

NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING STEERING GROUP

NOTES

of meeting held on **3 DECEMBER 2008** at the

Council House from 2.30 pm to 3.20 pm

Councillor Mellen (Chair)
Councillor Collins
Councillor Griggs
Councillor Marshall
Councillor Urquhart

indicates present at meeting

Also present

Lynne Anderson - Service Manager, Fostering)
Julie Lewis - Head of Service, Children in Care) Children's Services

Keith Ford - Committee Administrator, Resources

63 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Suzanne Aslan, Andrew High, Barry Horne and Sara Parker.

64 GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS AND FORMAL ESTABLISHMENT OF GROUP

The draft report to Executive Board on 16 December 2008, to formally establish a Corporate Parenting Board, was circulated at the meeting for information.

During discussions, the following issues were raised:

- elected members would be appointed to the Board on a politically balanced 7(Labour): 1(Lib Dem): 1 (Conservative) basis. Further discussions would be held within the various political groups to confirm membership. The existing members expressed their willingness to continue their membership;
- meetings would be held on a bi-monthly basis from January onwards (with an additional meeting arranged for February to assist in the initial establishment of the group);
- the formal establishment would raise the profile of the issue and help to underline that the corporate parenting responsibility was shared by all elected members and officers alike. It would also serve to clarify the role of the group within the Council's Constitution;

- informal Chair's Briefings would be arranged, two to three weeks ahead of the public meetings, to enable consideration of draft agendas, including the issue of potentially exempt information.

AGREED that the report to Executive Board be amended to underline that membership was open to both Executive and Overview and Scrutiny members. Keith Ford

65 NOTES

AGREED that the notes of the last meeting held on 3 November 2008, copies of which had been circulated, be confirmed.

66 MATTERS ARISING

(a) Note 58 – Corporate Parenting Self-Audit Tool (CPSAT)

Members queried if any further progress had been made on the issue of Criminal Records Bureau checks. Members felt that information previously provided may have to be provided again to utilise the full term of the checks.

AGREED that this issue be raised with Debra La Mola, Head of Democratic Services. Keith Ford

(b) Note 59 – Role of National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS)

It was clarified that the case of a 16 year old placed on a Section 31, Full Care Order in a Foster Placement, highlighted in the 'Themes and Issues' report, concerned an independent agency foster home which had subsequently been deregistered by the Independent Fostering Authority.

With regard to the lack of information, which had been flagged as an issue in the report, managers of the Council's residential homes had assured Julie Lewis that welcome packs, which included NYAS information, were issued to all young people. Welcome packs were also issued to all children entering foster placements but clarification was needed that these packs also contained NYAS information.

Although the group welcomed the type of qualitative information which was being provided in these reports, the importance of accuracy and contextual information in reports to future meetings, which would be held in public, had been discussed further with NYAS.

AGREED that clarification be sought that NYAS information was included in foster care welcome packs. Lynne Anderson

(c) Note 61 – Fostering

With regard to sharing information with relevant elected members, maps of foster carers in each ward would be shared as appropriate.

67 FEEDBACK FROM VISIT TO LEICESTER CITY COUNCIL – 26 NOVEMBER 2008

Councillor Mellen and Lynne Anderson updated the group on the visit to Leicester City Council, which had Beacon status for its Corporate Parenting processes, and highlighted the following main points:

- the visit included observing a meeting of Leicester's Corporate Parenting Panel;
- Leicester's overall population and numbers of children in care were very similar to Nottingham's;
- the lead member recognised the importance of making elected members fully aware of how traumatic it could feel for children to be taken into care, and felt that visits and meetings with children and foster carers were the best means of understanding the child's perspective;
- the Corporate Parenting Panel met on a bi-monthly basis and linked into other relevant bodies, including the Safeguarding Children Panel. The Panel consisted of 7 elected members and a great deal of work had gone into briefing other members on this issue. All of the Council's departments were represented at meetings and there was also good private and public sector involvement. The Panel held themed meetings rather than trying to address all aspects of corporate parenting at each meeting;
- the 'Flying Fish' initiative organised work placements for children in care and had been successful in obtaining full employment for a number of young people. The relevant businesses had been very proactive and had pursued the introduction of this initiative with the Council. The Leicester Education Business Company was represented at the Panel;
- breakfast clubs, aimed specifically at children in care, and a sponsored Letterbox Club, which delivered books and resources to Year 3 and Year 5 children, were other innovative developments;
- support in education was offered through the Council's RELAC team, which had a specific objective (Target 25) to ensure that all young people in care received their full entitlement of 25 hours of education a week;
- a Risk and Participation worker fed in the views of children and young people to the Panel. The 'Stand Up, Speak Out' initiative also encouraged engagement, including regular meetings with the Council's directorate and 'take over' days in which young people came in and ran the organisation;
- Leicester seemed very keen to utilise every opportunity that was presented, and were good at developing initiatives as far as possible. A dedicated officer was responsible for the Beacon status elements of their work. A positive, 'can do' attitude seemed to inform and motivate the work of the group. It was hoped that Nottingham's Board could enable a similar dynamism once formally established;
- laminated foster carer information profiles and message calendars had been produced, the latter containing a monthly message from the children to their workers, for example, 'Don't forget me', 'Come and visit me today';
- young people had used the BBC Radio Leicester 'Telling Lives' programme to tell their stories. The importance of promoting adoption, especially in light of the current climate around safeguarding, was recognised in Nottingham;
- a Children in Care Council was emerging. Nottingham's Youth Council contained children in care as members but a dedicated Council would enable more specific issues to be addressed;

- the buy-in to corporate parenting within Leicester City Council and the wider community was well illustrated by initiatives such as the availability of free bicycles, football tickets and library resources. Nottingham had recently utilised contacts with Nottinghamshire County Cricket Club to obtain free Test Match tickets ;
- housing ‘knock-throughs’, as well as extensions, were offered to carers as a means of keeping siblings together. This was a growing issue in Nottingham, which only had a limited budget for extensions;
- Leicester offered a loan scheme to enable carers to buy larger cars, although this was not as generous as the hire scheme and interest-free loans offered in Nottingham.

With regard to learning from Leicester’s best practice, the following points were raised in discussion:

- it was hoped that greater departmental buy-in to the Board would help raise the profile of this issue and assist in future developments;
- representation at Board meetings would be sought from Nottingham City Homes and Nottingham Business and Community;
- elected members would be encouraged to write to foster carers in their ward to offer an opportunity to raise any issues on their behalf;
- corporate parenting briefings were planned for elected members and it was felt that meetings of the individual political groups would be the most appropriate forum for such briefings;
- an action plan of visits to children and foster carers would be developed by officers and the Board, as appropriate;
- opportunities for the Corporate Parenting Outcomes group to undertake specific tasks on behalf of the Board needed to be utilised.

AGREED that the feedback from the visit be noted and used to inform the working of the Corporate Parenting Board. All

68 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

AGREED

- (1) **that the next meeting date of Monday 26 January 2009 (2.30 – 4.00pm in the Tea Room at the Council House), which would be submitted to Executive Board on 16 December 2008 for approval, as part of the overall Corporate Parenting report, be noted; All**
- (2) **that the following proposed meeting dates for the 2008/09 municipal year, which would be submitted to the first meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board for approval, be noted: All**
 - **Tuesday 24 February 2009 – 2.30pm;**
 - **Monday 23 March 2009 – 2.30pm;**

(3) that the following proposed meeting dates for the 2009/10 municipal year (all Mondays at 2.30pm), which would be submitted to future meetings of Executive Board and the Corporate Parenting Board for approval as appropriate, be noted:

All

- **18 May 2009;**
- **20 July 2009;**
- **21 September 2009;**
- **16 November 2009;**
- **18 January 2010;**
- **15 March 2010.**