

Barnsley Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report 2015-2016

1. Context

- 1.1 This report sets out an annual update on the corporate parenting arrangements in Barnsley, with progress and outcomes of the panel for the period 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016. It reminds members of key legislation and guidance, advising on local performance and service improvement, as well as progress made by the corporate parenting panel. The report aims to strengthen the role and responsibilities of corporate parents in improving outcomes for children and young people.

2. Proposals and Reasons: Corporate Parenting – Our Responsibilities Legal Framework

- 2.1 The Children Act 1989 and the Leaving Care Act 2000 place clear statutory duties upon the Council to protect children from suffering significant harm and to provide continued financial and transition support to care leavers aged up to 21 (or 25 if in full time education). Underpinning corporate parenting is a wide range of national policies, guidance, regulations and legislation, which are subject to change by High Court rulings, such as the Southwark ruling in 2009.
- 2.2 The Munro review has significantly impacted on the work we do with children and young people looked after. The Final Report of the Munro Review of Child Protection Services published in May 2011 includes Professor Munro's 15 recommendations which have significant implications for the way that child protection services will be run at a local level. In relation to children looked after, key reforms to be taken forward include building the capacity of social workers and strengthening their professional practice; a reduction in the amount of central prescription; increased evaluation of the effectiveness of the help provided to children and families; and greater recognition that safeguarding is a multi-agency responsibility.
- 2.3 The revised care planning regulations and guidance, including The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Volume 3: Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers and the Statutory Guidance on Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked After Children March 2010, place increased emphasis on effective care planning with a focus on the child, and are designed to improve the quality and consistency of care planning, placement and case review for looked after children. They also aim to improve the care and support provided to care leavers.
- 2.4 The UK Government made significant reforms to the youth remand framework with the implementation of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders (LASPO) Act in December 2012. The Act implicitly attributes further responsibility to Local Authorities by means of children and young people being remanded to youth detention accommodation, being treated as children looked after and being eligible for leaving care services if they are looked after beyond 13 weeks.

3. Corporate Parenting – The Role and Responsibility of Councillors

3.1 Effective corporate parenting requires knowledge and awareness of the needs of children and young people looked after and the services they receive. This is a shared responsibility by the Council as a whole. The role of the corporate parent is therefore:

- a) To receive and consider accurate and timely management information reports on the numbers, characteristics and needs of looked after children and care leavers.
- b) To receive and consider reports demonstrating how effectively Barnsley is serving it's looked after population through the provision of services and targeted initiatives.
- c) To receive briefings on new national and local initiatives designed to improve children and young people's life chances.
- d) To gain knowledge of services based on direct involvement and opportunities to meet and gain the views of stakeholders, especially listening to the views of children and young people looked after and members of the Care 4 Us Council.
- e) To monitor and review progress on the delivery of Corporate Parenting 'Promise' to children looked after and care leavers.
- f) To ensure that decisive action is taken to address any shortcomings in the services provided to children and young people.

4. The Barnsley Pledge to Children and Young People in Care

4.1 What all children and young people in our care can expect from us:

- We'll look after children in care in a safe and caring home.
- We'll promote, support and respect their identity.
- We'll ensure all children in care receive a good education.
- We'll support children in care to be healthy.
- We'll prepare children in care for the future.
- We'll involve children in care in decision making and making it happen.

5. Corporate Parenting in Barnsley

5.1 Children in Care are those children and young people aged 0 -18 years who cannot safely remain with their family and are cared for by the local authority. The local authority has continuing legal and financial responsibilities to many of these children until they are 21 (or 25 if in full time education). This includes all unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) and children with multiple disabilities. Children in Care and Care Leavers are one of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in our community.

5.2 The Corporate Parenting Panel is responsible for children in care, children at the edge of care and children and young people who have left care.

6. Corporate Parenting Panel Overview and Membership

6.1 The Corporate Parenting Panel is chaired by the Cabinet Spokesperson for People (Safeguarding).

6.2 The Panel meet every 2 months and there continues to be good attendance at meetings by the full range of members, which include:

- Elected Members, BMBC
- Executive Director, People Directorate, BMBC
- Service Director, Children's Social Care & Safeguarding, BMBC
- Virtual Head Teacher for Children in Care, BMBC
- Representatives for the Care4Us – Children in Care Council
- Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance, BMBC
- Foster Carer/s from the Barnsley Foster Carers Association
- Named Nurse for Children in Care, SWYPFT
- Designated Nurse Safeguarding Children/LAC, NHS Barnsley Clinical Commissioning Group
- Designated Doctor, BHNFT
- Head of Service, Children in Care Services, BMBC
- Managers for Children in Care and Care Leavers Teams, BMBC
- Scrutiny Officer, BMBC

7. Corporate Parenting Progress throughout the year 2015-16

7.1 At each of its meetings the Corporate Parenting Panel receives the following standard reports:

- Looked after Children Performance Report; a bespoke performance report which captures data, provides a commentary and performance rating against all key performance indicators of relevance to children in care. Panel members receive a cover report which highlights the areas of concern and invites and encourages member challenge.
- A Children in Care Status Report; a report which sets out numbers, locations and types of placements of Barnsley's children to support members in asking questions about trends and the implications for children's wellbeing.

7.2 Other standard agenda Items:

- Minutes of the Education of Children in Care Steering Group
- Minutes of the Health of Children in Care Steering Group
- Minutes of the Care 4 Us Council

7.3 Over the past year the Panel has requested and considered the following thematic reports for discussion and challenge:

- Report on the Foster Carers Ball Celebration Event; April 2015
- Update Report on the Adoption Reform Grant; April 2015

- Breakdown of Children Missing from Care Presentation; June 2015
- Adoption Tracking, Performance and Post-Adoption Support Fund Presentation; June 2015
- Report on a small audit of the implementation and utilisation of Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQ's); September 2015
- Data report on Children in Care who have been in Custody; September 2015
- The Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) Annual Report; September 2015
- The Looked After Children Missing Protocol; October 2015
- Outline Programme for National Takeover Day; October 2015
- Outline Programme Presentation for the Children in Care Awards Event; October 2015
- Ofsted Annual Children's Social Care Data Report; December 2015
- The IRO Action Work Plan; December 2015
- Draft Corporate Parenting Report 2014/15; February 2016

7.4 Promoting young people's increased involvement and participation has been a key focus for the corporate parenting panel during 2015 – 2016. This has been evidenced by:

- Takeover Challenge is a national event led by the Children's Commissioner for England which puts children and young people into decision-making roles. In 2015 we had one young person involved. This year we had 17 children in care and care leavers shadowing Officers and Councillors from across the council to allow them to gain an insight into the world of work and how decisions are made. The event was well supported from every Directorate. The young people had a range of experiences including spending time with Public, Health, the Better Barnsley Major Project Team, the Family Information Service, regulatory Services and Communities. They also shadowed lead members, Cllr Bruff and Cllr Cheetham along with the Chief Executive. Feedback from the service providers was that it was a privilege to spend time with such fantastic Barnsley young people. Young people reported that besides it being a fun day it increased their confidence and enabled them to open up possibilities as to their future options.
- Following wide-ranging consultation, including input from Barnsley Care4Us Council, the Pledge to children in care and care leavers which informs young people about the level of care and services they can expect from the council as their corporate parent, has been updated and is published in a new format more suited to its audience. The Pledge was signed by members at a Cabinet meeting, which young people in care attended.

- Two Children in Care sat alongside decision-makers at Barnsley Council as Cabinet members considered two reports relating to the wellbeing and aspirations of young people in care and care leavers. The young people introduced two reports to the meeting - Review of the Barnsley Pledge to Children and Young People in Care and Update Briefing regarding The Provision of 16+ Accommodation. They successfully asked senior councillors to approve the recommendations in each report. The young people were invited to 'take over' the meeting for these two reports as a further demonstration of the council's commitment to the Children's Commissioner's national Takeover Challenge initiative.

7.5 The Corporate Parenting Panel has links with the following groups:

- Children in Care Health Improvement Group – the Chair sits on the Corporate Parenting Panel and formally reports back each meeting. It was agreed to further strengthen this by having one of the Corporate Parenting Panel Councillors also sitting on the group. Minutes of meetings of this group are considered by the Corporate Parenting Panel.
- Care 4 Us Children's Council - the Cabinet Spokesperson for People (Safeguarding) and chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel sits on this group, in addition to the Cabinet Spokesperson for People (Achieving Potential). This is to ensure that links between the two bodies remain strong and to get direct customer feedback on whether children and young people feel cared for and safe, as well as to be able to deal with any other issues raised by Care 4 Us.

7.6 Any areas of concern may be referred to Cabinet which may refer for Scrutiny Committee consideration.

7.7 Corporate parenting panel members have been encouraged to attend and receive training in understanding and making use of performance reports to support member challenge.

7.8 Member training is provided on the role, responsibilities and expectations of corporate parents. Members of the corporate parenting panel have agreed that their role is to act as 'pushy parents' for children in care on the edge of care and care leavers. The litmus test being "Would this be good enough for my child or me if I was a child?"

7.9 As part of the Continuous Service Improvement Plan the structure of Corporate Parenting Panel meetings has been changed, from day time to early evening meetings, specifically to enable children and young people in care to attend, as well as foster carer representatives.

7.10 One of the key outcomes arising from the performance reports and from the Ofsted report is that the Panel will challenge the quality of Personal Education Plans (PEPs). An Education Improvement Steering Group and a Virtual School Governance Group have been set up, attended by Officers, members of Corporate Parenting Panel and partners. The groups are chaired by Cabinet Spokesperson for People (Achieving Potential).

- 7.11 The Corporate Parenting Panel attend key participation events such as the annual celebration event.

8. Governance Arrangements

- 8.1 The Corporate Parenting Panel is established within the Council's Constitution and has specific Terms of Reference which emphasise the above responsibilities and its overarching responsibility to ensure that the Council, through elected members, officers and partner agencies, fulfils its corporate parenting role. Although the Corporate Parenting Panel does not possess Executive powers, the Panel is able to refer matters to the Council's Cabinet to consider any actions which the Panel recommends. The Council's Scrutiny Committees may, in turn, receive any of those issues which are referred to Cabinet and which the Cabinet feels would benefit from an in depth investigation in open session. It is proposed that the Corporate Parenting Panel annual report is considered by both the Cabinet and the Full Council meeting.

9. Children in Care Council

- 9.1 The Children in Care Council directly supports the Corporate Parenting Panel to measure and monitor the effectiveness and quality of 'Corporate Parenting' to children and young people; according to the views and experiences of the children who are in care. The panel remains fully committed to listening to the voice of service users and the active involvement of children and young people within the decision-making processes.
- 9.2 A key recommendation of the 2014 Ofsted inspection report is to widen the council to include the voice of younger children and more children in care as well as the existing care leavers.
- 9.3 A service review was undertaken in 2015 aimed at better aligning resources to areas of demand and need. Consequently a full time dedicated post has been developed, for implementation from the 1st April 2016. The aim of the post is to improve young people's participation, ensuring that their voices and experiences are heard and influence all aspects of service delivery, as well as strengthening the Care4Us Council.

10. Continuous Service Improvement Framework

- 10.1 A Continuous Service Improvement Plan continues to be in place following the Ofsted inspection in June 2014 which judged Barnsley as 'requires improvement'. The plan consists of the work which is being monitored as part of the continuous service improvement journey and is mapped against the OFSTED recommendations and local improvements. The plan is overseen by the multi-agency Officer Group. Barnsley Safeguarding Children's Board (BSCB) monitors the actions which indicate whether sufficient progress is being made, i.e. the right amount of progress in the right direction at the right pace.

10.2 All of the areas for improvement from the Ofsted inspection have been addressed within the Continuous Service Improvement Plan.

11. Priorities for the Corporate Parenting Panel for 2016- 2017

11.1 Driving forward improved educational progress and attainment for all children in care.

11.2 Challenging school absence, exclusion or lack of full time and suitable provision for all children in care.

11.3 Improving young people's participation with the evidence that shows the difference that has been made and the outcomes.

11.4 Improving Care Leavers engagement in education, employment and training.

11.5 Improving the emotional health and wellbeing of children in care and the access to timely help and intervention.

11.6 Learning from return to care interviews to help avoid children going missing.

12. Conclusion

12.1 Corporate Parenting Panel is where the responsibility and accountability for the wellbeing and future prospects for Barnsley children in care ultimately rest.

12.2 A good corporate parent must offer everything that a good parent would, including stability. It must address both the difficulties which children who are looked after experience and the challenges of parenting within a complex system of different services.

12.3 The 2014 Ofsted report outlined a number of different areas where the Corporate Parenting Panel needs to challenge and support the development of services to ensure that Barnsley's children in care have good outcomes.

12.4 Significant improvements for children in care and care leavers have been achieved, as evidenced within the Service Improvement Plan and as measured against key performance indicators; **See Section 13.**

12.5 The challenge remains for everyone to raise their aspirations for the children of Barnsley and to remain a 'PUSHY PARENT' to ensure that all children at the edge of care, in care or who have left care are given opportunity to reach the best possible outcomes they can.

13. Performance Information - Looked after Children (LAC) data for the period 1 April 2014-31 March 2016

	2014	2015	2016	Commentary
Numbers of LAC	228	244	285	<p>The number of LAC at the end of March 2016 had increased significantly to 285. Slightly more children were admitted to care in the second half of the year (92), compared with the first half (85). This increase was not unexpected due to the corresponding rise in CP Plans; however the number leaving care has reduced. Barnsley's rate of looked after children is below the average for its statistical neighbours but is in line with the national average. Barnsley has stable communities and family units who are willing to care for children within the extended family network. We have established an Intensive Adolescent Team to help prevent young homelessness. Legacy children have been adopted and we continue to successfully promote SGOs. There is an ongoing action to ensure that the right decisions are made to safeguard children at the right time. Plans are in place to closely monitor CP Plans and CP Plans for the 2nd time to ensure that there is no drift in timely decisions making. Public law case tracking and LAC figures are monitored at weekly performance meetings.</p> <p>At the end of March 2016, 171 looked after children were placed in Barnsley by other local authorities; this number is increasing over time which causes added pressures on Barnsley services in line with our own increasing looked after population.</p>
LAC Health Assessments	93.8%	96.8%	99.4%	Our performance on LAC health assessments has continued to improve on the previous year. Health Assessments are being held and recorded in accordance with statutory guidance. There is an ongoing action to maintain progress to health assessments, with any decline escalated to the Service Improvement Plan Officers Group and subject to interrogation by key managers.
LAC Dental Checks	84.4%	97.8%	100%	Considerable effort has been made to address data inputting problems at child level that resulted in previous reporting inaccuracies in dental checks. Performance shows significant improvement from the previous year, clearly evidencing that real progress has been made.
LAC Education	2014	2015	2016	
Completed PEPs	96.0%	99.3%	95.1%	The percentage of PEPs completed has deteriorated in the last year and stood at 95% in March 2016, although there is a time-lag with recording information on more recent Care Plans. A new Virtual Head Teacher took place in February 2016, and with the LAC

				team has reviewed all PEPs for year 10 and 11 children. Performance is monitored monthly. The Education Steering Group was established, chaired by a lead member, to drive forward the improvements required in relation to educational progress of our children and young people. This group tracks and challenges PEP progress, quality and performance. This is included in the Service Improvement Plan and overseen by the BSCB.
Exam results (LAC)	2013	2014	2015	
KS2 Reading, Writing, Maths – Level 4+	-	30%	30%	As at 31 March 2015 there were 10 children that had been in care continuously for 12 months or more in this age group and therefore eligible to take KS2 in reading, writing and maths. This means that each pupil in this cohort is worth 10%. Due to low prior attainment of the children in this cohort outcomes in all three areas for this group are below the 2014 LAC national averages and the performance of all pupils both nationally and in Barnsley. However outcomes for Barnsley LAC are above the projections returned by schools to the Virtual Head earlier in the year.
KS4 GCSE 5 A*-Cs including English and Maths	0%	11.1%	11.1%	For 2015 there were 9 eligible children in the cohort. The corporate target was for 11.1% (relating to one child) to achieve GCSE 5 A*-C including English and Maths. Given the small cohort, attainment is in line the 2014 national average for LAC and outcomes remain the same as last year. The proportion achieving 5 A*-G has dropped from previous years, standing at 66.7%, but remains above the last reported figure for LAC nationally in 2010.
	2013	2014	2015	
Emotional and behavioural health of looked after children	14.4	14.3	13.7	This measures the rate of emotional and behavioural health of children aged 4 to 16 who are looked after continuously for 12 months. The lower the rate the better the emotional and behavioural health of the cohort of children measured. A score of under 14 is considered normal; 14-16 is borderline with cause for concern; 17+ is a cause for concern. An improvement in the emotional and behavioural health of looked after children in Barnsley can be seen over the last few years, with the average rate now being classified as normal. Barnsley performs better than all benchmarks, with the national rate at 13.9, statistical neighbours at 14.1 and regional at 14.4.
	2014	2015	2016	

Foster Carers	77	96	104	There are currently 104 active in-house foster carer households, an increase on previous years. Although 22 new households were recruited in 2015/16, unfortunately 9 households left the service during the same period. A more proactive recruitment strategy has been undertaken during 2015/16 and will continue during 2016/17. The updated sufficiency strategy has set a target of 35 new placements to be recruited by April 2017.
Commissioned Placements	69	65	81	As at 31 March 2016 we had 81 children in IFA placements (65 at last report) and 144 children placed in house. The increase in IFA placements reflects the rapid increase in numbers of LAC, despite the increase of in-house placements, which we will continue to try to recruit more of. The time-lag in recruiting and training new carers will undoubtedly mean continued need to use emergency IFA placements in the near to medium term.
Adoption (% adopted during the year ending 31 March)	18%	32%	22.5%	Barnsley's adoption rate has reduced since the previous year, however this is in line with published figures for regional (23%), statistical neighbours (23%) and above national (17%) performance. Our performance has been above the national average for several years. 2014 excluded, we have exceeded all our comparators in recent years and performed in the upper quartile (rank 3) nationally. In the last 12 months, 29 children have been adopted. In comparison, a further 53 children were placed with family members subject to Special Guardianship Orders. We have approved 26 adopters in the last year and of these, which compares well to previous years, despite resourcing issues within the adoption team. Placements which cannot be provided in house can be purchased from other authorities or voluntary adoption agencies at a cost of £27,000 per child, however in 2015/16 we made fewer out of authority placements and provided a number of placements ourselves for other authorities. Of the out of authority placements we have made, we have been reimbursed for a number by the national inter-agency adoption grant for children categorised as hard to place.
	2014	2015	2016	
Percentage of looked after children who are placed less than 20 miles from their home address	New Measure	New Measure	92%	Generally speaking we consider that the closer to home we can keep looked after children the better it is for them. This is so that they can keep in contact with birth family where appropriate and maintain links with their home communities. Sometimes children are placed further away for adoption placements where it is not in their interests to keep in contact with birth families and where more specialised placements

				are needed e.g. for sibling groups. In 2015/16 the corporate target for looked after children being placed less than 20 miles from their home was 91%, meaning the target was achieved. At the end of March, 99 young people were in placements outside of the Barnsley borough.
Placement stability - children with three or more placement moves	7%	4.7%	3.5%	Performance on track, with good and improved performance for both indicators of placement stability, as well as good performance compared to statistical neighbours and national benchmarks. At the end of March 2016 there were 9 looked after young people who had three or more placement moves since entering care.
Placement stability - children who have been in the same placement for 2+ years or placed for adoption	79%	71%	79.1%	Good performance has been achieved by carefully matching children with the right carers and providing support to both children and their carers.
Looked after children cases reviewed within timescales	85.1%	95.9%	96.9%	All cases of looked after children should have a review within 4 weeks of either becoming looked after or their last review. The same standard applies to visits. Performance shows an increasing trend, with 97% of reviews being within time, while 93% of visits are within timescales. Managers have really driven the timeliness of visits to children with the service and significant progress has been made since July 2015, however the proportion of visits in time remains below the target of 100%. Where visits are out of time this is often by only one day, and there is some time-lag in recording visits, however increasing scrutiny is being placed to ensure all looked after children receive timely visits.
Looked after children visits in timescales	75%	90.2%	92.7%	
Care leavers in suitable accommodation	19-87.5% 20-100% 21-100%	19-100% 20-87% 21-100%	19-96% 20-100% 21-96%	We always aim to place 100% of care leavers in suitable accommodation. However, due to the nature of the client group we work with, this is not always achievable. Unfortunately this year, we have two care leavers in custody, the 19 year old is in on a short term basis and the 21 year old is likely to remain there post 21.
Care leavers in employment, education and training (EET)	19-48% 20-70.6% 21-60%	19-59.0% 20-20-56.5%	19-79% 20-20-54%	Overall, there was steady progress throughout the year, with care leavers accessing and maintaining positive EET provision. Corporate targets were only met for the 19 year olds in 2015/16. The 20 and 21 year old groups did not meet the targets, however, as some individuals in these groups were not available for work due to pregnancy,

		21-76.5%	21-56.5%	<p>illness or disability. We are continuing to improve our work within the Future Directions team, which offers support to children leaving care. We have improved communications between our Targeted Information Advice and Guidance team, social care, and EET providers by holding monthly panel meetings. This is delivering positive outcomes and we are seeking to improve and develop this further during 2016/17. This should lead to a continued increase in the number of care leavers actively engaged in EET.</p> <p>The small numbers involved in each age group make it difficult to set targets and performance can see large fluctuations. To improve benchmarking opportunities and reliability of measurement we are moving corporately to a target that covers all three age groups combined.</p>
Children Missing From Care or Home Incidents	73	165	212	<p>Figures for 2015/16 show a significant increase compared to previous years, although numbers of missing LAC and the number of episodes this relates to has reduced throughout the last 12 months. Q1 saw 60 episodes of missing LAC compared to just 46 in Q4. The 46 episodes in Q4 related to just 11 children. Work is being undertaken with the police and partners to ensure that children are correctly classified as missing or absent, as the majority of cases where children are in our care and reported as missing, their whereabouts are actually known and we are often in frequent contact with them. The service director is alerted immediately about any missing Barnsley LAC and informed when they return. Ofsted commented positively about this in their report. Improvement work is currently being undertaken around understanding the impact of and issues relating to LAC children placed within the Barnsley borough.</p>
	2012	2013	2014	
Youth Offending (Looked after Children)	9 <5%	6 <5%	N/A <5%	<p>Overall offending by Looked After Children in 2015/16 shows a positive trend. We have seen improvements in the use of custody with less young people being convicted of offences or breaching their orders, resulting in the court sending them to prison. Re-offending figures by looked after children cared for by Barnsley Council show a positive trajectory and better performance than for our non-looked after children. We also see a relatively low number of Looked After Children entering the criminal justice system for the first time. We are also sure that they enter for offences that take place, predominantly, within the community and that being dealt with for offending behaviour is not as a result of living within a children's home.</p>

			<p>Staff from the YOT work closely with the Children in Care Team and with the leaving care team, Future Directions. Staff from both teams attend case planning meetings and YOT staff attend and contribute to reviews for Looked After Children as well providing work and support to enable them to fully achieve their potential. Within the YOT we retain high expectations for our young people and this is reflected in the effort and support we provide to enable young people to attend school and attain as well as they are able.</p>
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OFSTED Ratings for Children’s Residential Establishments (no commentary available)

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Spring Lane	Outstanding	Good with outstanding features	Good
Newsome Avenue	Adequate	Good	Good