

**DRAFT CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY Sept 2015 – Sept 2017 –
DRAFT CABINET REPORT**

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an opportunity to undertake the pre-decision scrutiny of the draft Cabinet report on the Corporate Parenting Strategy Sept 2015 – Sept 2017, which is due to be considered by Cabinet on 12 November 2015 (copy attached at **Appendix A**).

Background

2. The Children's Services Directorate Delivery Plan 2015-2017 identifies a number of "Core Business Priority Commitments" for this year. In particular the Plan states that the Directorate will "*Prepare a Looked After Children Strategy that aims to make the experience of being looked after or leaving care the best that it can be within resources; promotes stability; enables children to form secure and permanent attachments; and in collaboration with Education and others, improves, their life chances and outcomes*".
3. The Delivery Plan indicates that the development and implementation of the strategy would be undertaken during the year, and a review report assessing the impact of the strategy would be reviewed and evaluated by the end of March 2016.

Key Issues

4. The Cabinet report sets out for the first time that Cardiff Children's Social Services has departed from a narrow focus on statutory functions and joined with its statutory and third sector partners to develop a coherently aligned strategy that is focused upon improving outcomes for looked after children (copy attached at **Appendix A**). This strategy aims to combine the skills, resources and commitment of all professionals in a unified way to deliver two key Outcomes. It reflects a genuine partnership in which no one agency has primacy but in which all are committed to:
 - 'Narrowing the gap' so that looked after children achieve their potential.
 - Improving services so that fewer children need enter the looked after system.

5. With this in mind, what was initially a 'Looked After Children's strategy' has now evolved to become a 'Corporate Parenting Strategy' which has been developed working in partnership with colleagues from the University Health Board and the Education and Lifelong Learning Directorate to reflect that the corporate responsibility for looked after children is embraced by all partner agencies and not just social services.

6. The key issues summarised in the Cabinet Report are:
 - Collaboration between early intervention, prevention and the looked after children service.
 - Reducing the number of looked after children.
 - Admitting the right children in to care at the right time.
 - Promoting permanency through special guardianship and / or adoption.
 - Continuing the promotion of long term placements with connected carers.

- Continuing to improve the choice of high quality in-house placements.
- Effectively managing the use of external residential and independent fostering agency placements.
- Continuing to improve services for children with disabilities including short break care.
- Improve the education attainment and achievement for all looked after Children.
- Improving and supporting the emotional well-being of looked after children.
- Arrangements for the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee.

Scope of Scrutiny

7. At this meeting Members may wish to consider the draft Corporate Parenting Strategy Sept 2015 – Sept 2017 and to pass on any observations, comments or recommendations to Cabinet prior to their consideration of the draft report attached at **Appendix A**.
8. Councillor Sue Lent (Cabinet Member for Early Years, Children & Families and Deputy Leader) has been invited and may make a statement. Tony Young (Director of Social Services) and Irfan Alam (Assistant Director, Children's Services) will make a presentation and will be available to answer any questions Members may have.

Way Forward

9. Members may wish to comment on the draft Cabinet report attached at **Appendix A**, submit any comments or recommendations to the Cabinet Member and Director of Social Services, and consider any issues for further investigation.

Legal Implications

10. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct legal implications. However, legal implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any legal implications arising from those recommendations. All decisions taken by or on behalf of the Council must (a) be within the legal powers of the Council; (b) comply with any procedural requirement imposed by law; (c) be within the powers of the body or person exercising powers on behalf of the Council; (d) be undertaken in accordance with the procedural requirements imposed by the Council e.g. Scrutiny Procedure Rules; (e) be fully and properly informed; (f) be properly motivated; (g) be taken having regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its taxpayers; and (h) be reasonable and proper in all the circumstances.

Financial Implications

11. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct financial implications at this stage in relation to any of the work programme. However, financial implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. These financial implications will need to be considered before any changes are implemented. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any financial implications arising from those recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members review the information contained in **Appendix A**, and submit any comments or recommendations to the Cabinet Member and Director of Social Services prior to the Cabinet's consideration of the report.

Marie Rosenthal
Director of Governance and Legal Services

4 November 2015