

**TITLE OF REPORT:** Corporate Parenting Arrangements in Gateshead

**REPORT OF:** Andrea Houlahan, Deputy Strategic Director, Children Social Care and Early Help

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Would This Be Good Enough for My Child?

Proposals for Corporate Parenting Arrangements

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### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide Families Overview and Scrutiny with an update on the proposal to implement a Corporate Parenting Board which has been agreed at cabinet.

### **Policy Context**

#### **What is Corporate Parenting**

2. Corporate parenting operates at strategic, operational and individual levels. It has three key elements:
  - A statutory duty, detailed in the Children Act 1989 and the Children and Social Work Act 2017, on all parts of a local authority to co-operate in promoting the welfare of children and young people looked after, and a duty on other partners and agencies to co-operate in fulfilling that duty.
  - Co-ordinating the activities of the many different professionals and carers who are involved in a child or young person's life and taking a strategic, child centred approach to the delivery of services.
  - Shifting the emphasis from "corporate" to "parenting", making sure our moral and statutory responsibilities towards children looked after and care leavers are being fulfilled.
3. 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 well-being, 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.
  - To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.
4. All councillors and council officers share corporate parenting responsibility and cannot abdicate this responsibility, but this does not mean that everyone has the same role. Clearly the elected members who attend Corporate Parenting Committee, or who are involved with thematic scrutiny of children's services, will have a greater role day-to-day than those who, for example, are responsible for environmental or planning decisions. Even the Planning Committee, however, will be making decisions that affect children looked after and care leavers.
  5. A key principle for corporate parents is to ensure that children looked after, and care leavers are considered within decision making across the Council.
  6. Similarly, officers will have differing roles, for example, to ensure that there is a range of high quality housing options available for young people when they leave care, ensure there are employment opportunities and make sure children looked after and young people are supported to live a healthy lifestyle.
  7. Responsibility extends beyond local authority services, in reality, the range of potential partners in meeting the needs of looked after children is as wide as the number of agencies and organisations within the area. Elected members and Council staff may have multiple roles within the borough, such as school governors, the duty to be an effective corporate parent is paramount, and must consider and promote the welfare of children looked after and care-leavers throughout these various activities. This is what a reasonable parent would do. I have captured some of the learning from these local authorities which I feel would be beneficial to children and young people if implemented in Gateshead.
  8. Cabinet on 25 May 2021 agreed the proposal to Redesign the current corporate parenting structure and introduce a Corporate Parenting Panel/Board with an internal and external partnership membership and develop the relationship between the Board, Overview and Scrutiny and the partnership groups.

## **Recommendations**

9. The Corporate Parenting Overview and Scrutiny Sub Committee are asked to
  - Note the contents of the cabinet report and recommendations.