

<b>Item No.</b> 8.	<b>Classification:</b> Open	<b>Date:</b> 18 February 2010	<b>Meeting Name:</b> Corporate Parenting Committee
<b>Report title:</b>		Corporate Parenting Committee Review	
<b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b>		All	
<b>From:</b>		Assistant Director of Children's Specialist Services	

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To consider the implications for the scope and activity for the Corporate Parenting Committee arising from revised statutory guidelines, national inspection requirements, and new local priorities for children and young people;
2. To identify and agree a way forward from proposed options for the development of the Corporate Parenting Committee (paragraph 19).

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. Corporate parenting requires services across the Council including housing, education and leisure, to work together corporately and with partner agencies to achieve the best outcomes for looked after children and care leavers. Duties in Section 10 of the Children Act 2004 require local authorities and their 'relevant partners' to cooperate to improve children's wellbeing within the ECM outcomes framework.
4. Councillors, council officers and partner services all share corporate parenting responsibilities. These include acting as an advocate for children in their care, to help them to make a success of their lives. The reasons for children needing to be looked after will already have placed them at a disadvantage. Corporate parents should ensure these experiences are not compounded when they come into Southwark's care, and act as champions in ensuring this group's needs are met as best they can.
5. The corporate parenting approach, first articulated during the 1988 Quality Protects programme for children looked after, has been strengthened alongside the development of the broader children's agenda, particularly within the Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes. A number of legislative and policy initiatives have further developed the statutory framework around securing good outcomes for children looked after and care leavers. Recently, these have reinforced the vital role played by corporate parents in securing these outcomes. This has also been reflected in new inspection standards for looked after children. Further details can be found in paragraph nine.
6. In view of these developments, this report reviews corporate parenting approaches, as requested by the Corporate Parenting Committee as the basis for considering how Southwark's corporate parenting approach can be further strengthened.

## KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

### Corporate Parenting national framework

7. The government has indicated that the term 'corporate parent' recognises that the local authority must have the same interest in the progress and attainments of looked after children as a reasonable parent would have for their own children. Recent guidance has indicated that the welfare of looked after children is the responsibility of everyone in the local authority, including all services (including those outside of children's services) and all members. Ultimate corporate parenting accountability rests with the Lead Member for Children's Services, along with the Director for Children's Services.
8. The Care Matters White Paper indicates that all councillors should take an informed interest in how the council and its partners support children looked after (paragraph 1.26 of the White Paper); this effort should be led by the local corporate parenting group. The Care Matters programme of change indicates that embedding the concept of corporate parenting and its strategic delivery across all sectors is key to improving outcomes.
9. The new Ofsted and Care Quality Commission three-year inspections of looked-after children services will look at the effectiveness of corporate parenting as a key area. This will include an assessment and judgement of the following:
  - The championing role of senior officers and elected members;
  - The extent to which the corporate parenting group provides effective leadership and contribute significantly to the development of services, which are regularly audited for effectiveness;
  - The effectiveness of corporate parenting strategies, policies and procedures in supporting practice for looked after children and care leavers;
  - The extent to which there is an embedded culture of strong engagement of all relevant partners in corporate parenting;
  - That information on the effectiveness of the complaints system is part of the work of the corporate parenting panel.

Surveys of children in the local authority's care and who have recently left care will be undertaken through the Children's Right Director and will also be taken into account during these inspections. The Corporate Parenting Committee will play a significant role in evidencing the effectiveness of Southwark's corporate parenting and improving outcomes for looked after children.

10. There are also a number of national priorities for looked after children and care leavers, to be achieved in all local areas during 2010, as part of the Care Matters programme. These include establishing a Children in Care Council, developing a local Pledge for looked-after children, appointing a virtual school head by April 2010, and rolling out the Care2Work programme. Improving Corporate Parenting is also a significant priority, and to assist members in discharging their corporate parenting responsibilities, the Secretary of State has also reissued the list of questions on children in care (see Appendix 1).
11. The increasing prominence of corporate parenting approaches nationally, indicates the significant role to be played by corporate parenting groups in ensuring better outcomes for looked-after children and care leavers. The Corporate Parenting Committee may therefore wish to consider how it can continue to provide a valuable input in line with these corporate parenting requirements.

12. The National Children's Bureau has developed a checklist for corporate parents, which can be used by the Corporate Parenting Committee, in reviewing Southwark's corporate parenting approach (See Appendix 2).

### **Corporate Parenting best practice examples**

13. Good practice guidance indicate that corporate parenting is most effective when there is a shared collective responsibility across all local authority services to achieve good parenting for children in their care. It is considered that the needs of looked-after children cannot be met by a single agency, or by looked-after children's services alone, and key partners should work with local authorities to proactively support looked-after children. The Government's/ National Children's Bureau's model of effective corporate parenting is detailed at Appendix 3.
14. In other authorities, a strong culture of corporate parenting and collective approach to corporate parenting responsibilities has been embedded in the organisation through measures such as the following:
  - Appointing a 'councillor champion' for looked-after children. This is frequently a councillor other than the Lead Member for Children's Services;
  - A corporate parenting strategy which sets out high aspirations for children in care, is signed up to by all sectors of the local authority and partners, and is used to indicate success;
  - Ensuring children's participation is an integral part of arrangements, including through an effective Children in Care Council;
  - Training members in their corporate parent responsibilities, so that they are able to make well-informed contributions to reviewing services and can champion the needs of looked-after children and care leavers in the other forums they are engaged in;
  - Looked-after children and care leavers remain high on the multi-agency strategic agenda and their needs are met within and across services. In some authorities, this is ensured through an established multi-agency looked after partnership, in others, senior officers from core services together with elected members form part of the Corporate Parenting Group to ensure strong corporate parenting across the system;
  - Strong lines of communication are kept between the Corporate Parenting Group and key strategic bodies such as the Children's Trust, the Executive and full Council. Often, the Corporate Parenting Group reports annually to these bodies, indicating areas of strengths as well as making recommendations to help improve outcomes for looked-after children.

In addition, Corporate Parenting Groups have regular communication with children looked-after. This is an area of strength for Southwark's Corporate Parenting Committee, which formally meets bi-annually with Speakerbox.

15. The Corporate Parenting Committee should consider how it can build on its strengths to drive a strong corporate parenting approach across the council and with partner agencies.

### **Local needs and issues**

16. Examples of corporate parenting best practice have been underpinned by a corporate parenting strategy that has ensured that both members and officers of local authorities have been able to meet and respond effectively to the needs of looked after children. In Southwark, this will be steered by our new Children and Young People Plan (CYPP). The role of the children's trust has been

strengthened and children's trusts now have greater responsibility and oversight for services concerning children, including looked after-children's services. Recent draft statutory guidance for children's trusts and CYPP regulations, has indicated that children's trusts are to become a statutory body, strengthened the duty on partners to cooperate and the CYPP has become more explicitly a joint commissioning plan for the children's trust which sets out how partners will fulfil their duty and local arrangements to cooperate.

17. Priorities contained in the forthcoming new CYPP 2010-13, including those for looked after children and care leavers, are based on an analysis of services for and the experiences of looked-after children and care leavers. The CYPP priorities for looked-after children and care leavers provide the framework within which services and partners should meet and address their corporate parenting responsibilities and improve the outcomes for looked-after children and care leavers. The Corporate Parenting Committee should monitor progress on these priorities, including the corporate parenting approach taken by services other than the looked-after children service.
18. The Corporate Parenting Committee can also play a key role in ensuring standards of care for looked-after children and care leavers, by helping services to sustain quality and monitor improvements where necessary, in line with new core inspection criteria.

### **Suggestions for development**

19. The Corporate Parenting Committee may wish to consider the best practice examples and emerging local and national issues in developing their forthcoming work programme and considering how corporate parenting can be improved across Southwark's services. In particular, the following may be considered to strengthen Southwark's corporate parenting approach and accountability:
  - How does the Corporate Parenting Committee interface with other bodies, such as Young Southwark? The Committee may wish to provide a regular report to Young Southwark, focussing on the progress of securing good outcomes for children and young people, such as those in the CYPP.
  - Should senior representatives from key services regularly attend, or form part of the membership of the Corporate Parenting Committee, to provide expert advice and ensure a focus on key areas is maintained throughout? The Committee's current terms of reference indicate that key services include health, education and employment, education and training (EET). Working group for looked after children currently exist along these three services; it may be considered that Corporate Parenting Committee's membership should be extended to include the chairs of these working groups.
  - How does the Corporate Parenting Committee ensure there is a whole systems approach to corporate parenting? The Committee may wish to consider having a minimum list 'one-off' topics to be considered each from the perspective of looked-after children, such as housing, child and adolescent mental health, transitions and leisure etc. To ensure effectiveness and evidence impact, such topics should be in line with the local performance framework and issues arising. Issues identified from self-evaluation, and inspection findings may also be explored. The Committee should ensure that senior representatives from these different partner services provide a report on their corporate parenting contribution, and how they work with the looked-after children's services in securing better outcomes.

## Policy implications

20. Any new corporate parenting approach in Southwark should be aligned to the new CYPP, which will be published in April 2010.

## Resource implications

21. None.

## Community impact statement

22. Changes to the Corporate Parenting Committee may have an impact on services provided to and for looked-after children. This report is judged to have very little other impact on local people and communities.

## BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Accessible At
The Roles and Responsibilities of the Lead Member for Children's Services and the Director of Children's Services	<a href="http://publications.everychildmatters.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&amp;PageMode=publications&amp;ProductId=DCSF-00686-2009">http://publications.everychildmatters.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&amp;PageMode=publications&amp;ProductId=DCSF-00686-2009</a>
Care Matters: Time for Change - White Paper	<a href="http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&amp;PageMode=publications&amp;ProductId=Cm%25207137">http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&amp;PageMode=publications&amp;ProductId=Cm%25207137</a>
Ofsted inspection frameworks	<a href="http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Forms-and-guidance/Browse-all-by/Care-and-local-services/Local-services/How-we-inspect">http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Forms-and-guidance/Browse-all-by/Care-and-local-services/Local-services/How-we-inspect</a>

## APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Follow up to the Care Matters National Stocktake letter
Appendix 2	Corporate Parenting: a checklist for corporate parents
Appendix 3	Model of effective corporate parenting

## AUDIT TRAIL

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Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance	No	No
Finance Director	No	No
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