

COUNTY COUNCIL

Meeting date: 4 November 2021

From: Cabinet Member – Children and Families
Services (Chair of Corporate Parenting Board)

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD UPDATE REPORT

PART A - RECOMMENDATION OF CABINET

For Council to affirm its commitment to its Corporate Parenting duties and for Members to understand that each of them has a duty to do what they can for children looked after and care leavers.

PART B – ADVICE OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 *Provides Members with an update on the Corporate Parenting Board's activity over the past year, plans for the next year and a chance to hear directly from the Children in Care Councils about the experiences of children looked after during COVID.*

2.0 STRATEGIC PLANNING AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

2.1 *The Council has a responsibility to the children they look after and their care leavers. In this context local authorities are referred to as being the 'corporate parent' of these children and young people, and the critical question that local authorities should ask in adopting such an approach is: 'would this be good enough for my child?'*

2.2 *National statistics show that care leavers are more likely to experience worse outcomes in relation to health, education, employment and criminal justice. A priority for the Board is to implement the corporate parenting principles that are intended to secure a better approach to fulfilling existing functions in relation to looked after children and care leavers and for the local authority to facilitate as far as possible secure, nurturing, and positive experiences for looked after children and young people and enable positive outcomes for them.*

2.3 Supporting delivery of the Council Plan priorities, which are

- ***To safeguard children, and ensure that Cumbria is a great place to be a child and grow up***
- ***To enable communities to live safely and shape services locally***
- ***To promote health and wellbeing, and tackle poverty***

3.0 RECOMMENDATION

3.1 To note the report

4.0 BACKGROUND

4.1 The Board receive an update on the progress of the implementation of the CLA strategy at each meeting. Officers attend to provide the updates.

4.2 The role of the Children in Care Council Champions was reviewed and a terms of reference was agreed. Regular meetings have been diarised to ensure members are sighted on issues for children looked after. This will strengthen the link between the Corporate Parenting Board and Local Area Committees.

4.3 The board received a report from the virtual head to provide assurance. Over the past year the virtual school has continued to ensure that children looked after have been receiving the best possible education throughout the pandemic.

4.4 Cumbria's Promise is a pledge that is made by corporate parents to all children who are looked after and care leavers. It sets out basic standards for how children and young people wish to be treated by services that are acting in the role of corporate parents. The Board have asked the children in care council to review and re launch the promise.

4.5 During the summer the Board was led by the children in care council who provided members with an update on their projects including their meetings with the assistant director.

4.6 The two new Care Leaver Ambassador apprentices attend the Board and represent the views of care leavers.

4.7 The Ofsted short focused visit of children's services was undertaken in August 2022, There were no 'priority areas for action' resulting from the visit with many strengths highlighted as well as some areas that require further focus. We are particularly proud that they found that social workers were very positive about working for Cumbria and reported manageable caseloads, and high commitment to learning and improvement with good training opportunities.

- 4.8 A performance scorecard has been developed for the Board; this allows the Board to identify any areas for improvement. CLA figures decreased slightly over the quarter rates but remain above target and national comparators. Average time between entering care and placement with adoptive family, figures are now showing improvement with children experiencing considerably shorter waits to matching and placement with adoptive families
- 4.9 The Board was updated on the specific area of work to support vulnerable young people and care leavers into and in appropriate housing. The ambition for this service is that, from the first point of contact with a young person who is experiencing homelessness/at risk of homelessness, everyone working in this service area sees the potential in that young person and plays their part in moving that young person from a point of crisis, to give them hope for the future.
- 4.10 Members of the Board attended the 'Celebrating us' Children in Care Council Awards on Saturday 16th October. The celebration at Carlisle racecourse was attended by approximately 150 people which included foster carers and children. This year there were more than 110 nominations, for 100 different individuals, across the nine award categories.
- Educational achievement of the year for primary, secondary, and further education
 - Young Citizen of the year
 - Inspirational Worker of the year
 - Community and volunteering
 - Foster Carer of the year
 - Small but Mighty Achievement of the year
 - Inspirational young person of the year (Over 18)
 - Inspirational child or young person of the year (Under 18).
- 4.11 The event is organised by the children in care council and is now one of the Council's high profile events of the year.

5.0 OPTIONS

- 5.1 Members to agree note the report.

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 Strong corporate parenting means strong leadership, challenge and accountability at every level, the Corporate Parenting Board provides us with the vehicle to do this.
- 6.2 The quality of support can be measured in how the child or young person experiences the support they receive and the extent to which they feel listened to and taken seriously. The children and young people that we talk to tell us that they feel listened to, our children have been an inspiration, and

the voice of children in care will come out stronger with our Care Leaver Ambassadors. I hope Members will support us in doing all that we can for the children and young people in our care.

**Anne Burns,
Cabinet Member Children' Services (Chair of Corporate Parenting Board)**

4 November 2021

APPENDICES

None

Electoral Division(s): All

** Please remove whichever option is not applicable*

Executive Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No*
Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No*
If a Key Decision, is the proposal published in the current Forward Plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>		N/A*
Is the decision exempt from call-in on grounds of urgency?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes* No*
If exempt from call-in, has the agreement of the Chair of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee been sought or obtained?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A*
Has this matter been considered by Overview and Scrutiny? If so, give details below.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes* <input type="checkbox"/>
Has an environmental or sustainability impact assessment been undertaken?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A*
Has an equality impact assessment been undertaken?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A*

N.B. If an executive decision is made, then a decision cannot be implemented until the expiry of the eighth working day after the date of the meeting – unless the decision is urgent and exempt from call-in and the Head of Member Services and Scrutiny has obtained the necessary approvals.

PREVIOUS RELEVANT COUNCIL OR EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

No previous relevant decisions

CONSIDERATION BY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Advisory Board received a Children's Services Improvement Update on September 21

BACKGROUND PAPERS

No background papers

RESPONSIBLE CABINET MEMBER

**Anne Burns,
Cabinet Member Children' Services (Chair of Corporate Parenting Board)**

REPORT AUTHOR

Contact: **Susan Hodkin, Partnership Manager**
Susan.hodkin@cumbria.gov.uk