

BARNSLEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT OF THE: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (CHILDREN'S SERVICES)

REVISED TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

REPORT TO:	CABINET
Date of Meeting	20th MARCH 2024
Cabinet Member Portfolio	CHILDREN'S SERVICES
Key Decision	No
Public or Private	Public

Purpose of report

To present the revised terms of reference for the Corporate Parenting Panel, following a recent review.

Council Plan priority

The Corporate Parenting Panel holds to account the role of the Council, together with statutory and non-statutory partners in improving the range of outcomes for children in care and young people leaving care, particularly through the Borough's Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy. The Panel supports the following Council Priorities:

- A **Healthy Barnsley** – by ensuring care experienced young people are safeguarded from all forms of harm, are able to maintain their physical and mental wellbeing and are enabled to have equal access to services of relevance to their needs.
- A **Learning Barnsley** – through ensuring care experienced young people achieve their potential and acquire qualifications and skills that will allow them to access the employment market and enable them to become active citizens in sustainable and inclusive communities.

Recommendations

That Cabinet endorses the Corporate Parenting Panel's revised terms of reference for consideration and approval at the meeting of Full Council, on 28th March 2024.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The current terms of reference for the Corporate Parenting Panel were conceived in 2013, in response to the outcomes and recommendations of Ofsted's inspection of safeguarding and services for looked after children (SLAC) during the previous year.
- 1.2 These terms of reference placed an onus upon the Corporate Parenting Panel to effectively hold to account the role of Council services, together with partners in promoting the overall wellbeing of children and young people in care and young people leaving care so that they could make a successful transition into adult life.
- 1.3 At its meeting held on 17th July 2023, the Panel discussed the need to review its existing terms of reference as part of ensuring it remained compliant with its responsibilities, particularly under Part 1V of the Children Act (1989) and Part 1, Chapter 1 of the Children and Social Work Act (2017).
- 1.4 It was also imperative that the Panel's focus was upon ensuring that Council services and both statutory and non-statutory partners made the required progress in helping achieve the objectives of the Borough's Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy (2022-25) particularly in relation to the sufficiency of placements, through helping increase the number of Local Authority foster carers, reducing caseloads and that care experienced young people and their families maintain stable, long-term relationships with their social workers.
- 1.5 Moreover, the Government's published its final response to the findings of the Independent Review of Children's Social Care in September 2023 which established its vision for the reform of children's social care. This included a document entitled "*Stable Homes, Built on Love*" aimed at transforming services to best meet the needs of vulnerable children in need of care and young people leaving care amidst unprecedented rising demand. As a result, Members of the Panel agreed that revisions to the terms of reference should also be informed by these developments.

2. PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The Panel's revised terms of reference are appended to this report. The document reflects the statutory responsibilities upon the Panel which have developed following 2013, notably in relation to the Children and Social Work Act (2017) and the following seven principles for corporate parenting:
 - (a) To act in the best interests and promote the physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of children and young people in care.
 - (b) To encourage young people in care to express their views, wishes and feelings.
 - (c) To actively consider the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people in care.

- (d) To help children and young people in care gain access to and make the best use of services provided by the Local Authority and its relevant partners.
- (e) To promote high aspirations and seek to secure the best outcomes for such children and young people.
- (f) For such children and young people to be safe and for stability to be assured in their home lives, relationships, education and work.
- (g) To prepare young people leaving care for adulthood and independence.

2.2 These principles correlate with our own ambitions for children in care and young people leaving care as expressed in the Borough's Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy (2022-250 outlined below:

- They are safeguarded from all forms of harm.
- To promote their health and wellbeing.
- To ensure they achieve their potential through good educational attainment.
- To enable them to make a positive contribution to society.
- To help them make a successful transition to adulthood and attain skills and qualifications that will enable them to access sustainable employment and become active citizens in their communities.

2.3 Equally, the revised terms of reference recognise and will help the Panel prepare for developments in the reform of children's social care, including Outcome 4 of the National Framework for Children's Social Care, namely that children in care and care leavers benefit from caring and loving homes, as detailed in the Government's aforementioned, document '*Stable Homes, Built on Love*'.

2.4 It was widely expected that a Children's Social Care Reform Bill was to be included in the Government's legislative programme for the 2023/24 Parliamentary year. This would have paved the way for primary legislation that should have included extending the role of 'corporate parent' to that of a '*community parent*' to include central government departments and the local NHS and Police.

2.5 Cabinet will be aware that, ultimately, there was no room for such a Bill and therefore this proposal does not currently form part of the Panel's terms of reference. However, both the South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board, through the Barnsley Place Partnership and the South and West Yorkshire NHS Partnership Foundation Trust are integral members of the Corporate Parenting Panel. whilst it is also proposed that, in view of updated statutory guidance concerning the safeguarding of vulnerable children and young people, South Yorkshire Police be invited to become a member of the Panel.

2.6 Similarly, it is proposed that the Cabinet Spokesperson (Public Health and Communities) be appointed to the Panel, subject to Full Council approval, together with the appointment of the Service Director (Education, Early Start and Prevention) as a co-opted member.

- 2.7 These proposed appointments reflect the importance of reducing health deprivation among vulnerable groups of children and ensuring effective prevention, early help and '*edge of care*' services, particularly through Barnsley's 'Supporting Families' and 'Start for Life' Programmes further improve outcomes.
- 2.8 With these considerations in mind, Cabinet is recommended to endorse the Corporate Parenting Panel's revised terms of reference for consideration and approval at the meeting of Full Council, on 28th March 2024.

3. IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

3.1 Financial and Risk

- 3.2 There are no direct financial implications for the Council or Children Services arising from changes to the terms of reference of the Corporate Parenting Panel as outlined in this report.

3.3 Legal

- 3.4 Under the revised terms of reference the Corporate Parenting Panel will continue to be fully compliant in helping ensure the Council fulfils its statutory responsibilities towards children in care and young people leaving care.

3.5 Equality

- 3.6 As part of its consultation document '*Stable Homes, Built on Love*' the Government originally proposed that experience of care and leaving care, should be a protected characteristic and primary legislation would have been instrumental in amending the Equality Act (2010) to ensure these vulnerable groups did not face any unlawful discrimination.

- 3.7 However, the required legislation did not emerge, although the Council itself has extended the scope of support offered to young people leaving care, including access to accommodation, skills and employment which was commended by Ofsted, following its focused visit on the progress and experience of young people leaving care, early in 2023.

- 3.8 An equality impact assessment will be included as part of the Panel's annual report to both Cabinet and Full Council, later this year.

3.9 Sustainability

- 3.10 There are no implications for the local environment or sustainability in the Borough arising through this report.

3.11 Employee

- 3.12 Similarly, there are no implications for the Council's workforce, arising from this report.

3.13 Communications

3.14 There are no communications implications for Cabinet to consider, resulting through this report.

4. CONSULTATION

4.1 Both the Corporate Parenting Panel, including partner organisations and the Senior Management Team have been consulted and have endorsed the revised terms of reference.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.1 The exclusive purpose of this report is to outline the rationale for revising the Corporate Parenting Panel's terms of reference, to bring it up to date with developments in the role of corporate parent as defined in recent legislation and reforms in children's social care.

5.2 Equally, the revised terms of reference will enable the Panel to maintain effective oversight in achieving the objectives of Barnsley's Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy, particularly our placement sufficiency and workforce proposals which form a crucial element of the Children's Services Financial Recovery Plan.

5.3 Improving the range of outcomes for looked after children, young people leaving care and promoting the inclusion of these vulnerable groups aligns with our overall 'Vision' for Barnsley as a *Place of Possibilities* during the next decade.

6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Please see Paragraphs 5.1 -5.3 of this report.

7. GLOSSARY

7.1 None, applicable.

8. LIST OF APPENDICES

8.1 Appendix 1: Draft Terms of Reference of the Corporate Parenting Panel
Appendix 2: Governance arrangements for the Corporate Parenting Panel

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 If you would like to inspect background papers for this report, please email governance@barnsley.gov.uk so that appropriate arrangements can be made

10. REPORT SIGN OFF

Financial consultation & sign off	Senior Financial Services officer consulted and date <i>Joshua Amahwe (21/02/2024)</i>
Legal consultation & sign off	Legal Services officer consulted and date <i>M P Farrell</i> Marianne Farrell, Team Leader, Legal Services 20 th February 2024

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