

Committee: **Corporate Parenting Panel**

Date: **19 October 2007**

Title of Report: **Draft Annual Report on Corporate Parenting**

By: **Director of Children's Services**

Purpose of Report: **To request the Panel's comments on the draft report prior to submission to the Cabinet on 20 November 2007.**

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**Recommendation:**

**The Corporate Parenting Panel is recommended to approve the contents for submission to Cabinet on 20 November 2007**

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**1. Financial Appraisal**

1.1 The financial implications are included in the Cabinet report.

**2. Supporting Information**

2.1 When the Corporate Parenting Panel annual report was presented to the Cabinet in autumn 2006, it requested a fuller report in 2007 about how the County Council has exercised its corporate parenting responsibilities during 2006/07. The attached report, therefore, covers the Corporate Parenting Panel's remit during the year within a more detailed report about corporate parenting.

MATT DUNKLEY  
Director of Children's Services

Contact Officer: Helen Davies, Deputy Director, Children and Families, Tel: 01273 481274

Local Members: All

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:  
None

Committee: **Cabinet**

Date: **20 November 2007**

Title of Report: **Corporate Parenting Annual Report, April 2006-March 2007**

By: **Director of Children's Services**

Purpose of Report: **To outline progress in corporate parenting in 2006/07**

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**Recommendation:**  
**The Cabinet is recommended to approve the annual report**

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### **1. Financial Appraisal**

1.1 There are likely to be financial implications in implementing Care Matters and the subsequent White Paper. Announcement about a new ringfenced Government grant is expected in December.

### **2. Supporting Information**

2.1 The annual report is attached as Appendix 1. Following feedback from Members last year, the format of the report has been changed to range wider than the activities of the Corporate Parenting Panel. The attached report, therefore, examines the many ways in which the County Council's role as Corporate Parent has been discharged, and includes a summary of progress made by children looked after by the County Council, significant developments in services for these children, as well as the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

### **3. Conclusion and Reason for Recommendation**

3.1 The Cabinet is recommended to approve the annual report.

MATT DUNKLEY  
Director of Children's Services

Contact Officer: Helen Davies, Deputy Director, Children and Families, Tel: 01273 481274

Local Members: All

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS  
None

## Corporate Parenting Annual Report, April 2006-March 2007

### 1 Placement Data

1.1 During 2006-07, the number of children looked after by the County Council reduced slightly (by 14). On 31 March 2007, there were 444 looked after children, placed as follows:

with foster carers	342
of these: in house carers	254
kinship carers	42
agency carers	46
placed for adoption	32
in lodgings	3
in ESCC children's homes	16
in agency children's homes	9
in agency special schools	10
placed with own parents	29
absconded	1
youth custody/secure unit	2

1.2 The slight reduction is due to a small decrease in the number of teenagers admitted to care, a few children becoming subject to special guardianship orders in favour of their foster carers and a proactive policy of placing children with friends and relatives through residence orders (with financial assistance). The reduction masks the increase in the number of young people aged 16+ technically designated as care leavers who continued to live with their foster carers.

### 2 Performance

2.1 Virtually all key performance indicators continued to improve in 2006/07:

- % of children with 3 or more placements in the year reduced to 8.6%
- % of children leaving care with at least 1 GCSE – 58%
- % of care leavers aged 19 who are engaged in employment, education or training – 73%
- % of children who had annual health checks and dental checks – 90%
- % of children adopted during the year – 11%
- % of children absent from school for more than 25 days – 8.5%
- % of children participating in their reviews – 80%
- % of reviews held on time – 90%

All the above are national performance indicators where performance was 'good' or 'very good'.

The only performance indicator banded as 'adequate' was the % of looked after children offending – 9.8%.

Additional important performance indicators include:

- % of care leavers at the age of 19 in suitable accommodation – 92%
- % of children looked after for more than 2 years in stable placements – 67%
- % of children achieving 5 or more GCSEs A\*-C – 25%

### **3 Inspections**

3.1 The Joint Area Review (JAR) graded services for looked after children as 'good'. The relevant section of the JAR report (which is due to be published on 16 October) will be available on 19 October.

3.2 The annual fostering service inspection in December 2006 judged the service to be 'excellent'.

3.3 Children's home inspections were as follows:  
The Bungalow, Sorrel Drive (June 2006) – excellent  
Old Roar House (September 2006) – adequate  
Rose Cottage (October 2006) – good  
Homefield Cottages (October 2006) – good  
Lansdowne Secure Unit (October 2006) – good

### **4 Key developments in 2006/07**

4.1 The most significant development this year was the establishment of the integrated looked after children's (LAC) service in October 2006, whereby the 3 social work teams responsible for most looked after children (ie 300) joined with the fostering service, the adoption and permanence service, and the residential care service, together with the education support team and the designated nurses and CAMHS clinicians for looked after children, to develop a more integrated approach to meeting the needs of looked after children. (35 looked after children are the responsibility of the SEN and disabled children's service, while the remaining 100 or so are the responsibility of the integrated area services, who are trying to rehabilitate them to their families or support them into adulthood).

4.2 The fostering service had another successful year. As well as the excellent inspection outcome, 27 new foster carers were approved during the year (a net increase of 5). A member of the Corporate Parenting Panel sits on the Fostering Panel. The service continued to work closely with the East Sussex Foster Care Association, who held its annual conference in May 2006, attended by Elected Members, staff and carers. The Foster Care Association has worked with the integrated LAC service to hold a Christmas party and pantomime trip for children, a very successful trip to see the X Factor in Brighton, and activity weekends at Little Canada. 200 carers and staff, along with some Elected Members, attended the Spring thank-you event at East Sussex National Golf Resort in March.

4.3 The adoption and permanence service matched 43 children with adopters during 2006/07 and matched 19 children with permanent foster carers. 26 new prospective adopters were approved during the year. A special guardianship policy was introduced in 2006/07, approved by the Lead Member for Children and Families. Special guardianship is a new legal order offering permanence to children and their carers, giving parental responsibility to the carers, thereby discharging the child from the care of the County Council. During the year, 5 special guardianship applications were approved by the Adoption and Permanence Panels. (A member of the Corporate Parenting Panel sits on each Panel.)

4.4 Progress was made in implementing the residential strategy. Lansdowne House (an 8 bedded children's home) closed in August 2006 and the staff and children moved to two smaller family style homes (4 places for boys in Bexhill and 5 places for girls in Seaford). After a long wait, the moves and new homes have proved very successful, with most of the children making significant progress. During

the past year, 2 new properties were purchased to replace Old Roar - in Eastbourne and Hastings, with 4 places each. After refurbishment, it is anticipated that the children will move in in December 2007. Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel have visited the homes regularly throughout the year.

4.5 The independent reviewing officer service continued to fulfil an extremely useful role in reviewing independently the care plans of all looked after children, monitoring their progress and quality assuring the work with the children. Their quarterly quality assurance reports to senior managers are instrumental in driving up standards for the looked after children's service.

4.6 Nationally, the most significant development was the launch of the Care Matters Green Paper, followed by a White Paper in 2007. A seminar was held for Members to acquaint them with the implications of the Paper – notably, improving educational achievement by looked after children, extending the period that care leavers should receive ongoing support and remain living with foster carers, improving health and leisure options, and establishing a children in care council.

## **5 Corporate Parenting Panel**

5.1 The Panel has met quarterly, and has continued to take a keen interest in the progress of looked after children and scrutinise the performance of services that support them. During 2006/07, the Panel has received presentations from young people in care, supported by Xpress Advocacy Service, and from East Sussex Foster Care Association.

5.2 It has considered reports on:

- strategy to reduce offending by looked after children
- educational progress of looked after children, including the 'Right to Read' project and a DVD for foster carers on 'literacy in the home'
- adoption and permanence service
- fostering service
- care leavers' progress
- independent reviewing service
- healthy care audit of looked after children, and action plan
- NHS dentistry available to looked after children
- audit of black and minority ethnic children
- Care Matters consultation

5.3 In addition, at each Panel, the monthly Regulation 33 reports on each children's home (compiled by an off-line manager) are considered. The members take a keen interest in these detailed reports, which supplement their own knowledge of the children's homes gained through regular visits.

## **6 Conclusion**

6.1 Improvements have been made in 2006/07 in the quality of care looked after children experience and their outcomes. However, much remains to be done to narrow the gap in outcomes between looked after children and their peers – in educational attainment and achievement, including accessing higher education, in health, in reducing teenage parenthood, and in making a positive transition into adulthood. The most effective way of improving outcomes is to secure a permanent placement throughout childhood. Therefore, continuing to develop the fostering service remains the top priority for the integrated looked after children's service.