

THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PARENTING RESPONSIBILITIES

Committee name	Social Care, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committee
Officer reporting	Janice Altenor, Social Care
Papers with report	N/A
Ward	All

HEADLINES

The report provides a briefing to the Social Care, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committee regarding the Council's Corporate Parenting responsibilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee notes the content of the report and the role the Committee and all Members have in championing the corporate parenting ethos across the Council.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Looked after children (LAC) and care leavers are the most vulnerable children in society; living away from their families, often because their parents faced difficulties and pressures in providing for their care or because they have suffered abuse or neglect.

'Corporate Parenting' describes the collective responsibility of the Council and its partners to provide the same care and protection for children who are LAC as they would for their own children. The role of a corporate parent is undoubtedly one of the most important duties and responsibilities that Councillors, Council officers and staff have in trying to be the best "parent" possible.

In Hillingdon we are 'Corporate parent' to 687 children (looked after children and care leavers).

The statutory responsibilities for Councils are deeply rooted in legislation. They are set out in the Children Act 1989, including through amendments made by the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, the Children and Families Act 2014 and The Children and Social Work Act 2017.

Our 'Corporate Parenting' responsibility for children doesn't end when they leave care but continues as they transition into adulthood. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 made additional provisions for care leavers, extending support until the age of 25 and further clarifying in law our role as corporate parents. We work alongside our care leavers to support their transition into adulthood, including actively supporting their mental well being, education training and employment, having high aspirations and ensuring they are provided safe and appropriate housing choices.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 introduced seven corporate parenting principles that

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Councils must have regard to when looking after children in care:

- To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people
- To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
- Take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people
- 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
- To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people
- For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and
- To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

The 2007, 'Care Matters: Time for Change White Paper' set out the then Government's intention for all local authorities to establish a Children in Care Council to provide children and young people, in and leaving care, with additional opportunities to voice their views and experiences of the care system and increase their ability to influence and improve the services they receive from their local authority corporate parents.

In Hillingdon we have an effective Children in Care Council which ensures that children have a say in how decisions are made about them, their care and decisions made about service design. The Children in Care Council which are an insightful group of young people are supported by a dedicated, passionate team of officers who promote young people's involvement in service delivery and design.

In going forward, we remain committed to ensure that the principles highlighted in the new legislation are embraced by the local authority as a whole and not just by children's services.

The statutory guidance identifies a critical question that local authorities must ask themselves in adopting a corporate parenting ethos, 'would this be good enough for my child?' This is the very key question which we have been considering whilst discharging our duties as corporate parents.

Officers strongly believe that the integration of the corporate parenting responsibilities into the Social Care, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committee will further strengthen this important responsibility across the Council's functions and will enable a 'corporate parenting ethos' to develop further across the Council, championed by our dedicated elected members.

Financial Implications

None at this stage.

Legal Implications

Discharging our corporate parenting duties is a legal requirement set firmly in legislation.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Applying corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers

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Statutory guidance for local authorities (February 2018).