of apprenticeships in the Public Sector for Looked after Children and Young people.
5. Initiatives which assist in the transition from care to independent working life.

**Our Pledge is to support:**

1. Actions and investment that directly lead to improving the life chances of children in care.
2. Actions and investment that lead to children in care receiving the same high standard of education and opportunities that we demand for all of our families.
3. Actions that lead to a society where children in care are truly valued and supported to fulfil potential.
4. Actions that lead to an education system that encourages and inspires all children in care to succeed through high quality education and skill training

The Charity provides additional and complimentary teaching and skills training for children in care in order to support better long term life prospects; volunteer befrienders and mentors who support those children and young people that request it; access to work experience by the public sector recognising that to these young people we are their 'family firm'; access to apprenticeship opportunities in the public sector or with those private enterprises that are commissioned by the public sector.

The Charity will engage in joint activities with affiliated Creating Chances Trusts in the UK, including fundraising, research, publicity and web pages in support of it "Objects".