

<b>Item No.</b> 10.	<b>Classification:</b> Open	<b>Date:</b> 2 November 2015	<b>Meeting Name:</b> Corporate Parenting Committee
<b>Report title:</b>		Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy	
<b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b>		All	
<b>From:</b>		Director, Children's Social Care	

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. This report outlines the draft children in care and care leavers strategy and sets out the project plan for the delivery of the strategy, to be approved at cabinet. Committee members are asked to:
  - Comment on the draft Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy (“the strategy”)
  - Note the proposed project plan for the adoption and delivery of the strategy
  - Request that each department makes a pledge to children in care and care leavers for 2016/2017
  - Agree that the delivery of the actions in the strategy are monitored through the work plan of the committee.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. The council's Commissioning Strategy for Children in Care, 2011/2012-2013/2014 was developed in September 2011. It set out 3 key commissioning priorities for services for children in care and care leavers; to 1. Redirect resources to reduce the need for children to come into care and to remain safely within their families, 2. Improve outcomes for children in care and to; 3. Ensure provision for children's care is good quality, efficient and effective. It is important we provide an up to date strategy which builds on this and ensures we have in place a framework by which we can deliver effective services for children in care and care leavers whilst meeting our obligations regarding the Ofsted inspection.
3. As part of its inspection of services for children in need of help or protection, children looked after and care leavers Ofsted will ask for documented performance information to help understand the work of the local authority, this will include a request for a strategic plan for looked after children, including corporate parenting objectives, education and housing priorities, planning for permanence and children's futures.
4. Ofsted will judge Local authorities to be good if *“there is a clear and up-to-date strategy for commissioning and developing services and there are sufficient resources to meet the needs of children and young people in the local authority area. Leaders, both professional and political, drive continuous improvement so*

*that the local authority is consistently effective as both the lead agency for the protection and care of children and as a corporate parent.”*

5. The strategy and the Placement and Sufficiency strategy set out our priorities in order to provide services and accommodation for children in care and care leavers. This report outlines a draft vision, principles and values, and strategic aims and priorities for the proposed children in care and care leavers strategy. It also sets out a timeline for further engagement in the strategy ahead of its adoption at Cabinet and subsequent implementation.
6. The outline strategy has been developed using evidence and findings from a range of sources, including:
  - Feedback from children in care and care leavers via Speaker Box, the council's Children in Care Council.
  - Analysis of the current needs of the council's children in care and care leavers population set against current performance in meeting these needs.
  - Self assessments and audits by the council and partners on existing services.
  - Best practice examples from available research, from work with other local authorities and from feedback from council officers.
  - Internal and external reviews and evaluation reports.
7. The strategy incorporates the findings of the 16+ accommodation review, the action plan of the New Belongings care leavers programme, and aligns to the Families Matter Strategy and the Placement and Sufficiency Strategy.

## **KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

### **Vision**

8. The strategy vision describes the council's ambition for every child or young person in our care and care leavers, as follows:

***“We want all our children and young people to be safe, happy and healthy, and to enjoy life. We want them to develop into resilient adults who are ready for work and can make a positive contribution to their community. We will provide them with high quality care, support and guidance to ensure they get the best start they need.”***

9. This supports the vision and ambitions set out in the Children and Young People's Plan 2013-2016, the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2015-2020, the Council Plan 2014-18, as well as helping to meet the Corporate Parenting Committee's aim to provide children and young people with the best start in life and develop into resilient adults, and to secure real and sustained improvements in the life chances of looked after children and care leavers.

## Values and principles

10. The strategy includes the following values and principles. These will underpin the planning, commissioning and delivery of services to support children and young people:
- Be the champions our young people deserve
  - Deliver high quality care, support and accommodation services
  - Do our best to enable families to stay together, whilst keeping children and young people safe
  - Keep children and young people safe at all times
  - Keep children and young people's needs central to our work
  - Keep all children and young people in care and care leavers well informed about their rights and where to go for help
  - Empower children and young people to take control of their own lives and realise their full potential
  - Deliver proactive support that secures the best long term outcomes for all children and young people
  - Ensure the views of children, young people and their families inform service improvement
  - Deliver, through action, our commitment to the **Care Leavers Charter**:
    - To respect and honour your identity
    - To believe in you
    - To listen to you
    - To inform you
    - To support you
    - To find you a home
    - To be your lifelong champion

## Strategic aims and priorities

### Strategic aims

11. The draft strategy has four strategic aims, which will support the delivery of the vision:
- 1. To be an effective corporate parent**
  - 2. Reduce the numbers moving into care**
  - 3. Build resilience of children in care and care leavers**
  - 4. Improve the quality of care**
12. It is the council's role to lead the way in being an effective corporate parent and integrate services across all council departments, schools, the voluntary sector and other public sector organisations to deliver services that meet the needs of children in care, the carers that are supporting them and those who leave care.
13. In delivering this strategy we are working with an overarching drive to reduce the need to bring children and young people into care because they remain safe, in loving family homes. This means providing the right support to families before issues escalate, working across the local authority and its partners to provide effective housing, education, health, criminal justice and employment support at all times.

14. We have set out how we will deliver effective early help and preventative services to families in our Families Matter Strategy. Both the Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy and the Families Matter Strategy recognise that many families in Southwark have complex needs, which vary over time. They need high quality services that respond to their underlying and changing needs through integrated working, supporting families to build their resilience and achieve positive outcomes together, reducing the need for intervention by social care through the delivery of responsive community based provision.
15. We want the best of our children and young people and we aim to provide services that promote self-esteem, positive learning experiences and nurturing relationships, and help children and young people to better cope with adversity. We aim to improve the resilience of our children and young people and prepare them for a successful adult life where they can live independently.
16. We need to have the mechanisms in place to effectively monitor performance, identify and address gaps in support and use intelligence effectively to inform commissioning and service improvements.
17. As well as meeting our statutory duties we aim to develop standards which make it clear what children and young people should expect from the services they are provided. We will work with our Housing Department, for example, as they pursue plans to introduce accommodation standards so that private sector providers and landlords understand their obligations and expected standards of the accommodation they provide to our young residents.
18. We will continue to invest in the development of our workforce through programmes like Social Work Matters that focus on providing a team around the child and promote continued oversight and support from practitioners and managers. We will invest in training for our carers so they too can build resilience and provide the right support for all children and young people.

### **Strategic priorities**

19. In delivering these aims, the strategy includes the following priorities. These have been discussed with Social Care DMT, the Children's Rights Team, the Commissioning Team and the July Corporate Parenting Committee.
  1. Children and young people have a say and their voice is heard
  2. Whenever it is safe, children and young people are supported to remain with, and return to, their families or with their extended family
  3. To work in the best interests of children and young people and remove them from harmful situations where necessary
  4. Children and young people secure timely, permanent care arrangements in loving homes
  5. Children and young people live closer to home, in provision that meets their needs
  6. All children and young people in care and care leavers feel safe and

secure in their placements and accommodation

7. Our foster carers and adoptive parents feel well supported to deliver the best care
8. All children and young people are happy and in their best health
9. All children and young people achieve their education outcomes at key stage 2 and 4
10. Children and young people are diverted from criminal activity
11. All young people leave care when they are ready to live independently
12. All care leavers are in education, employment or training.

### **Outcomes and performance monitoring**

20. We will monitor the delivery of these priorities through an outcomes framework which focuses on the following outcomes for children and young people:
  - Getting involved and having a say
  - Feeling safe, secure and settled
  - Being happy and in best health
  - Getting the most from education
  - Avoiding harmful risks
  - Being prepared for independence
21. 'Journey of the Child' indicators will be used to track progress against the delivery of agreed actions in the strategy; these will continue to be monitored on a monthly basis. The delivery of outcomes can be tracked through the annual work plan for the corporate parenting committee, providing a clear governance structure for the committee.
22. The strategy will include performance framework, setting out the outcomes and related strategic priorities, the priority actions, and the performance indicators used to monitor success.

### **Governance**

23. Corporate parenting committee will oversee the strategy implementation and will monitor delivery of the key actions whilst recommending ways in which more integrated services can be developed across all council departments, schools and the voluntary sector to achieve better outcomes for children in care and care leavers.
24. Further thematic work with partners, via the proposed Children's Action Network, will help to deliver the strategic priorities in the strategy across the wider corporate parenting community.

## Delivery plan

25. The following delivery plan sets out the timescale for the completion of the strategy ahead of final approval at cabinet.

Action	Due by
Further consultation with young people via Speaker Box	October/November 2015
CPC meeting	2 November 2015
Children's Social Care DMT	4 November 2015
Dissemination at service team meetings	November/December 2015
Strategy published and implemented through service business plans and the Achieving Excellence Plan.	From January 2016
Cabinet	January 2016

## Policy implications

26. This strategy supports the Council Plan to give all our young people the best start in life by keeping them safe and stable in healthy environments where they have the opportunity to develop, make choices and feel in control of their lives and future.
27. The delivery of the strategy provides an opportunity to increase the council's role as an effective corporate parent for children and young people in our care. It supports and promotes the duties of the corporate parent in relation to safeguarding and keeps the voice and the rights of the child at the centre of our work across housing, commissioning, health, education, employment and youth offending services.

## Community impact statement

28. The care population is diverse in terms of age, gender and ethnicity and we closely monitor these protective characteristics to ensure we understand specific needs and are able to deliver services that address these needs. It is recognised that placement stability, engagement in education, access to leisure and healthy lifestyles all help to build resilience for young people to successfully achieve economical wellbeing and make a positive contribution. Effective performance monitoring supports these objectives and enables us to identify areas where improvements may need to be made.

## BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
None		

## APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Draft Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy

## AUDIT TRAIL

<b>Lead Officer</b>	Rory Patterson, Director, Children's Social Care	
<b>Report Author</b>	Elaine Gunn, Principal Strategy Officer	
<b>Version</b>	Final	
<b>Dated</b>	20 October 2015	
<b>Key Decision?</b>	No	
<b>CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER</b>		
<b>Officer Title</b>	<b>Comments Sought</b>	<b>Comments Included</b>
Director of Law and Democracy	No	No
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	No	No
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	No	No
<b>Date final report sent to Constitutional Team</b>	20 October 2015	