

Bath & North East Somerset Council		
MEETING:	Council	
MEETING DATE:	18th November 2021	
TITLE:	Corporate Parenting – Referral from Children, Adults, Health & Wellbeing Panel	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report:		
The report presented to the CAHW Panel – 15 th June 2021		

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 The appended report was presented to the Children, Adults, Health & Wellbeing Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel in June 2021. A request was made for Full Council to also receive this report and this covering statement provides updated information for Elected Members. As stated, the report outlines the effectiveness of the Local Authority in meeting its safeguarding responsibilities and progress of children in care and care leavers.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Council is asked to;

- 2.1 Note the progress made to date in these duties; and
- 2.2 Note that this work will continue to be a priority within the Local Authority.

3 THE REPORT

- 3.1 Members are reminded of their Corporate Parenting responsibilities and that upon election all Councillors take on the role of “Corporate Parent” to children looked after and care leavers within B&NES. They have a duty to take an interest in the wellbeing and development of those children as if they were their own. Whilst the Lead Member for children’s services has particular responsibilities, the role of corporate parent is carried by all Councillors, regardless of their role on the Council. Effective Corporate Parents consider their role for children and young people within B&NES in their everyday role as a Councillor.
- 3.2 At the time of writing this report there are 183 children in care and 194 care leavers. As stated in the June report, our number of children in care continue to

remain stable over time. The following information is provided as an update to the June 2021 report

- (1) **Visits to Looked After Children:** We have continued to provide a statutory service throughout covid lockdowns and since restrictions have lifted. Our rates of visiting have now further increased with 94% of children being consistently visited within statutory timescales. This is excellent.
- (2) **Transitions and Planning:** The introduction of the Permanence Planning Panel has ensured that transitions are timely and that the quality of our Pathway Planning for young people into adulthood has improved.
- (3) **Participation:** This continues to be a key focus of our work and our two Young Ambassadors are now fully embedded in the service, consulting in many areas of service development and ensuring that children and young people's voices are at the heart of what we do.
- (4) **Education:** I can confirm that seven young people took GCSE's this year, with all of them passing with a grade four or above. Six out of the seven young people have confirmed college places. Some young people have not taken GCSE's due to additional needs but have completed functional skills and ESOL. These young people are continuing to stay in education for Year 12.
- (5) **A Levels** - 20 young people took A Levels with 15 passing (5 of these with EHCP)
- (6) **Special Guardianship:** The rate of Special Guardianship Orders remains high in B&NES, which is an excellent alternative for those children who are unable to live with their birth parents, enabling them to be cared for by a connected person who is known to them.
- (7) **Sufficiency:** The Fostering Recruitment and Retention Project, which sits within the Children's Transformation Programme, has concluded and is now in the implementation phase. There has been one marketing campaign in the Autumn of 2021, with a further three campaigns planned over the next 18 months. There are early indications of the impact of these campaigns, and other aspects of this project, but further monitoring and evaluation of data is needed to report with accuracy.
- (8) Alongside recruitment of new foster carers, we are also focusing on retention and propose additional measures and benefits to B&NES carers, including training and support. An allowance review has been undertaken which recommends that our fee structure is amended to reflect skills and experience, rather than the age of the child. This will encourage our carers to engage in professional development and is in line with our neighbouring Local Authorities. This has now been approved in principle.
- (9) We have also recently approved our first two 'Fostering families' carers. This will provide a dedicated fostering service to support those children at the edge of care, to remain at home, by providing a dependable, consistent, and emotionally invested individual who can provide support for the duration of children's minorities. The aim of this service will be to avoid children entering Local Authority care.

(10) **The Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET) project:** This has now commenced, and aims to increase the number of B&NES children and young people in education, employment, and training (EET). This project will build on the existing EET pathway by strengthening our Corporate offer to our children, as well as working with partner agencies and private industry in B&NES. There will be further information about this project, and ways in which Elected Members can support the aims, in the forthcoming months.

(11) **Reunification Service:** This new service has also been developed within the Children's Transformation programme and is in the implementation phase.

3.3 Finally, we have recently celebrated National Care Leavers Week, 25th – 31st October. This was well supported by both Elected Members and Officers through activities, events, and donations. The contributions enabled us to give 38 care experienced young people, who were nominated by their Personal Advisor or Family Support Practitioner, a gift in recognition of their outstanding success and progress they have made through yet again, a very challenging year. During this week we also provided all care experienced young people who are currently being support by the team with a voucher for them to spend on a gift for themselves, as well as various other celebratory events.

3.4 In celebration of our care leavers in B&NES I would like to share that we have had seven young people graduate from University this year with either a Masters or Post Grad Degree, and we have another 10 young people still at University in various stages of their degree/masters. There are 22 young people are in full time training or employment and four young people are in full time apprenticeships. Alongside this, 12 young people are engaged in part time education, employment, and training – this includes open university course, college, work.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 Statutory guidance produced in February 2018 outlines the role of Local Authorities and the application of corporate parenting principles as set out in section 1 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017. Local Authorities must have regard to the needs identified in the Children and Social Work Act when exercising their functions in relation to looked-after children and care leavers (relevant children and former relevant children). It should be read and applied alongside the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations volume 2: care planning, placement and case review, and volume 3: planning transition to adulthood for care leavers, resource implications (finance, property, people)

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

5.1 The Local Authority seeks to ensure that it meets all its corporate parenting responsibilities. Placements are identified depending on the child's assessed need. Aside from the cost of the placement, additional funding may also be agreed relating to supervision and support. Placement sufficiency is a significant area for development. A number of Children's Transformation Projects seek to increase the range of children and young people supported through connected carers and an expanded in-house fostering provision. The financial year 20/21 saw significant pressures across Children's Services. Children's Services continue to keep under constant review the effective and efficient use of the

financial resources allocated to it to endeavour to stay within the budgetary envelope.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

6.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

7 EQUALITIES

7.1 An EIA has not been carried out on this report. Any changes to service delivery identified through the Children's Transformation programme will be underpinned by an EIA.

8 CLIMATE CHANGE

8.1 The council has declared a climate emergency and has resolved to enable carbon neutrality in B&NES by 2030. When considering any placement for a child, we will seek to accommodate children within B&NES, therefore avoiding unnecessary travel for the child, their family, the social worker and other professionals. Children's Services must see children in their homes, settings and community in order to discharge their statutory responsibilities. Where possible, we will seek to minimize travel and use technology

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9.1 The Corporate Parenting Group are informed of progress against The Pledge on a quarterly basis. The services referred to within this report are directed and overseen by the Assistant Director and Director of Children's Services and Education. Any significant changes to service development are discussed with the relevant authority.

10 CONSULTATION

10.1 This report has been authored by Rachael Ward, Head of Service, in conjunction with the Assistant Director for children and Young People Service, the Director of Children's Service and the Children's Finance Manager. It has also been shared with the Lead Member for Children and Young People.

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Background papers	
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	