

Item No. 7.	Classification: Open	Date: 7 July 2021	Meeting Name: Corporate Parenting Committee
Report title:		Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021-2024	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Director, Children and Families	

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The committee notes the final draft children in care and care leavers strategy, the Corporate Parenting Strategy, and plans for the finalisation and adoption of the strategy.
2. The committee members are asked to:
 - Comment on the draft Corporate Parenting Strategy (“the strategy”)
 - Agree the priority areas for the delivery of the strategy
 - Agree that the delivery of the strategy is regularly monitored through the work plan of the committee.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

4. The Southwark Council *Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy 2016-2019*, the corporate parenting strategy, was published in February 2016 following the approval of the council’s cabinet. The strategy was drafted in line with the Council Plan 2014-2018, the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2015-2020 and the Children and Young People’s Plan 2013-2016.
5. Building on the foundations of the existing strategies vision, aims and priorities, the council has developed a proposed next iteration of the corporate parenting strategy. The development of the new strategy follows and aligns to the revised Borough Plan 2018-2022, the Fairer Future’s commitments, and the changed legislative and national policy context.
7. Progress towards the development of the new strategy began with the initiation of the Bright Spots Survey for children and young people in our care and those who have left our care. The Bright Spots Survey measures the well-being and quality of our children and young people’s experience of care and the support they have received whilst in care and beyond. The tool provides a holistic insight in to the views and experiences of our children and young people which is invaluable in the future development

of our services and whole council approach to supporting the life chances of our children.

8. In addition to the work done previously to understand the views and experiences of our children and young people, the development of the new strategy seeks to understand and respond to our intelligence on the significant impact of Covid-19 Pandemic the health, wellbeing, educational and social development of our children and young people. As well as the significant discussions in society on structural inequality and institutional racism, that our children and young people have spoken so passionately to us about.
9. With the pace of change in society increasing and the complexities changing like no other time in recent generations, it is essential that this new strategy remains alive to the changing needs and issues affecting our children and young people, and their changing aspirations and goals.

NATIONAL CONTEXT

The Borough Plan 2018-2022

20. The Borough Plan restates the ambition to build a fairer future for all the people of Southwark. The specific challenge captured in the plan most relevant to children in care and care leavers is that of ensuring we provide the environment and support for our children and young people to have the *best start in life*. The new strategy will be critical to the delivery of this priority.
21. The new strategy has sought to better integrate the seven core values set out in the Borough Plan into our delivery of services for our children, young people and young adults. This is nowhere better emphasized in our aspiration of *treating residents as if they were a valued member of our family*. Aligned to the Corporate Parenting Principles this presents a stark challenge to all areas of the council, our partners, and even our wider residents, and public and private sector community, to recognize their responsibilities for raising our all of our children as if they were our own.

Policy, Legislative & Regulatory Context

23. Since the publication of the last strategy there has been a significant shift in the national policy context in relation to corporate parenting. This has included changes set out within the DfE Strategy *Keep on Caring 2016*, the *Children and Social Work Act 2017*, the 2018 Statutory Guidance *Applying corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers* and the revised Ofsted Framework *the Inspection of Local Authority Children Services Framework*, the ILACs, published in 2018.
24. *Keep on caring* built on a number of reforms to the care system prior to 2016 such as the publication of the cross-government Care Leaver

Strategy in 2013 and the introduction of the Staying Put duty in 2014. Recognizing the comparatively poor outcomes for care leavers against their peers, the strategy set out a vision and five key outcomes for the continuing reform of support for care leavers.

28. A primary intention of *Keep on Caring* was to “*make corporate parenting everyone’s responsibility*” this was to be delivered by the introduction of corporate parenting principles which require all departments within a local authority to recognise their role as corporate parents, encouraging them to look at the services and support that they provide through the lens of what a reasonable parent would do to support their own children. These principles were subsequently set out in the Children and Social Work Act 2017.
29. The Children and Social Work Act 2017, and the 2018 guidance defines, for the first time in law, the role of corporate parents, in addition to expanding and extending support for care leavers, for example through the publication of a ‘local offer for care leavers’ and making personal advisers available for care leavers up to the age of 25.
30. The corporate parenting principles within the Act as set out are that,

“In order to thrive, children and 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 looked after children and young people, as follows:
 - *to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and young people*
 - *to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings*
 - *to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people*
 - *to help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners*
 - *to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people*
 - *for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and*
 - *to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.”*
32. The new strategy sets out to embed these principles within the council and beyond into our partners and broader community.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Vision & Priorities

33. The new strategy adopts the wider vision of the council for Children that is;

We want all children and young people in Southwark to grow up in a safe, healthy and happy environment where they have the opportunity to reach their potential.

34. To achieve this vision we propose 6 key strategic priorities

- **Supporting More Families to Safely Stay Together** - Ensuring all our children & families get the right help at the right time, and at the earliest possible opportunity. To make sure that every child is supported to safely thrive at home.
- **Growing Up Safe and Independent in Society** - Giving all of our children the tools, skills, resources and support that they need to grow towards independence, and be protected from the threats and risks to them from an increasingly complex world.
- **Health, Wellbeing, Education & Opportunity** - Marshalling the unique resources of the borough to ensure that every one of our children and young adults gets the support and advocacy they deserve and expect from an excellent parent.
- **Happy, Safe and Stable** - Making sure that everyone of our children has a say in where they live and who they live with. That they are safe and in permanent homes earlier, closer to home, and supported to remain there as long as they need to.
- **Identity & Belonging** - Giving all our children and young people the chance to learn about themselves, their history and identity, and to live with carers who understand and reflect their cultural identity. Providing every chance for our children to appropriately engage with their own families and personal history.
- **A Whole Borough That 'Cares to Care'** - Placing delivering for our children and young adults at the heart of everything the Council and its partners do. Broadening the voice and experience of our children across all decision making, and making Southwark a truly Corporate Parenting Borough.

35. At the core of the strategy is our intention to drive the corporate parenting principles and delivery for our children, young people, and young adults into all areas of the Council and its partners, and to unashamedly

leverage all opportunities to improve the life chances of children in care and those who have left care.

Delivery Plan

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

Action	Due By
Corporate Parenting Committee Review & Comments	8 July 2021
Further Consultation & Engagement with children in care and care leavers	30 July 2021
Lead Member Approval	3 August 2021
Publication	6 August 2021
Development of Young People's Version & Action Plan	13 August 2024
Delivery	August 2021 – August 2024
Review and Refresh	February 2022 / August 2024

Policy implications

39. An updated and ambitious corporate parenting strategy that recognises the shift in national policy context and builds capacity across the local public sector system to deliver outcomes for our children in care and care leavers, will increasingly serve the delivery of the fairer future commitments and the Borough Plan.

Community impact statement

40. Successful delivery of a strategy to improve outcomes for children in care and care leavers will have a significantly positive impact on the outcomes of one of the most vulnerable groups.

Resource implications

41. There are no resource implications associated with the development of the strategy.

Legal implications

42. There are no legal implications associated with the development of the strategy.

Financial implications

43. There are no financial implications associated with the development of the strategy.

CONCLUSION

44. Southwark has a significant record of investment in services for our children in care and our care leavers, we have an agile and responsive partnership that is committed to achieving improved outcomes for our children. The draft strategy sets a high ambition for how we can continue to build on that investment and see meaningful transformation in the life chances of the most vulnerable in society.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Previous corporate parenting strategy – cabinet 9 February 2016 (item 14)	Constitutional Team 160 Tooley Street London SE1 2QH	Paula.thornton@southwark.gov.uk
Web link: http://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=302&MId=5144&Ver=4		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Draft Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021-2024

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Alasdair Smith, Director, Children and Families	
Report Author	Michael Crowe, Service Development Manager	
Version	Final	
Dated	25 June 2021	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Director of Law and Governance	No	No
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	No	No
Cabinet Member	No	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	25 June 2021	