

Full Council

12th January 2021



Report of: Ann James, Director of Children's Services

Title: Corporate Parenting Strategy (refresh) 2021-23

Ward: City-wide

Member Presenting Report: Cllr Helen Godwin, Cabinet member for women children and homes

Recommendation

- 1 Note the refreshed Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021-23
2. Note the progress on the delivery of Bristol's Corporate Parenting Strategy 2018

Summary

This refreshed Strategy sets out our new priorities and actions that build on Bristol's good performance and strong Corporate Parenting arrangements. The improvements from 2018 include stronger permanency arrangements for children, reduced caseloads for children's social workers, introduction of council tax exemption for our care leavers and higher levels of young people in education, employment and training.

The significant issues in the report are:

We want to re-engage the wider council and partners across the city in their corporate parenting role to build on our strengths, to be ambitious and to do more to make a difference for children in care, care leavers and their carers. This Strategy provides a series of detailed actions and specialist supports set out in 8 key priorities.

Significant actions include promoting care-experience as being a local protected characteristic, developing specialist alternative education provision, creating a regional offer for care leavers, developing bespoke children's homes, reviewing the health offer, and revising the support package and benefits for foster carers including council tax exemption.

Policy

This Strategy 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'.

Consultation

- 1. Internal**
Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel, children, young people, carers and staff
- 2. External**
Staff from partner agencies, including health and education.

Context

1. Following the success of the 2018 Corporate Parenting Strategy that drove improvements for children in care and care leavers in the city, this refreshed Strategy sets out our new priorities and actions that build on Bristol's good performance and strong Corporate Parenting arrangements.
2. Whilst there has been significant improvement in most areas there are some remaining challenges where we want to improve further and be the very best. We want to further embed the 7 Corporate Parenting Principles from Children and Social Work Act 2017.
3. This strategy describes our city approach to delivering on those Corporate Parenting Principles to improve the lives of the children in and leaving our care. It outlines our vision and approach, reports on some of our recent achievements and developments and sets out how we intend to achieve our goals. This strategy sits alongside our Pledge to children in care and care leavers which outlines our commitments to them, and the support they can expect from us.
4. This Strategy will very much assist the City to achieve its legal responsibility to our Children in Care and Care leavers and provides a series of detailed actions and specialist supports set out in 8 key priorities. This will inform the direction of our work so that our young people can recover from their trauma, lead happy and fulfilling lives, and play a meaningful part in Bristol society.

Proposal

3. Full Council to note the strategy and the actions therein.

Other Options Considered

4. N/A

Risk Assessment

5. The Corporate Parenting Strategy is due for refresh and we are duty-bound to ensure it is delivered, therefore no other alternative course of action available.

Summary of Equalities Impact of the Proposed Decision

The strategy is focussed on delivering better outcomes for children in care and care leavers, as well as supporting foster carers to provide quality and stable care. Summary of equalities issues include: diversity in recruitment of foster carers including those who can care for disabled children, and those who can offer parent/child fostering arrangements; and differences in issues around exploitation risks for boys and girls.

Equalities Impact Assessment available as background paper.

Legal and Resource Implications

Legal Advice:

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 (the Act) is intended to improve support for children in care 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.

The Corporate Parenting Strategy is in line with the Act and reflects changes to national policy. The transition of safeguarding arrangements for Bristol from the Bristol Safeguarding Board to the Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership has now been completed as has the collaboration of adoption services with other local authorities in the area under the umbrella of Adoption West.

(Legal advice provided by **Legal Team Leader**: Oliver Moore 7/10/20)

Financial

(a) Revenue and (b) Capital

This report seeks Cabinet approval of the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2020 -2023 and 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. As the strategy sets out general intentions to meet Bristol City Council's corporate parenting duty, there are no specific financial implications, in the report at this stage. However, any future commissioning activities or for example proposals for the review of foster care allowances or any council tax relief proposals, will need to go through a new decision pathway, for sign off of any new spend proposals."

(Financial advice provided by **<Finance Business Partner**: Denise Hunt, Finance Business Partner 29/10/20)

Land

n/a

Personnel

n/a

Appendices:

EqIA

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers:

Equalities Impact Assessment on request