

ITEM No ...2.....

REPORT TO: CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICES COMMITTEE – 28 OCTOBER 2019

REPORT ON: CORPORATE PARENTING

REPORT BY: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICE

REPORT NO: 359-2019

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report provides Elected Members with the second 12 month update on the implementation of the Corporate Parenting Plan for Looked After Children and Care Leavers. Reference is made to Article II of the Minute of Meeting of the Children and Families Services Committee held on 25 September 2017 (report 310-2017 refers) and Article III of the Minute of the Meeting of the Children and Families Services Committee held on 29 October 2018 (report no 340-2018 refers). The report describes significant progress being made in the development of support and improvement of outcomes for care experienced children and young people. The report also outlines key priorities over the next 12 months.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that Committee Members:
- i. note significant continued progress made in the implementation of the Corporate Parenting Plan and improved outcomes for Looked After Children and Care Leavers.
 - ii. instruct the Executive Director to provide a further update on Corporate Parenting in 12 months.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The Scottish Government provided an additional £1.2 million to support the implementation of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and parity of payment for kinship carers and foster carers. The two previous reports noted that the implementation of Continuing Care requirements had reduced local placement capacity and therefore driven increases in the number of young people being accommodated in external residential placements, which had led to a marked over-spend.

3.2 As noted in the last report, (report 340-2018 refers), this led to a range of actions to appropriately return some young people to local placements and re-integrate them back into the community whilst also reducing costs. The actions taken within Children Services has resulted in a change to the support and placements offered to young people and therefore a change to the expenditure profile. The Table below shows the number of young people in various types of placement or receiving support and the project spend for financial year 2019/20 compared to 2016/17.

	31-Mar-17	30-Sep-19
Residential School	42	31
Other placements eg. Education Support, continuing care, supported accommodation	32	31
Total Number of Placements	74	62
Total Cost	£8.8m	£8.0m

3.3 As was also outlined in the last report, (report 340-2018 refers). Scottish Government allocated an additional £409,200 Pupil Equity Funding for Looked After Children and Care Leavers to support improvements in their health, wellbeing and educational attainment. This targeted funding has since been allocated to develop a team to provide targeted support to Looked After Children at risk of school exclusion and to provide additional capacity in the Throughcare and Aftercare Team in mental health and employment support. These posts commenced in August of this year.

4.0 MAIN TEXT

4.1 Background

In accordance with Part 9 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, each Local Authority area has a statutory duty to implement a Corporate Parenting Plan for the Looked After Children and Care Leavers it has responsibility for. The Act lists a range of partners as Corporate Parents and requires them to be pro-active in improving outcomes in 8 inter-related categories of care and support ranging from providing safe, secure, stable and nurturing homes through to reducing numbers in youth/criminal justice systems.

4.2 Part 10 of the Act also outlines requirements in respect of providing Aftercare for care experienced young people and adults up to the age of 26 years. Part 11 outlines requirements relating to Continuing Care up to the age of 21 years, whereby young people must be supported to remain in the same placement if the carer is willing and the placement meets the young person's needs. The broad purpose is to ensure that care experienced young people benefit from supported transitions into early adulthood.

5.0 DEVELOPMENTS

5.1 Over the last 12 months, the Corporate Parenting Partnership, consisting of representatives from the Council, NHS Tayside, Police Scotland, the Third Sector and Dundee & Angus College, has continued to oversee the implementation of the Corporate Parenting Plan. The partnership also now includes a representative Care Leaver and links with our local Champions Board to inform priorities. In accordance with the 8 categories of care and support outlined in the Act, the following is being achieved:

5.2 **Safe, secure, stable and nurturing homes** – the total number of Looked After Children has continued to reduce from 519 in October 2018 to a current total of 498. This is believed to be a result of more effective Team Around the Child (TATC) arrangements where universal services prevent family problems from escalating and also targeted Social Work support delivered on a voluntary or statutory basis which does not involve children and young people needing to enter the formal care system.

5.3 In respect of the stability of homes for children and young people who become Looked After, over the last 4 years almost all placement types have increasingly been far more settled with an increase in length of placement, attributed to high levels of support. This is a key factor for Looked After Children and Young People, who need consistent and continuous placements where they can form enduring positive attachments with carers and not experience further trauma caused by separation and perceived rejection. The average length of placements has increased from:

- **At home with parents** - from 14 months to 15 months
- **Kinship carers** - from 5 months to 13 months
- **Internal foster carers** - from 12 months to 15 months;
- **External foster carers** - from 14 to 24 months
- **Children's houses** - from 3 to 19 months.

- 5.4 There have therefore been particular improvements in the stability of kinship care and children's houses. This corresponds with additional training and support provided to carers and staff from a dedicated Social Worker and Educational Psychologists over the period. In June this year, the Kinship Care Team received the Outstanding Team Award at the local authority Outstanding Service and Commitment Award (OSCA) Ceremony. The Educational Psychology team has also since been shortlisted for a COSLA Award.
- 5.5 At the same time, all 5 children's houses continued to receive grades of Good and Very Good in Care Inspectorate inspections. The Family Placement Team, which recruits and provides support to foster carers and adoptive parents, also received Good and Very Good grades and won the Lord Provost Award at the OSCA Ceremony. Following the introduction of a pilot Missing Person's Scheme with Police Scotland, episodes of Looked After Children going missing has reduced markedly.
- 5.6 In order to maintain children and young people in their local community and continue to manage costs, the service has also attempted to increase the recruitment of internal foster carers. In the last 12 months, 5 new foster care placements and 4 new adoptive families started. Currently, 84 internal foster carers are caring for over 150 children and young people but recruitment is a challenge, especially for siblings, teenagers and children with a disability.
- 5.7 At present, over 56% of children placed with internal foster carers are aged 0-5 years; 27% are aged 6-10 years; and 17% are aged 11-17 years. The low availability of foster carers for teenagers is compensated for to some extent by children's houses which care for up to 25 young people at any time. However, most of our current 28 external residential placements relate to teenagers who have particularly complex needs and for whom a suitable local placement was not available when the placement started.
- 5.8 Significantly, the number of children and young people in external residential care has also continued to reduce over the last 12 months from 42 in March 2017 to 31 at 30 September 2019. This has involved identifying young people with the capacity to return to local placements with additional support, including with their own families, foster carers and children's houses. Once they have returned, school aged children and young people also attend local schools and are supported to remain in local placements as part of Continuing Care.
- 5.9 In relation to Care Leavers, there are currently 16 young people aged 18-21 who have elected to stay in Continuing Care. To facilitate this further, all 5 children's houses have had their conditions of registration varied to allow for young people to remain until they are 21 years. To support those who want to move out of the houses on reaching adulthood, 2 satellite flats with outreach support are being used. As it is entirely voluntary, it remains impossible to predict how many will elect to remain in Continuing Care each year.
- 5.10 **Positive relationships with family, friends and others** – over the last 12 months, the Champions Board has extended its membership, cemented links with the Corporate Parenting Partnership and jointly agreed a number of actions with Corporate Parents. A Young People's Participation Group (YPPG) also developed a film highlighting the experiences of care leavers entitled 'Grit', which is being shown to Corporate Parents to raise awareness.
- 5.11 **Uphold and promote the rights of care experienced children and young people** – the service continues to commission an independent advocacy service from Who Cares?, which has supported 77 young people in various placement settings over the last 12 months. This includes attendance at Children's Hearings, Looked After Child Reviews and TATC Meetings. The service also provides group based support to all young people in the children's houses, where young people are encouraged to speak openly about their needs.

- 5.12 **Increase positive educational outcomes and attainment** – there has been a considerable amount of joint activity across the partnership to help improve the educational outcomes of Looked After Children. This includes the development of a Charter with Head Teachers and Social Work Teams; the implementation of the Breakthrough Mentoring scheme to all 8 secondary schools and offsite education; targeted support from designated Pupil Support Workers; and a new Inclusion Policy.
- 5.13 This joint work is leading to some significant improvements, particularly in relation to exclusion rates and attainment levels. In 2017-18, there were 238 exclusion incidents for Looked After Children and last year there was a marked reduction of only 87 exclusions. In 2016-17, 40% of Looked After Children achieved SCQF Level 4 or better compared with 60% in 2017-18.
- The above figures refer to Literacy and Numeracy attainment for ‘Looked After’ school leavers, Insight’s National Benchmarking Measure. Updates (ie 2018/19 data) for these will not be available until February 2020.
- 5.14 **Value care experienced children and young people as individuals** – the service also encourages children and young people to record their views when developing and reviewing their individual Child’s Plans. This year, over 75% recorded their views against a 3 year target of 100% by 2020. Comments included them being more aware of their rights and requests to have overnight stays. Building on this, the service is presently exploring the use of a social media application which will allow Looked After Children and Young People to express their views autonomously, whenever they want.
- 5.15 The care experienced representative on the Corporate Parenting Partnership has also been nominated for a 20/20 Vision Scottish Reviews Young Scots of the Year Award. In addition to being a key member of the partnership, they take a lead role in the Champions Board and YPPG; helped to lead on the production of the film ‘Grit’; are a care experienced representative on the Independent Care Review; and had an article published on feminism and women’s mental health.
- 5.16 **Address physical and mental health concerns** – all Looked After Children and Young receive health assessments on entering care and benefit from additional support in school from Tayside NHS School Nurses. Building on this for Care Leavers, the Throughcare and Aftercare Team (TCAC) now employs a Health and Wellbeing Worker, who has commenced an audit of the health needs of young people being supported by the team to inform practice developments.
- 5.17 In order to promote seamless health care transitions from school to early adulthood, the School Nursing Service work closely with the Health and Wellbeing Worker. For Care Leavers with emotional or mental health problems, a Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist is also now attached to the team. Where their specialist support is not necessary or a Care Leaver is presently unable or unwilling to engage, they continue to receive holistic support. The mental health staff are also training core team members.
- 5.18 **Increase the number in positive destinations** – as with exclusion rates and attainment levels, the proportion of Looked After Child school leavers entering a positive destination has increased from 81% in 2014-15 to 87% in 2017-18. Whilst there are concerns about the sustainability of their progress, this issue is an area of priority for ongoing support through the new LAC posts in schools and the care leavers employability worker who is co- located with the Throughcare Team and Discover Works.
- 5.19 It is indicative of the ongoing vulnerability of Care Leavers and emphasises the importance of continuing to provide ongoing holistic care and support. Of the 73 not in employment, education or training, 12% (17) is due to long term health or being young parents. In order to help address this key issue, which can potentially affect the longer-term life chances of Care Leavers well into adulthood, a range of inter-connected initiatives have been or are about to be implemented, including:

- Whilst still in school all Looked After Children receive key worker support on transitions
- The Through Care After Care Team is co-located with the Discover Work Service to provide instant access to employability advice
- An Employability Worker recently started with Discover Works and will provide continued pro-active outreach support to Care Leavers.
- A programme on employability skills is used with those Care Leavers who are not yet considered to be ready to enter further education, training or employment
- The Council has introduced a Guaranteed Job Interview Scheme which applies to all posts, guarantees an interview to applicants up to the age of 29 who are, or have been, in care with Dundee City Council, who meet the essential selection criteria for a job. It also gives any GJIS applicant who is unsuccessful, access to the selection criteria for a job and access to the Employment Support Service. This has been in place since 2019 and data is not yet available but will be produced from 2020.
- In 2018/2019, 74 new jobs were created by the Scottish Employer Recruitment Incentive (SERI). As part of the Scottish Government's grant for No-one Left Behind (NOLB), funding has been allocated to support the creation of 44 new jobs for young people in 2019/2020. To date in 2019/20 19 jobs have been created.
- We are working in partnership with Skills Development Scotland to set up a data sharing agreement to identify all care experienced young people. This will fulfil our role as corporate parents and enable care leavers to get the full level of support required, hopefully leading to better long term outcomes through positive sustained destinations.

5.20 **Reduce the number entering the youth and criminal justice systems** – there has been an increase in the number of young people Diverted from Prosecution by the Crown Office. There has also been a decrease in the number of young people being admitted to secure care on offence or welfare grounds, falling from 15 in 2015-16 to 4 in 2018-19.

6.0 SUMMARY

6.1 As can be seen, a broad range of activities over the last 12 months have led to some exponential improvements in the care and support of Looked After Children and Care Leavers. In particular, placements have become more stable; inspection reports have been Good and Very Good; teams have won local and been shortlisted for national awards; the use of external residential and secure care has continued to reduce; children and young people are more actively engaged; and educational outcomes have improved.

6.2 Building on this, the Corporate Parenting Partnership has identified some key priorities which include prioritising and further enhancing the support available to kinship carers; increasing the number of internal foster carers through a targeted recruitment campaign; pro-actively identifying and supporting Care Leavers not engaged with services to help address their wider needs and promote effective transitions into ETE; and engaging with key partners to expand ETE opportunities.

6.3 To further inform priorities, over the next 6 months the partnership will also be carrying out a detailed self-evaluation exercise in the context of the Care Inspectorate framework for children and young people in need of care and protection. The findings of the Independent Care Review, which is broadly exploring how Looked After Children and Young People and Care Leavers can have the absolutely best experiences whilst in care, will also inform developments. Recommendations are due to be published in early 2020.

7.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 This Report has been subject to an assessment of any impact on equality and diversity, fairness, poverty, environment and corporate risk. There are no major issues.

8.0 CONSULTATIONS

8.1 The Council Management Team have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

9.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 None.

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