



Open Report on behalf of Heather Sandy, Executive Director - Children's Services

Report to:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Date:	09 May 2024
Subject:	Corporate Parenting Panel Review

Summary:

This report presents the proposed changes to the Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP) aimed to achieve tangible outcomes for the young people within the Authority's care.

Actions Required:

That the Panel give consideration to the suggested changes and offer comments on the proposals.

1. Background

- 1.1 We have a highly engaged and top performing Children's Services that cares for our young people and promotes our responsibilities as Corporate Parents - both within the Authority and to our partners and stakeholders.
- 1.2 However, top tier Authorities across the country have been judging that a 'Corporate' approach to parenting doesn't necessarily provide the wanted connection with the young people within its care.
- 1.3 Our Members are firmly of the belief that our care-experienced young people should be at the heart of the corporate parenting process, and that currently we are running this process *for* them, but *without* them.
- 1.4 The current national view is that high level meetings in such a formal setting may limit young people's interest and could serve as a barrier to the children it serves. The review of CPP was launched by Councillor S P Roe and facilitated by Democratic Services representatives.

1.5 This recommendation has followed the decision-making process as follows:

- a) Children DLT - 9 February 2024
- b) Executive DLT with Cllr Bradwell and Cllr Roe – 18 March 2024
- c) Consideration at full council meeting on 17 May 2024

2. Proposal

2.1 It is therefore being proposed that changes be considered to improve our engagement and to become 'Less Corporate, and More Parenting'. These suggestions are made to achieve the following outcomes:

- Putting our young people at the heart of the process, to better help them to feel engaged with, cared for, and inspired – the way any parent would wish to for their child to feel.
- Raising the profile of Corporate Parenting.
- Stimulating better engagement from all directions:
 - through our network of providers who support our young people;
 - from our Elected Members;
 - from the young people covered by this service;
 - from the people and officers who represent our young people; and
 - through our district and parish connections.

2.2 It is envisaged that this can be achieved by making six simple changes:

- (1) create thematic meetings;
- (2) change the performance reporting process;
- (3) changing the governance arrangements of Corporate Parenting Panel meetings;
- (4) utilise different methods of engagement;
- (5) demonstrate our dedication to those in our care; and
- (6) reaffirm the role of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

2.3 (1) Thematic Meetings

The generic nature of the CPP meetings means that often attendance is by those persons who have a vested interest in the whole, rather than the parts.

By splitting the annual work of the Panel into focused subject headings would enable the right people to come together at the right time such as portfolio holders, key stakeholders, and those with connections that can make true change for our young people. It would also, in turn, encourage any young people with a vested interest or issues in each thematic sub-heading to engage with the process.

Four themed meetings are suggested:

1. Health and Wellbeing
2. Education, Training, Employment and Careers
3. Criminal Justice Interventions
4. Housing and Accommodation

With cross cutting elements being addressed within each of the themed meetings:

1. Promoting relationships, friends and family time
2. A focus on Permanence
3. A focus on Fostering
4. Residential settings

In the thematic meeting model, relevant partners with a co-responsibility for Corporate Parenting would be invited to attend to help shape service improvements.

2.4 (2) Changing the Governance Arrangements

LCC works hard to reduce the stigma associated with being care-experienced, and it is a well-known fact that young people within Local Authority care prefer not to be identified as such. It is on that premise that a live-streamed meeting prohibits engagement with our Care Leavers. Those currently under the age of 18 would be prohibited from appearing on camera due to safeguarding.

To help make tangible change, discussions will need to permit reference to experiences of care-experienced individuals. When a meeting is public, this level of openness cannot be achieved without breaching confidentiality.

Whilst Lincolnshire County Council operates a very transparent method of examining its functions, and it is very important not to erode this, the benefits of creating a safe space for engagement would be more beneficial.

In return, performance reporting can be altered to ensure that the transparency can be maintained.

2.5 (3) Changing the Performance Reporting Process

The Council is under specific regulation to deliver its corporate parenting duties and there are requirements to ensure our activities, and the performance of those, are used to inform the way in which we parent. However, the way in which the performance is presented is not dictated to us.

It is suggested that the frequency and length of reporting be reviewed, and the majority of performance reports should be presented in line with thematic

meeting subjects. Presenting information on how the service performs in relation to (for example) NEET requirements at the Education themed meeting would bring about informative discussion with the right people to create good outcomes.

There are quarterly reporting requirements to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee, and overarching performance reports that will still be presented to the two meetings of the CPP which are not themed.

2.6 (4) Changing Methods of Engagement

It is further suggested that meeting reporting be simplified to be more accessible to younger people dispensing with local authority jargon and acronyms.

CPP meetings can become easier to access by permitting young people to join the meeting remotely.

Making young people feel comfortable to engage will be a challenge that could be met with a small budget for food or travel to and from meetings, or reward for attendance.

2.7 (5) Demonstrated Dedication

For the young people in the care of the Authority, feedback shows that they need demonstrated dedication by way of action. Many have been let down along their journey in life, and therefore these changes could become another way to give them reassurance.

This could be demonstrated by engaging with key officers and Members and having them present at the thematic meetings – this way it may be only one meeting a year they would be required to attend, but it would have meaning and purpose to the young people engaging or hearing feedback. Attendance could be by relevant Scrutiny Chairmen, Portfolio Holders or Executive Directors.

Utilising council resources and influence, as a parent would do, to levy benefits for its 'children' in a transparent manner would also demonstrate the stability that our young people need and trust that the Council is looking after their interests.

(6) Reaffirming the Role of the Corporate Parenting Panel

The Corporate Parenting Panel currently sits alongside the scrutiny function, which can result in some overlap and duplication between the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel and the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee. In May 2019, the County Council agreed that the Corporate Parenting Panel would report to the Full Council as required, rather than the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee, to increase awareness among all members of the work being undertaken in ensuring that the County Council undertakes its duty as Corporate

Parent. Therefore, the Corporate Parenting Panel is an anomaly within the scrutiny function as it does not report to a parent scrutiny committee.

The new model for delivery provides the Corporate Parenting Panel with the opportunity to develop a new distinguishable role for itself. It is suggested that its principal role would be to provide strategic leadership that drives forward a multi-agency approach for improving outcomes and overcoming barriers for those in our care. The terms of reference for the Panel would need to be altered to remove it from 'within' the scrutiny function and to consider its membership accordingly.

Scrutiny of the Panel would however continue to be supported by a scrutiny officer and the Chairman and Scrutiny Officers associated with the subject areas discussed at the new 'thematic' meetings. This opens a dialogue between each area of scrutiny to widen the impact and knowledge of Corporate Parenting across all areas of the authority, thus increasing the profile of the group.

2. Conclusion

Having considered the potential for a greater level of engagement, it is hoped that Members will determine that the changes proposed can make a measurable improvement to the lives of the young people in their care. They will feel better informed and engaged, and Members will be surrounded by contextual first-hand information.

3. Consultation

Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Proposed Amendments to the Terms of Reference for the CPP

5. Background Papers

The following background papers as defined in the Local Government Act 1972 were relied upon in the writing of this report.

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers Second Report	National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers second report (publishing.service.gov.uk) .

This report was written by Andrew Morris, Head of Service, Leaving Care and Supported Living, who can be contacted at Andrew.morris@lincolnshire.gov.uk

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