

Barnsley Corporate Parenting Panel

Annual Report: 2021-2022

1.0 Context

1.1 This report sets out an annual update on the Corporate Parenting arrangements in Barnsley, with progress and outcomes for Children in Care and Care Leavers for the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022. It reminds Members of key legislation and guidance and highlights local performance and continued service improvement, setting out the priorities for the coming year.

2.0 Proposals and Reasons: Corporate Parenting – Our Responsibilities Legal Framework

2.1 At the heart of our service delivery to our children, young people and care leavers is our commitment to the seven principles of corporate parenting as set out in Section 1 of the Children and Social Work Act (2017) and the statutory guidance: *Applying corporate parenting principles to looked after children and care leavers* (2018).

- 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

2.4 The Children and Social Work Act (2017) introduced new provisions for care leavers being to provide Personal Advisers (PA's) up to the age of 25 and for councils to publish a Local Offer for this cohort of young people leaving care. The Local Offer is refreshed annually and more so, in the event of any significant updates. The Service has recently implemented an action plan which tracks all operational service priorities, including the Local Offer.

2.5 Associated statutory guidance also introduced in the Children and Social Work Act (2017), focuses on supporting the education of children in care and previously looked-after children including Adoption, Child Arrangements Orders and Special Guardianship. Other key duties for professionals involved with children in care states that, '*Social workers, virtual school heads, Independent Reviewing Officers, school admission officers, and Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) departments should work together to ensure that, except in an emergency, appropriate education provision for a child is arranged at the same time as a care placement*'. In Barnsley, any consideration of a placement or change in placement for a child looked after is considered alongside the Virtual School and SEND professionals.

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 new Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy 2022-25 and the 'expectations' to children looked after and care leavers.
- f) To ensure that decisive action and challenge is taken to address any shortcomings in the services provided to children and young people

4.0 The Barnsley Expectation 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; and
- We'll involve children in care in decision making and making it happen

5.0 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 responsibilities for young people up until they are 25 years of age who have been in care for a period of at least 13 weeks (or periods amounting to 13 weeks). This includes all unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) and children with multiple disabilities.

- 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.
- 5.3 Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel in their roles must act as ‘pushy parents’ and continually question, ‘*would this be good enough for my child*’.

6.0 Corporate Parenting Panel Overview and Membership

- 6.1 The Corporate Parenting Panel is chaired by the Cabinet Spokesperson for Children’s Services.
- 6.2 The Panel meet every two months and the strong commitment to children and young people is reflected in the consistent attendance by the full range of Members, which include:
 - Elected Members, BMBC
 - Executive Director, Children’s Services, BMBC
 - Service Director, Children’s Social Care & Safeguarding, BMBC
 - Virtual Head Teacher for Children in Care, BMBC
 - A Care-Experienced Young Person - Representative for the Care4Us / Children in Care Council *
 - Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance, BMBC
 - Foster Carers *
 - Safeguarding Nurse for Children in Care, BMBC
 - Designated Nurse Safeguarding Children / LAC, NHS Barnsley CCG
 - Designated Doctor, BHNFT
 - Head of Service, Children in Care Services, BMBC
 - Managers for Children in Care and Care Leavers Teams, BMBC
 - Managers from the Registered Childrens Homes

*We are currently seeking additional foster carer representation and for 2022/23 we have now introduced a young persons led panel that will start in the autumn.

7.0 Corporate Parenting Work Programme in 2022-23

See Appendix 1

8.0 Progress and Outcomes for Children in Care & Care Leavers in 2021-22

- 8.1 We know that Barnsley has stable communities, with well-established extended family networks that frequently support vulnerable children within the family. This factor has an impact on both the numbers of children with protection plans and the numbers of children in our care, which we continually scrutinise.
- 8.2 Children in care and care experienced young people have some strong, stable relationships with their allocated worker who knows them well and sees them regularly, some over and above regulatory/practice requirements. There has been some

instability in the Children in Care and Care leavers service in 2021/22 due to the Head of Service retiring alongside two Team Managers leaving for progression purposes. The service has recently appointed two new Team Managers with extensive experience of supporting children and young people in care. The new permanent Head of Service joins Barnsley in May 2022.

- 8.3 The global pandemic impacted upon the numbers of CiC during 2020/21 which peaked at 356 in November 2021 and reported as 31st March 2022 at 350, 17 more than in the same period in 2021. Barnsley's latest rate of LAC (68.5 per 10,000) remains below our statistical neighbours' average rate (112 per 10,000) and in line with the national average (67.0 per 10,000) for 2020/21. Robust decision making for children coming into care continues with full oversight of the Service Director.
- 8.4 The year on year rise in relation to looked after numbers brings with it challenges in identifying suitable care arrangements. Whilst every effort is given to identify wider family and friends as carers, demand remains for placements predominantly for older children. Placement stability for children who have 3 or more placements has had a decline in this year reporting as 10.6% at yearend compared to 4.5% at yearend 20/21. Our audits and dip sampling has attributed much of this to the global pandemic during 20/21. Our audits and deep dive also attribute placement moves into adoptive placements, moves into family placements and moves to be with siblings in more permanent care arrangements.
- 8.5 Long term placement stability has seen an improvement with yearend data at 69.7% compared to 67.3% in the same period in 20/21. A new stability pathway and panel has been introduced in February 2022 which ensures placements that are 'simmering' are referred to a weekly panel for tracking, whilst offering assurances that core stability meetings and reviews are regularly taking place. It is anticipated that further embedding of this new process will continue to be reflected in the stability data.
- 8.6 Children in care have attention given to their health needs with regular health needs assessments to promote their health and wellbeing. During the global pandemic routine dental care was significantly impacted upon with the majority of dentists only carrying out emergency treatment. In this year, efforts to ensure all children are registered and seen by a dentist has been a key focus. Children accessing a dentist in 21/22 has increased from 33% in 20/21 to 83.9% in 21/22. The Service continues to track this key indicator through regular performance meetings, daily team communications and through the Health of Children in Care Panel.
- 8.7 Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQs) continue to be a focus and priority for our children in care. Whilst we saw a continued increase in completion overall Qtr 4, our year end data remains disappointingly below target (71.6%). This is a decline in performance (96.9% on 20/21) Robust tracking takes place in the service with regular communication out to Foster Carers and Providers to ensure these are completed in a timely way. The service is also currently working with Business Intelligence to support tracking of SDQ's for children with an average score of 16 or more. This data will be introduced into the CAMHS monthly tracker meetings and also the new placement support pathway to ensure the emotional health of children in care is fully understood and support needs are identified.

8.8 Development of the South Yorkshire Regional Adoption Agency (SYRAA) continues. A Service Manager has recently been appointed to lead the service for Barnsley. They will oversee the practice and supervision of the Adoption Team. This is a welcomed development as it supports the Regional Agency to further strengthen their identity, moving away from the historic 'Barnsley Adoption Team'. The agency consists of joined up areas being Barnsley, Doncaster, Sheffield and Rotherham. Adoption performance remains strong for Barnsley with Yearend 21/22 reporting 36 children adopted, Doncaster (9) Rotherham (31) and Sheffield (36)

8.9 In 20/22 there has been a refresh of the Communication and Marketing Strategy. The recruitment and marketing officers, along with the Head of Service, meet fortnightly to ensure robust oversight and progress of recruitment of local carers. There has been significant investment in a radio campaign that will run for 6 months (with refreshes) and we have continued to invest in Local IQ and social media platforms. Our target is to recruit 23 new fostering households in 22/23 and we currently have 14 in assessment, with panel dates booked in which is an excellent position at this point of the year.

To date there are three Mockingbird constellations in Barnsley, and we are planning for our 4th. The model continues to go from strength to strength and where children/carers need additional support, we are able to consider the constellations to assess how best to meet need.

8.10 A monthly Education, Training and Employment Panel, made up of representatives from social care and employment and skills, continues to meet to ensure care leavers get the targeted information, advice, guidance and support they need to participate and progress in education, employment and training. This is a valued panel and offers further reassurance on our support to care leavers. The performance has remained strong with 68.2% of care leavers ETE above our target for 21/22 of 65%.

8.11 Care leavers in suitable accommodation reports as 93.9% at yearend compared to 90.9% for 20/21. We are fully aware of the young adults who are not in suitable accommodation due to imprisonment. Timeliness of visits to care leavers remains strong with a year-end report of 99.5%.

8.12 Spring Lane and Newsome Avenue have also been Inspected under the Social Care Common Inspection Framework, Ofsted. Following an *Inadequate* grading for Spring Lane (July 2021) it was pleasing to be able to report a *Good* judgement in November 2021. Newsome Avenue was also inspected (September 21) and maintained *Good* in all areas. There is ongoing development in the Homes where practice continues to be challenged and taken forward by the team and managers.

13.0 Priorities for the Corporate Parenting Panel for 2022 - 2023

- Effectively oversee and manage the Placement Sufficiency Strategy
- Track and strengthen placement stability
- Monitor progress of young people in our residential homes through Regulation 44 reports
- Track recruitment of new carers into Barnsley

- Track adoption timeliness and provide support to our Regional Adoption Agency
- Improve school attendance and reduce the number of exclusions
- Track and strengthen the numbers of Care Leavers engaged in Employment, Education and Training
- Improve transitional planning for Disabled Children in Care and Care Experienced Young People into Adulthood
- Progress our new Childrens Home and Staying Close accommodation
- Improve the offer of accommodation for 16 Plus.

In this year we will also have a Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy. An action plan will be developed and be reviewed in a new Corporate Parenting sub-group going forward.

Claire Brodie
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May 2022