

**CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD – 24 MAY 2010**

<b>Title of paper:</b>	Safeguarding Children in Care	
<b>Director(s)/ Corporate Director(s):</b>	Satinder Gautam Director of Safeguarding	<b>Wards affected:</b> All
<b>Contact Officer(s) and contact details:</b>	Helen Blackman Head of Service – Denewood Centre, Bilborough, Nottingham	
<b>Other officers who have provided input:</b>	Dorne Collinson: Head of Safeguarding	

**Relevant Council Plan Strategic Priority:**

World Class Nottingham	
Work in Nottingham	
Safer Nottingham	
Neighbourhood Nottingham	
Family Nottingham	
Healthy Nottingham	
Serving Nottingham Better	

**Summary of issues (including benefits to customers/service users):**

Looked After children are one of the most vulnerable groups in society, requiring ongoing support and safeguarding. Locally, the number of Children looked after has risen, inline with national trends and alongside an increase in associated areas of work with children and their families. Increasing demand and some limitation on capacity due to a national shortage of social workers, requires services to demonstrate that there is an appropriate focus on safeguarding, identify challenges and planned improvements to ensure Children Looked After are protected.

**Recommendation:**

It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Board note and comment on the work to safeguard Children Looked After in Nottingham City.

**1 BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 The DCSF (DfE) report that children in the care of Local Authorities are one of the most vulnerable groups in society. The majority of children who remain in care do so because they have suffered abuse or neglect. At any one time around 60,000 children are looked after in England, although some 90,000 pass through the care system in any year.
- 1.2 Children in care can have significantly poorer outcomes than their peers who are not in public care. These outcomes include a greater likelihood of poor educational outcomes, poor mental health, and more likelihood of being involved in offending and being more vulnerable to sexual exploitation. Whilst many children in care achieve great successes, attending university, finding employment and going onto have families of their own, they are for their time in care vulnerable to negative influences and sometimes isolated from family members. The obligation to safeguard children in care is a core duty for social workers, corporate parents and those looking after these young people.

### 1.3 Children in need of protection and care

- Significant increases in the demand on services to support, assess and protect vulnerable children.
- 11% increase in the number of children in care March 09 - March 10.
- Increases in the 0-4 year old and 5-10 year age bands in line with trends across many Local Authorities.
- Despite these increases there are significantly higher numbers of 11-18 year olds in care.
- More young people are becoming looked after due to abuse or neglect or as a result of families being in acute stress.

1.4 Children are cared for in a variety of settings from foster care to residential settings. Depending on the different placement types, young people may face different challenges, for example in a residential placement there can be a sense of comradeship or more potential to argue and be isolated.

1.5 Statutory and local processes provide a framework in which young people are safeguarded through the requirement on workers to be vigilant and reflect on the needs and plans for children in care through :

- Statutory Visiting
- Supervision Audits
- Quality Assurance Audits
- Key working Sessions
- Safeguarding Training for Carers and Practitioners
- Reviews
- Regulation 33 & Ofsted Inspections
- Missing from care interviews on return

### 1.6 Fostering Processes

- Vigorous assessment of carers
- Role of supervising Social Workers
- Unannounced visits
- Comprehensive range of training
- Annual review processes

### 1.7 Ensuring Children are heard

It is important that children in care are supported in having access to a number of adults other than their carers for example their social worker, independent advocates and visitors, to support them in voicing their contributions to decision making about their plans and in seeking support as needed.

Children should feel that they are active participants and engaged in the process when adults are trying to resolve difficulties and make decisions about them. When plans are being made for the child's future, it is important that they are listened too and feel involved. Where a child has difficulty in expressing their wishes and feelings about any decisions being made about them, consideration should be given to securing the support of an advocate.

## 1.8 Challenges for staff responsible for safeguarding young people include:-

- Balancing Short-Term and Long-Term needs
- Recruitment/retention of critical safeguarding staff. A high turn over in staff can lead to poor opportunities for children in care to make trusting relationships with a familiar worker
- New Requirements in Respect of Sufficiency Assessments. There are some very clear advantages for many young people in being placed near to their community, school, friends and family, which is now reflected in statutory guidance. This does however continue to pose a challenge sourcing enough local placements to meet the need. Effective Transitional Planning.

## 1.9 Planned improvements to enhance safeguarding include:-

- Performance Management Information in relation to statutory visits to be inputted into CareFirst to track and report on all visits to young people
- Small Group Homes
- 15+ Service to develop a specialist focus on planning positive transitions for young people into adulthood.
- Dedicated IRO function with a specialist focus on children in care
- Adoption pilot to develop a focussed specialist service

## 2 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS (INCLUDING OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION)

No recommendations

## 3 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED IN MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS

None, as not applicable.

## 4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING VALUE FOR MONEY)

As the number of young people in care increases there is significant cost to the Authority. It is critical that there is effective planning and support to achieve the very best outcome and use of resources invested to ensure young people in care are well looked after, safe, happy and prepared for adulthood.

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

There are significant risk issues to emerge from poor safeguarding, making it important that there is strong scrutiny from key forums such as the Corporate Parenting Board.

Certain groups of young people can be more vulnerable due to communication support needs or different experiences in different countries, for example for some of the unaccompanied children travelling to Nottingham. We use specialist support to ensure children are supported in placements where they can communicate with their carers and feel supported.

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

None

**7 PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO IN COMPILING THIS REPORT**

Safeguarding Children. The third joint Chief Inspectors' report on arrangements to safeguard children. Ofsted 2008

Care Planning, placements and case review regulations ( England) 2010 and statutory guidance

Sufficiency: Statutory guidance- Securing sufficient accommodation LAC ( March 2010)