

## **MEETING OF THE COUNCIL – 28 FEBRUARY 2005**

### **CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY REPORT OF THE CABINET**

#### **1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1 To advise Members on the Council's role as corporate parent and to present a strategy to meet these requirements.

#### **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 The local authority acquires parental responsibility for children committed to its care and has a duty under Section 22 of the Children Act 1989 to safeguard and promote the welfare of any child it is looking after.
- 2.2 Corporate Parenting emphasises the collective responsibility of local authorities to achieve good parenting for those children and young people in public care, ensuring their overall well-being, safeguarding them and promoting their achievements.
- 2.3 The Children Act Guidance sets out what is expected of the Council as a state parent. The obligations cover material well-being and provision for appropriate education and training, health care, employment, leisure and continuing support after discharge from care. They also involve helping the child develop personal skills and preferences and a sense of personal identity and worth, a sense of security and an understanding of family life. This does not replace or replicate the selfless character of parental love but it does imply a warmth and personal concern which goes beyond the traditional expectations of institutions.
- 2.4 Parental responsibility is borne by the authority as a whole and cannot be discharged effectively without the full participation of all the services to which local authorities have access, including health services. Political leadership is essential in demonstrating acceptance and guaranteeing fulfilment of these responsibilities and therefore elected Members have a key role.
- 2.5 In 1998 the Government set an agenda for local authorities in partnership with key agencies to improve children's services and deliver services against 11 key objectives through the Quality Protects Programme. This was set against a background of concern about the state of public care in the light of a number of high profile institutional scandals and emphasised the the role of the authority when the care of a child depends upon a corporate public parent.

- 2.6 Children who become looked after must be regarded as children in need and therefore services provided for them should be seen in the wider context of services for vulnerable children and for children in society as a whole. For any parent managing the parenting task single handedly is challenging and is more successfully discharged with the assistance of good support networks. In the same way whilst care away from home is largely provided by Social Services or providers commissioned by the Directorate, a single agency cannot hope to meet the total needs of looked after children. A positive and joined up approach is essential for the authority to ensure that children have a positive experience of being looked after and are not further disadvantaged by a system which is in conflict with the networks which have the ability to enhance the services children receive.
- 2.7 The Children Act 2004 and associated guidance provides the legislative framework which underpins the Government's programme for the reform of children's services which is contained in Every Child Matters Change for Children. The Act places a new duty on the statutory agencies which provide services to children young people and their families to co-operate with arrangements to improve the well-being of children in the local authority's area. The Act also contains a specific duty to improve the educational outcomes for looked after children.
- 2.8 Every Child Matters sets out a national outcomes framework which drive improvement for children and young people to ensure that they
- Enjoy and achieve
  - Make a positive contribution
  - Be healthy
  - Achieve economic well being
  - Stay safe
- 2.9 Dudley's approach to implementing the Children Act is based on 6 dimensions
- A further strengthening of the existing Children's Partnership arrangements
  - The establishment of a Dudley Children's Safeguarding Board
  - The development of formalised multi agency joint commissioning arrangements
  - The development of a comprehensive multi agency preventative strategy for Dudley
  - Further development to embrace bottom up cross agency integration of services over time
  - Formalise cross Directorate co-ordination and reporting arrangements on children's services within the Council

- 2.10 Dudley Council is currently corporate parent to 418 children (excluding respite) and young people. They live in a variety of settings with the majority accommodated by some 150 foster carers approved by Dudley:
- 45 children in respite care
  - 292 children in foster care
  - 52 children in residential settings
  - 29 other
- 2.11 In March 2002 a Corporate Parenting Champions' Group was set up to take forward the development of the corporate parent role. It consists of representatives from each of the Directorates and meets regularly to ensure that Directorates are working together to discharge the corporate parenting responsibilities and to drive forward initiatives to meet those responsibilities. A list of achievements to date and future initiatives agreed by the group is presented as Appendix 1.
- 2.12 In addition a cross party Children's Champions' Member Group was set up in the spring 2003 to provide effective Member involvement with this agenda and to provide an interface between Members and young people. The group is chaired by the nominated Children's Champion who is currently Councillor David Simms.
- 2.13 A Joint Policy Statement between the Directorates of Education and Lifelong Learning and Social Services relating to the education of looked after children was approved in 2003 and circulated to all Members.
- 2.14 In July 2004 the Commission for Social Care Inspection undertook an Inspection of Children's Services. The report made a number of recommendations relating to the role of the Council as corporate parent in improving outcomes for looked after children. Whilst positive comment was made regarding the development of the portfolio lead and Children's Champion Group the report noted that "corporate parenting was in need of a more developed strategy to focus Councillors' and council senior managers on engagement with young people and carers as major stakeholders and on key performance areas requiring corporate action".
- 2.15 There are a number of performance indicators which relate to outcomes for looked after children. Of particular relevance to this agenda are:
- PAF A2 Education of Looked After Children
  - PAF A4 Education Employment and training for Care Leavers
  - PAF C24 Looked After Children Absent From School
  - PAF C23 Adoptions of Looked After Children
  - PAF C19 Health of Looked after Children

- PAF A1 Stability of Placements for Looked After Children

2.16 Current performance for these indicators is shown as Appendix 2. Dudley's performance in respect of PAF A2, A4, C23 and C24 needs further development and improvement. These areas were identified as areas for development in the Annual Review of Performance for 2003/4 and the Children's Inspection 2004. In addition Improving Education Outcomes of Looked After Children was also an LPSA target

2.17 A draft Corporate Parenting Policy document has been circulated separately with the agenda. An action plan attached as Appendix 3. This lays out:

- The roles and responsibilities of Members and Directorates
- A corporate parenting pledge to children and young people
- A leaving care policy statement
- A joint statement for working with Health
- A joint statement for working with Education
- The corporate framework for joint working to promote the corporate parenting agenda
- An action plan to underpin and take the strategy forward

2.18 In consideration of the above, the Cabinet at its meeting held on 9 February 2005, resolved to recommend the Council to approve the proposals set out in Section 3 below.

### **3.0 Proposals**

3.1 That the Council's corporate parenting responsibilities as contained in legislation and associated guidance be noted.

3.2 That the Corporate parenting strategy be agreed.

3.3 That a programme of work for the Corporate Parenting Champions Group, based on the action plan contained in the Corporate Parenting Strategy, be approved.

3.4 That approval be given to the holding of a Member seminar on corporate parenting.

### **4.0 Resource Implications**

4.1 An annual corporate budget of £10,000 would support the work of the Champions' Group and the Corporate Parenting Group, host events, training and publicity relevant to this agenda. Core services would continue to be the responsibility of the individual Directorate but should reflect a commitment to corporate parenting in terms of service delivery. A corporate budget would enable the agenda to be

progressed and would reflect corporate ownership of the good parenting role.

- 4.2 The establishment of a Corporate Parenting Manager Post would co-ordinate activity in this area and support the initiatives contained in the Strategy. External funding is being sought for 0.5 post with the additional 0.5 funding being sought on a proportionate basis across Council Directorates.

## **5.0 Equality Implications**

- 5.1 The effective discharge of the corporate parenting role would ensure that the needs of looked after children are promoted and that the Council achieve positive outcomes for this group of children and young people. They should not be disadvantaged by the fact of being in public care and a positive approach to corporate parenting will reduce the risks of social exclusion by offering opportunities which allow children to develop into mature and responsible adults.

## **6.0 Community Implications**

- 6.1 Promoting the development of looked after children will give them a greater chance of becoming socially and financially independent so that they can contribute to the future prosperity of the borough rather than becoming dependant on scarce resources in future years.

## **7.0 Recommendations**

- 7.1 That approval be given to the proposals set out in Section 3 above.

-----

**LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

## Appendix 1

### **CORPORATE PARENTING CHAMPIONS GROUP ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE**

- **Children's Champion Group**
- **Teenagers to Work Programme**
- **Celebration of Success Evening**
- **Key to Leisure Pass for children's homes**
- **Care Leavers strategy**
- **Corporate Parenting Policy – Principles & Standards**
- **Sexual Health Policy for Looked After Children**
- **Partnership arrangements with Housing for the provision of children's homes**
- **Allocation of duplex flats for care leavers**
- **Joint Education/Social Services/Education Support Services for looked after children**
- **Joint training for Education/Social Services staff**
- **Delivery of Total Respect consultation tool to multi agency audience**
- **Extend Key to Leisure Pass to foster carers**
- **Establishment of Just Say it Group's interface with Members**
- **Member visits to Children's homes**
- **Health of Looked After Children's Service**

### **Future Developments**

- **Explore Corporate Parenting Manager post**
- **Extend Teenagers to Work Programme**
- **Explore opportunities for modern apprenticeship for looked after children within the council**
- **Develop a savings scheme for looked after children**
- **Policy on additional contributions to Children's Trust Fund for Looked After Children**

## Appendix 2

Indicator	Definition	Year									
		Actual 02/03		Actual 03/04		Current as at 31/12/04		Target 04/05		Target 05/06	
		%	Blob	%	Blob	%	Blob	%	Blob	%	Blob
<b>PAF A1</b> Stability of placements of children looked after.	The percentage of children looked after at 31 March with 3 or more placements during the year.	13.0%	5	11.4%	5	12.9%	5	11.0%	5	10.5%	5
<b>PAF A2</b> Educational Qualifications of Children looked after	The percentage of young people leaving care aged 16 or over with at least 1 GCSE at Grade A* - G or a GNVQ	35.5%	2	45.7%	3	50.0%	3	50.0%	3	55.0%	4
<b>PAF A4</b> Employment, Education and training for care leavers	The percentage of those young people who were looked after on 1st April in their 17th year (aged 16) who were engaged in education, training or employment at the age of 19	38.50%	2	28.60%	1	38.50%	2	42.30%	2	45.00%	2
<b>PAF C19</b> Health of children looked after	The average of the percentages of children looked after at 30th September who had been looked after continuously for at least 12 months, and who had their teeth checked by a dentist during the previous 12 months, and had an annual health assessment during the previous 12 months. This is the average of two indicators which are calculated separately.	68.4%	3	72.1%	4	70.3%*	4*	80.0%	5	82.0%	5
<b>PAF C23</b> Adoptions of Children looked after	The number of looked after children adopted during the year as a percentage of the number of children looked after at 31st March who had been looked after for 6 months or more on that day	5.2%	2	4.3%	2	2.4%	1	6.0%	2	6.5%	3
<b>PAF C24</b> Children looked after absent from school	The percentage of children who had been looked after continuously for at least 12 months and were of school age, who missed a total of at least 25 days of schooling for any reason during the previous school year	12.3%	3	27.8%	1	17.9%*	2*	17.0%	2	16.0%	2

\* is an actual 04/05 figure taken from the OC2 return submitted in November 2004

Appendix 3

**CORPORATE PARENTING IN DUDLEY**

Objective	Action	Outcome	Measure	Lead	Target Date
<b>Corporate Parenting</b>	Raise Council wide awareness of the issues faced by children looked after and their carers.	All Directorates have disseminated the corporate parenting strategy to staff.	Reporting to Corporate Parenting Group through Directorate representatives to identify contributions within business plans.	P Sharratt	June 2005
	Raise awareness amongst Members and Council officers of their corporate parenting responsibilities.	All Directorates have corporate parenting as an agenda item at their management team meetings on a quarterly basis to identify their contributions to improving outcomes for looked after children and their contribution to the strategy.	Annual report to Cabinet on the work on the work of the Corporate Parenting Group and the Children's Champion Group.	L Sanders	February 2006
	Improve service delivery and outcomes for looked after children through corporate ownership and investment.		Improvement in performance indicators and feedback from inspections.	L Sanders/ P Sharratt	May 2005



		Members understand their corporate parenting responsibilities and consider them in relation to their broader portfolios.	Deliver corporate parenting seminar to Members.  Deliver corporate parenting strategy to Management Forum		April 2005  February 2005
<b>Improving educational outcomes</b>	Implement education of looked after children action plan.  Implement LPSA action plan.	Improved educational outcomes against GCSE and SAT results and performance indicators	Performance Assessment Framework, Delivery and Improvement Statement	S Menghini/ P Sharratt	May 2005 and October 2005
<b>Improving health of looked after children</b>	Establish health of looked after children service.  Ensure that carers and staff have access to advice and consultancy for looked after children.	All children have their health needs assessed and that services are identified to meet those needs.  Early identification of health issues and pro-active approach to meeting them.	All newly looked after children from 17 January 2005 to have an up to date health plan.  Health plans for all other looked after children to be in place.  Reports from carers, staff, Dudley Foster Care Association, Looked After Policy Development Group and Health of Looked After Children group	J Prashar  J Prashar  J Prashar	June 2005  December 2005  Ongoing

	To ensure a priority CAMHS service for looked after children.	Timely intervention in relation to children's mental health needs.	Dedicated consultancy time for looked after children.	J Prashar	Achieved
<b>Improving leisure and social opportunities</b>	Raise awareness of key to leisure passes to foster carers	To ensure that looked after children are able to swim 25 metres	All foster carers and children's homes have key to leisure passes	R Doyle	July 2005
	Ensure foster carer allowances keep pace with National Foster Care minimum recommended rates.	Have had a holiday within last 12 months	Aggregate information from statutory reviews	G Tilby	6 monthly
	Enhance additional placement needs budget	Are involved in activity/hobby outside school day	Budgets set to reflect financial investment	L Sanders	2005/06
		Looked after children are offered opportunity to play musical instrument	Achievements are recognised at celebration evening	P Sharratt/ S Menghini	October 2005
<b>Outcomes for care leavers</b>	To develop a range of work experience and employment opportunities both within the Council and with private providers.	Care leavers are in training or employment.	Performance Indicator A4 and Delivery and Improvement Statement	Leaving Care Forum/Corporate Parenting Officers' Group	May & October 2005 for achievement of incremental target improvements

	<p>To provide care leavers 16 + with access to lap tops to support learning.</p> <p>Explore development of foyer scheme and further develop supported housing</p>	<p>Access available to all care leavers</p> <p>Care leavers have access to appropriate accommodation and stable environments</p>	<p>To achieve provision of 6 lap tops.</p> <p>Proposal for foyer scheme drawn up. Proposal for supported lodgings costed and budget identified</p>	<p>Corporate Parenting Officers' Group</p> <p>R Simms/P Sharratt</p>	<p>June 2005</p> <p>August 2005</p>
<b>Safeguarding and Protecting</b>	<p>All Directorates and agencies discharge their duty to safeguard and promote welfare of Children Act 1989 and 2004.</p>	<p>Systems are in place to protect vulnerable children and young people</p>	<p>Reporting to Local Children's Safeguarding Board through agency representation and Quality &amp; Assurance sub group of the Local Children's Safeguarding Board</p>	<p>P Sharratt</p>	<p>Immediate</p>
	<p>All officers and Members who have substantial access to children have CRB checks.</p>	<p>Systems are in place to protect vulnerable children and young people</p>	<p>All checks in place and systems implemented to review on 3 yearly basis</p>	<p>Andrew Packer/Steve Woodall</p>	<p>Immediate</p>
	<p>All Council Directorates implement safe employment practices in line with ACPC recommendations.</p>	<p>Systems are in place to protect vulnerable children and young people</p>	<p>Monitored by ACPC and through corporate HR group</p>	<p>P Sharratt/A Packer</p>	<p>Immediate</p>

	Regulation 33 visits and Member visits to children's establishments are undertaken	Systems are in place to protect vulnerable children and young people.	Visits are undertaken on a monthly basis, recorded with recommendations responded to.	P Sharratt	Immediate
--	--	---	---	------------	-----------