

Corporate Parenting Panel

Slough Borough Council

Proposed Terms of Reference 2023/24

1. Corporate Parenting Panel Vision

- 1.1 When a child becomes looked after everyone at the Council, including officers, members, and our partner organisations become corporate parents for children and care experienced young people we look after. This means we have a legal and moral responsibility to improve the lives of all those we look after and who leave our care.
- 1.2 Just as we would our own children, we will prioritise their needs and create the right conditions for them to thrive and have happy and fulfilling lives; “as if, this were my child.”

2. Strategic Context

- 2.1 Slough Borough Council has a strategic and legal responsibility for children looked after and care experienced young people as documented in legislation and national and local guidance. The Children Act 1989 and Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 placed a duty on Health, Housing, Education and Social Care as a minimum, to work together to improve outcomes for children looked after. The Children Act 2004 placed a statutory duty on Local Authorities to promote the educational achievement of children looked after. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 established seven key Corporate Parenting Principles which the Council must have regard to.
- 2.2 In order to thrive, children and care experienced young people have certain key needs that good parents generally meet. The corporate parenting principles set out seven principles that local authorities must have regard to when exercising their functions in relation to children looked after and care experienced young people, as follows:
 - i. to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and care experienced young people
 - ii. to encourage those children and care experienced young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
 - iii. to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and care experienced young people

- iv. to help those children and care experienced young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners
 - v. to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and care experienced young people
 - vi. for those children and care experienced young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and
 - vii. to prepare those children and care experienced young people for adulthood and independent living.
- 2.3 The corporate parenting principles do not exist in a vacuum. They should shape the mind-set and culture of every part of a local authority in how it carries out all of its functions in relation to children looked-after and care experienced young people.
- 2.4 The principles intend to ensure that all councils have high ambitions for the children in their care. In doing so, the application of the principles must respond to the individual needs, vulnerabilities or disadvantages of children looked after and care experienced young people. This will assist in securing that such children and care experienced young people are not placed at significant disadvantage when compared with the support a non-looked after child may receive from their family.

3. Purpose of the Corporate Parenting Panel

- 3.1 The Corporate Parenting Panel (the 'Panel') is a private meeting of Slough Borough Council (SBC). It acts as an advisory Board to the Council, its partners and its Committees on matters related to the Council's children looked after and care experienced young people. It will report annually to the Council's People Scrutiny Panel, Cabinet and Council.
- 3.2 It ensures that **all** Councillors demonstrate their commitment to deliver better outcomes for children and young people in and leaving our care.
- 3.3 Its role is to ensure that the Council, Slough Children First, and its partner agencies is fulfilling its duties towards children looked after corporately and in partnership with other statutory agencies, and have a joint commitment to:-
- (a) Achieving improved outcomes for children looked after and care experienced young people;
 - (b) Developing and overseeing implementation of the Corporate Parenting Strategy to drive improved outcomes;
 - (c) Providing challenge to ensure that the Council's duties as Corporate Parent are carried out effectively and consistently.
- 3.4 The Panel will:-

- i) Lead on behalf of the Council and partners of the Local Authority to ensure that all services directly provided for children looked after and care experienced young people are scrutinised to deliver to a high standard and to all statutory requirements.
- ii) Raise the aspiration, ambitions and life chances of children and care leavers in care and care leavers, narrowing the gap of achievement between children in care, care leavers and their peers.
- iii) Ensure that children in care are protected and supported to develop as healthy citizens, able to participate in their community.
- iv) Ensure that all elected members are aware of their corporate parenting responsibilities and that all Council services are mindful of the needs of children in care and respond accordingly within their particular remit.

4. Responsibilities of the Corporate Parenting Panel

- 4.1 To develop, monitor and review a Corporate Parenting Strategy and work plan.
- 4.2 To assist in the development, operation, monitoring and review of the Council's policies and strategies as they affect children looked after and care experienced young people.
- 4.3 Take account of the views of children, young people and their carers and involve them in the assessment and development of services.
- 4.4 To promote a co-ordinated and partnership approach to the delivery of Council services as they affect children looked after and care experienced young people and to challenge services where this is not evidenced or effective.
- 4.5 To advise the Council and its Committees on issues relevant to children looked after and care experienced young people and to ensure that policies implemented by the Council which affect these children and young people are effective and appropriate.
- 4.6 To review and monitor outcomes for children looked after and care experienced young people, including data from the Corporate Parenting Score Card and feedback from the Standards & Complaints and Quality Assurance Framework officers in respect of children looked after and care experienced young people.
- 4.7 Ensure the needs of children and young people in care and their carers are prioritised and these are reflected in the 'promises' to Slough's children in care
- 4.8 To ensure that systems are in place which mean that the views of children and young people are represented in the development of services that affect them.

- 4.9 To ensure arrangements are made for the training and development of Councillors, all council staff and partner organisations on the Corporate Parenting role.
- 4.10 To receive reports on the discharge of the Council's functions regarding the provision of accommodation for children looked after and care experienced young people, and to make recommendations to the appropriate body of the Council.
- 4.11 Champion and provide clear strategic and political direction in relation to corporate parenting.
- 4.12 Raise the profile of the needs of children looked after and care experienced young people through a range of actions including through the organising of celebratory events for the recognition of achievement.
- 4.13 Ensure that leisure, cultural, further education and employment opportunities are offered and taken up by our children looked after and care experienced young people.
- 4.14 Promote the development of participation and ensure that the view of children looked after and care experienced young people are regularly heard via 'Reach Out' and 'Space to talk', through the Corporate Parenting Panel to improve educational, health and social outcomes to raise aspiration and attainments; working towards co-delivery.
- 4.15 Undertake meetings with children looked after and care experienced young people, frontline staff and foster carers to inform the panel of the standards of care and improvement outcomes for children looked after and care experienced young people.

5. Membership

- 5.1 There will be standing membership of the Corporate Parenting Panel to provide continuity and consistency. Councillors outside of the standing membership will be invited to discuss issues and raise questions within a standing agenda item. Membership will be reviewed annually (each municipal year) as follows:
- 5.2 In order to avoid any potential conflicts of interests, the Chair of the People Scrutiny Panel shall be prohibited from sitting on the Panel as a member.
- 5.3 All seven elected member appointments to the Panel by the Council will be made on a politically proportionate basis; identifying lead portfolio holders linked to the Councils 'promises'.
- 5.4 Councillor Hulme (Labour) is appointed as the chair of the Panel.
- 5.5 The Lead Member for Education, Childrens Service, Lifelong Skills and Governance will attend each Corporate Parenting Panel.

Non-Councillor members

5.6 Non-voting members are required to attend all meetings, or to nominate a substitute in the event of their absence.

5.7 The non-Councillor members of the Panel shall be as follows:

- Executive Director for People (Children) and Chief Executive of Slough Children First (SCF)
- Director of Childrens Services/ Chief Executive Slough Children First (SCF)
- Director of Operations (SCF)
- Head of Children Looked After and Support Service (SCF)
- Head of Quality Assurance and Safeguarding (SCF)
- Participation Officer (SCF)
- Virtual School Headteacher (SCF)
- Foster Carer representative
- Reach Out! Group representative
- Thames Valley Police representative
- Designated Nurse for Children in Care, East Berkshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)
- NHS Frimley CCG
- Service lead for Strategic Housing Services (SBC)
- Service lead for Communities and Leisure (SBC)
- Service lead for Strategic Adults Services (SBC)
- Communities & Voluntary Sector representatives

6. Operation of the Panel

Meetings

6.1 The panel will meet bi-monthly preceded by an agenda setting meeting.

- 6.3 Each meeting of the Panel will be based the annual reporting/theme schedule agreed at the beginning of the municipal year; additional themed agenda items will be agreed in relation to the Corporate Parenting Strategy and Action Plan as required and agreed in advance.
- 6.4 The governance support for this Panel will be provided by a representative from the Council's Democratic Governance Service and the agenda will be dispatched a week in advance of the meeting.

Administration

- 6.5 The agenda for each meeting shall be agreed by the council's Director of Children, Learning and Skills as part of the Panel's ongoing Forward Work Plan for the municipal year.
- 6.6 Administrative support will be provided by the Council's Democratic Services team, who will arrange the meetings of the Panel; maintain the forward work plan and publish the agendas. The agreed agenda will be despatched by Democratic Services, at least five working days in advance of the meeting.
- 6.7 An officer from the Council's Democratic Services team will be responsible for the minutes of the meeting and their subsequent circulation.
- 6.8 Attendance at meetings and access to the minutes will be restricted to members of the Panel, as set out above.
- 6.9 Requests from non-members to view the minutes will be considered, based on the request fulfilling a valid 'need-to-know' requirement.

Accountability/Governance

- 6.10 The Panel will provide a child friendly response to children looked after's views, comments, priorities, and representations identified by Reach Out. This summary will be provided within 14 working days of the meeting taking place – "you said, we did, so what?".
- 6.11 The Panel will provide an annual report to the People Scrutiny Panel setting out work to deliver the Corporate Parenting Strategy. The Chair of the Panel will present this report.

Review

- 6.12 The Council's Executive Director for People (Children) and the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Lifelong Learning & Skills will review the terms of reference annually.
- 6.13 Any revisions must be endorsed by the Panel and the Member Panel on the Constitution before being approved by full council.