

## ASSEMBLY

21 November 2018

<b>Title:</b> Annual Reports 2017/18- Adoption and Corporate Parenting- a new approach	
<b>Report of the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care Integration</b>	
<b>Open Report</b>	<b>For Decision</b>
<b>Wards Affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> Yes
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<b>Accountable Director:</b> April Bald, Operational Director for Children's Care and Support	
<b>Accountable Strategic Director:</b> Elaine Allegretti, Strategic Director for People and Resilience	
<b>Summary:</b>  The Council is required to produce annual reports on corporate parenting and adoption, both of which are included in the agenda, for your consideration today. Whilst useful and important, these reports primarily serve the purpose of acquitting our reporting duties to the DfE and in isolation, do not reflect our more considered and systematic approach to permanency planning for the children and young people in our care.  This report outlines the contents of the two annual reports and describes the new approach that will be taken to producing these in future.	
<b>Recommendation</b>  The Assembly is recommended to:  (i) Note the contents of the two annual reports on adoption and corporate parenting respectively.  (ii) Note developments in children's social care over the last 6 months and support their reflection in a more useful, timely and purposeful strategy.	
<b>Reason(s)</b>  The purpose of this report is to update Assembly on the work of Adoption and Corporate Parenting, highlighting key achievements and priorities for the coming year.	

## 1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 Looking after and protecting children and young people is one of the most important jobs that councils do and when a child, for whatever reason, can't safely stay at home, it is up to us as the local authority to step in and give them the care, support and stability that they deserve.
- 1.2 This isn't just up to the lead member or director of children's services – we need everyone looking out for our most vulnerable children and young people, and every councillor has a role to play. Being a corporate parent means doing everything we can for every child in the council's care – and every care leaver – to give them the opportunities that other children get. This covers everything from keeping an eye on their progress at school, to looking after their health and wellbeing, to preparing them for life as independent adults – and supporting them when they get there. We need to be ambitious for the children in our care, encouraging them to dream big and take chances even if they don't feel like that's been an option in the past.
- 1.3 The Adoption Annual Report provides an update on the progress of plans for regionalisation, Barking and Dagenham will join with the East London boroughs of Tower Hamlets, Havering, Redbridge and Waltham Forest and potentially Newham. The London Borough of Havering has been identified as the local authority to be the Hub for East London. The aim is for the Hub to be set up by the spring of 2019, but this may be undertaken in stages from April 19 onwards. The final plans have yet to be agreed by the local authorities that will make up the East London Region and then the proposals will need to be ratified by each authority's Cabinet.
- 1.4 Timeliness continues to be a challenge in adoption and we are scrutinised against DfE standards through the Adoption Scorecard. Nationally there has been a marginal increase in children being referred for adoption decisions and in 2017/18, LBBD saw a slight increase in the number of children who were given the decision that they 'should be placed for adoption' (SHOPA) decision as well. This was an increase from 18 cases to 22 cases between 2016-17 and 2017-18. A contributory factor was a number of sibling groups needing placements.
- 1.5 The Corporate Parenting Annual Report provides an update on the numbers of children in care as well as some of the key events over the last year, including Takeover Day. Our 0-9 population is underrepresented in care, with 10-17-year olds being overrepresented. Boys are overrepresented, making up 53% of all those in care. White ethnic groups are overrepresented in care, with Black African and Asian groups being underrepresented in care relative to the local population. 2014-2017 has seen a downward trend in children entering care and children in care, with minor trend fluctuations in 2017/18.
- 1.6 One of the critical things our children and young people need is stability and clear plan for permanence in their future. This might mean a plan to remain at- or return home with their parents, to progress to independence, to remain in a happy foster placement, a plan for adoption or a placement in residential care; regardless planning for permanence is critical. We recognise that this approach to achieving permanence for our children and young people cuts across the children's care and support and doesn't apply just to children in care. It is also impacted by and reflected in our approach to- and performance in corporate parenting and adoption, as well as other areas.

## **2. Proposed Strategy**

2.1 It is for this reason that we are developing a Permanency Strategy, which will underpin our plans for permanence throughout every child's journey. The Permanency Strategy will encompass the following and will incorporate and replace the two annual reports you are being presented with today, in future years. We will still, however, need to report to the DfE on these items annually and therefore these elements of the strategy will be updated every year so that we can fulfil that duty.

- A needs analysis and performance report including:
  - Adoption
  - Corporate parenting
  - Demand analysis and projections
- Our strategy for improvement including
  - Early permanence planning
  - The edge of care
  - Return home and Special Guardianship
  - Fostering
  - Residential care
  - Adoption
  - Leaving care
  - Participation and co-production
- Our strategy for ensuring sufficiency including
  - Placement and carer sufficiency
  - Commissioning plans
  - Care leavers' accommodation
  - Demand management
  - Market management

2.2 The strategy will be developed over the next 2 months, in line with revisions to the target operating model and in response to previous performance and anticipated policy developments.

## **3. Consultation**

3.1. One key element of our work in corporate parenting and in planning for permanence is ensuring that children and young people are involved, both in their own plans and by feeding into broader service development through groups such as Skitz and the Corporate Parenting Board. The Corporate Parenting Annual report outlines activity in this area over the last year and the new strategy will seek to further improve opportunities for children and young people to meaningfully contribute to planning.

**Public Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report:** None

### **List of appendices:**

**Appendix 1-** Adoption and Permanence Annual Report 2017/18

**Appendix 2-** Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2017/18