

**Corporate Parenting Panel Annual
Report 2019/20**

**Report of Councillor Ivan Jewell, Chair of the Corporate Parenting
Panel, and Helen Fergusson, Head of Children's Social Care,
Durham County Council**

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of this report is to present the Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report 2019/2020, for discussion following agreement by email in August 2020.
- 2 The Annual Report was due to be agreed by the Corporate Parenting Panel at its meeting on 17 July 2020, however due to the Covid 19 pandemic all meetings were cancelled. The Chair and Vice Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel agreed the Annual Report initially, then it was circulated by email to the Corporate Parenting Panel members for wider agreement.
- 3 The Corporate Parenting Panel meetings recommenced on 23 October 2020, and it was felt that it would be timely to discuss the Annual Report, which provides reflection on our achievements during 2019/20 and outlines the priorities identified for 2020/21.
- 4 The Annual Report was endorsed by Cabinet at its meeting on 14 October 2020, and presented to Council on 21 October 2020 for information. Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee will also receive the Annual Report for information at its meeting on 6 November 2020.
- 5 The Annual Report 2019-20 is attached as Appendix 2 of this report.

Executive summary

- 6 It was recognised that the Corporate Parenting Panel needed to strengthen political and management oversight and increase the voice of children and young people in our work. This was highlighted in our 2016 Ofsted inspection and benchmarking work.

- 7 A number of changes were implemented, and the September 2019 Children's Services Ofsted inspection report stated that 'The Corporate Parenting Panel is effective and is maintaining good political and strategic governance of children in care and care leavers.'
- 8 The Corporate Parenting Panel's Terms of Reference form part of Durham County Council's constitution and make specific reference that the Corporate Parenting Panel will prepare and provide an annual report that will be shared with Council, Cabinet and Scrutiny.
- 9 This is the third Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Panel, following the changes to political oversight.

Recommendation

- 10 Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are requested to receive a presentation at the meeting outlining achievements during 2019/20 and the priorities identified for 2020/21.

Background

- 11 In March 2016, Durham County Council's Children's Services were inspected by OFSTED who found that services required improvement. Their report made fourteen recommendations including: "Review existing arrangements to ensure that political and senior leaders have access to improved quantitative and qualitative performance information that enables them to have an accurate picture of the current practice delivered to children, so that they can develop strategies to maintain and improve the quality of front-line practice."
- 12 Following the publication of the Ofsted Inspection report an Ofsted Improvement Plan was developed and was grouped into four themes, including The Strengthening Political and Management Oversight theme. Benchmarking was undertaken, and as a result changes were made to political oversight arrangements, including the functions, membership, governance and administration of the Corporate Parenting Panel. Work has also been undertaken to raise the profile of the Corporate Parenting Panel's work.
- 13 Further work has been done following the approval of changes to the constitution, and terms of reference for the Corporate Parenting Panel were agreed, which incorporates all aspects of the constitutional changes. The terms of reference include the functions described in the Constitution with the responsibilities of the Corporate Parenting Panel in relation to each of the functions clearly set out.
- 14 The terms of reference make specific reference that the Corporate Parenting Panel will prepare and provide an annual report that will be shared with Council, Cabinet and Scrutiny.
- 15 In September 2019, Durham County Council's Children's Services were inspected by OFSTED. The inspection report states that since previous inspections (JTAI in July 2018, and focused CIN visit in January 2019) 'the local authority has taken swift and decisive action to strengthen services. Pace has increased since the focused visit, and solid improvements can be seen in many service areas, including at the front door and for children in care. Firm foundations are in place to sustain and build on the improvements made'.
- 16 The inspection report also states that 'The Corporate Parenting Panel is effective and is maintaining good political and strategic governance of children in care and care leavers.' A copy of the OFSTED inspection report can be found [HERE](#)

Development of the Annual Report

- 17 To ensure the voice of the child is reflected in the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel, it was agreed that young people from the Children in Care Council, supported by officers from the Partnerships Team, would develop the Corporate Parenting Panel's Annual Report for 2017-18.
- 18 The young people worked on the design, content and language of the Annual Report to ensure it was easy to read and understand. This was well received, and a decision was made to follow a similar process for the development of the Annual Report moving forward.
- 19 To ensure we continue to raise the profile of the Corporate Parenting Panel, the Durham County Council Communications and Marketing Team have been involved in the development of the Annual Report to ensure it follows a more corporate format, whilst ensuring it uses language and design which is also appealing to young people.
- 20 The Annual Report will hold a more prominent position on the Durham County Council website and will again be hosted on the Investing in Children website, and the Children in Care Council website.
- 21 The Annual Report includes information on:
 - (a) What a Corporate Parent is
 - (b) The role of the Corporate Parenting Panel
 - (c) The Corporate Parenting Panel's Terms of Reference
 - (d) Key performance data
 - (e) Achievements during 2019/20
 - (f) Priorities for 2020/21

Next Steps

- 22 Corporate Parenting Panel members are to note the following key date for the Annual Report:
 - (a) Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 6 November 2020, for information

Conclusion

- 23 Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel will have oversight of the work undertaken during 2019-20, and the priorities for the year ahead.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

The Corporate Parenting Panel's Terms of Reference form part of Durham County Council's Constitution.

Finance

There are cost implications for design and print services, however the Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report will primarily be shared by email, and will be hosted on the Children in Care Council, Investing in Children and Durham County Council websites to minimise printing and distribution costs.

Consultation

Young people from the Children in Care Council have been involved in the development of the Annual Report. Following an initial face to face meeting with the CICC in February 2020, the rest of the consultation has been done in the main through virtual meetings coordinated by Investing in Children, due to the Coronavirus pandemic and lockdown restrictions.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Looked After Services are available to all children and young people in line with legal duties.

Climate Change

There are no climate change implications

Human Rights

Children and young people have been central to the development of the Annual Report to ensure that their voices are heard.

Crime and Disorder

There are no crime and disorder implications.

Staffing

There are no staffing implications.

Accommodation

There are no accommodation implications.

Risk

There are no risk implications.

Procurement

There are no procurement implications.

Appendix 2: Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report 2019-20

Attached as a separate document