

# Full Council

17 July 2018



**Report of:** Ann James, Acting Director Children and Families Services

**Title:** Corporate Parenting Strategy

**Ward:** Citywide

**Member Presenting Report:** Cllr Helen Godwin

## Recommendation

That Council

1. Approve the priorities and actions set out in the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2018 (Appendix A)
2. Note the progress, summarised in this report, on the delivery of Bristol's Corporate Parenting Strategy 2015
3. Note the refreshed Pledge (Appendix B)

## Summary

The Corporate Parenting Strategy sets out how the local authority and partners will meet their statutory duties and improve outcomes for children in care and care leavers. The Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers sets out what children and young people can expect from Bristol.



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## Policy

1. The Corporate Parenting Strategy is supported by the Council's overarching Corporate Strategy 2018-23, in particular, the 'Wellbeing' and 'Empowering and Caring' themes and the key commitment to be 'great corporate parents and safeguard children and vulnerable adults, protecting them from exploitation or harm'.
2. The Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers is for children and young people and sets out what they can expect from Bristol City Council and partners.

## Consultation

### Internal & External

3. The Strategy has been subject to wide ranging consultation with members, partner agencies, third sector partners, children and young people and council officers.

See Appendix C for more information.

## Context

4. In November 2015 Bristol launched the current Corporate Parenting Strategy and Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers. The Strategy is designed for Bristol City Council and our partners and the Pledge for children and young people.
  - 4.1. The Corporate Parenting Strategy was developed as part of the Council's response to the 2014 Ofsted Inspection of Bristol's services for children in need of help and protection; children looked after and care leavers. It set out our vision as an effective, caring and ambitious corporate parent with 9 objectives and 19 actions outlining how we aimed to improve outcomes for children in care and leavers. Governance arrangements were established with Bristol's Corporate Parenting Panel and Strategic Boards to monitor and support delivery against the 9 strategic objectives.
  - 4.2. Progress against the objectives set out in the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2015 is captured on pages 20-23 of the new strategy (Appendix A). It evidences improved outcomes such as the reduction in the number and rate of children in care as more children are supported to remain safely in the care of their parents. For care leavers, outcomes have improved across a range of indicators that had previously been judged inadequate. For care leavers, a service remodelling has delivered reduced caseloads for leaving care personal advisers enabling improved levels of contact, suitable accommodation and education, employment and training. Participation has improved and the voice of young people strengthened by employing care leaver ambassadors and by working in partnership with Barnardo's to develop a care leaver participation group.
  - 4.3. For children in care, long term placement stability has improved, as has the percentage of children placed in foster care compared to other placement types. Between 2015 and 2017 Bristol performed above the national average and that of most core cities and statistical neighbours. It is upon these strong foundations that the new Corporate Parenting Strategy and Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers is launched. It sets out how we will build upon our strengths as well as focussing on areas for development.

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4.4. Areas for continued development include health assessments for children in care and education outcomes at Key Stage 4, where our performance has yet to evidence sufficient improvement.

4.5. There are three reasons to refresh the Strategy now:

4.5.1. Two years has passed since the launch of the last Strategy and Pledge. It is important that we hear from and respond to the views of our current group of children in care and care leavers. We hear from children and young people in a number of ways, with over 90% involved in developing their care and pathway plans and taking part in their review. We also hear from young people through the Children in Care Council, Care Leavers United Bristol group and at other events. To fully inform this new Strategy and Pledge we also undertook a survey and took part in face to face consultation events in order to gather young people's views and priorities for this Strategy and Pledge.

4.5.2. Whilst there has been significant improvement in some areas, in others challenges remain. The development of the new Strategy and Pledge has re-engaged council and city partners to build on our strengths, to be ambitious and to do more to make a difference for children in care, care leavers and foster carers.

4.5.3. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 has enshrined in law seven Corporate Parenting Principles. It has also required local authorities to publish an offer to care leavers by September 2018 and deliver leaving care support up to the age of 25 for all those who want it.

## 5. **Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers**

5.1. The Pledge sets out the promises we make to children in care and care leavers to demonstrate how Bristol will deliver on its Corporate Parenting Strategy. Using feedback from consultation events and key messages from the Pledge survey 2017, Bristol has refreshed its Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers, with young people leading the design work for both the Strategy and Pledge (Appendix B).

5.2. The Local Offer to Care Leavers is required by the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and must be published by September 2018. We are consulting with young people on the detail of the new Local Offer whilst information about entitlements and our current offer remains available on the [RVoice](#) website.

5.3. The Pledge has been designed as a poster and is also available on the RVoice website for young people. The Local Offer to Care Leavers will also be published in hard copy as well as on-line and will be presented to Corporate Parenting Panel in September 2018. The website will host a range of further information about entitlements and local initiatives for children in care and care leavers.

## 6. **Proposal**

6.1. That Council approve the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2018 and note the progress made on priorities set out in the previous Strategy.

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- 6.2. That Council note the Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers and consider how they can fulfil their corporate parenting responsibilities and champion children in care and care leavers.

### **Other Options Considered**

7. Not Applicable.

### **Risk Assessment**

8. Bristol must set out how it plans to meet its statutory duties as a Corporate Parent, no alternative options were therefore considered.

### **Public Sector Equality Duties**

- 8a) Before making a decision, section 149 Equality Act 2010 requires that each decision-maker considers the need to promote equality for persons with the following “protected characteristics”: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. Each decision-maker must, therefore, have due regard to the need to:
- i) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Equality Act 2010.
  - ii) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to --
    - remove or minimise disadvantage suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic;
    - take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of people who do not share it (in relation to disabled people, this includes, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities);
    - encourage persons who share a protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.
  - iii) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to –
    - tackle prejudice; and
    - promote understanding.
- 8b) An equalities impact assessment has been undertaken and actions to address the identified issues relating to each protected characteristic have been identified above. See Appendix C

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## **Legal and Resource Implications**

### **Legal**

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 (the Act) is intended to improve support for looked after children and care leavers, promote the welfare and safeguarding of children, and make provisions about the regulation of social workers. The Act sets out corporate parenting principles for the council as a whole to be the best parent it can be to children in its care. The Act requires local authorities to publish their support offer to care leavers and to promote the educational attainment of children who have been adopted or placed in other long term arrangements.

Thee Corporate Parenting Strategy 2018 is in line with the Act and reflects changes to national policy.

**Legal advice provided by Legal Team Leader: Oliver Moore – Senior Childcare Solicitor**

### **Financial**

#### **Revenue & Capital**

This reports sets out ways in which available resources could be used better to enhance the role of the Corporate Parent for Looked After Children and Care Leavers. Commissioning services over the next few years of this plan will be exceptionally challenging, given the continued downward pressure on public finances. Nevertheless, Bristol City Council and partners are collectively committing to maintain strong and effective provision, and improve outcomes for the most vulnerable children in the city, while at the same time managing the effect of reducing public finances.

**Financial advice provided by David Tully, Interim Finance Business Partner**

### **Land**

Not Applicable

### **Personnel**

Not Applicable

### **Appendices:**

**APPENDIX A** – Corporate Parenting Strategy

**APPENDIX B** – Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers

**APPENDIX C** – Corporate Parenting Strategy and Pledge Consultation

**APPENDIX D** - Equalities Impact Assessment

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

### **Background Papers:**

None