

Cabinet

Report Title:	Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report 2015/16 and Children in Care and Care Leavers Council (C2C) Annual Report 2015/16
Meeting Date:	13 September 2016
Lead Councillor(s):	Councillor Gordon Jones, Cabinet Member for Children's Services
Local Councillor(s):	All Councillors
Director:	Sue Cook, Corporate Director for Children and Young People's Services
Assistant Director or Head of Service:	Allan Cadzow, Deputy Director, Children and Young People's Services
Author:	<i>Fiona Harris, Corporate Parenting Board Manager, Tel: 01473 260797</i>

Brief summary of report

1. This is the annual report to Cabinet on the work of the Corporate Parenting Board to monitor and challenge the quality of services to children in care and care leavers.
2. The report is accompanied by
 - a) Appendix A – Corporate Parenting Board Summary report
 - b) Appendix B - The Annual Report of the Children in Care and Care Leavers Council (C2C)

What is Cabinet being asked to decide?

3. To note the progress made by the Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) in raising the awareness of Members and senior officers in Suffolk County Council and partner agencies of their corporate parenting responsibilities
4. To endorse the continuing role of the Board as champions for the voice of children in care and care leavers, acting 'as if they are our child'
5. To note the performance and achievements of the CPB in meeting its 2014,15 priorities to promote and improve outcomes for looked after children and care leavers.
6. To consider and agree the proposed priorities for the CPB for 2015,16 and consider if other actions would assist the Council in fulfilling its corporate parenting responsibilities

Reason for recommendation

7. In recognition of the continuing importance of services specifically provided for Children in Care and the effectiveness of agencies in discharging their Corporate Parenting responsibilities this report has been provided to Cabinet and provides information on the work of the Corporate Parenting Board over the last year (2015/16).
8. This will assist the Cabinet in fulfilling its duty to ensure that the interests of children in care and care leavers are appropriately reflected in all Council policies and in the priorities of the Children's' Trust commissioning group, and Local Safeguarding Children and Health and Wellbeing Boards. The work of the Corporate Parenting Board and C2C was acknowledged to be effective in the most recent Ofsted Inspection of services provided for children in care and care leavers undertaken at the end of 2015.
9. The report provides an overview of the work of the CPB and highlights the achievements and challenges the Board has identified, setting out the proposed actions for the coming year. The Cabinet is being asked to agree the actions proposed and decide if there are any further actions the Cabinet require to be taken in order to improve outcomes for looked after children and care leavers.

What are the key issues to consider?

10. Is the Board providing sufficient challenge and support to staff, carers, schools and other education providers to improve the educational progress and attainment of Suffolk's children in care, wherever they are placed?
11. Are the Council's 10 Promise's co-produced with the Children in Care and Care Leavers Council sufficiently comprehensive to ensure that the authority meets its statutory commitments to children in care and care leavers and will improve outcomes for them?
12. Is the County Council working well with partners and children and young people through the Corporate Parenting Board, the Local Safeguarding Children's Board and the Health and Wellbeing Board to meet the challenges of providing services for Children in Care given the context of current financial constraints?

What are the resource and risk implications?

13. There continue to be increasing expectations through legislation, statutory guidance and regulatory inspections to provide a range of support services to children in care and leaving care. These requirements must be met within an overall reduced level of resource. Savings cannot be realised at this stage from the Children in Care budget because of the increased number of LAC and their changing profile; big sibling groups, older children and those with more complex needs all requiring more costly placement arrangements. There is also an increasing number of Special Guardianship Orders made by the courts which result in long-term financial commitments.
14. The need to provide suitable placements where children can feel secure and have positive and fulfilling experiences and realise their potential is challenging as it is difficult to recruit sufficient foster carers. The new structure of foster carers' fees and allowances is intended to improve the council's capacity to provide placements for older children sibling groups and those with significant

emotional and behavioural needs. We exceeded the target of foster placements but the numbers of children coming into care have increased significantly in the past twelve months and even more carers are needed to meet that challenge.

15. Identifying appropriate accommodation for care leavers continues to provide a challenge to the council and its partners but we have been successful in re tendering our supported accommodation during 2015/16 with new providers with a higher level of service quality. Ipswich Borough Council have offered some of their housing stock to help facilitate this and we are also working with Housing Associations and the Private Sector Landlords.
16. As this report is for information only no EIA is required.

What are the timescales associated with this decision?

17. The priorities as agreed by the Cabinet will be delivered over the next twelve months.

Alternative options

18. This report sets out the priorities for the Corporate Parenting Board. The Board, together with partner agencies will be working together to explore further options to make sure children in our care receive every opportunity to thrive and not be disadvantaged by being 'in care'.

Who will be affected by this decision?

19. Children and young people, their families and carers. The County Council and partner organisations in the Safeguarding Children Board and Suffolk Health and Wellbeing Board.

Main body of report

Progress against Corporate Parenting Board Strategic Priorities 2015/16

1. *To monitor the Corporate Parenting and Sufficiency Strategy and the progress made in meeting the priorities.*

The Board has received reports relating to the CYP Service priorities, has noted the achievements and continued to provide challenge in areas requiring further development; principally improving the mental health and well-being services, improving educational progression and achievement, increasing the number of in-house foster carers for hard-to-place children and reducing still further the number of care leavers in unsuitable accommodation. The Sufficiency Strategy is in the process of being reviewed and when finalised will be presented to the Board

2. *To continue to listen to the voice of children in care and care leavers and ensure that young people's feedback receives a considered response.*

Reports were received on a range of consultations and involvement activities with children and young people and the impact of those on changes to policy and practice.

3. *To work with the Children in Care Council (C2C) and support them in achieving these priorities.*

The CPB and C2C agreed joint priorities and have monitored their implementation throughout the year. They are reported in full in the CPB annual report and C2C's annual report. A key area going forward is to assess how effective the Council has been in delivering the 10 Promises we have agreed with C2C.

4. *To ensure the provision of services by SCC and its partners reflects and conforms with the Government's Cross-Departmental Care Leavers' Strategy to achieve the best possible outcomes for care leavers.*

Progress is being made in the areas of housing, employment and training and the continuing support for care leavers. During the year care leavers were appointed as Young Apprentice Commissioners to assist in commissioning services for young people and we are looking to extend this programme in future years.

5. *To continue to work with Health and Mental Health Services to ensure the emotional health and wellbeing needs of Children in Care are appropriately met.*

This has been the focus of considerable attention throughout the year and while the take-up of physical health services has improved, mental health and well-being services are subject to a transformation process between SCC and the CCGs as they are recognised not to meet the needs of Suffolk's children.

6. *To support and monitor actions focussed on improving the educational progress and attainment of children in care, acting as Governing Body to the Virtual School.*

The Governing Body to the Virtual School with an independent chairperson has begun during its first year to demonstrate effectiveness in challenging schools and the authority and partners to ensure improved educational outcomes for children in care and care leavers. Work is being undertaken to develop a virtual college for young people aged 16 plus to ensure young people have the support to access post 16 provision when they finish statutory education.

Sources of further information

- a) Appendix A - CPB annual summary report
- b) Appendix B - Annual Report – Children in Care Council, C2C