

Croydon Council

For General Release

REPORT TO:	Corporate Parenting Panel 9 July 2014
AGENDA ITEM NO:	7
SUBJECT:	Terms of Reference
LEAD OFFICER:	Paul Greenhalgh, Executive Director, Children Families and Learning
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor Alisa Flemming, Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Learning
WARDS:	ALL
CORPORATE PRIORITY/POLICY CONTEXT: The item is to present the current terms of reference and to provide an opportunity for the Panel to discuss how best to meet the aims of Corporate Parenting	
FINANCIAL IMPACT None	
FORWARD PLAN KEY DECISION REFERENCE NO.:	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 Corporate Parenting Panel to note the Report
- 1.2 Corporate Parenting Panel to consider what additional means may be available for Council members to fulfil their role as corporate parents.
- 1.3 That training on the role of corporate parenting is arranged for all Council members.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 The current terms of reference are attached as Appendix 1 to this report. The report is intended to provide the Panel with background to the concept of Corporate Parenting and invite consideration of how best to meet the intended aims of the terms of reference.

3. DETAIL OF YOUR REPORT

- 3.1 The term Corporate Parenting is used to describe the role of the Local Authority towards looked after children and young people as well as those young people who have left care. There is a particular role for Local Authority members in discharging this duty.
- 3.2 Outcomes for looked after children are generally worse than for the general population of children. Research evidence has shown that they are at higher risk of becoming homeless, of becoming involved in offending behaviour and of developing mental health problems. Their general health outcomes are not as good as those for other children and their educational outcomes are also relatively poor. Looked after children will often enter the care system with a history of traumatic experiences that are likely to affect their outcomes. Looked after children are not a static population. Many children will only be looked after for short periods of time. However, for a substantial proportion, they will spend a large part of their childhood looked after and the role of corporate parenting is vital in ensuring that their needs are appropriately met. Currently Croydon has 804 looked after children and 814 young people who are owed a statutory duty under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.
- 3.3 The council is the Corporate Parent, meaning that elected members along with employees, service areas departments and directorates must consider looked after children and care leavers as if they were their own children. In 1998, partially as a response to the concerns regarding the outcomes for children, Frank Dobson, then Secretary of State wrote to all Councillors to try to describe their role in corporate parenting. He wrote:
'When you become a Councillor you also become responsible for ensuring that the Council act as the corporate parent, for all the children in its care. The role of Corporate Parent is to seek for the children in public care outcomes that every good parent would want for their own children.'
- 3.4 In order to fulfil this duty, Council members were offered further guidance in 1999 to:
- Find Out – get the facts and follow them up
- Make Decisions – play your part in the business of the Council
- Listen to children and Young People – find out from them how council services (and services such as health) work for them and remember that they are citizens too
- Be a champion for children – take a lead in your community
- 3.5 Services to children looked after are subject to inspection by Ofsted through the single inspection framework, which looks at Looked After Children and Care Leavers as part of the Single Inspection Framework. Inspections will take place on a three year cycle. Inspections are unannounced and it is anticipated that Croydon may be inspected in the current calendar year. One of the indicators of a good authority is listed below:

- The local authority is an active, strong and committed corporate parent that knows the children and young people it looks after well. It is an effective and successful champion of their progress (particularly in education and learning) and an ambitious corporate parent, ensuring that each child has every opportunity to succeed. It actively challenges and engages partners where appropriate to support children and young people, such as engaging the local authority strategic housing function.

3.6 The Panel is invited to consider whether there may be additional opportunities for Council members to discharge their functions as corporate parents in addition to the Terms of Reference as attached at Appendix 1. A range of opportunities could be developed for Council members to engage further with children and young people in different settings. The role of Council members in taking responsibility for bringing together services across the Council and the local authority area and ensuring that the needs of looked after children and care leavers are fully incorporated into a range of policies is very important in achieving better outcomes for our young people. Some ideas would be:

- ◆ Attending the Children in Care Council
- ◆ Visits to Children Looked After
- ◆ Mentoring roles
- ◆ Shadowing opportunities
- ◆ Promoting apprenticeships

3.7 The Panel is also invited to consider whether the current constitution of the meeting is the best way of fulfilling the role of corporate parents and the Terms of Reference. The Panel is asked to consider how best to ensure that all Council members are aware of their role with regard to looked after children and care leavers. Many authorities have provided training for all Council members and it is recommended that this is arranged and that young people play a role in the delivery of such training.

4. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Once the Corporate Parenting Panel has indicated how it best wants to take forward the issues contained in the report, officers will be able to advise on any considerations which may arise.

CONTACT OFFICER: Ian Lewis, Director Social Care and Family Support, ext. 88481
BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: none