

CABINET



Report subject	BCP Corporate Parenting Strategy
Meeting date	13 November 2019
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	<p>The council works hard and in partnership with others to support the minority of families who need support in the community to care for their children within their family and family network. For some children this is not possible and they become children in our care.</p> <p>Every councillor and officer within a council has a statutory responsibility to make good decisions for children in our care and care experienced young people (also known as care leavers) as a parent would for their own child, in this context councillors are Corporate Parents.</p> <p>The corporate parenting strategy has been created through the newly established BCP Corporate Parenting Board in consultation with our children in care and care experienced young people. It sets out our ambition for our children in care and care experienced young people, and how this will be achieved.</p> <p>The Corporate Parenting and Sufficiency Strategy Development Plan will make the ambition in the strategy a reality.</p>
Recommendations	<p>It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet:</p> <p>(a) Notes how the strategy was developed in partnership and the feedback received from Children's Overview & Scrutiny Committee</p> <p>(b) Recommends the final corporate parenting strategy for adoption by Council</p>
Reason for recommendations	<p>To agree BCPs shared partnership ambition for our children in care and care experienced young people, in line with the BCP Corporate Plan.</p> <p>To support BCP Council in meeting its legal responsibilities in regard to our children in care and care experience young people.</p>

Portfolio Holder(s):	Sandra Moore, Portfolio Holder for Children and Families
Corporate Director	Judith Ramsden, Corporate Director - Children's Services
Contributors	Claire Webb, Senior Policy Officer
Wards	All wards
Classification	For decision

Background

1. Every councillor and officer within a council has a responsibility to act for children in care and care experienced young people (also known as care leavers) as a parent would for their own child. This is known as being Corporate Parents. It is one of the most important roles that BCP Council has.
2. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 defined for the first time in law the responsibility of corporate parents to ensure, as far as possible, secure, nurturing and positive experiences. Under the Children Act 2004, local authorities have a duty to promote cooperation between 'relevant partners', including the police, the NHS and education providers, while those partners have a duty to cooperate with the local authority in turn. Statutory guidance sets out the roles and responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children's Services.
3. BCP has a recently established Corporate Parenting Board ("the Board") to support the council in meeting its statutory duties and achieving the very best outcomes for our children in care and care experienced young people. The Board chaired by Cllr Moore has a membership made up of children in care and care experienced young people, foster carers, health professional leads, education partners, Councillors and BCP officers from housing and children's services. Part of the Board's purpose is to develop and deliver the Corporate Parenting Strategy and champion the needs and high aspirations for our children in care and care experienced young people.
4. Strategies and policies for children in care, care experienced young people and corporate parenting were already in place for Bournemouth, Christchurch (via Dorset County Council) and Poole. BCP has chosen to create a new corporate parenting strategy as a priority so that we have the new Council's ambition and commitment for all our children in care and care experienced young people to have a *brighter future* articulated. This report explains how the strategy has been developed and provides an overview of what BCP Council is being asked to adopt. The full strategy is appended.

Developing the strategy

5. To support the Board in developing the strategy the existing strategies were reviewed and the following information was analysed:
 - a. Issues identified by children in care and care experienced young people from the preceding authorities and the newly forming BCP children in care council and care leaver forums;
 - b. Local performance data on outcomes and service delivery; and
 - c. National research and practice from 'outstanding' areas.
6. At its first meeting the Board held a workshop session to:
 - a. Articulate partners ambition for our children in care and care experienced young people
 - b. Review key issues identified by children in care and care experienced young people and other analysis, and from these identify priorities and what partners should commit to do about those priorities
7. These outputs were used to draft the strategy which the Board reviewed and developed further in October 2019. BCP's new forums for both children in care and care experienced young people are creating pledges, which will set out what our children and young people can expect from us. They will be considered by the Board at its February 2020 meeting, and then onwards to Cabinet and Council. The agreed pledges will be included in this strategy.
8. The Chair and Vice Chair of the Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, sit on the Board; they invited feedback on the draft strategy from Members of Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee via email as there was no scheduled meeting of the Committee within the required timescales. The feedback received did not propose any changes.

Overview of the draft strategy

9. The strategy sets out the mission of BCP Council working with partners, which is to create brighter futures for our children in care and care experienced young people, ensuring they are happy, healthy and feel secure, and that we have high aspirations for them to be the best that they can be. It reflects the high aspirations that we have and what can be achieved by working with partners. It is an aspirational strategy, which will be delivered through the development of a delivery plan and by championing this work across the whole Council and with the wider community of partners across BCP who can make a difference to the lives of our children and young people.
10. Central to the strategy are 9 principles, set out below. The principles underpin everything we will do and explain how the collective ambitions for children and young people will be made real, the governance section sets out how partners will ensure the strategy is delivered:

- I. The views, needs and priorities of children, young people and their carers inform everything that we do
- II. Children and young people are best cared for wherever possible within their birth or extended family
- III. Where children and young people can't live with parents or extended family and require local authority care, we strive to provide the best carers to provide a safe, stable and caring home
- IV. Our children and young people will stay in touch with their family, friends and local community, and have a strong sense of their own identity
- V. Our children and young people will have positive and stable relationships with those who care for them and support them
- VI. Our children and young people will have good physical and emotional health and wellbeing
- VII. We all have high expectations and aspirations for our children in care and care experienced young people
- VIII. Our parenting responsibility extends beyond when a young person leaves care, including being corporate grandparents when they are young parents
- IX. We will further develop how we work with children, young people, their families and carers

Summary of financial implications

11. No direct impact as a result of the strategy, any financial impacts arising from the implementation of the strategy will be assessed through the delivery plan/associated implementation work.

Summary of legal implications

12. No direct legal impacts arising from this strategy, it will however support the Council in meeting its legal responsibilities towards children in care and care experienced young people.

Summary of human resources implications

13. No direct impact as a result of the strategy, any human resource impacts arising from the implementation of the strategy will be assessed through the delivery plan/associated implementation work.

Summary of environmental impact

14. No direct environmental impacts arising from this strategy, any environmental impacts arising from the implementation of the strategy will be assessed through the delivery plan/associated implementation work.

Summary of public health implications

15. No direct impact as a result of the strategy, however public health may be involved in the delivery plan/associated work to implement the strategy.

Summary of equality implications

16. A full equality impact assessment has been carried out and is available on the Council's website. No actual or potential negative outcomes from the strategy have been identified. Analysis and research carried out to inform the development of the Corporate Parenting strategy and the equality impact assessment has highlighted many additional challenges which children in care and care experienced young people face compared to their peers, which the strategy will seek to address. These include (see the full assessment for all details):
- a. Support/entitlements change at age 18, and at age 25 their entitlement to support as care leavers ceases. Each young person is an individual with different circumstances, strengths and needs; the ability of each young person to cope at these 'cut off points' will therefore vary. The strategy aims to positively impact this through the commitment to parenting responsibility extending beyond when a young person leaves care, and support to be prepared for independence.
 - b. Children in care and care experience young people typically have poorer emotional wellbeing and health. The strategy aims to positively impact this through the commitment to ensure that children in care and care experienced young people have good physical and emotional health and wellbeing.
 - c. A number of care experienced young people go on to become young parents; similar to many young parents they may need additional support, especially where they do not have a support network through family and friends. The strategy aims to positively impact this through the commitment to be good corporate grandparents; to support our care experienced young people if they become young parents; and to support our 'grandchildren' to ensure they have a bright future and a good start in life, to help mitigate generational inequality.

Summary of risk assessment

17. There are no direct risks created by the strategy, risks will be assessed through the delivery plan/associated work to implement the strategy. The absence of a corporate parenting strategy potentially risks the Council being less effective in its role as a Corporate Parent and poor child level outcomes. It also risks the consequential impacts of not being a strong corporate parent, which include a risk of a reduction in foster carers (lower numbers recruited and a loss of existing foster carers), the loss of local care and financial impacts.

Background papers

The equality impact assessment is published on the Council's website.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - BCP corporate parenting strategy.