

ASSEMBLY

24 November 2021

Title: Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2020/21	
Report of the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care Integration	
Open Report	For Information
Wards Affected: All	Key Decision: No
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Accountable Director: April Bald, Operational Director for Children's Care and Support	
Accountable Strategic Director: Elaine Allegretti, Director of People and Resilience	
Summary: The Council is required to produce an annual report on corporate parenting, which is included in the agenda for your consideration today. The Corporate Parenting Annual Report is produced on behalf of the Members Corporate Parenting Group (MCPG) and covers the period of 1 st April 2020 to end of March 2021. This report introduces the Corporate Parenting Annual Report.	
Recommendation The Assembly is recommended to: (i) Note the contents of the report on corporate parenting. (ii) Note achievements and plans for the financial year 2021/22.	
Reason(s) (i) The Council is required to produce a Corporate Parenting Annual Report and present these to elected members in their capacity as corporate parents.	

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 is not 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 do not feel like that has been an option in the past.

2. Corporate Parenting Annual Report

- 2.1 This annual report provides an overview of what we are doing well, our key achievements in the last year, what are our key challenges and our plans to address those challenges in 2021/22 and beyond. The report presents activity and performance data from 2020/21 and identifies the Board's plans and priorities for the year ahead.
- 2.2 Since the last Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2019/20 was produced, we have experienced one of the most turbulent periods for public services – and people services in particular – with the global pandemic. Given the context of the borough and high levels of deprivation, the pandemic has posed significant challenges for our whole community, families, children, and young people and remains – one of the greatest challenges many of us have faced.
- 2.3 Despite the profound impact of the pandemic, and the significant challenge of maintaining business as usual throughout, we have continued our improvement journey. We have remained relentless in our ambitions to improve the quality of social work practice and lived experiences, with many key achievements and improved outcomes for our children in care and care leavers.
- 2.4 We were pleased with the overall positive feedback and published Ofsted letter from our ILACS focused assurance visit held in May 2021 (Ofsted letter published 15th of July 2021) which confirmed many strengths and improvements during the pandemic. We have noted the areas for improvement relevant to children in care and care leavers and these have been incorporated into our improvement plan and progress will be reported regularly at MCPG this year.
- 2.5 The work of the MCPG has also concentrated on delivering the promises we have made to our looked after children and care leavers. We are ambitious for children and young people and want them to lead happy, safe, and successful lives.
- 2.6 A summary of the key achievements in 2020/21 include:
 - Strong and effective senior leadership with an unrelenting focus on improving outcomes for vulnerable children, young people, and their families. A robust and effective response to COVID-19 premised on our culture of putting the needs of the most vulnerable first, honest conversations, robust risk management and creating the conditions to work together as a team and with partners.
 - Lead Member led Corporate Parenting Group going from strength to strength with honest conversations with children, young people, foster carers, and partners resulting in better understanding of experiences, what needs to be different and agreed actions for improvement.

- Further work to do, but continued improvement in our partnership working, with education and health outcomes improving. A health led overhaul of our initial health assessment and reviews has led to improved performance but more work to do especially for health of care leavers.
- Practice improvement continues although consistency and variability remain a priority. This is set against a trajectory of improving practice as identified by audit, good stability, and sustained performance in adoption.
- Innovative and exciting Specialist Intervention Service continues to develop interventions that reflect children, young people and community needs to help keep children in their families or return home.
- For those children in care, a strong in-house fostering service supported by the Mockingbird programme continues to keep placements stable and responding to the variety of needs of our children, with stronger Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) footprint evident.
- Effective Virtual School during the pandemic demonstrating good outcomes for children in care and care leavers.
- New care leaver service that is young person centred in capacity and processes and that responds to new duties.
- Our work with care leavers underpinned by “no expiry date” ethos for our care and support offered, with strengthening relationships, good rates of keeping in touch, and celebration of their achievements.
- Increased investment in our enhanced local offer underpinned by better internal and external partnership working including Community Solutions, Housing, Inclusive Growth, and Brokerage with aspirations to work towards Care Leaver Covenant.
- Continuous improvement plan that reflects our strengths and challenges of our offer and practice following a helpful and inspirational visit from the National Improvement Advisor for Care Leavers – Mark Riddell, owned politically and operationally at the highest level.
- Good progress in strengthening consistency and visibility of child’s voice and lived experience.
- An active and greater presence of children in care council in our improvement and corporate parenting work including shaping virtual ways of working.

2.7 We know we still have a lot to do to improve the lives of our children and young people in care and care leavers, but with our stronger invigorated MCPG and as committed Corporate Parents, we are relentless in our ambition to achieve this. Headline plans for 2021/22 are set out at the end of the corporate parenting annual report.

2.8 The Corporate Parenting Annual Report is attached as Appendix C.

3. Consultation

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 Skittlz and the Members Corporate Parenting Group. 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 A: LBBD Corporate Parenting Annual Report (2020/21)