

Nottingham City Council Corporate Parenting Peer Diagnostic

April 2022

Su Turner and Cllr Anntoinette Bramble

Children's Services Peer Challenge

- 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 - which took place in January
 - Development of key areas and aspects for improvement
 - A bespoke development programme for the corporate parenting board.
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Peer Review

- Peer review is based on the national Corporate Parenting Principles
- Not an inspection – invited in as “critical friends”
- Information is confidential and non-attributable

Peer team

- The Peer team included, Councillor Anntoinette Bramble, Hackney Council, and Su Turner independent Governance Specialist
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The Process

- Across five days at the beginning of April, interviews were held with the following people:
 - Mel Barratt - Chief Executive
 - Catherine Underwood, DCS
 - Nick Lee - Director of Education
 - Beth Brown: Head of Legal and Governance
 - Councillor Cheryl Barnard
 - Treza Mann: Interim Service Manager for children in care and care leaving service
 - Jon Rea: Research, engagement and Consultation Manager
 - Mary-Anne Cosgrove: Head of Children in Care (regulated services)
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Themes

The peer diagnostic considers the following themes:

- Health and wellbeing of children in care and care leavers
 - The voice of children in care and care leavers
 - Aspiration and achievement
 - Quality, planning, stability and permanence
 - Care leavers and transition
 - Governance and board effectiveness
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Strengths

- There appears to be 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
 - Key partner are now attending the Corporate Parenting Board meetings
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Areas for consideration:

- Whilst commitment to children in care and care leavers was voiced by all interviewed, there does not seem to be a single coherent aspiration or vision that could be articulated, and the council's pledge or promises to the children was not mentioned by most in the interviews.
 - The Corporate Parenting Board meets in public, which is quite unusual. This can stifle board discussions and deeper conversations regarding key aspects of services for children in care and care leavers, it also prevents those children in care who wish to attend from doing so and means holding a separate private meeting.
 - The reviewers felt that whilst the council had made improvements to services for children in care and care leavers, it felt that these had been done in silos, and the Corporate Parenting Board could act as the bridge to improve services.
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Areas for consideration contd.:

- 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. Partners attend but are unsure of their role.
 - Meetings are dominated by lengthy reports and from presentations from officers. Whilst there is good agenda management by the chair; reports and presentations can prevent important discussions.
 - The board is keen to hear the voices of children, however this needs to be explored carefully, and the board adopting a variety of means not just children in care and care leavers attending board meetings
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What next ?

- It is proposed that the following development sessions are held:
 - CPB1: a session specifically for the corporate parenting board that focuses on leveling understanding of corporate parenting and how they can be the champions for children
 - CPB2: a session specifically for the corporate parenting board focusing on how to listen effectively to the voices of children and how the work programme can be developed to support this.
 - All Councillors: a development session for the whole council and senior managers that focuses specifically on what corporate parenting is and how they can all be effective corporate parents.
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