

**REPORT TO: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE - 23 AUGUST 2010**  
**REPORT ON: CORPORATE PARENTING**  
**REPORT BY: ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE**  
**REPORT NO: 369-2010**

## **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report updates members of the Policy and Resources Committee on the progress of Dundee's Corporate Parenting Policy established by Dundee City Council on 9th June 2008 and the work underway to develop further support to looked after children in the city.

## **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Committee agree and endorse the 2009/2010 Corporate Parenting Annual Report (attached) and the recommendations therein:

- i) a Looked After Children Board is developed to 'Champion' the needs of Looked After Children
- ii) the work and impact of the 'Board' to be monitored and evaluated and any recommendations reported to the Policy and Resources Committee within the 2012 Annual Report on Dundee's Corporate Parenting Strategy.
- ii) the concept of the 'family firm' is developed within the city's Public Sector Recruitment Approach with the aim of improving positive destinations for Looked After Children in transition into the adult world
- iii) a self-evaluation framework based on quality indicators designed by HMIE is developed and implemented

## **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

None.

## **4. BACKGROUND**

Dundee City Council has a statutory duty to co-operate in promoting the welfare of children and young people who are looked after by the City.

As of 3rd March 2010, there were 617 children and young people looked after within the city. One hundred and sixty five were looked after in the family home by their parents, 228 were looked after by other family or friends, 176 were looked after by Foster Carers and 48 were looked after in residential accommodation.

As Corporate Parents, Dundee City Council and its partners have a duty to accept responsibility for all children in the City's care, making their needs a priority and ensuring support for their care and education which includes seeking the same outcomes as any good parent would want for their own child. In carrying out that duty the Corporate Parent needs to listen to the views of children and young people and

taking account of those views, consider the impact on children of any new policy respect diversity and give young people the support they need as they move into adulthood.

The attached Annual report goes some way to identify how Dundee City Council and its partners within integrated Children's Services can meet those statutory responsibilities.

5. **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

This report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of Sustainability, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Anti-Poverty, Equality Impact Assessment and Risk Management. There are no issues in this regard to report on.

6. **CONSULTATIONS**

The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), Director of Finance, the Director of Education, Director of Leisure & Communities, Director of Finance, Director of Housing and Director of Social Work, along with NHS, Police and Voluntary Sector partners have been consulted on this report

7. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None.

Chris Ward  
Assistant Chief Executive

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13/08/2010



## Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2009/2010

### 1.0 Introduction and Background

The Scottish Government publication, 'These Are Our Bairns', (a guide for community planning partnerships) states that 'Corporate parenting operates at the strategic, operational and individual levels. It highlights three key elements of the role of a corporate parent:

- The statutory duty on all parts of a local authority to co-operate in promoting the welfare of children and young people who are looked after by them, and a duty on other agencies to co-operate with councils on fulfilling that duty.
- The co-ordination of the activities of the many different professionals and carers who are involved in a child or young person's life, and taking a strategic child centred approach to service delivery.
- The shift in emphasis from 'corporate' to 'parenting' defined by Jackson et al 2003 as *'the performance of all actions necessary to promote and support the physical, emotional, social and cognitive development of a child from infancy to adulthood'*.

Corporate parenting is not only a responsibility but a real opportunity to improve the futures of looked after children and young people. It needs to be recognised that all parts of the system have a critical contribution to make if corporate parenting is to be a success. Good parenting demands continuity and organisations, by their nature, are continuously changing. Staff move on, elected members change, structures change, procedures change. One challenge of being a corporate parent is to manage these changes while giving each individual child or young person a sense of stability.

This paper describes Dundee's corporate parent approach with children and young people who are, or who have been looked after in the city. It examines the role of the corporate parent and specifically within three areas:

- the proposed development of a Champion for Looked After Children Board
- the approach to positive employment and training outcomes including the concept of the 'family firm' (this is where the local authority makes training, shadowing and or work placement opportunities available for looked after and previously looked after children) and
- outlines the process for undertaking a self-evaluation of Dundee's corporate parent approach

For the purposes of clarity, Looked After Children fall into three broad categories:

- 1 Children who are looked after at home under a Supervision Requirement from the Children's Hearing system.

- 2 Children who are looked after away from home within a foster setting or a kinship care setting (kinship care is where a child is placed formally with another member of the family or close family friend).
- 3 Children who are looked after and accommodated within a residential establishment which could be an open children's unit/home, it could be a residential school or a secure unit.

As of 3rd March 2010, there were 617 children and young people looked after within the city. One hundred and sixty five were looked after in the family home by their parents, 228 were looked after by other family or friends, 176 were looked after by Foster Carers and 48 were looked after in residential accommodation.

#### 1.1 Locally there are a number of policy documents which guide the work with looked after children in Dundee.

Dundee City Council first adopted a corporate parenting policy in 2000 (report 291-2000) and the city was the first in Scotland to do so. This groundbreaking policy was refreshed and presented to the Policy and Resources Committee on 9 June 2008 and committed Dundee City Council to working together for Dundee's children in need. It stipulates that when carrying out Corporate Parenting responsibilities the Council will adopt the behaviour of a good parent at all times. The Policy commits Dundee City Council to share collective responsibility for ensuring that children who are looked after are provided with quality experiences and the help they need to maximise their full educational, social and economic potential. It also says that the Council, when carrying out these duties, will act as positive advocates for these vulnerable children and will actively challenge instances of less favourable or different treatment.

The **Corporate Parenting Charter** was set before the Policy and Resources Committee on 24 November 2008. The Charter sets out a social and moral obligation for us to do our best for those children and young people for whom we are Corporate Parents. It makes the point that like any good parent we want all our children and young people to enjoy school and do well there. We want them to be healthy and happy, secure and confident. We want to maximise their potential which could include going to college, university or apprenticeships, to find good jobs, to have loving relationships and happy lives. We want them to feel included and effective members of our communities and in the fullness of time to be good parents themselves.

#### 1.2 **Nationally** the 2007 Scottish Government strategy *We Can and Must Do Better* aimed to drive up aspirations and achievement across the board for looked after children. The strategy specifically included delivering year on year improvements in educational attainment, post-education pathways, health and dental outcomes and access to sustained, appropriate accommodation.

As the corporate parent for these vulnerable children, local authorities and their partners are responsible for ensuring that looked after children achieve the same well-being and success that all parents wish for their children. Getting from a position where looked after children are six times more likely to be excluded and 60% of care leavers are not in education, employment or training - to that goal requires a radical transformation of our aspirations and practice for Scotland's most vulnerable children.

'**These are Our Bairns**' 2008, (*a guide for community planning partnerships on being a good corporate parent*) raised the bar on expectations from corporate parents, with a clear and unequivocal statement from the Minister for Children an Early Years, "Corporate parents attitude should be these children are my responsibility, are in my care and I need to do the best for them. The buck stops with them". The document

which is based on the aspirations of children themselves, sets out clear guidance for those in the role of corporate parent and importantly gives useful indicators on 'how we will know if we have made a difference'

The policy documents above are part of a suite of policies and procedures available to guide us on the journey to developing and implementing a good corporate parent structure. The policies around corporate parenting have to be viewed within the overarching context of the '**Getting it Right for Every Child**' (GIRFEC) approach. Getting it right for every child includes those who are looked after or previously looked after.

As corporate parents we need to adopt the GIRFEC mantra that every child in Dundee will be safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included.

**Curriculum for Excellence** is a crucial element of the getting it right agenda. It aims to enable all of Scotland's children to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. Meeting all elements of a Child's wellbeing is a necessary requirement for this to be achieved.

It is clear that a collaborative partnership approach which includes parents and carers will be most successful in addressing this aim and it is expected that the full range of professionals working with children will be familiar with it and contribute to achieving it.

How we do this is the key to positive outcomes and many of these are articulated within the 2010-2012 Dundee **Integrated Children's Service Plan**.

## 2.0 The Corporate Parent

Corporate Parenting involves the demonstration of ownership and leadership at a senior level including Elected Members and Chief Officers. Elected Members and Chief Officers have a specific role to play in ensuring that outcomes and life chances of looked after children and young people are maximised. Being a good Corporate Parent means:

- accepting responsibility for all children in Dundee City Council's care
- making their needs a priority and ensuring support for their care and education
- seeking the same outcomes as any good parent would want for their own child
- listening to the views of children and young people and taking account of them
- considering the impact of children on any new policy
- respecting diversity
- giving young people the support they need as they move into adulthood

As a Corporate Parent we have a right and a duty to question as to whether children and young people are safe, well looked after and supported. This level of scrutiny might include:

- how are children supported in school?
- what support is there when they leave care?
- are outcomes improving?
- are agencies doing enough to equip and support staff and foster and kinship carers who have responsibility for the direct day to day of these children?
- do agencies have a role as employers in supporting looked after children into employment?

## 2.1 Where we are now in Dundee?

Dundee is developing a very strong approach to supporting Looked After Children, the 'Welcome to My World' event in June 2008 saw participants from across children's services sign up to be 'champions' and this paper is an extension of that commitment.

The event was so successful that the Scottish Government was inspired by the work and incorporated the ideas into the national development and launch of national strategy for Looked After Children 'These are our Bairns'.

The engagement of young people in the process of defining policy was something that Scottish Government found particularly persuasive.

Dundee has established a charter for looked after children across the city. We have a dedicated 'Looked After Children' theme group attached to the Strategic Planning Group of Integrated Children's Services.

Looked After Children are a strategic priority for Dundee, both within the Community Planning Partnership via the Single Outcome Agreement and within the Integrated Children's Services Plan which has the key outcome of "*Children and young people who are, or have been looked after in Dundee have improved life chances*". Issues affecting Looked After Children are addressed in the outcomes and actions articulated throughout the Plan.

The Scottish Government provided a one-off allocation of £92,000 to Dundee through the ***We Can and Must Do Better*** strategy to support and improve activity around raising and sustaining awareness of corporate parent responsibilities.

In Dundee this fund is being used for activities such as:

- awareness raising events, for national and local elected members and senior officers;(These are our Bairns)
- multi-disciplinary development event bringing together education, social work, housing, partners in the NHS and others; (Welcome to my World)
- awareness-raising through events and other media; (Opal Fruit)
- publication of local strategies (Corporate Parent Policy and Charter)
- consultation events with looked after children; (Pure Media)
- 'reward fund' to celebrate the success of looked after children or care leavers. (*grants are awarded to acknowledge an achievement or attainment by children and young people who are, or have previously been, looked after, both at home and or accommodated*).

Looked After Children are a strategic priority group within the More Choices More Chances agenda. We have a joint protocol between Dundee's Social Work Department and Dundee College with a view of increasing support for looked after children who are applying or actually placed within college.

Dundee has recently commissioned a DVD called 'Opal Fruit' which followed children over a twelve month period supporting them to express their views on living within the care system in the city. The DVD has now been developed in conjunction with national materials as part of an awareness raising approach with staff across children's services which was formally launched on 14th June 2010.

## 2.2 National Activity

Many local authorities across Scotland are currently working within or working to an agenda which includes a Corporate Parenting Strategy and the idea of a Children's Champion for looked after children. A 2009 seminar attended by representatives of most Scottish Local Authorities highlighted elected members as a particular area for action. It was generally felt that the Corporate Parenting agenda, as it stands, was not enough and there needed to be a more strategic approach which included all sectors of our communities, i.e. Local Authority, NHS, Public and Private Sectors.

There is a great deal of innovative work underway across the country particularly around the development of a Looked After Children Champion. Much of this work is multi-agency where senior officers, practitioners and elected members collaborate to develop better services to support children and young people.

Some examples of practical support include:

- provision of tenancies for young people leaving residential care
- supported flats for care leavers.
- care leavers involved in Corporate Parent Groups
- children and young people forums established
- young people involved in staff interviews
- reference groups where young people can raise issues direct with councillors.
- agreement with NHS re access to dentists.
- senior staff designated as Looked After Children Champions

All of the above suggests a great deal of work is in development and ongoing across the country. There is no obvious 'one size fits all' and it is more about developing an approach which meets local needs.

In Dundee our throughcare and aftercare service supports care leavers into tenancies, we involve young people in interviews for residential staff and we have close working relationships with NHS Tayside including the provision of a dedicated Looked After Children Nurse. We also have a multi-agency looked after children theme group which reports through the Integrated Children's Services structure.

The theme group is responsible for developing services that address the needs of looked after children and young people in Dundee and to collectively develop and implement strategies for addressing those needs and thus improving life outcomes for looked after children and young people. It has a strategic overview where representatives from key LAC agencies carry out specific tasks to ensure that the needs of looked after children are being met, i.e. health assessments, educational provisions, placements etc.

The LAC group carries out its aims by promoting:

- the assessment of health needs of those who become accommodated
- the development of ways to improve their educational attainment
- the involvement and participation of children and young people
- the importance of placements in or near Dundee if possible, where appropriate
- the importance of maintaining children and young people in education
- the need for care leavers to have opportunities in education, training or employment

All of these aims are linked into the delivery framework within the Integrated Children's Services Plan 2010/2012.

There is however, a perceived gap in the membership and scope of this group. It does not include children, young people, or elected members with its main focus of service and practice development and delivery and not the strategic overview. It could be argued that the Integrated Children's Services Strategic Planning Group takes that role, but Looked After Children are one theme out of 10 and again there are no elected members or young people represented on that group.

### **Recommendation 1**

It is recommended that we address this gap through the establishment of a Looked After Children Children's/Corporate Parent Board with the primary remit of providing a platform for looked after children and young people to engage with their "corporate parent" and make their needs known.

The Board with young person representation would go a long way to firmly establishing the development of a "participation strategy" to support children making their views known, as described in Dundee's Integrated Children's Services Plan.  
(See appendix 1 for Board remit)

Following on from the above it is recognised that we are stepping into new territory in how we engage with our looked after children and encourage them to put their point of view to those responsible for deciding policies and designing services for looked after children.

The fact that we are breaking new ground means that we have to pay particular attention to how the Board's processes, procedures and outcomes develop and ultimately impact on our corporate parent approach. It is therefore crucial that we build a monitoring and evaluation element into the process and that we regularly update the Integrated Children's Services Strategic Planning Group and report back to Policy and Resources Committee through the annual reporting framework.

### **Recommendation 2**

The work and impact of the 'Board' to be monitored and evaluated and any recommendations reported to the Policy and Resources Committee within the 2012 Annual Report on Dundee's Corporate Parenting Strategy.

## **3.0 Training, Employability and the Family Firm**

One of the most challenging aspects for a looked after child is the transition into the world of work.

The '**family firm** concept' has been developing across the country where many authorities are making opportunities available within their own departments for employment for looked after children. Such opportunities include:

- enhanced work experience across children's services partnerships, appropriate adult services and other relevant council departments and agencies
- improved links with further education, in particular their college pilot for looked after young people and care leavers.
- creation of more opportunities with Skillseeker programme
- improved partnerships between human resources and children's services with focus on removing the barriers to young people taking up those opportunities.

- programme of skills for access to work.
- supported employment team for Looked After Children and care leavers and
- partnership with Skills Development Scotland to provide support and to build on what is currently available for young people and care leavers.
- developing interview techniques through an interactive DVD
- apprentice scheme within local authority departments.
- employment schemes with the voluntary sector.
- summer jobs with the NHS

In **Dundee** we are endeavouring to develop positive economic destinations for post school Looked After young people and care leavers.

From a 16+ Learning Choices point of view, all care leavers are flagged within the More Choices More Chances early indicators and this is used to identify young people most in need of support for the post school transition.

We have developed a process to identify Dundee young people who are looked after and accommodated outwith the city to ensure each of these young people are also given a 16+ Learning Choices suitable offer.

The structures are in place to develop this approach, such as structured work experience placement's and guaranteed interviews for selected posts currently managed through our Public Sector Recruitment Approach. We plan to adapt these more specifically to the needs and interests of care leavers and options could include:

- **Work Experience placement's** - a priority of public sector placement's to MCMC young people including care leavers is being built into the current review of work experience placement's for school age children
- **Get Ready for Work / Skill seeker admin posts** - we have a group of personnel and providers' looking at how to improve the current system of placements under GRfW. The plan is to develop a supported programme which could support care leavers. The aim is to get better at sourcing placements in the council and negotiate a guaranteed interview for selected positions at the end of the placement period.

We are also reviewing our Skill seeker / Admin Modern Apprentice approach which will include targeting Care leavers in the 16-18 group.

In terms of dedicated employability support for Looked After young people and care leavers SDS and our Moving On team have an established a data sharing protocol and co-work cases where appropriate.

Social Work and Dundee College have a protocol which offers support to LAC and those previously looked after.

The Venture Trust (Inspiring Scotland) has a project 'Inspiring Young Futures' targeted at engaging Care Leavers and Young Carers into employment opportunities based within the Moving On team.

The above are aligned to the Young Adult Joint Action Team and provider network meetings.

We have successfully negotiated with Inspiring Scotland to widen their target group to all young people who have been known to SWD and this has resulted in a substantial increase of referrals to the service.

We have commissioned Pure Media Scotland to deliver a number of initiatives aimed at engaging, supporting and promoting positive outcomes for Looked After and previously Looked After Children.

One of these initiatives is 'Catalyst' where the aim is to:

- engage young people within the care system in Dundee to encourage them to take the next step in life by getting them to think about their future and what they need to achieve their hopes and dreams
- ensure that we experiment with ways of engaging people that wouldn't ordinarily participate in this kind of project

One of our key successes to date was the securing of resources to create two pilot 16hr a week placements for two 'Catalyst' graduates. This is a new innovative approach which we will closely monitor and evaluate to see how it might be more widely used in the future.

### **Recommendation 3**

It is recommended that the 'Family Firm' concept should be developed through the Public Sector Recruitment Approach and aligned directly with the suite of activities available through the More Choices More Chances strategy. Development and implementation should also align with the 16+Learning Choices and be monitored through the Young Adult Joint Action team.

## **4.0 Self-evaluation**

Self-evaluation, within the overall process of planning for improvement and excellence, will help identify current good practice and positive impacts and identify areas for further development.

Self-evaluation will help to:

- recognise the work we are doing which has a very positive impact on the lives of looked after children and their families;
- encourage staff, at all levels, to reflect upon practice and identify the strengths and areas for improvement;
- identify levels of service we need to maintain or improve;
- identify what we can do to make things better for looked after children and their families; and inform stakeholders about the quality of services in our area.

Self-evaluation for improvement will focus on answering two key questions about our practice:

### **How good are we now?**

This will help us to identify our strengths and development needs in key aspects of our work and the impact our work has on looked after children and their families.

and

### **How good can we be?**

We ask this question to help us set priorities for improvement and to form a clear picture about what high quality corporate parenting would look like.

It is not a one-off activity which is done for its own sake. It is a dynamic process which goes on throughout the year. We will use self-evaluation to establish a baseline from which to plan to improve outcomes for looked after children. We will also use it as a means of ensuring our stakeholders' commitment to set priorities and change.

After we have taken planned action, ongoing self-evaluation will help us to monitor our progress and determine impact.

#### **Recommendation 4**

It is recommended that the Integrated Children's Services Looked After Children Theme Group should carry out a self-evaluation on corporate parenting resulting in an improvement plan and a schedule for ongoing monitoring of outcomes.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Looked After Children/Corporate Parent Board**

The LAC/Corporate Parent Board would play a key role in linking the views and aspirations of our looked after children with the leadership and policy shaping of our chief officers and elected members.

The Board would be chaired by the Chair of Dundee's Integrated Children's Services and meet quarterly and membership would be made up of five Looked After Children, one each from residential, foster, at home, kinship, and after care Manager of Integrated Children's Services, Chair of Looked After Children Theme Group, Children's Rights Officer, Convenors and the Major Opposition spokesperson for Social Work, Education, Chair of the CHP and Senior Tayside Police representative.

In essence the Board would be a forum for young people to be listened to, in which the agenda would primarily consist of issues raised by children and young people, or on their behalf by their carers or workers.

The Board would not replicate or overlap the remit of the existing Looked After Children theme group nor would it subvert the existing routes for workers through their management teams. However, it would be entirely appropriate for the LAC theme group to suggest the Board consider specific issues as highlighted to the theme group by children young people their families, carers and workers.

The Board in turn can request the LAC theme group undertake a particular activity in furtherance of the needs of looked after children.

The Board may also wish to take a view on key strategic and or service developments as they affect looked after children, but these should be limited in number, in order to maintain the interest and participation of children and young people.

The above is a suggested approach to Board composition and remit, based on the pick of best practice elsewhere across the country.

However, we must take into consideration the needs and aspirations of children and young people, including those who may potentially join the Board as representatives.

We have heard the views of some young people via the making of Opal Fruit DVD where young people raised concerns about the potential intimidating nature or tokenism of such forums. We therefore intend to consult further with looked after children and young people during the roll-out and follow up of the Opal Fruit awareness-raising DVD.

It is therefore suggested that any views expressed during that consultation are acknowledged and where appropriate, incorporated into the Board structure and key processes.

The establishment of a looked after children Board will necessitate some very complex and detailed planning involving all key stakeholders across integrated children' services. One of the most significant elements will be training and support to the Elected Members, Senior Officers and Young People acting as representatives on the Board.

Part of this training will come from 'Who Cares Scotland' who have been commissioned by the Scottish Government to develop and deliver Corporate Parenting Awareness Training based on the 'These Are Our Bairns' guidance for Community Partnerships on Corporate Parenting.