



Meeting: Council

Date: 17th July 2014

Wards Affected: All Wards

Report Title: Putting Corporate Parenting into Practice

Is the decision a key decision? No

When does the decision need to be implemented? After the call-in period

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1. Purpose and Introduction

- 1.1 Following the 1989 Children Act and supported by subsequent legislation and guidance, Councillors have been ultimately accountable for the quality of care provided to vulnerable children with specific responsibility to lead this work and monitor its effectiveness. This responsibility has become known as “Corporate Parenting” in recognition that the task must be shared by all Councillors and a range of Council departments and partner agencies.
- 1.2 This report outlines how this role is undertaken in Torbay, provides an action plan for 2014/15 and a pledge from “Corporate Parents” to children in care. The report will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis.

2. Proposed Decision

The Mayor be recommended:

- 2.1 That Members recognise Corporate Parents’ Groups and their role as Corporate Parents, support the work of both the Officers and Members, attend recommended training, increase their efforts to attend events to support Looked after Children and specifically approve:-
 - the pledge to Children in Care
 - the attached action plan

3. Reason for Decision

- 3.1 Supporting the proposed recommendation will ensure that Torbay Council meets its statutory duties under the 1989 Children Act, the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000,

the Adoption and Children Act 2002, the Children Act 2004 and the Children and Young Persons Act 2008. The legislative framework is supported by statutory guidance that demonstrates the roles and responsibilities in more detail.

Supporting Information

4. Position

- 4.1 Previous reports have been brought to Council outlining these responsibilities, however, this has not been done for some years and subsequently the role of “Corporate Parent” has not been given the high profile that it should have within the role of Councillors. This report redresses this situation ensuring that statutory duties are met and that Children and Young People in Care are proactively supported.
- 4.2 The proposals in the report have no additional costs to the Council. They outline how the existing resources of staff and budgets can be more effectively aligned to the needs of Children and Young People in Care.

5. Actions

- 5.1 Children’s Services initially reviewed previous action plans against the new Ofsted Framework and new expectations from central government. From this review, a number of new arrangements were put in place and a report from the National Children’s Board was commissioned to identify ways in which the service can be improved: not by keeping children out of the care system who need to be there, but by ensuring that the care system for Children and Young People is used purposefully for the “right” children, at the “right” time and “right” place in their lives and for the shortest duration in order to meet their needs and improve their outcomes.
- 5.2 The purpose of the report was to stimulate discussion and to identify ways in which changes that have already taken place can be taken forward. The key observations highlighted in the report are as follows:-
- Children do not appear to be entering care unnecessarily, with the possible exception of some teenagers with behaviour problems.
 - Torbay has a good range of services, although it may be possible to target them more effectively.
 - There is some evidence that care is seen as a “last resort”, resulting in a reluctance to act decisively in some cases and unplanned admissions to care.
 - Care-planning is not always robust, with some cases drifting, and the involvement of friends and family could be strengthened.

- Recording systems do not support effective practice.
- Practitioners would benefit from having access to psychological/child development expertise to support their decision-making.
- Staff would benefit from more opportunities to reflect on and to share good practice.

5.3 In response to their report, a new Corporate Parenting Officers' Group has been set up, with representatives drawn from across partner agencies and chaired by the Director of Children's Services.

Membership

Simon Costin	Devon and Cornwall Police
Alex Howarth	South Devon College
Elaine Atkinson	Service Manager, Safeguarding and Quality Assurance, LA
Corrine Foy	CAMHS
Richard Kirkup	Children's Society
Linda Village	Designated Nurse LAC, South Devon and Torbay CCG
Lorry Parton	Foster Carer
Angie Fuller	Service Manager, Integrated Youth Support Service, LA
Caroline Hobson	Service Manager, Specialist Services, LA
Jane Inett	School Service Manager, LA
Mary Brown	Action for Children
Angela Farrell	Barton Hill Academy
Gail Rogers	Principal Commissioner, Children and Families, LA
Elaine Watling	Torquay Academy

5.4 To monitor and evaluate the work of this group and to represent all Councillors, a Members' Monitoring Group has also been set up with membership drawn from cross party.

Membership

Councillor Ken Pritchard (Chair)
 Councillor Alan Tyreman
 Councillor Neil Bent
 Councillor Matt James
 Councillor Jenny Faulkner
 Councillor Cindy Stocks
 Director of Children's Services: Richard Williams

5.4 The Terms of Reference for both groups is the same with the additional role for Members to monitor the work of the Officers' group and to evaluate and respond appropriately.

The Terms of Reference are as follows:-

- To fulfil the Corporate Parenting responsibilities of Torbay Council
- To define and communicate the role of Corporate Parents
- To keep Corporate Parenting at the heart of all our work
- To develop and improve the contribution of Torbay Council employees and elected members
- To create the best opportunities for all children and young people in care to achieve the best outcomes possible
- To identify gaps in Corporate Parenting work and recommend action to address these
- To raise awareness of Corporate Parenting at every level of the local authority and partner agencies
- To support the organisation, work and development of the Corporate Parenting Members and Officer groups
- To make opportunities to listen and hear the views of children and young people in care and those who have had care experience

5.6 In response to the NCB report, a full action plan has been developed by the Officers' group and is attached as Appendix 1. This has been adopted by the Members' group and will form the basis of their monitoring and evaluation work for the next year. In addition to this, the work of the Virtual School is integral to the support given to Children and Young People in developing and actioning their aspirations and their action plan will also be monitored alongside the Governing Body of the school (see Appendix 2).

5.7 Looked After Children have a statutory entitlement to have their views taken into account and Torbay has a Children in Care Council that meets on a weekly basis at Parkfield. Not all children will choose to be members of the Children in Care Council but they do "all" have a voice in their own care plan and the way this is implemented on a day-to-day basis. Corporate Parents are not expected to get involved with individual cases and there are risks associated with doing so – but they should be aware of the principle of participation.

5.8 The Children in Care Council has developed a set of commitments that they see as important for them as Looked After Children. This has been considered by the Members Group and formulated into a pledge from Corporate Parents to all children

that are looked after. There is an expectation in the statutory guidance that all Councils will have a pledge and that it will be a dynamic document forming the basis of an on-going relationship between Councillors and Looked after Children. The pledge is attached as Appendix 3 and if supported, will be issued to all Looked after Children.

- 5.9 To facilitate this, Councillors on the Corporate Parenting group will meet with Children in Care Council to discuss the pledge and monitor the impact it has on their outcomes in the future. They have also requested that every Councillor should sign the pledge to demonstrate their commitment to their “Corporate Parents” role and improving outcomes for Looked after Children.
- 5.10 In recognition of a renewed commitment, Officers will support Councillors by ensuring that information on events is sent out and that a refreshed training programme is developed. This has already started with invites sent out to the Looked after Children Awards event on 11th July. Dates for a training event in the autumn will be sent out in the near future and will initially focus on the experience of Young Carers in Torbay.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Corporate Parenting Strategy Action Plan

Appendix 2 Torbay Virtual School Development Plan

Appendix 3 Children in Care Pledge for Torbay