



Committee and Date

Council

13th December 2018

COUNCIL CORPORATE PARENTING PLEDGE

Responsible Officer

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1. Summary

Shropshire Council Members have regularly approved and endorsed at Council meetings a pledge for their Looked After Children. As a result of the Children and Social Work Act 2017, which came into force in April 2018, there are new statutory requirements for such a pledge. These are set out in full at section 5.1.

A group of young people from the Leaving Care Forum have revised Shropshire Council's pledge to them, considering these newly published principles. The revised pledge is attached at Appendix 1.

The corporate parenting panel has approved the revised pledge and it is now presented to Council for endorsement and adoption.

2. Recommendations

That Members endorse and adopt the revised Corporate Parenting Pledge (attached at Appendix 1)

REPORT

3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

There are risks that children in care will not receive the help and support that they need if the pledge is not adopted and supported by Members as Corporate Parents.

(NB this will include the following: Risk Management, Human Rights, Equalities, Community, Environmental consequences and other Consultation)

4. Financial Implications

Enhanced entitlements have been included in the local offer for care leavers at an estimated additional cost of £90,000 per year.

5. Background

5.1 Our Revised Pledge to Children and Young People in and Leaving Care

In April 2018, the Children and Social Work Act 2017 came into force, requiring every local authority to have regard to the need:

- to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of children and young people
- to encourage children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
- to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people
- to help children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners
- to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for children and young people for children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work
- to prepare children and young people for adulthood and independent living

These requirements (known commonly as the seven corporate parenting principles) guide the work of children's services and the corporate parenting panel. A group of young people from the leaving Care Forum have revised the council's pledge to them, considering these newly published principles (the pledge is attached at Appendix 1). The corporate parenting panel has approved the revised pledge and it is now presented to Council for Members' endorsement.

5.2 Corporate Parenting Panel

5.2.1 The Corporate Parenting Panel is the multi-agency forum which has oversight of the services provided to children and young people who

are looked after by Shropshire Council and ensures that they have the best possible life whilst in our care and beyond.

5.2.2 Following the Ofsted inspection in 2017 the Corporate Parenting Panel has enhanced its oversight and interventions.

5.2.3 Revised Corporate Parenting Panel terms of reference were approved in June 2018. The panel has been meeting monthly to oversee their responsibilities with a specific focus on the Leaving Care Action and Ofsted Improvement Plans and is very focussed on service improvement for the benefit of looked after children subject to the pledge.

5.3 Membership

The panel has extended its membership in recognition of the wider corporate parenting responsibility of partners, both within and outside of the local authority. In addition to Children's Services officers and elected members, the panel also includes representatives from:

- Health
- West Mercia Police
- Shropshire Housing Department
- The Virtual School

There are also "virtual" members of the panel who, whilst not regularly attending meetings, accept corporate parenting responsibilities and are invited to participate when their contribution is necessary to improve the lives of children in care and care leavers:

- Adult Services
- DWP
- Higher and Further Education

Young people attend the panel. This year, they have presented a proposed Local Offer, financial entitlements and a revised pledge.

5.4 Corporate Parenting Champions

5.4.1 Four elected members have stepped forward to become corporate parenting champions focussing on accommodation, education, training and employment, care experience and participation, and emotional health and wellbeing. A role description and terms of reference are in place. Each champion has taken part in service development through meeting with groups of young people and taken part in operational meetings.

- 5.4.2 The champions for housing and education, training and employment (ETE) each sit on a panel planning for each young person's suitable accommodation and ETE respectively.

5.5 Performance and Improvement Oversight

- 5.5.1 Following the Ofsted inspection in late 2017, the Corporate Parenting Panel has overseen the Ofsted action plan and the Care Leavers action plan. It has been meeting monthly to drive performance and development work.
- 5.5.2 A follow up visit by the DfE National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers demonstrated that the Corporate Parenting Panel has taken a firm grip of the improvements needed to "get to good". His 35 recommendations immediately following his previous visit in February this year have reduced to one. At the recent National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum, he cited Shropshire for our good practice within his presentation.
- 5.5.3 Quarterly reports from the Independent Reviewing Officer service are now a standing item on the agenda for every Corporate Parenting Panel. Robust monitoring of the care planning process has taken place throughout the year and quality assurance oversight has increased and challenged areas where drift and delay has indicated an impact on the child.
- 5.5.4 New data sets have been designed which provide evidence of continuing performance improvement.

5.6 Participation

The Corporate Parenting Panel has supported the development of participation initiatives:

- A care leaver's forum has been established which has met weekly. The forum drafted the local offer entitlement, revised our pledge to children in care and care leavers and organised a celebration event in October 2018.
- A Care Leaver's Ambassador has been appointed from within our own group of care leavers. She is leading the efforts to increase the number of young people involved in improving our service to all children in care and care leavers. She has been appointed a national ambassador by the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum and brings back to Shropshire lessons learnt from other local authorities.

- New care packs for children in care and care leavers have also been drafted and are awaiting publication. A participation strategy for children in care and care leavers has been drafted

5.7 Apprenticeships

Ten apprenticeship places with Shropshire Council services have been made available for care leavers and so far 8 have been taken up, with 5 care leavers still in post.

5.8 Local Offer

The Corporate Parenting Panel has overseen the drafting of a new set of entitlements for care leavers, which have now been approved and is about to be published. Young people were significantly involved in proposing the entitlements and are very happy with the outcome. This now brings Shropshire alongside good and outstanding authorities.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)

Cllr Nick Bardsley

Local Member

All Members

Appendices

Appendix 1: "Our Pledge" flyer