

Children's Services Committee

Report title:	Report from Corporate Parenting Board to Children's Services Committee
Date of meeting:	12 September 2017
Responsible Chief Officer:	Matt Dunkley Interim Executive Director of Children's Services
Strategic impact The Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) has a key role in scrutinising and supporting the services provided by Children's Services and key partners to Norfolk's Children in Care and Care Leavers. In addition to its key statutory responsibilities to these children and young people, the governance provided by the CPB will deliver an important level of checks and balances which will strengthen continued improvement in the Council's performance and services.	

Executive summary

The Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) has a lead role in ensuring that the Council acts as a good parent to the children and young people who are in or leaving its care.

Children's Services Committee on the 25th June 2017 received a report on the role of the CPB and agreed the new Terms of Reference for the Board going forward. The Board places the Lead Member for Children's Services and the party Children's Services leads in a position to scrutinise the performance of services which support these children and young people, and to offer both challenge and support for the efforts of Children's Services and key partners to meet statutory responsibilities and drive improvement and ensure that 'our' children meet their full potential and aspirations.

Each Board meeting is structured around one (or two maximum) priority areas of focus. The focus of the CPB meetings on the 27th April and the 27th July focused on unregulated accommodation for care leavers and findings from an independent review into four individual complaints of four young people, who were, or had been, placed in accommodation with support, provided by Sixteen Plus, and who were at the time entitled to or eligible for support from Norfolk County Council.

Recommendations:

Note the update report from the Corporate Parenting Board

Agree to receive a future report from the CPB Task and Finish Group on accommodation and support for young people and care leavers so that Committee are able to monitor progress.

1. Background context

- 1.1.1 In March 2017, Norfolk County Council received complaints in relation to the standard of accommodation and support provided to two young people by the provider 'Sixteen Plus'. Subsequently, following a number of media reports, the Council received complaints in relation to placements with Sixteen Plus of a further two young people.
- 1.1.2 It was agreed at Children's Services Committee on 14th March 2017 that an additional meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board should be held before the election to consider the issues of unregulated accommodation for young care leavers. At this meeting of the Board on the 27th April 2017 it was agreed that members of the Corporate Parenting Board would receive a copy of the findings of an independent review of the four complaints.

2. Independent Review

- 2.2.1 The review was commissioned by Norfolk County Council specifically to consider the complaints which arose in respect of four young people and looked at the commissioning, planning, monitoring and reviewing of four young people, who were, or had been, placed in accommodation with support, provided by Sixteen Plus, and who were at the time entitled to or eligible for support from Norfolk County Council. It was not a review of post-sixteen provision in Norfolk and it was not a review of Sixteen Plus.
- 2.2.2 On the 27th July 2017 the reconvened Corporate Parenting Board received a copy of the Independent Review and also an accompanying report, produced by the Children's Services Leadership Team, with recommendations to address specific learning and wider system action needed.
- 2.2.3 In order to maintain appropriate confidentiality, this report relates only to the wider system learning arising from the review. However, it is noted that the Corporate Parenting Board agreed that placements with Sixteen Plus could resume subject to agreed conditions and measures being met, by both Children's Services and the provider. However, as yet we have not made any new placements with Sixteen Plus. A significant amount of progress and learning has already been made and we will continue to work in partnership with our teams and Sixteen Plus on clear next steps.

3. Wider System Learning

- 3.1 The review reinforced a number of wider issues that need progressing in order that the Council can be confident that we are providing and commissioning services for young people that meet their needs and enable them to transition to independence successfully. It was agreed at the Corporate Parenting Board to share any system wide learning from the review with Children's Services Committee.

3.2 Integrated approach to commissioning and sufficiency

3.2.1 Our approach to commissioning and sufficiency in relation to post 16 accommodation must be underpinned by a detail understanding of the needs of young people, particularly where those young people have complex needs. Initial measures being taken to strengthen our approach include;

- Children's Services has undertaken a critical analysis of 16 – 24 year old Looked after Children & Leaving Care which has helped to inform service delivery in relation to provision for 16 – 17 year olds. This is a good foundation but now needs to be used to inform a robust sufficiency strategy so that we provide a wide range of accommodation types to meet the individual needs of our young people, particularly those with identified complex needs.
- A new "Positive Pathway" which is taken from the St Basils national framework as a model of best practice, is being developed in partnership with District councils, partnership providers and colleagues from Adult Services and will be part of the commissioning process being implemented this year.
- Developing an integrated commissioning service which will increase staffing in our placements team to monitor and quality assure all providers.
- The commissioning element of placements and the placements team has now been moved into the developing integrated commissioning team.
- Development of 14-25 transition service with Adult Services

3.3 Quality Assurance and Monitoring Framework for post 16 Semi-independent accommodation

3.3.1 We need an improved and systematic response to quality assurance of our supported accommodation for young people and we are in the process of implementing the following:

- A new monitoring framework is being created which is outcome focused and will be undertaken in partnership with our providers to ensure the delivery of high quality services
- Monitoring Officers will visit each unit as part of an annual programme, with quarterly reports being submitted by providers to ensure they are delivering agreed outcomes for every young person.
- At a national level, we are part of the Cross County Regional Group (CCRAG) that has 20 local authority representatives who collectively are looking to implement NCC Monitoring, Evaluation & Review (MER) framework which will standardise our approach in relation to the monitoring of services and assist in identifying high quality service providers.
- Development of Young Inspectors Service to ensure young people have a significant voice in our monitoring and quality assurance activity.
- Implementation of the 'Mind of My Own (MoMo) text service to widen ways we can keep in touch with young people about their experiences.

3.4 Leaving Care Service

3.4.1 We need to further establish and improve our offer to our care leavers which is reflected in the Children's Services Improvement Plan. Below highlights some of the key work being carried out:

- Upskilling our leaving care workers via bespoke training ('setting up care leavers to succeed') with regard to risk assessment and planning with young people
- Launched our 'passport to independence' to engage providers in providing systematic support to young people to achieve independence
- Moved all 16 year olds and over into specialist leaving care teams to promote earlier planning and enhance oversight of their journey into independence
- Leaving Care Service is now a specific theme within the monthly performance and challenge surgeries carried out in localities by the Childrens Services Leadership Team.
- Requested diagnostics by our DfE Improvement Partner Essex County Council specifically on our service to care leavers to inform continuous improvement

3.5 Early Help and Prevention Services

3.5.1 As a system we need to strengthen our approach and focus on prevention. This is very much a priority for Children's Services and below highlights some of our current activity:

- Developed our partnership with Barnardo's creating the 'New Directions' service which will focus on young people at risk of coming into care and reunification with family members where appropriate to do so.
- Over the last six months we have taken a more targeted approach within our Family Focus teams in Early Help so that we are working with young people and families to prevent them needing statutory services
- Developing a business transformation model that focuses on a whole system approach to prevention and demand management. This is also a corporate priority for the Council.

4. Corporate Parenting Board Task and Finish Group

4.1 The Board agreed for a Task and Finish group to be set up to oversee action and progress on wider system issues to ensure we are providing services for young people that meet their needs and enable them to transition to independence successfully. This Task and Finish Group will report to the Corporate Parenting Board and provide progress reports to Children's Services Committee.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 This are no financial implications arising from the content or recommendations of this report.

6. Issues, risks and innovation

- 6.1 **Risks:** The provision of an appropriate range of good quality placements for care leavers is a key element in our improvement work and links in to RM14147 on the Risk Register.
- 6.2 **Innovation:** We have been successful in securing Innovations funding through a joint bid with one of our voluntary sector providers. The project will focus on the provision of supported accommodation for young people leaving residential care.

Officer Contact

If you have any questions about matters contained or want to see copies of any assessments, eg equality impact assessment, please get in touch with:

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