

Barnsley Corporate Parenting Panel DRAFT Annual Report 2014-2015

1.0 Context

1.1 This report sets out an annual update on the corporate parenting arrangement in Barnsley, particularly progress and outcomes of the panel during 2014-15. It advises members on key legislation and guidance, 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 the Council as corporate parent, in improving outcomes for children and young people.

2.0 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 LASPO (Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders) 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.

3.0 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 its 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 the 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.

4.0 Corporate Parenting in Barnsley

4.1 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.

4.2 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.

5.0 Corporate Parenting Panel Overview

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

5.2 The Panel meet every 2-3 months and there continues to be good attendance at meetings by the full range of members.

6.0 Corporate Parenting Progress During 2014-15

6.1 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.

6.2 Other standard agenda items, include:

- 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

6.3 During the period 1st April 2014 to 31st March 2015, the Panel has requested and considered the following thematic reports for discussion and challenge:

- Report on the Advocacy and Participation Service; February 2015
- Report on the Health of Children in Care; February 2015
- Report on Apprenticeship Opportunities (Children in Care); March 2015
- The Corporate Parenting Panel – The Councillor's Role in Addressing CSE; March 2015

6.4 As part of its work programme, during 2014/15, the Panel also considered the following matters:

- Outcomes of the Ofsted inspection (2014) including those relating to services for children in care and care leavers and the greater alignment of the Panel's Work Programme with the relevant recommendations emerging from the inspection.
- Provisions of the Children and Families Act (2014) and the new regulations and statutory guidance concerning the introduction of education and health care plans for children in care with special educational needs, including disabilities, introduced in Barnsley on 1st September 2014.
- Use of the Pupil Premium and how this could be used more effectively by schools to improve the progress and attainment of children in care.

- Outcomes of the Jay and Casey Reports into the extent of child sexual exploitation in Rotherham (1997-2013) and the reasons for the institutional failure to protect children and young people. Consideration of the measures being undertaken by Council services in Barnsley, following publication of these reports and the role of each individual elected member in promoting child protection, including children in care, care leavers and those missing from care.
- Improving capacity and the quality of adoptive placements, through a revised Council policy and scheme for the recruitment, training and retention of local authority foster carers, together with consideration of other developments in national fostering and adoption reform.
- The priorities of the Barnsley Placement and Sufficiency Strategy for Children in Care and Care Leavers (2014-17) emerging risks and the remedial action being taken to restore progress against these priorities.
- National Corporate Parenting Week (w/c 27th October 2014) and National 'Takeover Challenge' (November 2014) – steps to raise the profile of children in care in Barnsley and improve their experience.
- The Barnsley Virtual School for Children and Young People Development Plan (2013/14) together with a self evaluation report from Barnsley 'Future Directions' on the level of care leavers not in employment, education or training in the Borough, on the steps being taken to improve the attainment and employability of young people in or leaving care and enabling improved access to apprenticeships.
- Barnsley Children's Rights Report (2014) and the quality and extent to which children and young people in the Borough, particularly those in care or leaving care were engaged and their voice heard on issues of most importance to them, together with the improvement to outcomes arising through advocacy, representation and active citizenship.
- Development of the terms of reference and membership of the Barnsley Children in Care Education Improvement Steering Group and Virtual School Governing Body.
- Lessons to be learned and best practice that can be applied from commissioned research into the plight of children and young people missing from care. A presentation to the Panel from Safe@Last on the support providing to such young people in Barnsley.
- Members of the Panel continued to undertake Regulation 33 visits to children's homes in the Borough as part of ensuring the wellbeing of children in care. In addition, the National Children's Bureau's document 'Putting Corporate Parenting Into Practice' was provided to each Member of the Panel as part of maintaining the added value contributed.

6.5 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.

- 6.6 Any areas of concern may be referred to Cabinet which may refer for Scrutiny Committee consideration.
- 6.7 Corporate Parenting Panel members have been encouraged to attend and receive training in understanding and making use of performance reports to support member challenge.
- 6.8 During 2014/15, the National Children's Bureau was commissioned to provide all member training 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?"
- 6.9 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.
- 6.10 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 the Cabinet Spokesperson for People (Achieving Potential).
- 6.11 Corporate Parenting Panel challenged the service around health and dental assessments as well as the completion of Personal Education Plans (PEPs). These have all now made a significant improvement. *See Section 12 for Performance and Progress.*
- 6.12 The Corporate Parenting Panel attend key participation events such as the annual event to celebrate the achievements of children in care and care leavers.

7.0 Governance Arrangements

- 7.1 The Corporate Parenting Panel is established within the Council's Constitution and, during 2014/15 had a similar challenge, advisory and oversight role to the Member Safeguarding Children Panel (*this Panel was dissolved as part of the creation of the Safeguarding Scrutiny Committee, in May 2015*).
- 7.2 The Corporate Parenting Panel 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. The Panel commenced a review of its Terms of Reference during 2014/15.
- 7.3 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. Equally, the Area Councils in the Borough are able to refer matters to the Panel for its attention.
- 7.4 During 2014/15, the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee (now the Safeguarding Scrutiny Committee) 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's annual report is considered by both the Cabinet and the full Council meeting.

8.0 Children in Care Council

- 8.1 The Children in Care Council (Care4Us) 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.
- 8.2 A key recommendation of the 2014 Ofsted inspection of services for looked after children, is to widen the Children in Care Council to include the voice of younger children and more children in care as well as the existing care leavers, as part of the creation of a 'Little Care4Us' Council and the development of stronger links between the Care4Us Council and the Panel, during 2015/16.

9.0 Continuous Service Improvement Framework

- 9.1 A Continuous Service Improvement Plan remained 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 Barnsley Safeguarding Children's Board (BSCB) who 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.

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

10.0 Priorities for the Corporate Parenting Panel for 2015- 2016

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

10.2 Challenging any school exclusion or lack of full time and suitable provision for children in care.

10.3 Improving young people's participation in all aspects of their care and decision making and in all planning for services for children in care.

10.4 Improving Care Leavers engagement in education, employment and training, including apprenticeships.

11.0 Performance

11.1 Performance information and data concerning the number of children in care in the Borough, together with services' performance in improving outcomes, including education and health, is set out in detail on Pages 8-12.

12.0 Conclusion

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

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 Improvements have been made, as evidenced within the Service Improvement Plan. The challenge is 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.

Councillor Margaret Bruff

Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel (2014/15)

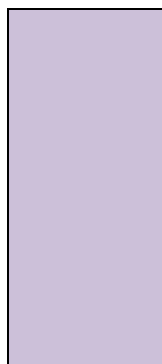
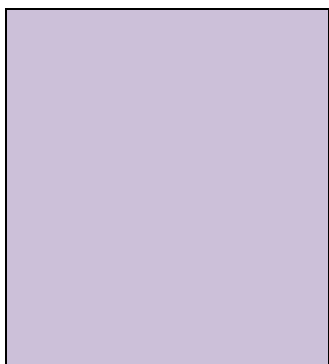
13. Performance Information - Looked after Children (LAC) data for the period 1 April 2014-31 March 2015

	2014	2015	Commentary
Numbers of LAC	228	244	The numbers of LAC at the end of March 2015, increased to 244. More children were admitted to care in the second half of the year (82), compared with the first half (50). This increase was not unexpected due to the corresponding rise in referrals, assessments and Child Protection (CP) Plans. Barnsley's rate of looked after children is still well below the average for its statistical neighbours and numbers have been scrutinised. An exceptional meeting was convened in March 2015 to examine the low numbers of LAC, which resulted in a shared understanding between Children's Social Care (CSC) and Legal. 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 Special Guardianship Orders (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 decision making. Public law case tracking & LAC figures are monitored at the weekly performance meetings.
LAC Health Assessments	93.8%	96.8%	Our performance on LAC health assessments improved 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%	Considerable effort has been made to address the data inputting problems at child level that resulted in reporting inaccuracies in dental checks in the past. Performance shows significant improvement from the previous year, clearly evidencing that real progress has been made.
LAC Education	2014	2015	
Completed PEPs	96.0%	99.3%	The percentage of Personal Education Plans (PEPs) completed was back on track at 99% in March 2015. Previous reported figures were affected by technical issues around recording the PEP within the Care Plan. Training sessions and support were led by the dedicated Virtual Head Teacher, who is also responsible for monitoring performance on a monthly basis. 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 Barnsley Safeguarding Children Board.
Exam results (LAC)	2013/14	2014/15	
KS2 Reading, Writing, Maths – Level 4+	-	30%	For 2014/15 there were 10 children in the LAC cohort eligible to take KS2 (Key Stage) in reading, writing and maths. This means that each pupil in this cohort is worth 10%. Attainment in 2014/15 is below the 2014 national average for Children in Care and outcomes show a drop from the previous year. 78% of the progress cohort made at least expected progress in writing and maths, in line with 2014 LAC national averages. 50% made at least expected progress in reading, dropping below the LAC national average for the first time in recent years.
KS4 GCSE 5 A*-Cs including English and Maths	0%	11.1%	For 2014/15 there were 9 eligible children in the LAC cohort. Given the small cohort, attainment is in line the 2014 national average for LAC and outcomes show a rise from last year. However, the proportion making at least expected progress has dropped below the national average for LAC for the first time in recent years. 25% made expected progress in English with 12.5% doing so in maths.
	2014	2015	
Foster Carers	77	96	There are currently 96 active in-house foster carer households. Although 21 new households were recruited in 2014/15, unfortunately, 8 households left the service during the same period. Of these, 64 currently have placements, 7 have vacancies and 7 are on hold. The remainder are either connected persons households (family members assessed as foster carers for specific children) or 'staying put' carers, where the young people are over 18 but staying with their former foster carers. A more proactive recruitment strategy has been undertaken during 2014/15 with 15 assessments currently being undertaken and a number awaiting allocation. It is hoped that the number of available in-house foster carers will continue to rise as the recruitment and marketing strategy takes effect. However the loss of the Adoption Reform Grant will have an impact particularly with the loss of the recruitment and marketing officer and even if the strategy continues to be effective the increasing numbers of approved carers will put pressure on the fixed number of fostering support workers to support increasing numbers of carers.

Commissioned Placements	69	65	<p>We currently have 65 children in Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements (69 at last report) and 110 children placed in house (102 at last report) as at 31 March 2015. The increase in IFA placements reflects the increased demand for specific types of placement, particularly for older young people or to keep sibling groups together, which are not available in-house.</p> <p>There is a recruitment strategy in place to recruit more carers in-house for these specific groups but unfortunately there is a time lag of at least 4 months before carers are fully approved. These are not popular placements with carers so we do not get large numbers of potential carers coming forward.</p>
Adoption (% adopted during the year ending 31 March)	18%	32%	<p>Barnsley's adoption rate has gone up by 14% from the previous year, which is way above the regional (23%), statistical neighbours (23%) and national averages (17%) for 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, 37 children have been adopted and there are a further 40 children placed with adopters but where the final order has not yet been made. By March 2015, 15 children had a placement order and the service is actively involved in family finding. We have approved 23 adopters in the last year and of these, 10 have already been matched with children. There are currently 14 adopters in the first stage of assessment and 5 are in the second stage. Given that we anticipate that there will be around 40 children requiring adopters each year, providing a sufficient number of adopters still remains a challenge. 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.</p> <p>The ending of the Adoption Reform Grant could have a significant impact on the recent positive developments. Although there are plans to use the base budget to mitigate some of the impact, nevertheless, the capacity of the Adoption Team will be significantly reduced and there will be the loss of additional hours in both the Adoption and the Fostering teams.</p>
	2014	2015	
Care leavers in suitable accommodation	19-87.5% 20-100% 21-100%	19-100% 20-87% 21-100%	<p>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 three 20-year olds in custody, and likely to remain there post 21. This will obviously impact on 2015/16 figures.</p>

Care leavers in employment, education and training (EET)	19-48% 20-70.6% 21-60%	19-59.0% 20-56.5% 21-76.5%	Overall, there was steady progress throughout the year, with care leavers accessing and maintaining positive EET provision. Corporate targets were met for all three age categories in 2014/15.
Children Missing From Care or Home Incidents	73	165	Figures for 2014/15 show a significant increase in the previous year, peaking in quarter 3 with 71 episodes relating to 14 children. However the recording of missing children and young people, together with the definition has changed during this period. Performance has continued to improve from that point onwards. It is important to remember that in 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.
	2012	2013	
Youth Offending (Looked after Children)	9 <5%	6 <5%	Overall, the rate of offending by looked after children is positive in comparison with our statistical neighbours, though still well below the level we aspire to achieve. Internally, we have reconfigured and prioritised looked after children. We have a member of staff taking lead responsibility and the management team also receives regular updates on overall progress. Discussions have started with the Children in Care team about a more coordinated and integrated approach to supporting the needs of LAC. Through work with colleagues in other Youth Offending Teams, we are taking forward work to ensure consistency of approach across the region and sub-region. Through closer monitoring we are able to actively challenge decisions to charge for requests for formal cautions to be issued. We have been successful in advocating with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) for charges against some young people to be dropped. The introduction of a diversion scheme in Barnsley will have further positive impact on this cohort of young people. The number of young people in care dealt with through the criminal justice system remained low during the year. Overall the actual figures are quite small, so the percentage is open to fluctuation through relatively small changes in behaviour. We work to support appropriate use of sanctions for young people and monitor the decisions made to prosecute them, and have successfully challenged some where appropriate. All the young people we work with have thorough assessments completed and these are used to inform a multiagency case planning process that meets their needs. Recently we have reviewed our work with young people in care. We have developed a lead



role within the Youth Offending Team (YOT), currently fulfilled by one of our social workers, to ensure better continuity of intervention, particularly where children live out of area and may have a number of placements. We are also working to develop our links with the Children in Care team and ensure that we work together on behalf of Barnsley to provide a consistent voice for those children placed out of area and to advocate with local services on their behalf. We are involved in the LAC reviews and contribute fully to them. Our specialist staff also support engagement in substance misuse, education or health provision. We retain strong expectations for all the young people looked after by Barnsley and are working to an objective where their likelihood of entering the Criminal Justice system or remaining within it is better than that of the young people we don't look after.

OFSTED Ratings for Children's Residential Establishments (no commentary available)

Spring Lane		May 2013 (1 st inspection)	Feb 2014	Mar 2015
		Outstanding	Good progress (Interim)	Improved effectiveness (Full)
Newsome Avenue	Oct 2012	Dec 2013	Mar 2014	Feb 2015
	Good	Good	Good progress (Interim)	Adequate (Interim)