

CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

9th March 2021

Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021-2024

Reasons for the Report

1. The report has been prepared to update the Committee on the development of the Council's Corporate Parenting Strategy. In consultation with our looked after children across the city and partners this three year Corporate Parenting Strategy outlines Cardiff Council commitments, challenges and the key steps that need to be taken to ensure that Cardiff's children have the best possible outcomes in life.

Background

2. When a child or young person enters the care of the Council, the role of being a parent is taken on by the local authority. This is known as Corporate Parenting. The term describes how Cardiff Council collectively fulfil their parenting responsibilities, by seeking positive outcomes for looked after children and young adults who are care leavers in the same way we do for our own children. From early years into adulthood all our children, young people and young adults are safe, happy and have every opportunity to thrive.

3. Section 78 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 imposes a duty upon a local authority to safeguard and promote the well-being of each child it looks after. Under sections 104 – 118, a local authority has similar duties to promote the well-being of care leavers.
4. The role of a corporate parent is to seek for children in public care the outcomes every good parent would want for their own children. Local authorities in Wales have a legal and moral duty to provide such support to the children it looks after. Elected Members have a responsibility to ensure that children looked after by a local authority are able to thrive, are nurtured, supported, educated and prepared for adult life in the way any parent would want for their own children.

The Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee

5. The Cardiff Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee brings together representatives from strategic partners to work with and for the Councillors elected by the citizens of Cardiff to improve outcomes for children looked after and care leavers.
6. The Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee terms of reference states the requirement - to develop, monitor and review a corporate parenting strategy, and ensure its effective implementation through work plans and corporate parenting training programmes;
7. The Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee vision was to develop a co-produced strategy with a range of partners, but more importantly looked after children who would be directly impacted by the work undertaken outlined in the strategy.

8. Individual feedback sessions were held with Members of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee to gain their views and feedback on the Corporate Parenting Strategy. Changes were then implemented and a consultation session with members of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee was held for further changes to be made.

Participation of young people

9. Engagement work has taken place between March and September 2020 in physical and virtual focus groups to actively involve looked after children in the development of our Corporate Parenting Strategy from the outset. These sessions took place through a range of creative means. Children, young people and care leavers participated age 5 to 27. Participants were from a range of looked after settings and backgrounds, including children with disabilities.
10. Sessions were held through a mixture of interactive group workshops using a variety of methods such as digital design, artwork and video making ensuring identities of the young people involved were protected. Separate engagement sessions were held according to the age of the looked after child in order to ensure the sessions were age appropriate and worthwhile with over 20 young people taking part.
11. Children looked after in Cardiff also had the opportunity to take part in a number of age appropriate surveys via the Bright Spots Survey. This survey was a partnership between, Bristol University, the Children's Commissioner for Wales and Cardiff Council. From the survey the views of 255 young people were gained through a number of key themes including relationships, resilience, recovery and wellbeing .The surveys were organised into three categories depending on age; a survey aimed 4- 7 year olds, a survey aimed 8- 11 year olds and a survey aimed at 11-18 year olds. This was to help young people to get the most out of the exercise, and where appropriate a trusted adult was able to support.

12. Feedback from these surveys helped influence our Corporate Parenting Strategy and together with findings from a number of engagement sessions with young people ensured that the document placed looked after children's views at the centre. The draft priorities in the Corporate Parenting Strategy were all developed from what young people told us.

COVID 19 restrictions

13. In line with COVID 19 restrictions a series of online sessions also took place with children, young people and stakeholders. The sessions obtained the views of what was working well, what could be better and what the aspirations were for looked after children and care leavers in the future. This feedback was fed directly into the strategy ensuring that the priorities outlined for the future were based on what looked after children in Cardiff said.

Consultation with partners

14. Throughout the development of the Corporate Parenting Strategy feedback has been obtained from a range of both internal and external partners to obtain their views and expertise.

15. Views were obtained via an online engagement stakeholder session with representatives from Education, NHS, Police, Youth Justice Services, Housing, Communities, Child Friendly City Team, Legal Services and Children Services.

16. Officers have also met with teams who were not able to attend the virtual session and updates have been provided regularly on the document.

Corporate Parenting Strategy

17. The Corporate Parenting Strategy is a three year strategy that sets out what we all need to do as corporate parents to support our looked after children and care leavers to enable them to thrive and improve outcomes. It outlines five

key priorities that have been formed based on the views and experiences of Looked after Children in Cardiff.

The five priorities identified by our young people were:

Priority 1: Improving emotional well-being and physical health

Priority 2: Better connections, improved relationships

Priority 3: A comfortable safe stable home whilst in care and after

Priority 4: Educational achievement, employment and training

Priority 5: Celebrating our children and young people

18. The strategy makes specific reference to the Childrens Rights including UNICEF UKs Child Friendly Cities and Communities initiative. Specific reference is also provided to safeguarding and inclusion.

19. National and local data is provided showing a range of indicators for Looked after Children data specifically relating to education, housing and care leavers. This data will help with decision making and service development planning for the future.

20. An action plan is being developed outlining the responsibilities of partners and key outcomes linked to the strategy. The action plan will take forward the priorities outlined in the strategy and influence the work programme for the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee for the upcoming year.

Financial Implications

21. The activities and initiatives referred to within this strategy will be funded from within existing internal resources and external grant funding, where relevant.

Legal Implications

22. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

RECOMMENDATION

23. The Committee is recommended to agree the draft Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021- 2024 appended as Appendix A, and recommend its approval by Cabinet

DEBORAH DRIFFIELD

Director of Childrens' Social Services.

3rd March 2021