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Nottingham City Council

Corporate Parenting Board

Minutes of the meeting held at Loxley House, Nottingham on 16 January 2023
from 2.00 pm - 3.21 pm

Membership

Present

Councillor Cheryl Barnard (Chair)
Councillor Merlita Bryan
Councillor Eunice Campbell-Clark
Councillor Jay Hayes
Councillor Phil Jackson
Councillor Georgia Power
Councillor Shuguftah Quddoos
Councillor Andrew Rule

Absent

Councillor Maria Joannou
Councillor Salma Mumtaz

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Ailsa Barr	- Director of Children's Integrated Services
Mary-Anne Cosgrove	- Head of Children in Care, Care Leavers and Children's Regulated Services
Colette Elliott-Cooper	- Interim Service Manager, Children in Care and Care Leavers
Lee Kimberley	- Head of Nottingham Catering
Nick Lee	- Director of Education Services
John Matravers	- Service Manager, Safeguarding Partnerships
Jon Rea	- Engagement and Participation Lead Officer
Jane Richardson	- Barnardos
Audrey Taylor	- Service Manager, Fostering and Adoption
Catherine Underwood	- Corporate Director for People
Phil Wye	- Governance Officer

29 Apologies for absence

Councillor Maria Joannou - unwell

Jasmin Howell
Alison Platkiw
Patrick Skeete

30 Declarations of Interests

In the interests of transparency Councillor Georgia Power stated that she works for the Children's Society

31 Minutes

The Board agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2022 as a correct record and they were signed by the Chair.

32 Complaints Service Update

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

33 Independent Review Service - Annual Report

John Matravers, Service Manager Safeguarding Partnerships, introduced the report and delivered a presentation to the Board, highlighting the following:

- (a) the role of the Independent Reviewing officer (IRO) is to monitor the performance of the Local Authority and their function in relation to the children's cases, participate in any review of a child's case, and ensure that any ascertained wishes and feelings of the child are given due consideration by the appropriate authority;
- (b) the Children in Care population for 2020-21 within Nottingham City Council increased by 5.8% from the previous year. The East Midlands has also seen an increase in this population ranging from 4% -10%;
- (c) caseloads are within the upper limit specified in the IRO handbook, which denotes a caseload of 50-70 per IRO as being manageable. At present IRO's hold an average caseload of 65. This shows progress over the previous years;
- (d) in Nottingham 72% of children in care have remained in the same placement for at least 2 years or more. Reviews carried out within timescales were at 92%, which is a slight decline against the previous year;
- (e) children's participation in their own review was at 95%, which is a slight improvement against the previous year. This is a strong performance given the challenges presented by the pandemic over the last two years, but could still be improved further;
- (f) the Ofsted inspection of Nottingham City local authority children's services highlighted that IROs do not consistently monitor children's circumstances in between reviews. More mid-way reviews and checks need to take place, and this should be easier now that caseloads are reducing;
- (g) Ofsted also commented that escalation processes are currently not effective in demonstrating impact or positive change for children because of concerns raised by the IROs.

The following points were raised during the discussion which followed:

- (h) a video could be produced by children who have chaired their own reviews in order to demystify the process;
- (i) individual children would have differing views on the use of the terms 'placement' or 'home' for where they live. Effective communication with the children is

important to establish these views;

- (j) it would be useful for the report to contain some underlying themes that come up in complaints and positive feedback received;
- (k) the complexity of some children in care is increasing due to exploitation and other issues, which can impact on the capacity of IROs;
- (l) it is positive that stability of children in care has improved, but it would be useful to have further information on the reasons why some do move out of placements, as this will help with the needs of individual children;
- (m) a lot of work is currently being undertaken to support children to remain safely with their parents, or supporting their extended family to support if this is not possible.

34 Feedback from development session and Corporate Parenting Board next steps

Mary-Anne Cosgrove, Head of Children in Care, Care leavers and Regulated Services, delivered a presentation to the Board on feedback from a recent development session, and highlighted the following:

- (a) the development session was part of a wider package of support to develop the effectiveness of the Corporate Parenting Board. This package also includes peer interviews with key officers and councillors to understand the approach to corporate parenting, a Board observation, development of key areas and aspects for improvement, and a bespoke development programme for the Board;
- (b) the following strengths of the Board were identified:
 - there is a commitment across the council to corporate parenting, and an increased understanding of what this means by those not working in children's services;
 - there is a strong culture of focusing on the child, and the Corporate Parenting Board is keen to examine ways to effectively engage with children in care and care leavers;
 - recent interventions have seen improvements to services for Children in Care and Care Leavers;
 - the Corporate Parenting Board meets six times per year and members are committed to attending and asking questions;
 - some key partner organisations are now attending the Corporate Parenting Board meetings routinely.
- (c) whilst there is a commitment to Children in Care and Care Leavers, there is no clear single vision or aspiration;
- (d) the Board operates in a similar way to a scrutiny committee, and whilst key members champion the needs of children in care, this leadership dynamic could be enhanced by changing the terms of reference;

Corporate Parenting Board - 16.01.23

- (e) the Corporate Parenting Board meets in public which is unusual. This can stifle board discussions and deeper conversations;
- (f) the voice of Children in Care and Care Leavers should be embedded more into the work of the Board. Suggestions of doing this include members acting as Link Champions, take over days, and children attending meetings.

The following points were raised during the discussion which followed:

- (g) examples from other local authorities should be used to establish new terms of reference which put the Children in Care and Care Leavers at the heart of the Board's work;
- (h) the vision for the Board should be full of energy and commitment to the best opportunities and support;
- (i) the voices of as wide a range of Children in Care and Care Leavers should be captured, including those that do not live in Nottingham and those that find it difficult to engage.

35 Date of the next meeting

The date of the next meeting was noted.

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Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report 2021/2022

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Minute Item 33



Nottingham
City Council

Roles and Responsibilities

- Monitor the performance of the Local Authority and their function in relation to the child's case.
- Participate in any review of the child's case.
- Ensure that any ascertained wishes and feelings of the child are given due consideration by the appropriate authority.
- Perform any other function, which is prescribed by the regulations.

Children in Care Data 2020/21

- The Children in Care population for 2020-21 within Nottingham City Council was 724 (684). This shows an increase of 5.8% from the previous year. The East Midlands has also seen an increase in this population ranging from 4% -10%.
- Caseloads are within the upper limit specified in the IRO handbook, which denotes a caseload of 50-70 per IRO as being manageable. At present IRO's hold an average caseload of 65. This shows progress over the previous years.

Children in Care Data 2020/21

- Stability of placement is an important factor for children in care and a key performance indicator. In Nottingham 72% (64%) of our children in care have remained in the same placement for at least 2 years or more.
- Reviews within timescale were at 92% (95%) which shows a slight decline against the previous year.
- Child participation in their review was 95% (92%). This shows a slight improvement against the previous year. This is strong performance given the obvious challenges presented by the pandemic over the last two years.

Inspection of Nottingham City local authority children's services

- The review of children's plans mostly takes place within statutory timescales, and minutes are sensitively written to children to help them understand the outcomes and plans. Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) do not consistently monitor children's circumstances in between reviews. Escalation processes are currently not effective in demonstrating impact or positive change for children because of concerns raised by the IROs.

Priorities for 2022/23

- Ensure every child has a mid-point review undertaken by the IRO and evidenced on child's record.
- Rewrite the previous Dispute Resolution Policy and rebrand as Practice Resolution Protocol and this to be reportable on Liquid Logic.
- To ensure the IRO's footprint is clearly evidenced in the child's records.
- Consultation documents to be reviewed, refreshed and then shared with children and carers 30 days before the next review.
- Performance Framework dashboard to be developed and implemented through an IRO specific analysis and insight report to monitor outcomes.
- Improved collaboration with all parts of Childrens Services ensuring the IRO offers high support and high challenge in meeting expectations for our children.

QUESTIONS



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Corporate Parenting

Peer Support Programme
Module two – development session

Su Turner – LGA Associate

January 2023

www.local.gov.uk

Corporate Parenting Peer Diagnostic

- This diagnostic is part of a wider package of support to develop the effectiveness of the Corporate Parenting Board.
- The package includes:
 - peer interviews with key officers and councillors to understand the approach to corporate parenting
 - a Corporate Parenting Board observation
 - development of key areas and aspects for improvement
 - a bespoke development programme for the corporate parenting board.
- Peer Team
 - Councillor Anntoinette Bramble, Hackney Council
 - Su Turner, CEO, Shaping Governance
 - Supported by Helen Donelan-Bell, LGA

Our Observations

Strengths

- There is a commitment across the council to corporate parenting, and an increased understanding of what this means by those not working in children's services;
- There is a strong culture of focusing on the child, and the Corporate Parenting Board is keen to examine ways to effectively engage with children in care and care leavers;
- Recent interventions have seen improvements to services for children in care and care leavers;
- The Corporate Parenting Board meets six times per year and members are committed to attending and asking questions;
- Some key partner organisations are now attending the Corporate Parenting Board meetings routinely.

Our Observations

Areas for development

- **Whilst there is commitment to children in care and care leavers – there was no clear single vision or aspiration.**
- The Corporate Parenting Board **meets in public**; which is quite unusual. This can stifle board discussions and deeper conversations.
- Improvements to services for children in care and care leavers had been made, but it felt that these had been undertaken in silos. The Corporate Parenting Board could **act as the bridge to improve and connect services**;
- **The Corporate Parenting Board appears to operate as a scrutiny committee**, and whilst key members champion the needs of children in care, **this leadership dynamic could be enhanced.**
- **Membership of the Corporate Parenting Board is unclear, as to are partners roles**
- Meetings are dominated by lengthy reports and from presentations from officers.
- **Better ways to hear the voices of children in care and care leavers**

Programme structure

Module 1

Overview of Corporate Parenting

Roles, Responsibilities and framework for effective corporate parenting

Module 2

Taking it to the next level

- 1) Leadership, Partnership and Aspirations
- 2) Scrutiny
- 3) Engagement – children and partners

Corporate Parenting

Recap from module one

What is a Corporate Parent?

Page 19 “a shared responsibility with all officers and members of the local authority to act as effective and caring corporate parents for looked-after children, with key roles in improving their educational attainment, providing stable and high quality placements and proper planning for when they leave care”

DfE 2013, Director and Lead Member for Children’s Services – Roles and Responsibilities

Corporate Parenting Principles

The Children and Social Work Act 2017...explains this further with 7 Corporate Parenting Principles

- To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people
- To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
- To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people
- To help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners
- To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people
- For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and
- To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

Who is a Corporate Parent within the council?

- **Specialist:** Lead Members and Directors of Children's Services
- **Targeted:** Corporate Parenting Boards and Scrutiny Committees have additional responsibilities
- **Universal:** Every councillor and officer of the local authority



Targeted roles...



Cabinet and Executive Councillors

Executive councillors key decision makers for council and community



Corporate Parenting Board

Champion the corporate parenting role across the authority and partners



Scrutiny Councillors and Committees

Champion the corporate parenting role across the authority and partners



Management Team and Senior Officers

Sets the tone of how directorates view the importance of Corporate Parenting



Partners

Children Act 2004, Councils have a duty to promote 'cooperation' between 'relevant partners', such as Police, the NHS and Education Providers

Corporate Parenting

Taking it to the next level!

Ofsted Expectations

- Leaders to take corporate parenting very seriously and be highly ambitious for children in care and care leavers.
 - Senior leaders to have a clear and transformative vision of services to sustainably improve the lives of vulnerable children.
 - Senior leaders to implement a clear and ambitious vision for all children in care & Care leavers.
 - Children to be cared for, and cared about.
-

Good Corporate Parents

Ofsted found that where services were considered good or better, the Corporate Parenting Board:

- *Demonstrated a strong cross-party commitment to children in care, by championing their rights, having high aspirations for their achievement, monitoring children's progress and challenging outcomes;*
- *Clearly understood its role and the responsibilities of the council and partners towards children in care, and planned for and prioritised their needs, resulting in a greater focus on improving outcomes;*
- *Actively engaged with their young people, for example, through the children in care council, and have effective and regular links with senior management and councillors*

Case Study One – Telford and Wrekin

“Corporate parenting is exceptionally strong. Children are cared for, and they are cared about...”

- Moved from RI to Outstanding in 2020 – confirmed in 2022
- Clear strategy and articulation of vision
- Strategy built as their promise to children – with the audience being the children based on a you said we will approach
- Each priority (7): you said, we will, how will we know we have made a difference
- CP Strategic Group involving partners
- CP Children’s Panel – co-ordinated by the children in care council and care leavers forum – run as a CPB meeting – with adults being called in

<https://democracy.telford.gov.uk/documents/s14336/Appendix%20A%20for%20Corporate%20Parenting%20Strategy%202022-2025.pdf>

Case Study two – Leeds

“There are two vocal, inclusive and influential groups for children in care and care leavers. Young people in these groups have a strong sense of responsibility about what they do, with a clear agenda and workplan. Young people told inspectors that they feel valued, listened to and respected by senior leaders.”

- Continued to be Outstanding in 2022
- Clear vision and how they will achieve their ambition
- Asking would it be good enough for my child
- Series of promises to children that they monitor
- CPB is the strategic partnership to drive arrangements – elected members, key service leaders, and partners
- Children supported to be board members for three evening meetings
- Annual takeover day
- Operational delivery through CP operational Group
- Training provided to all – council staff, councillors and across the partnership

Common factors for excellence

Clear partnership vision that all are signed up to

Delivery Strategy built on promises to children – which is monitored

Strategic CPB – members, senior level officers and partners

Operation delivery – officers from across partnership

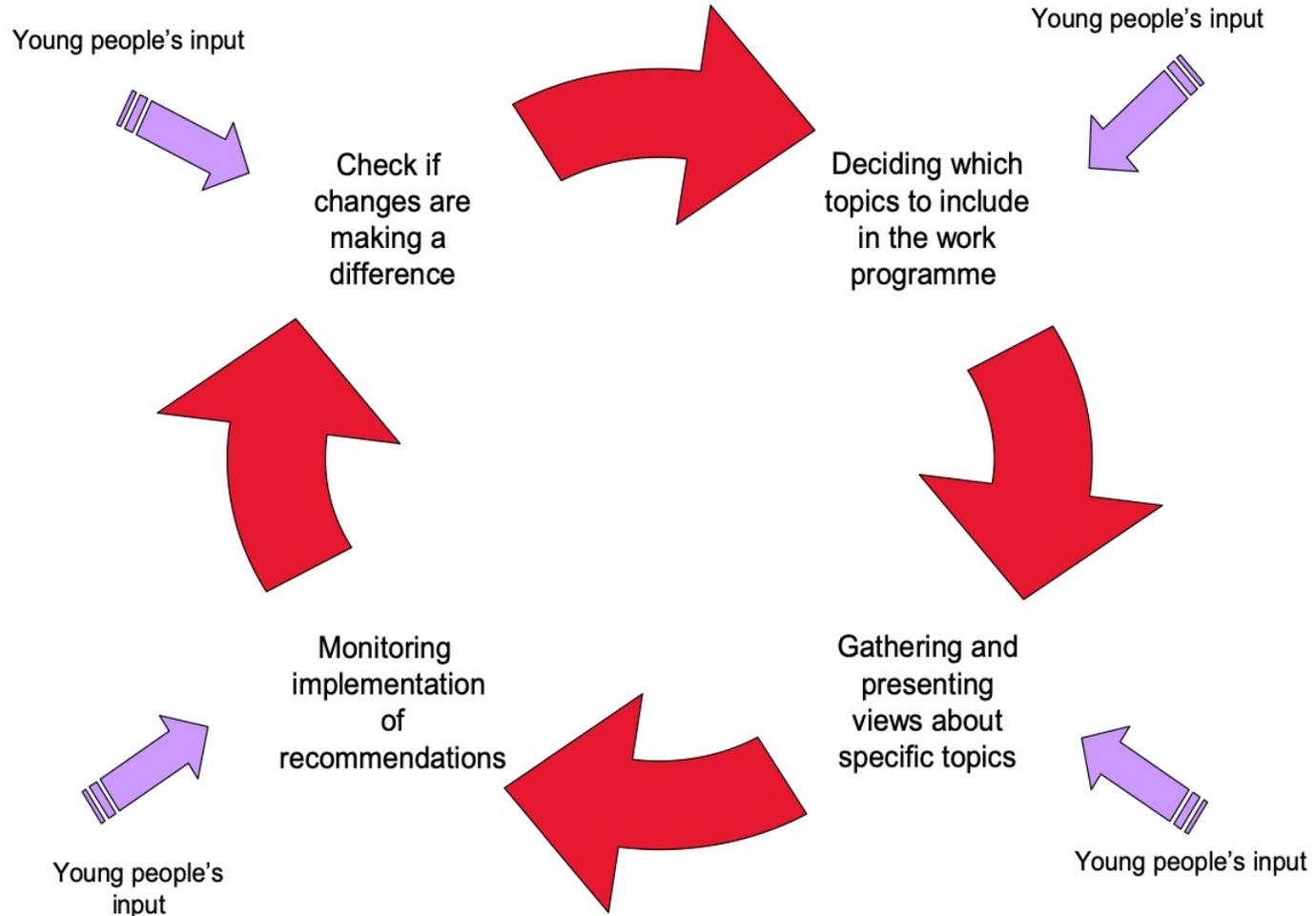
Meaningful ways to work with children in care and care leavers

Corporate Parenting

Mini-Module:

Rooting the voice of children in care and care leavers
in your board discussions

Where the voice of children in Care and Care Leavers can come in



Ways for the board to work with CYP

- Using the voice of children in care, care leavers and carers is valuable; but you don't have to set up special channels - much exists:
 - **Indirect engagement and listening**
 - Seeking voice through existing mechanisms that the council has, including participation officers and the Children in Care Council
 - Have your say Survey feedback
 - **Working with partners and specialists**
 - Your front line staff
 - CAMHs and CAFCASS
 - Schools
 - **Recruit young mentors or young researchers (scrutiny examples)**
 - Oldham, young people engaged their peers to talk about mental health
 - Doncaster – participation champions
 - Gloucestershire – care leavers co-design work
 - **Use technology and social media**
 - **Informal opportunities such as celebration events**

Child-centred corporate parenting

We have heard that outstanding approaches to being corporate parents include an active two-way relationship with the Children in Care Council

The Children in Care Council provides some children and care leavers with an opportunity to share their views on services they receive. However, the council is underdeveloped, with only nine children attending regularly. This limits the capacity for children and young people to influence service development and co-production in Nottingham city

Ofsted July 2022

- *Themed Meetings – focusing on key areas at each meeting*
- *Link Champions – councillors – meet with CYP on their theme*
- *CYP Take-over day; CYP supported to attend CPB meetings*
- *Dedicated CP Children's Panel*
- *You said, we did approach*

Discussion

- How do you currently work with the Children in care council
- How could you improve this?
- How do you know you are delivering your promises?
- How does the Corporate Parenting Board hear the views and wishes of CYP?
- How does the Corporate Parenting Board use this to plan its work strategically?

Embedding Voice

- Map out existing channels across the partners to understand how voice of CiC and CL is captured;
- Understand how these can be used by the CPB – or where there are gaps that need filling;
- Utilise the ½ termly events as a mechanism for voice –themed meetings and assigning Link Champion Councillor to each theme.
- Build a normal cycle of Link Champion attending ½ termly events to gather voice and use in CPB meetings
- Participants were keen ensuring naturalistic and fun opportunities

Reports

- Develop child-friendly reports that are easier to understand. Possibly use Link Champion to see if what is contained in the reports actually happens / is correct.

Corporate Parenting

Mini-Module:
Scrutiny 'S & s'

Simple snapshot of governance



Corporate Parent Board - role

- Provides the strategic leadership that drives an ambitious and multi-agency approach to improving outcomes for CiC and CL.
- Champions the role of the Corporate Parent – to all councillors, officers and partners.
- Works as a board to overcome any barriers to improving outcomes for children in care and care leavers.
- Understands the needs of children in care and care leavers, and
 - Produces a strategy for the improvements needed;
 - Develops a ‘pledge or promise’ detailing how they will care for and care about them.
 - Monitors how well the strategy is being implemented and how well services perform

Principle role is leadership

Children's overview and scrutiny - role

- Has a vital role in the wider governance system that holds the authority's decision-makers to account.
- Influences policies and decisions made by the council and partners involved in delivering public services
- Gathers evidence and uses the insight on issues affecting local people and make recommendations based on this.
- Adds value and makes a positive contribution to the lives of children and local people.
- Acts as a 'critical friend' in assuring the Council and their partners execute their duties effectively.

Principle power is influence

Main differences

Scrutiny

Holding the Cabinet to account



Policy development and review



Challenging and improving performance – big S



Supporting the achievement of value for money



Ensuring the council is child focused and doing its best for all children



A public meeting



Corporate Parent Board

Leadership and overcoming barriers

Developing strategy with partners to improve services

Challenging and improving performance – small s

Ensuring services are efficient and effective for CiC and CL

Acting as parents for CiC & CL championing and supporting

Not (usually) public

Joint planning adds value

Corporate Parenting and Scrutiny

There are benefits to working more collaboratively with overview and scrutiny:

How do you currently work with scrutiny to:

- Plan your work programme?
- Ensure no gaps in oversight?
- Use the right tool (OSC or CPB) to get the right impact?

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Briefly discuss:

How can you take your work with scrutiny to the next level?

Public vs non public meetings – which is best for you?

Clarity of role:

- Clarify the different roles that Scrutiny and CPB play – emphasising the leadership role of CPB;
- Change constitution to non-public meetings for the CPB;
- Routinely plan your work programme with scrutiny to understand which tool – Scrutiny or CPB is best to receive information;
- Remember - CPB role is to overcome barriers and improve!

Terms of reference

- Create a terms of reference that details clearly the role that members of the CPB has and how this is different from scrutiny.
- Use this to ensure that all councillors and officers understand the role of a corporate parent.

Corporate Parenting

Mini-Module:

Leadership, partnership and Aspiration

The two sides of leadership

Leading and
developing a Strong
Corporate Parenting
Ethos

Demonstrating
strong leadership to
children in care and
care leavers

Leading and developing a Strong Corporate Parenting Ethos

The Corporate Parenting Board is the vehicle to provide leadership and brings together partners to:

- Provides the leadership that drives an ambitious and multi-agency approach to improving outcomes for children in care and care leavers.
- Oversees completion of actions identified within the CPB strategy
- Promotes the pledge / promises in a meaningful way
- Champions the role of the corporate parent - encouraging all councillors

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Briefly discuss:

What is your shared vision for children in care and care leavers?

What are your promises and how do you monitor them?

How can you take your leadership and partnership to the next level?

LGA Training and resources



Courses

- Leadership Essentials 2 day courses for councillors providing learning and networking opportunities on specific themes, including Scrutiny and Children's Services <https://local.gov.uk/our-support/highlighting-political-leadership/leadership-essentials>
- E-Learning – coming soon



Resources

- Corporate Parenting Resource Pack
- Your first ten days as a lead member for children's services
Includes a glossary of key terms.
- LG Inform: benchmarking and data reports generated for your area
- Must Know for Lead Members of Children's Services
- LGA Children and young people policy pages



Peer mentoring

- Peer mentoring for CPB Chairs from an experienced children's services lead member or scrutiny chair.