

## ***Keeping our Children Safe from Harm***

<b>Date of SSCB Meeting</b>	17 <sup>th</sup> March 2016	Item 6
<b>Report Title</b>	Corporate Parenting	
<b>Summary &amp; Purpose of Report</b>	<p>This report sets out in brief the role of Corporate Parenting Board and their activities undertaken to ensure the safety of Looked After Children they act as corporate parents for is a priority.</p> <p><b>The report identifies key safeguarding risks for LAC and how these are being managed by their Corporate Parents and serves to advise Shropshire Safeguarding Children Board about the way in which Corporate Parenting Panel operates and receives information which enables it to scrutinise the services and stay safe outcomes for children in care and care leavers.</b></p>	
<b>Recommendations &amp; reason for recommendations</b>	<p>Shropshire Safeguarding Children Board to note the contents of this report and the constituent agencies should consider how their organisation can contribute to the continued health, safety and development for the children in care for whom we have corporate "family" responsibilities.</p>	
<b>How young people have contributed to this report</b>	<p>Children and Young People have not directly contributed to this report</p>	
<b>How this will promote positive outcomes for children and young people</b>	<p>A child who is cared for by the Council has the right to expect everything from a corporate parent that would be expected from a good parent.</p> <p>Every "good parent" knows that children require a safe and secure environment in which to grow and thrive. Parents protect and support their children against the dangers and risks of life. Parents are ambitious for them and want them to reach their potential. Parents celebrate and share in their achievements.</p> <p><b>Ensuring SSCB agencies understand the role of a Corporate Parent will promote critical friend challenge and a joined up approach to achieving our corporate parenting role and as such being a "Good Parent"</b></p>	
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<b>Actions to follow up Eg Communications?</b>	To be completed at meeting.
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<b>Indicate relevant strategic objectives</b>	
<p><b>Objective 1</b> Shropshire has an effective LSCB which fulfils its statutory responsibilities and promotes a culture of collective accountability, respectful challenge and continuous learning.</p>	<b>x</b>
<p><b>Objective 2</b> Shropshire has high quality safeguarding systems and practice in place which are effective in helping, protecting and caring for children and are delivered by a knowledgeable, experienced and well trained workforce</p>	<b>x</b>
<p><b>Objective 3</b> Shropshire has effective arrangements for identifying and responding to the needs of children and young people living in homes where the parenting abilities of their parents/ carers are compromised due to domestic abuse, substance misuse or mental ill health, including promoting early help to prevent escalation of risk and harm</p>	
<p><b>Objective 4</b> Shropshire has effective arrangements for responding to key safeguarding risks (particularly missing children, child sexual exploitation and trafficking), and through education and training aimed at increasing awareness and resilience.</p>	<b>x</b>
<p><b>Objective 5</b> Shropshire LSCB is active and influential through effective engagement with other strategic partnerships, statutory and other partners, front line practitioners, children and young people, parents, carers, and the wider public.</p>	

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Children and Young People in care and care leavers are involved in the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum which feed into Corporate Parenting Panel and attend panel at least twice per year to hold Corporate Parents to account.

### **1. Report**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

Shropshire Council aims to support the majority of its children and young people to achieve safe stable care within their own families and communities. However for a small number this is not possible and they require alternative short term or long term care.

Corporate Parenting is the term used for the collective responsibility of the Council and its partners to ensure safe, meaningful and effective protection of children and young people in care, and care leavers.

Children and young people are in care either by a Court Order made in public law proceedings or with the agreement of the child's parent or guardian. A child or young person may come into care as a result of temporary or permanent problems facing their parents, as a result of abuse or neglect or a range of difficulties; those in shared care/respice arrangements; those remanded into care – criminal proceedings and unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

Corporate parenting responsibilities extend to the age of 21 years (or 25 if remaining in education) for those young people who left care at 18 years. Children's Service is ultimately accountable for achieving these best outcomes for children in care but Corporate Parenting responsibilities extend to:

- ✓ All Shropshire Council departments and partner agencies;
- ✓ Community NHS Trust, Clinical Commissioning Group, Foundation and or Hospital Trusts;
- ✓ West Mercia Police;
- ✓ National Probation Trust;
- ✓ Schools, academies and Further Education colleges

In reality the range of potential partners in meeting the needs of Looked after Children is as wide as the number of agencies and organisations within the area.

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### **1.2 Corporate Parenting Panel**

A Corporate Parenting Panel is well established in Shropshire and has been for many years. Over recent times however, the focus and membership of this panel has been sharpened and extended respectively.

The Corporate Parenting Panel sets the priorities with and for children in care and monitor \ scrutinise service delivery and establish reporting mechanisms to seek to ensure that corporate parenting arrangements are effective. Corporate Parenting Panel also ensures that the commitments outlined in the Shropshire's Charter for Children in Care and Care Leavers are delivered.

### **1.3 Performance Information**

Corporate Parenting Panel monitors the delivery of good, safe, high quality services through quality assurance and performance management information.

A performance information dashboard (Appendix 1) was introduced last year and it continues to evolve. The performance information focuses on the population of Looked After Children by characteristics, placement type, placement stability, legal status, and reasons for ceasing care status. It also includes areas of particular interest such as missing episodes; care leavers – Education Employment and Training, Suitable Accommodation etc. The performance information is one of the ways in which Corporate Parenting Panel is able to understand its cohort of children and young people and to scrutinise and challenge the outcomes that are indicated from the data.

This information is set against Statistical and National performance. The following set of charts outlines the DfE LAC analysis across Local Authorities and was released in December 2015. This shows us how the LAC population of Shropshire compares with our statistical neighbours and All England data.

### ***Corporate Parenting dashboard***



Corporate  
Parenting - Q3 1516

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### **1.3.1 Key Performance Headlines**

- With effective edge of care support in place LAC rate per 10k has fallen slightly as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015 and we are seeing for the first time more children exiting than entering the care system. Also the number of children entering care over the age of 10yrs is comparatively lower than our SN and England.
- Through focused work under child protection and pre proceedings and implementation of a Support and Prevention panel, offering alternative options to care where it is safe to do so, we have been able to reduce our S20 percentage from 41% as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014 to 34% by December 2015 (and there is a corresponding rise in percentage of care orders).
- Whilst in Shropshire from 14/15 - 15/16 we have an increasing number of children placed in Foster Care provision this is still lower than SN/England. We have achieved a significant reduction in the number of children placed in residential care settings. Foster Placements have fallen in late 2015 – this is related to the rise in Special Guardianship Orders sought and granted in the year to Connected Person's Foster Carers (Friends and Family Carers who have been approved as foster carers for a specified child)
- Stability of placements remains higher than SN / All England average for children in the same placement for 2 or more years.
- There have been more children adopted from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015 - 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015 (19) than at financial year end of 14/15 (15) with another quarter to go.

### **1.4 Safeguarding Children in Care**

Many looked after children are at greater risk of social exclusion and have additional vulnerabilities than their non-looked after peers, both because of their experiences prior to coming into care, and by virtue of the fact that they are in care.

It is essential, therefore, that the Council, as a Corporate Parent, recognises the additional needs and risks of harm facing children in care and acts proactively to manage and reduce these.

Key Safeguarding Need / Risks:

- **Allocation of case workers**

All Looked After Children have a qualified social worker allocated to their case. Weekly case load allocation data is received by the DCS and AD to monitor this arrangement. The DCS is able to

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report and monitor this on behalf of the CP board. Case load reports consistently show no unallocated LAC cases.

Children Social Work services are undertaking a redesign and development of a Permanency team for LAC who have a long term permanency care plan with LAC status. This re-design will enable social workers to better prioritise LAC children on their case loads and ensure timeliness of visiting and LAC review without the competing demands of CP and incoming Assessments. The new structure will be in place as of 1.3.16.

- **Frequency of visits to children in care**

A DCS performance matrix has been developed which reports on the timeliness of visits to LAC by their allocated social workers and the timeliness of LAC care planning reviews. The DCS is able to report and monitor this on behalf of the CP board. Report dated 5.2.16 identified 12 LAC who had not had a visit within the required timescale. Quarterly trends showed improvement from the beginning of the year with 5% out of timescale in quarter 1, 6% in quarter 2 down to 3% in quarter 3.

**Denominator:** LAC at month end who have been LAC for more than 7 working days

**Numerator:** Of LAC the number who had a visit during the reporting period where the visits were not completed within 6 weeks of the previous visit. The calculation will be based on working days.

*Please note some LAC will require less frequent visits based on their permanency plan and those matched to Long Term Fostering placements however at this stage there is not sufficient information within CareFirst to separate those children. Therefore for some children who are identified as having no visit within 6 weeks will not be required to have one. Further work will take place to address this.*

- **Placement and visits to children placed outside of Shropshire**

At the time of writing there are 75 children placed out of Shropshire. 34 of these children are placed with foster carers including connected persons carers and as such placement are a result of identifying appropriate family friends and connected person as appropriate alternative carer who are already living out of area or where a child is in a stable foster care placement agreements are made within their care plan to move house along with carer to minting stability. 41 children are placed in a residential care setting. Residential placements are made as a result of special needs for the child or there being no internal foster carer available. Compared to SN/E data Shropshire has a lower number of children placed out of area.

Challenges with limited availability of foster carers for teenagers led us to undertake targeted recruitment in 15/16 and we have successfully engaged four sets of foster carers currently going through the process of assessment who are specifically looking to foster teenagers.

We have achieved a reduction in year in the number of newly accommodated children being placed in residential care settings.

In July 14 new guidance was issued to LA's in relation to the placement of children outside of their own LA. This amendment requires DCS approval of all children placed outside of their home LA – Shropshire comply with this through the PALAC process and authorisation for such external OOA placements are authorised by the HoS on behalf of the DCS.

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- **Sufficiency of placements to achieve local placement for local children**

Shropshire's placement sufficiency duty and strategy was revised for 2015. The strategy identifies how the service will continue to increase placement options locally to meet the needs for children coming into the care system locally and where necessary commission specialist placement as local as possible to meet needs. (Appendix 1)

- **Stability in placement promoting relationships with carers**

Shropshire performance shows an increase in placement stability from 69% in April 15 to 76.4 % in January 16. This is above SN/E data from March 14

- **Identification of CSE risk in LAC**

During 15/16 there were 9 LAC presented to CSE panel – x1 high risk, x7 medium risk and x1 low risk. 16 children in total who have been presented to CSE panel were or have been received into LAC to promote their welfare and protect them from harm.

- **Management of children missing from care**

Missing Children. For Shropshire's own LAC there have been 90 missing from care episodes involving 24 children year to date

	<b>Total Missing Episodes</b>	<b>Total Children</b>
<b>SC LAC Missing from Care</b>	90	24
<b><i>* of which a return interview was held</i></b>	38	11
	%	42%
		46%

Welfare Return Interviews (WRI) offer a good opportunity to identify additional risks, understand push \ pull factors and deter future missing episodes and are offered to each child missing from care. Not all children will engage with this interview.

Our data show that 46% of WRI have achieved engagement with the YP. This is an area that needs improvement but also needs to be understood in the context that whilst not all YP will engage in the WRI at the time other opportunities to talk about push /pull factors with their key worker in placement provision and their SW on other visits does take place but isn't formally recorded as a WRI.

Recent development to separate information provided to police as anonymous information has been undertaken to enable us to share information to build police intelligence but also to support the YP confidence in talking about push/pull factors and their experiences while missing.



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In addition the LA Child Exploitation and Missing lead (situated in Compass) is tracking all missing from home and care episodes to increase the timeliness and recording of return interviews for Shropshire Children.

- **Voice of the child informing quality of care placements**

Independent Reg 44 visits are undertaken to Shropshire's own children's homes by a member of the CP board or councillor and report on the outcome of these and the voice of the child in these visits are reported in detail to the CP panel part of a standard agenda item.

**Ofsted** have recently visited (week beginning 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2015) and inspected Shropshire Council's own Residential children's home – testing our Corporate Parenting in its delivery in the day to day care of Looked After Children. The outcome of the inspection was that the home was awarded the judgement of Outstanding across all areas (An interim inspection took place in February 2016 and again the outcome of this was demonstrating improved effectiveness).

Some of the comments from the feedback meeting with the inspector are detailed below:

### ***Overall Experience of a Child***

- ✓ The house is a family home with five children but is run by the local authority, It is obvious that the young people are "loved" in the right way, feel safe and their progress is excellent.
- ✓ Relationships between staff and young people are positive and staff do what any good parents do. This is highlighted in the lack of police involvement and notifications.
- ✓ Views of the young people are essential to the home. Plans for their future are not rushed. Young people are allowed to be teenagers and grow up when they are ready and are not pressured with independence.
- ✓ A lot of work done with young people and the risks of being teenagers. Alert to risks enables them to advise and support their own friends
- ✓ Missing episodes do not happen
- ✓ Judgement for Safeguarding has moved from good to outstanding as issues from previous inspections are no longer present as practice has changed.
- ✓ Education - All young people have made excellent progress in relation to their starting point.
- ✓ Young people that come to the home are going to do well. The progress of young people currently in the home is excellent.

In December 15 we completed a review and development of the exit from placement interview process and recording where children are interviewed at the end of placement and those interviews used to inform the carers annual reviews and collated will inform our service development and training for carers.

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- **Voice of the child informing service delivery and strategic service development**

Young People attend the CP panel regularly and represent Children in Care and Care Leaver groups.

In addition in February a Question Time styled event was held where Looked-after children and care leavers were able to ask councilors and officers questions about the services that are important to them, and about how well the Council has been able to meet the pledge it made to them as their corporate parent. Some of the messages from this event from young people included:

Valuable for young people to understand how the Council operates. It's important to understand how council decisions are made and that councillors also need support in understanding what difficulties some young people have to face.

Support with work experience opportunities. Does the Council offer apprenticeship or summer jobs

Question Time 02.16 Council

Increase the time/visits Social Worker have with their young people in order for them to understand their needs

Chamber

### **1.5 Recommendation**

Shropshire Safeguarding Children Board to note the contents of this report and the constituent agencies should consider how their organisation can contribute to the continued health, safety and development for the children in care for whom we have corporate "family" responsibilities.



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