

Summary Sheet

Council Report: Corporate Parenting Meeting 19th January 2016

Title: Development of participation and engagement with Looked After Children and Care Leavers

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report:

Ian Thomas Strategic Director

Report Author:

Jane Parfremment, Assistant Director Safeguarding

Ward(s) Affected:

All Wards are affected

Executive Summary:

Corporate Parenting Panel on 19th January 2016 has a theme of 'Voice and influence' and is receiving a number of reports that outline how participation and engagement activity has been undertaken across a range of services, teams and projects. This report invites Corporate Parenting Panel members to consider and debate how the activity that is currently undertaken could be improved and strengthened to provide increased impact and improved outcomes for Looked After Children and Care Leavers.

Recommendations

1. That the Corporate Parenting Panel note the range of engagement work undertaken to provide voice and influence for Looked After Children.
2. That the Corporate Parenting Panel note the opportunity to align and join up these work streams, services and projects.
3. That the Corporate Parenting Panel support the establishment of a working group to develop a more co-ordinated approach to engagement and participation, and to build a deeper understanding of the lived experience of children in our care.
4. That the Corporate Parenting Panel endorse a proposal that the above working group focus specifically on demonstrable impact

and outcomes from participation activity, and the most effective approaches to engaging looked after children in meaningful ways.

5. That the Corporate Parenting Panel endorse a recommendation that the above group examine how the range of services and projects can be reviewed and redesigned to ensure maximisation of capacity, and the embedding of meaningful engagement of looked after children in the people and services that support them.

List of Appendices Included

None

Background Papers

Corporate Parenting Panel Reports of 19th January 2016

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council Children and Young People's Services Improvement Plan

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

No

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Corporate Parenting Panel- Development of participation and engagement with Looked After Children and Care Leavers

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Corporate Parenting Panel note the range of engagement work undertaken to provide voice and influence for Looked After Children.
- 1.2 That the Corporate Parenting Panel note the opportunity to align and join up these work streams, services and projects.
- 1.3 That the Corporate Parenting Panel support the establishment of a working group to develop a more co-ordinated approach to engagement and participation, and to build a deeper understanding of the lived experience of children in our care.
- 1.4 That the Corporate Parenting Panel endorse a proposal that the above working group focus specifically on demonstrable impact and outcomes from participation activity, and the most effective approaches to engaging looked after children in meaningful ways.
- 1.5 That the Corporate Parenting Panel endorse a recommendation that the above group examine how the range of services and projects can be reviewed and redesigned to ensure maximisation of capacity, and the embedding of meaningful engagement of looked after children in the people and services that support them.

2 Background

- 2.1 Rotherham Commissioners have laid out a clear vision and determination to help the council secure a safe environment for Young People and ensure good, sustainable services and regulation to restore healthy democratic leadership and accountability.
- 2.2 The vision is for Rotherham Children's and Young People's Services to be rated as outstanding by 2018, based on a robust service improvement approach. A key improvement measure within the Rotherham Children and Young People's Services improvement action plan is to ensure that the voices and experiences of the most vulnerable children are routinely heard at all levels within the Local Authority and that they inform strategic planning and commissioning.

3 Key Issues

- 3.1 Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council Children's Services have a range of services and projects that play a direct role in consulting with Looked After Children and Care Leavers. The Corporate Parenting Panel on 19th January 2016 has a theme of 'Voice and Influence' and is receiving a number of reports that outline how participation and

engagement activity has been undertaken across a range of these services, teams and projects.

3.2 It is critical to the Council's ability to improve its services for Looked After Children and Care Leavers, that participation and engagement activity is robust, regular and secures meaningful, and impactful, engagement of children and Young People at all levels. Participation and engagement activity must have demonstrable impact with services shaped and improved in direct response to the feedback received. It is also our ambition that we strive to build a deeper understanding of what it really feels like to be a child in our care, understanding both the benefits and limitations of traditional approaches to engagement, so that we can better respond to children and young people's needs

3.3 There are a number of Ofsted Key Judgements related to this area as outlined below:-

- Children and Young People are listened to, practice is focused on their needs and experiences and influenced by their wishes and feelings or, where they cannot represent their view themselves, those advocated on their behalf. They are consistently seen and seen alone by social workers where statutory guidance requires that this should happen and it is professionally judged to be in the best interests of the child.
- Practice is informed by feedback from children and their families about the effectiveness of the help; care or support they receive from the time it is first needed until it ends.
- Children, Young People and families have timely access to and use the services of an advocate; where appropriate.
- Children and Young People are seen by their social worker alone and understand what is happening to them. Professionals and carers, who know them well, develop positive relationships with them and are committed to protecting them and promoting their welfare.
- Children and Young People are helped to understand their rights and the responsibilities that accompany those rights and legal entitlements. They understand how to complain and have access to an advocate and independent visitor. Complaints are treated seriously and result in a clear response, urgent action and improved services where that is required. Senior Managers regularly review and act upon complaints from Looked After Children.
- Children and Young People are represented by a Children in Care Council or similar body which is regularly consulted on how to improve the support they receive.
- The Local Authority is an active, strong and committed corporate parent that knows the children and Young People it looks after well. It is an effective and successful champion of their progress (particularly in education and learning) and an ambitious corporate parent, ensuring that each child has every opportunity to succeed. It actively challenges and engages partners where appropriate to support children and Young People, such as

engaging the Local Authority strategic housing function.

3.4 The range of reports presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel on 19th January 2016 demonstrates the scope of activity in relation to participation and engagement that is occurring. Equally; there is scope for improved co-ordination, alignment and evidence of impact.

3.5 This report makes recommendations in Section One on how further improvements might be achieved and the Corporate Parenting Panel is invited to utilise the 'Voice and Influence' themed meeting of the 19th January 2016 to robustly examine the opportunities for achieving better outcomes by co-ordinating and maximising the capacity that already exists within the Council for activity of this nature.

4 Options considered and recommended proposal

4.1 Continue with current arrangements and activities

Although the current activity provides benefits and is valued by those involved within it there is scope for further improvement and maximisation of the resources committed. More Looked After Children should be directly engaged and there needs to be more demonstrable impact. *Not recommended.*

4.2 Continue with current activity alongside a review and redesign

This option ensures continuity of current activity whilst providing the opportunity to maximise investment and to deliver improvement in line with the Council's Children and Young People's Services Improvement Plan and to demonstrate progress against key Ofsted judgement areas. *Recommended.*

5 Consultation

5.1 The core purpose of this report is to improve consultation, participation and engagement processes with the Looked After Children and Care Leavers population.

6 Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

6.1 To be presented at the Corporate Parenting Panel 19th January 2016.

Subject to approval a working group to be established in February 2016 in line with recommendation three.

7 Financial and Procurement Implications

7.1 There are no direct financial implications however there is a potential opportunity to maximise use of resources through increased co-ordination and alignment of activity.

8 Legal Implications

8.1 Not Applicable

9 Human Resources Implications

9.1 Not Applicable

10 Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

10.1 To improve outcomes for Looked After Children and Care Leavers we need to ensure that participation and engagement is embedded across all aspects of design and delivery of services to them.

11 Equalities and Human Rights Implications

11.1 Participation and engagement of Looked After Children and Care Leavers is essential to improved outcomes. This is particularly in accordance with UN Rights of the Child (Article 12)

12 Implications for Partners and Other Directorates

12.1 The working group should ensure that participation and engagement activity impacts across the whole council and partner agencies to ensure improved services for Looked After Children and Care Leavers.

13 Risks and Mitigation

13.1 Failure to deliver effective voice and influence activity will impact on the Councils ability to improve the service to this particularly vulnerable group of children

14 Accountable Officer(s):

Jane Parfremment Assistant Director Safeguarding

Nicole Chavaudra Joint Assistant Director – Commissioning, Performance and Quality (Voice and Influence Lead)

Approvals Obtained from:-

Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services:-

Director of Legal Services: - Neil Concannon

Head of Procurement (if appropriate):-

Michelle Whiting

Interim Head of Looked After and Leaving Care Services

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