

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Education & Children's Services Scrutiny Panel

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PART I **FOR COMMENT & CONSIDERATION**

CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY – PROGRESS REPORT

1 Purpose of Report

1.1 To outline the key activity, lead by the Joint Parenting Panel, taken over the past six months to delivery the priorities of the Slough Corporate Parenting Strategy.

2 Recommendations

2.1 That the Education & Children's Services Scrutiny Panel:

- a) note the progress being made to deliver the Corporate Parenting Strategy; and
- b) consider ways in which scrutiny could be applied to further support the delivery of improved services for our looked after children and care leavers.

3. The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Five Year Plan

3a. Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities

Priority 1 – Protecting vulnerable children

3b. Five Year Plan Outcomes

Outcome: Children and young people in Slough will be healthy, resilient and have positive life chances

4 **Other Implications**

a) Financial

There are no financial implications specific to the recommendation in this report.

b) Risk Management

There are no risks identified in relation to the recommendation in this report.

c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

There are no Human Rights Act or other legal implications relating to the recommendations in this report.

d) Equalities Impact Assessment

There is no identified need for the completion of an EIA in relation to this report.

5 **Background**

5.1 The four week inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers took place in November and December 2015. Services delivered by Slough Borough Council and the Slough Children's Services Trust were within the scope of the inspection.

5.2 In terms of corporate parenting, Ofsted made the following specific comment:

“Slough's children looked after and care leavers do not regard the council as a good corporate parent. Inspectors agree with them. The corporate parenting strategy is a superficial document that uses old data and priorities, and includes no action plan. The corporate parenting panel has not received comprehensive performance information. This has limited its ability to provide scrutiny and challenge.”

5.3 The report made two recommendations in relation to corporate parenting:

- Revise the corporate parenting strategy to ensure that it sets out a clear vision and process for improving outcomes for children looked after and care leavers.
- Review terms of reference of the corporate parenting panel to ensure that it includes wider partner representation and provides rigorous scrutiny and challenge.

5.4 Key actions taken:

- The corporate parenting strategy was immediately revised, with priorities established based on the new Pledge to our looked after children and care leavers. The Strategy was agreed by Cabinet in June 2016.
- The terms of reference for the corporate parenting panel were reviewed and it was agreed that a new Joint Parenting Panel would be established to replace the Corporate Parenting Panel, with membership made up from both

elected members and the Trust's non executive directors, along with representation for key partners e.g. police, health, schools. The Council amended its constitution to enable a co-chairing arrangement between the Council and Trust to be put in place. The Panel has also amended how it manages its meetings to enable the inclusion of looked after children and care leavers to input into the discussions as they develop.

5.5 The Joint Parenting Panel has met twice in its new arrangement.

- The first meeting of the Panel took place in December 2016, with a focus on the educational support provided to our looked after children and care leavers (Priority 2 of the Corporate Parenting Strategy). The Panel recognised the improved engagement with Slough's looked after children wherever they attended school, not just those in Slough schools, and the impact this was beginning to have on progress being made of our looked after children and care leavers.
- The second meeting is scheduled to take place on 7th February 2017 with a focus on Priority 5 of the Corporate Parenting Strategy, looking at our support for our care leavers. A verbal update on this discussion will be provided at the meeting.

5.6 A detailed action plan was developed, setting out how the priorities in the Strategy would be delivered. Key activity that has taken place against each priority includes:

5.7 **Priority 1: Our looked after children will be supported by strong and effective corporate parenting**

- Development of Slough Corporate Parenting Strategy
- Establishment of new Joint Parenting Panel
- Representatives from the Reach Out Group and Care Leavers Forum are invited to the Joint Parenting Panel to take part in the discussions about the services they receive.
- Increased publicity around corporate parenting training leading to well attended sessions, involving looked after children and care leavers.
- Increased focus on the council's responsibilities under Section 11 of the Children's Act.
- Ongoing work to improve support looked after children and care leavers receive to open up opportunities for employment and training opportunities across the borough.

5.8 **Priority 2: Our looked after children and young people will be enabled to achieve their educational potential**

- Recruitment of an experienced Virtual School Head and the Virtual School restructured.
- ePEPs have been embedded as general practice.
- Education Support Worker has focused on 16-18 year olds placed out of borough to reduce NEET figures, and this work is starting to show an impact with a reduction in NEET figures from 22 in June 2016, to 5 in December 2016.

- Improved support to those placed out of borough with the Virtual School attending the development of two out of three PEPs for every child in care per year, regardless of location.
- There is now an accurate, interactive, comprehensive register of children in care, which includes a monitor of Pupil Premium Plus spend.
- There is a new Pupil Premium Policy agreed and shared with schools in September 2016. All monies are allocated to single children through targets identified in PEPs.
- The Young People's Service has been commissioned to raise career aspirations focusing on years 8 and 11 to promote a wider and deeper range of opportunities for young people.
- The best school for each looked after child is identified by the Virtual School team, with a particular focus on transitions. The Virtual School is now consulted on all school changes by the social worker, with protocols established with value for money choices of school, particularly for those with EHCPs/statements.
- The Virtual School is now represented at the Schools Forum and has attend the newly introduced schools briefing sessions that are held on a two weekly basis.
- The Virtual School Head is in regular contact with the Interim DCS and the Council's Head of Service.
- Slough Borough Council has supported connection with the EP service and will work with the Trust to make more permanent provision.

5.9 Priority 3: Our looked after children and young people will be encouraged to keep safe

- Establishment of Early Help Hub and MASH, and ongoing work to set up early help collaboratives across the borough.
- Mandatory CSE awareness training for SCST staff, and further intensive training for staff, managers and partner agencies, including intelligence sharing with police.
- Implementation of CSE risk assessment tool.
- Detailed discussions regarding the safeguarding of individual children and young people at significant risk of CSE held at SEMRAC multi-agency panel.
- Development of a clear multi-agency policy on the management of children who go missing from school, care or home put in place, with arrangements put in place with Slough Borough Council's Young People's Service and the national organisation NYAS to complete return home interviews.
- The Trust has implemented a Sufficiency Strategy for looked after children.

5.10 Priority 4: Our looked after children and young people will be encouraged to develop positive relationships

- Commissioned National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) to provide advocacy, independent visiting and return home interviews (out of borough).
- Improved advertising of complaints process, which has seen an increase in complaints from care leavers.
- Improving participation of looked after children and care leavers through Reach Out and the Care Leavers Forum.
- Increased opportunities for looked after children and care leavers to meet with the Chief Executive of the Trust.

5.11 Priority 5: Our looked after children and young people will be respected and engaged in planning for their future, and supported as they move into adulthood.

- The Care Leavers Service has been established within the social care hub structure of the Trust, which enables caseloads to be managed, supervision of staff, and individuals to be tracked more effectively.
- Young people have participated in recruitment of personal advisers.
- A local standard has been set, which establishes the expectation that contact with care leavers is made at a minimum of every 6 weeks.
- The pathway plan template has been reviewed and revised based on consultation with young people. The new template is shorter and more accessible.
- A multi agency care leaver's panel has been established to monitor the circumstances of individual care leavers.
- All young people living in Slough, who are NEET, have a dedicated worker from the Young Peoples Service allocated. For all young people placed outside of Slough, local NEET services are accessed.
- Slough Borough Council is leading, in consultation with the Trust, on development of Employment and Training Strategy for Care Leavers, setting out how opportunities across the borough will be opened up for care leavers. 3 care leavers have commenced apprenticeships within the council and 2 more are planned to commence in April 2017, with contractual partners such as Avarto. 1 young person is placed as a Young Persons Mentor, with the Virtual School in the Trust.
- All Year 11s in care have 3 enhanced career advice visits. 20 young people have had either University taster days, summer school or an employability day experience. All 8 university applicants had support with their applications from the Virtual school as did the apprentices.
- A Staying Put Policy has been agreed to support looked after children to remain in their foster placement beyond their 18th birthday.
- The Slough Borough Council's Interim Strategic Director for Regeneration, Housing and Resources is leading on reviewing range of accommodation provided for care leavers and opportunities for improving this offer and how it is administrated. The draft Housing Strategy, including care leavers as a priority vulnerable group was launched for consultation on 23 January 2017, with deadline for responses by 17 February 2017.
- A Care leavers Forum has been established to provide an opportunity for care leavers to meet together and express their views.
- A Transitions Forum and tracker is in place to support better transition of vulnerable young people with complex needs, who require ongoing support from Adult services. The draft Transitions policy has been completed and will be approved by the relevant SMT's and Boards for the Trust and Adults services in February 2017.
- Individual requirements around life skills and readiness for independence are discussed at Care Leavers Panel.
- The Care Leavers Panel request reports from providers to show how they are preparing young people for independence, and clear timescales are set.
- Foster carers are required to demonstrate how they support young people to gain their independence skills.
- The Young Peoples Service is working with the Trust to develop a life skills programme to ensure young people have the best chance to learn how to manage independently.

5.12 **Priority 6: Our looked after children and young people will have good health and wellbeing**

- Health representation has been included on the new Joint Parenting Panel and the Joint Improvement Board which oversees the delivery of the Ofsted Delivery Plan.
- There is due to be a report presented to the Joint Parenting Panel on the 7 February 2017 updating the Panel on the health of our care leavers.

6 **Governance**

6.1 The Joint Parenting Panel is scheduled to meet a minimum of six times per municipal year, and its work programme enables it to focus on one priority from the Corporate Parenting Strategy at each of its meetings enabling a detailed review of the work being done to deliver against our promises to our looked after children and care leavers.

7 **Panel Development – Focus for next period**

7.1 The Panel must consistently receive relevant, up to date data. The Panel has received comprehensive performance data around the educational progress of our looked after children and care leavers, but other areas need further development.

8 **Conclusion**

8.1 This report sets out some of the key activity that has taken place to deliver the Slough Corporate Parenting Strategy over the past six months. Whilst there has been a lot of activity, there is still much more to do, and many of the improved aspects of support for our looked after children and care leavers require embedding in everyday practice.

9 **Background Papers**

- 1 - Ofsted Report: Slough Borough Council. Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and Review of the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (24 November – 17 December 2015)