

Corporate Parenting Board - 24th February 2009

Title of paper:	What makes a difference for Children in Care? Overview of recent thinking and good practice	
Director(s)/ Corporate Director(s):	Ann Goldsmith – Specialist Services	Wards affected: ALL
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Relevant Council Plan theme(s):		
Choose Nottingham		√
Respect for Nottingham		√
Transforming Nottingham’s Neighbourhoods		√
Supporting Nottingham People		√
Serving Nottingham Better		√
Summary of issues (including benefits to customers/service users):		
<p>Nottingham aspires to being an excellent Corporate Parent. This entails putting in place the right Corporate Parenting structure, engaging all appropriate partners and learning from and adopting best practice. This briefing outlines some current work to inform the impending revision of the Corporate Parenting Action Plan (CPAP) with learning from best practice and recent thinking about what works in improving outcomes for Children in Care.</p>		
Recommendation(s):		
1	That Corporate Parenting Board note the contents of this briefing and discuss ways forward.	

1 **BACKGROUND**

1.1 The Children in Care Outcomes Group is in the process of revising and refining the existing CPAP for Nottingham's Children in Care and Care Leavers. As part of this process, work is being undertaken to ensure that appropriate learning is incorporated from:

- "Narrowing the Gap" initiative;
- Beacon Scheme round 9, "Care matters" theme;
- Putting Corporate Parenting into Practice (National Children's Bureau);
- Research in Practice network.

The Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services is a relatively new organisation, that identifies and coordinates local, regional and national evidence of 'what works', to create a single and comprehensive picture of effective practice in delivering children's services. Using this information, C4EO offers support to local authorities and their Children's Trust partners, working with them to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families. Vulnerable Children (particularly children in care) is the third theme C4EO will be working on as part of its three-year work programme. It will run from February 2009 until October 2010. In November and December 2009, the first progress maps will be published and regional knowledge workshops will be held. The Children in Care Outcomes Group will monitor these developments and ensure appropriate learning is taken from them.

1.2 **Narrowing the Gap.**

In 2007, the Local Government Association (LGA) commissioned the a review of the best evidence on what works in narrowing the gap in outcomes for vulnerable groups across the five Every Child Matters areas. The review aimed to underpin the *Narrowing the Gap Programme*, a major development programme being implemented by the LGA and the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

Learning from this project does not focus specifically on Children in Care. However, relevant headline findings confirm what is already known in Nottingham about what works to narrow the gap for Children in Care, namely placement stability, foster care (rather than residential home care), a supportive study environment, at both school and home with good links between the two and activities that promote resilience, a sense of stability and strong sense of identity.

Further detail is identified as "critical building blocks" of what makes the difference. These are expressed in terms of underpinning principles and contributions to integrated frontline delivery, integrated processes, integrated strategy and integrated governance.

Beacon Authorities: 'Care matters: improving the outcomes of children in care' theme.

The Beacon Scheme is a prestigious award scheme that recognises excellence in local government. It was set up to disseminate best practice in service delivery across local government. 'Care matters: improving the outcomes of children in care' is a theme in the current Beacon round (round 9). Leicester City and South Gloucestershire are the two Beacon authorities for this theme.

Beacon authorities put in place the key proposals in Care Matters. They provide effective services for children on the threshold of care and their families, to prevent them needing to enter care in the first place and on returning home, to prevent the need for a further period in care. Beacons demonstrate a clear and consistent approach to taking these difficult individual decisions.

To ensure that young people are supported better to make a smooth transition into adult life, Beacons have excellent commissioning strategies that enable them to provide real choice and quality in terms of the range of good quality placements to match individual children's assessed needs. They make effective use of family and friends carers. Wherever possible, they endeavour to place children locally. They have policies that develop and support their foster

carers and residential care workers to ensure that their skills are suitable for meeting children's needs.

Beacons provide seamless and tailored support to older children and young adults to help them to develop into independence. They ensure that the children receive a first class education and have the opportunities they need to enjoy a happy and fulfilled childhood.

In addition to providing a caring, stimulating and nurturing environment in their care placement, the local authority works closely with its partner organisations to provide the health, leisure, cultural and other services that children need to thrive.

Beacon authorities have effective corporate parenting arrangements involving strong overview and scrutiny by elected members. It is based on knowing who their children are, what their needs are, how they are doing, and listening to children's views about what they want. They have innovative ways of gathering information and data, and have effective checks and balances within the system to ensure that it is used effectively.

Putting Corporate Parenting into Practice.

The "Putting Corporate Parenting into Practice" toolkit and supporting documentation produced by the National Children's Bureau is intended to present a model of national best practice. It is the culmination of several years work.

The model provides a framework for the systems and processes that need to be in place if a local authority is to meet its responsibilities as a corporate parent. The model incorporates the links between the corporate parenting responsibilities of the local authority, children's and adult services and the resources and governance arrangements for the other agencies providing services for looked after children and their families.

Research in Practice

Research in Practice (RIP) is a growing network of more than one hundred partner agencies committed to the use of evidence informed practice to promote positive outcomes for children and families. It pools the knowledge and experience from its members to make the most of latest research knowledge and share practice and policy innovations.

In addition to searching the collection of RIP documents, Nottingham Children's Services has posted a request on the RIP information exchange for examples of what has worked in other agencies to improve outcomes for Children in Care and Care Leavers. The first response to this enquiry has been from "Action for Children", giving information about the value of therapeutic treatment for Children in Care.

2 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS (INCLUDING OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION)

- 2.1 Nottingham Children's Services is responding increasingly effectively to the identified needs of its Children in Care and Care Leavers. However, there can be no complacency in working for these children and young people who will always be amongst the most vulnerable members of the population.

The Children in Care Outcomes Group must continue to take the lead in ensuring that all the most recent ideas and best practice is incorporated into the work to improve the outcomes for Children in Care and Care Leavers.

Appropriate learning from the work outlined in this paper will be used over the next few months to help drive the next phase of development of planning for these children and young people.

- 2.2 Learning from other local authorities and national initiatives is one factor that will contribute to an improved Corporate Parenting Action Plan. This learning will be combined with findings from the self-audit and analysis work being undertaken by Children in Care Outcomes Group

members, a review of the current Plan and relevant management information and outcomes from the “Conversations Café” event on February 24th. The resulting, revised Corporate Parenting Action Plan will be more focused on delivering measurable improvements for Children in Care and Care Leavers.

3 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED IN MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 None

4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING VALUE FOR MONEY)

4.1 None

5 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES (INCLUDING LEGAL IMPLICATIONS, CRIME AND DISORDER ACT IMPLICATIONS AND EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS)

5.1 There are no specific risk management issues.

6 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS OTHER THAN PUBLISHED WORKS OR THOSE DISCLOSING CONFIDENTIAL OR EXEMPT INFORMATION

6.1 Corporate Parenting Board Minutes 26.01.09

7 PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO IN COMPILING THIS REPORT

7.1 *Narrowing the Gap* – reports and guidance. Local Government Association

7.2 *Care Matters: Improving the outcomes for children in care. A guide to the theme and the Beacon authorities.* IDeA 2008.

7.3 *Putting Corporate Parenting into Practice.* National Children’s Bureau 2008.

Action for Children’s work with children in care – the value of therapeutic treatment. Action for Children 2008.