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**CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide members of Scrutiny with information regarding the Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP).

**Summary**

2. The Children Act 1989 provides the legislative base for a child or young person to be 'looked after' by a Local Authority – previous terminology referred to 'children in care'.
3. The legislation specially states 'Local Authority' and it was this aspect which led to a renewed focus on the role of Councillors as 'Corporate Parent' in 1998.
4. The CPP is currently reviewing its remit and membership in addition to its links to other groups and forums e.g. Scrutiny; Council; LAC Strategic Group.

**Recommendation**

5. It is recommended that :-
  - (a) Scrutiny note the report and its contents;
  - (b) Scrutiny consider the areas of focus for 2012/13 and ways of improving the work of the CPP.

**Reasons**

6. The Children and Young People Scrutiny needs to be assured that the corporate responsibilities relating to 'looked after' children are being effectively implemented.
7. CYP Scrutiny is assured that all 'corporate parents' are aware and incorporating their responsibilities into their diverse roles.

**Murray Rose**  
**Director of Services for People**

**Background Papers**  
Children Act 1989

Jenni Cooke : Extension 2861

S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no issues for crime and disorder arising from this report.
Health and Well Being	Maximising life chances for Looked After Children, is addressed implicitly in this report.
Carbon Impact	There are no issues for carbon impact arising from this report.
Diversity	No specific issues arising from this report.
Wards Affected	All wards in the Borough could be affected dependent on home address of a looked after child.
Groups Affected	All Looked After Children and their carers
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not have implications for budget framework. Changes in membership or reporting arrangements may require policy or constitutional changes.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	Provision for Looked After Children – equality of opportunity.
Efficiency	There are no efficiencies identified in this report.

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

8. The Children Act 1989 provides the legislative base for a child or young person to be ‘looked after’ by a Local Authority – previous terminology referred to ‘children in care’.
9. The legislation specially states the ‘Local Authority’ as a whole has this responsibility, and it was this aspect which led to a renewed focus on the role of Councillors as the ‘Corporate Parent’ in 1998.
10. *‘For children who are looked after your Council has a legal and moral duty to try to provide the kind of loyal support that any good parents would give to their children – you should do your utmost to make sure that children in the public care get a good start in life’*  
(Dobson 1998)
11. The Quality Protects Initiative (1998) provided additional funding and also clarified Councillors’ specific responsibilities in monitoring the effectiveness of provision and ensuring a ‘corporate’ approach from a range of Council departments and agencies. A number of subsequent guidance documents have been produced, the most recent being ‘Care Matters’ in 2003.
12. Social workers embody the corporate parenting role on a day to day basis; however ‘corporate parents’ hold the ultimate responsibility.

### Corporate Parenting Panel

13. Local Authorities established a range of Panels/Boards following the 1998 Quality Protects’ initiative. In 2007 the Darlington Corporate Parenting Panel was reviewed to extend its

membership and have a clear remit with a focus on performance and outcomes (**Appendix 1 – Remit**). All members currently attend mandatory membership training regarding their role in relation to ‘looked after children’.

14. The CPP is again looking at those issues to ensure it is fulfilling its responsibilities towards this group of children and young people. The CPP does take a central role but this does not absolve others. This is a key challenge to ensure everyone incorporates these responsibilities into their respective committees and roles. Responsibility also falls on Health services, Police and other public services to consider ‘looked after children’ as a specific special priority and responsibility.
15. The CPP has developed links and involvement with young people via the Children in Care Council (Darlo Care Crew). Specific meetings are held to listen to issues and seek resolution. Central to this is the ‘Pledge’, developed by the young people.

### **Current Position**

16. The CPP agenda looks at all aspects of the care and welfare of children and young people looked after and the related performance and service issues. The Panel receives annual reports from service areas (e.g. fostering, adoption, education of LAC), outcomes of inspections and Reg 33 visits to DBC Children’s Homes (independent monitoring) and reports from other agencies as appropriate. The agenda has taken a specific outcome and received reports on that theme e.g. Be Healthy, Stay Safe.
17. The Peer Review in 2011 recommended that the CPP review its membership to involve other agencies and the Ofsted inspection felt a specific CPP Annual Report would increase accountability and awareness of its work. Attendance at the CPP by Members can vary and the last meeting was cancelled due to lack of attendance. This has led to the suggestion that substitution is allowed (from within the same political party) if the Panel Member is not available. These recommendations are incorporated into the current review.

### **Areas of Focus 2012/13**

18. The CPP is reviewing the remit and membership (as above), in addition to its links to other groups and forums e.g. Scrutiny; Council; LAC strategic group. Currently CCP does not have clear reporting arrangements – this does mean that the role of ‘corporate parent’ is not regularly promoted or full Council aware of its work