

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD – 16th MARCH 2015

Title of paper:	Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy 2014 – 2016: Summary of Progress	
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Other colleagues who have provided input:		
Date of consultation with Portfolio Holder(s) (if relevant)	25th February 2015	
Relevant Council Plan Strategic Priority:		
Cutting unemployment by a quarter		<input type="checkbox"/>
Cut crime and anti-social behaviour		<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure more school leavers get a job, training or further education than any other City		<input type="checkbox"/>
Your neighbourhood as clean as the City Centre		<input type="checkbox"/>
Help keep your energy bills down		<input type="checkbox"/>
Good access to public transport		<input type="checkbox"/>
Nottingham has a good mix of housing		<input type="checkbox"/>
Nottingham is a good place to do business, invest and create jobs		<input type="checkbox"/>
Nottingham offers a wide range of leisure activities, parks and sporting events		<input type="checkbox"/>
Support early intervention activities		<input type="checkbox"/>
Deliver effective, value for money services to our citizens		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Summary of issues (including benefits to citizens/service users):		
<p>In March 2014, the Corporate Parenting Board endorsed the Children in Care and Care Leavers 2014 – 2016 Strategy and by doing so accepted the six Strategic Priority Statements (SPSs) detailed in the strategy as it's 'corporate parenting objectives'.</p> <p>The SPSs represent areas of support services to children in care and care leavers that, if left unmitigated against, will adversely affect the outcomes of those we are corporate parents for.</p> <p>This report will provide an update on progress made against each SPS.</p>		
Recommendation(s):		
1	To note the progress made in fulfilling the 2014 – 2016 children in care and care leavers Strategic Priority Statements.	

1. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 As Corporate Parents we are responsible for ensuring that children in our care experience safe and high quality parenting. It is through positive corporate parenting that our children will obtain the best possible outcomes.

- 1.2 It is recognised that in order for our children to achieve the best possible outcomes, all agencies involved in their care and support have to work together effectively. This in-turn requires a multi-agency strategy that clearly states the areas that require improvement (i.e. strategic priorities) and the activities that must be undertaken to achieve the necessary improvements.
- 1.3 At the end of March 2014, the Corporate Parenting Board ('the Board') endorsed the 'Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy 2014 – 2016: Valuing the Future of Children in Care and Care Leavers' (CiC and CLs Strategy) and by doing so accepted the six Strategic Priority Statements (SPSs) as its corporate parenting objectives.
- 1.4 In order for the Board to fulfil its function in raising the profile of children in care by acting as a champion for the needs and rights of children in care in the Council's various service areas, political groups and settings; It is important that members note progress made against addressing strategic priorities and are made aware of delays in progress. It is also important that members are given an opportunity to suggest possible action or commit to possible action to mitigate against delays.

2. BACKGROUND (INCLUDING OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION)

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide a brief progress update against the activities set out in the CiC and CLs strategic action plan (see appendix one). The update will focus on those activities that, at the time of the strategy's approval, were what the Authority and its partners planned to do next i.e. what actions would be carried out in addition to actions that were already being undertaken to address the SPS.
- 2.2 In total, twenty-five new actions were identified, each with a set deadline for completion over the two-year period of the strategy. Twenty-two of these had a target deadline of December 2014 or before. Seventeen actions have been completed, fifteen of which were completed by the set deadline. The current status of the remaining five actions will be covered later in report (see paragraphs 2.8, 2.10, 2.11, 2.22 and 2.30).
- 2.3 It should be acknowledged that during the 2014-15 municipal year, reports have been presented that have provided greater detail regarding the activities presented in the report and offer supplementary performance information. This report will not go into that level as the purpose is to provide a concise overview of activity.

2.4 Strategic Priority Statement (SPS)

- 2.5 **SPS 1: To reduce young pregnancy and substance misuse. In addition to ensuring the timely completion of health checks, dental checks, immunisations, and SDQs**
- 2.6 By the end of June 2014, children had access to tailored and dedicated Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) support.
- 2.7 Also by June 2014, systems were in place to ensure the CAMHS team were able to contribute to the collection and monitoring of Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) data. In addition the CAMHS team were able to work with those young people who had the highest SDQ score.

- 2.8 With the re-commissioning of our substance misuse support service, a coordinated effort needs to be put into ensuring all relevant staff and primary carers are aware of the early intervention service to available to those at risk of substance misuse.
- 2.9 With the re-commissioning of the service, a new screening tool has been introduced. The Strength Based Lifeline Assessment is completed by a Recovery Practitioner within fifteen-days of a referral for support being received by Lifeline Journey (our current commissioned provider).
- 2.10 More work needs to be done regarding the identification of ways in which young people can be prepared for healthy relationships that take into consideration the effects of domestic violence, loss and trauma.
- 2.11 It is not yet clear if there is a need for a parenting programme specific for our care leavers. Initial discussions would indicate that there is not a specific need to develop and deliver a programme to this particular cohort as young people can be signposted to existing services. However, further exploration is required to establish if this is the case.
- 2.12 **SPS 2: NCC believes that all children should grow up with their birth families. Where this is not able to happen, we will secure permanency through adoption, special guardianship, residence orders or long term fostering**
- 2.13 By the end of March 2014 the local authority were in position where training and research relating to securing permanency could be put into practice across the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) workforce.
- 2.14 In May 2014, IRO were chairing and reviewing the Child Sexual Exploitation strategy meetings to ensure robust plans are in place to safeguard young people.
- 2.15 Also in May 2014, a subgroup of the Child Sexual Exploitation Cross Authority Group (CSECAG) had been established. The group provides addition intelligence; this intelligence is used to better safeguard children at risk of sexual exploitation.
- 2.16 **SPS 3: To ensure children in care and care leavers are better able to deal successfully with significant changes in their lives. This includes improving transition into independence, and ensuring there are consultation and participation opportunities**
- 2.17 By the end of April 2014, the 'Your IRO' leaflet had been distributed to children and young people.
- 2.18 Since March 2014, Looked After Children (LAC) Reviews were being used as an opportunity to verify that the Independent Living Skills Programme had been implemented for all children aged 11 years and over.
- 2.19 In December 2014, a system through which children in care and care leavers could access identified work experience and volunteering opportunities had been developed and embedded into practice.
- 2.20 **SPS 4: To improve the educational attainment of children in care and to ensure care leavers engage in employment, education or training, including voluntary and work experience opportunities**

- 2.21 As of the end of May 2014, it is now practice for Personal Education Plans (PEPs) to be presented and discussed at all LAC reviews.
- 2.22 The development of electronic PEPs through the incorporation of PEPs into the current case management system, Carefirst, has been delayed while work is underway to implement a new case management system.
- 2.23 In January 2015 the capacity of the Virtual School team was increased through the recruitment of two Education Support Officers. Although this action was not completed by the target date, the increased capacity will now help the Virtual School to achieve its aim to improve the educational opportunities and outcomes for all the Nottingham's children in care.
- 2.24 Efforts to ensure care leavers engage in employment, education and training has been advanced through the system described in paragraph 2.19.
- 2.25 **SPS 5: To ensure care leavers have access to suitable accommodation and support**
- 2.26 By the end of September 2014, efforts to ensure care leavers had access to support and suitable accommodation was strengthened through the implementation of the Commissioning and Sufficiency Strategy. Implementation of the strategy has involved the expansion of the Quality Assurance (QA) process once only applied to external residential settings to now include semi-independence accommodation. The application of the QA process has made it possible to better monitor value for money and outcomes for our young people for access semi-independent accommodation.
- 2.27 By the end of September 2014, the Independent Living Skills Programme had been rolled out for all young people aged 11 years and over. The programme is designed to better prepare young people for independent living once they leave care and to provide some indication of the potential support needs they may have upon exiting care.
- 2.28 In May 2014, a new Staying Put scheme was introduced. The scheme allows children in care to stay within the fostering household upon leaving care. This arrangement provided continued stability and support for young people and gives young people up to seven* more years to prepare for full independence. (* This applies to young people in Staying Put arrangements that are in full-time education or has a disability. Other Staying Put arrangements will cease on or before the young person's 21st birthday.)
- 2.29 **SPS 6: To reduce offending behaviour through strong collaborative partnership work**
- 2.30 While it was not been possible to establish a schedule of future Safeguarding Children in Care events by the end of October 2014 target date, an event was held during this month. The event provided attendees with relevant information regarding Restorative Justice and the impact of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders (LASPO) Act (2012), as well as an opportunity to consult on the Nottingham's implementation of the Sussex Protocol. The event allowed partners to come together to share ways on how best to reduce the offending behaviour of children in care and in turn, improve their outcomes.

2.31 Further opportunities were secured for young people and staff to attend theatre performances that deal with sexual exploitation and the associated risks of sexual exploitation. To compliment learning from these performances, training was provided for residential staff.

2.32 A multiagency network group had been established by the end of July 2014 and resumed activity in September 2014. These meetings are used as a preventative resource to identify any concerns and themes around young people offending and to sign post as appropriate.

2.33 Monitoring and Review of Strategic Action Plan

2.34 The Strategic Action Plan, which forms part of the CiC and CLs strategy, will continue to be monitored and reviewed through the CiC Outcomes Group. The purpose of the group is to improve the outcomes of children in care and care leavers. This is achieved by bringing key professionals together and providing a forum where these professionals review agreed action and to plan future action.

2.35 The group meets regularly, on an approximate bi-monthly basis. Members are required to provide an update, normally in the form of a written report, on;

- Progress on their allocated actions
- Risks to completing their allocated actions (if applicable)
- (Suggested) Actions to mitigate against identified risks (if applicable)

2.36 Resulting mitigating actions are currently recorded in meeting minutes and reviewed alongside the action plan in subsequent meetings.

2.37 An identified area of development regarding the monitoring and review of the action plan was the design of the action plan itself. This is being addressed through the redesign of the action plan. The new design includes a better activity referencing. It also makes provision for progress against each activity to be recorded and in turn, tracked.

3. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED IN MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 None.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING VALUE FOR MONEY/VAT)

4.1 None.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES (INCLUDING LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND CRIME AND DISORDER ACT IMPLICATIONS)

5.1 None.

6. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has not been carried out as this report does not include proposals for new or changing policies, services or functions.

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

7.1 None.

8. PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO IN COMPILING THIS REPORT

8.1 None.