



| <u>Committee and Date</u> | <u>Item</u> | <u>Paper</u> |
|---------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| Council<br>16 July 2009   | Public      |              |

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## **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL & CORPORATE PARENTING PLEDGE FOR SHROPSHIRE'S LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN**

### **Summary**

This report informs members about the new Corporate Parenting Panel in relation to Children in the care of Shropshire Council and to launch the Corporate Parenting Pledge. The overall purpose of the Corporate Parenting Panel is to ensure that the views of Shropshire Looked After Children are listened to and that there is a formal mechanism for Members and officers to consider the needs of Looked After Children and those leaving care.

### **Recommendations**

- A. That the Corporate Parenting Pledge is recommended to Council on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2009 for approval (Appendix 1).
- B. That the Corporate Parenting Panel arrangements are agreed (Appendix 2).

### **Report**

#### **1. Background**

The Government's programme *Care Matters: Time to deliver for Children in Care* has been built on the premise that the outcomes for Looked After Children are generally poor. Care Matters and the resulting legislation the Children and Young People Act 2008 require Local Authorities to address a number of key areas. One of the requirements is to ensure that a comprehensive corporate parenting pledge to Looked After Children is put in place, and to ensure that there are systems in place to monitor compliance.

- 1.1** A further requirement was the setting up of Children in Care Councils. Shropshire's Care Council was set up in November 2008 and since then a

group of young people have met with staff a number of times. The group has been supported by a dedicated Connexions worker who is based with the Looked After Children (Education Team). All Looked After Children are invited to attend: currently there is a core group of 8 – 10 young people attending regularly.

Some of their achievements include:

- choosing a name 'Care Council Crew' (CCC)
- work on the Shropshire Corporate Parenting Pledge
- evaluating and consulting on the future of CCC meetings

The ideas for the Corporate Parent Pledge have been developed by the Care Council Crew and are presented to Members for agreement. All Councillors are asked to sign the pledge and return it to the Lead Member for Children's Services. The mandatory Member induction session on July 22 will provide further information on the role of corporate parent and help Members to understand how they can fulfil their responsibilities as a corporate parent.

The next stage of development is to ensure that Members and officers had formal meetings set up with the Care Council Crew. A Corporate Parenting Panel has subsequently been established with quarterly meetings scheduled to start July 09 to ensure cross council accountability (Appendix 2).

The panel will ensure:

- cross council accountability.
- that the commitments in the corporate parenting pledge are owned and progressed by members and officers.
- that the requirements of the Care Matters legislation are followed.
- that care leavers are effectively supported and prepared for adulthood.
- that reports are presented on an annual basis to Scrutiny Panel where performance information about looked after children will be reported.

This panel will ensure that Shropshire Council and its partners continue to meet the needs of Shropshire's Looked After Children. The Panel will jointly develop services that further improve the outcomes for these young people for whom we have corporate parenting responsibility and provide a forum through which our Looked After Children can hold the Council to account as their corporate parent.

**1.2** Consultation with other West Midlands Local Authorities shows that similar panels have been or are being set up.

**1.3** This Panel comprises of:

- Lead Member for Children and Young People's Services
- Chair of Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny
- Young People's Champion
- Senior officers and parties as appropriate
- representatives from the Care Council Crew

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

Children and Young People's Act 2008  
"Care Matters: Time to Deliver for Children in Care"

**Human Rights Act Appraisal**

The recommendations contained in this report are compatible with the Human Rights Act.

**Environmental Appraisal**

There are no environmental issues associated with this report.

**Risk Management Appraisal**

If the proposed arrangements are not adopted, Shropshire Council will be in breach of its statutory duty.

**Community / Consultations Appraisal**

Looked After Children

Leaving Care Team

**Cabinet Member**

Cllr Cecilia Motley

**Local Member**

All Members

**Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Corporate Parenting Pledge  
Appendix 2 – Draft Terms of Reference