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**CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL REVIEW GROUP**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member –  
Councillor Cyndi Hughes, Children and Young People Portfolio**

**Responsible Director – Murray Rose, Director of People**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To report the findings and recommendations of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee's Corporate Parenting Panel Review Group, established to examine the role of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

**Summary**

2. At a meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee held on 27<sup>th</sup> February, 2012 it was agreed to establish the Corporate Parenting Panel Review Group. Terms of Reference were approved at the Scrutiny Meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> September and all Members of the Scrutiny were invited to participate in the Review. A wide number of issues were discussed and considered at the meetings and are referred to in the Final Report (**Appendix 2**).
3. At its meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> September, 2012, the Review Group agreed the following recommendations for submission to Cabinet.

**Recommendation**

4. Cabinet be requested to endorse the following recommendations of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee :-
  - (a) That the Membership of the Panel be increased to include a Liberal Democrat Member and also the Virtual Heads.
  - (b) That meetings of the Corporate Parenting Panel be formally agreed as part of the Municipal Calendar for 2013/14.
  - (c) That Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel be allowed named substitutes.
  - (d) That the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee receive regular reports on the work of the Children in Care Council (the 'Darlo Care Crew').

- (e) To actively seek to promote the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel across the authority and to present an annual report to Council.

## Reason

5. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons :-
- (a) The role of the Corporate Parent is a statutory responsibility of all Members of Darlington Borough Council regardless of political alignment;
  - (b) There is a need to ensure that corporate parenting responsibilities are fulfilled in an open and transparent manner;
  - (c) Members need to be assured that a high standard of provision and service to children looked after is maintained; and
  - (d) Members are aware of the work the Corporate Parenting Panel undertakens on the wider Council's behalf.

**Murray Rose**  
**Director of People**

## Background Papers

Notes of the meetings of the Corporate Parenting Panel Review Group.

Allison Hill : Extension 2291

|                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| S17 Crime and Disorder           | This report has no implications for Crime and Disorder.   |
| Health and Well Being            | This report has implications for the Health and Well Being for the residents of Darlington.   |
| Carbon Impact                    | There are no carbon impact implications in this report.   |
| Diversity                        | There are no issues relating to Diversity which this report needs to address.   |
| Wards Affected                   | This report does not impact on a particular Ward.   |
| Groups Affected                  | This report impacts on Children and Young People within Darlington  |
| Budget and Policy Framework      | This report does not recommend a change to the Council's Budget or Policy Framework.  |
| Key Decision                     | This is not a Key Decision.   |
| Urgent Decision                  | This is not an Urgent Decision  |
| One Darlington: Perfectly Placed | The report contributes to the Sustainable Community Strategy in a number of ways through the involvement of Members in contributing to the delivery of the five themes. |
| Efficiency                       | This report does not identify specific efficiency savings.  |

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

6. The Corporate Parenting Panel Review Group was established by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee in order to examine the role of the Corporate Parenting Panel and the Members of the Children in Care Council (also known as 'the Darlo Care Crew') and took into consideration the recommendations of the Peer Review carried out in November, 2011.

### Review Group

7. A wide number of issues have been considered and discussed at the meetings and this report describes the outcome of the Review Group, summarises the work undertaken, the findings from the processes and the subsequent recommendations.
8. The Corporate Parenting Panel Review Group met on two occasions and the Final Report of the Group is attached (**Appendix 1**).
9. The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee agreed to accept and endorse the following recommendations and to forward to Cabinet for consideration :-
  - (a) That the Membership of the Panel be increased to include a Liberal Democrat Member and also the Virtual Heads.
  - (b) That meetings of the Corporate Parenting Panel be formally agreed as part of the Municipal Calendar for 2013/14.
  - (c) That Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel be allowed named substitutes.
  - (d) That the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee receive regular reports on the work of the Children in Care Council (the 'Darlo Care Crew').
  - (e) To actively seek to promote the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel across the authority and to present an annual report to Council.

### Chief Executive's Comments

10. As Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel I welcomed the review and support the recommendations. To further build the work of the Panel it is our intention to develop a Forward Plan that will enable engagement of other important stakeholders at specific themed meetings.

### Director of People's Comments

11. I welcome the report from the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee. I fully support all of the recommendations made, which, if approved, will strengthen

the support for the Corporate Parenting role and enhance the good work which has already taken place.

### **Legal Implications**

12. Where a child is looked after by a local authority, section 22 of the Children Act 1989 requires the authority to safeguard and promote the child's welfare. This includes a particular emphasis on promoting his or her educational achievement. They are also required, as far as is reasonable, to make use of universal services available to all children. This responsibility is placed upon the local authority as a whole, not any individual or department, and has more recently been reinforced by the Children and Young Persons Act 2008.
13. Under section 27 Children Act 1989, a local authority may ask certain other public bodies, including Health, to assist it in fulfilling these duties. That other body is required to assist, unless this would unduly prejudice the exercise of their own functions.
14. These duties apply in relation to all looked after children including for example those who are accommodated by the local authority with the agreement of their parents (section 20 Children Act 1989) and children who have been returned to the care of their parents while remaining subject to a care order.

**CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL REVIEW GROUP  
FINAL REPORT**

**Introduction**

1. This is the final report of the Review Group, established by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to examine the Corporate Parenting Panel and its role.

**Background Information**

2. At the meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee held on 27 February, 2012 it was agreed to commence a Review Group and all Members of the Scrutiny were invited to participate in the Review.
3. Terms of Reference for this Review were approved at the Scrutiny meeting held on 5 September, 2011 **(Appendix 1)**.
4. A wide number of issues have been considered and discussed at meetings of the Review Group held on 2 April and 11 July, 2012. **(Appendix 2)**.

**Membership of the Review Group**

5. All Members of this Scrutiny Committee and Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel were invited to attend the meetings of this Review Group.

**Acknowledgements**

6. The Review Group acknowledges the support and assistance provided in the course of their investigation and would like to place on record their thanks to the following :-

Jenni Cooke, Assistant Director, Children, Families and Learning;  
Mary Sweeney, Service Manager Children in Care;  
Andy Whittam, Participation Officer;  
Allison Hill, Democratic Officer;  
Ada Burns, Chief Executive and Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel; and  
the Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel who attended the meetings of the Review Group.

**Aim**

7. The overall aim of the Review Group was for Members to examine the role of the Corporate Parenting Panel and the Members of the Children in Care Council (also known as the 'Darlo Care Crew'). Members also took into account the

recommendations of the Peer Review carried out in November, 2011 in relation to the membership of the Corporate Parenting Panel and the production of an Annual Report.

### **Methods of Investigation**

8. The Review Group met with Officers on 2 April and 11 July, 2012 to discuss the issues.
9. Members received an overview of the role of the Corporate Parenting Panel and its responsibilities under the 1989 Children Act and the Children Act 2004 for partnership arrangements from the Assistant Director of Children, Families and Learning.
10. Consideration was given to the levels of responsibility i.e. universal (minimum expectation of every member); targeted (specific interest of Ward Councillors); and specialist (Lead member, Scrutiny and Panel/Board arrangements) and discussed the current Membership of the Corporate Parenting Panel and outside representation from the relevant partners i.e. Health, Education and Police.
11. Members considered the recommendations of the two external inspections carried out – the Safeguarding and Looked After Inspection in November, 2011 which made no specific recommendations however suggested that consideration be given to an Annual Plan or Report to monitor its own effectiveness and to challenge outcomes for children; and also to the Peer Challenge carried out in July, 2011 which made a suggestion for wider multi-agency representation on the Panel.
12. Members also discussed in detail the involvement of the Children in Care Council, also known as the 'Darlo Care Crew' and their links with the Panel and this Scrutiny Committee.
13. Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee met with two young people from the Children in Care Council at their meeting held on 23 April, 2012 who advised Members of their involvement with the Care Council and their work with the Council which included the 21 promises made by the local authority in the 'Darlington Pledge'; involvement with the Corporate Parenting Panel; arrangements for Agenda Days and the plans to produce a DVD as a helpful tool for young people coming in to the Looked After Children system to explain who the Darlo Care Crew area.
14. At the final meeting, Members gave consideration to the final report of the Review Group and recommendations it wished to make.

### **Financial Implications**

15. The recommendations have no major financial consequence, however the Review Group recognises that the Council currently has limited resources and any spending aspirations will need to be reviewed within the overall competing priorities and service delivery pressures throughout the Council.

## **Conclusion**

16. It was agreed that the Corporate Parenting Panel are doing a good job and engagement with the Looked After Children has greatly improved, however the Group felt that this good work was not being communicated very well to the rest of the authority and that the Panel was in need of a PR exercise to highlight all the good work that has been done and is being planned for the future.
17. There needs to be a continued emphasis that all Councillors share the corporate parenting responsibility.
18. There is currently no reporting mechanism in place for the Corporate Parenting Panel although Minutes of each meeting are taken, however as this is a meeting not open to the public; these do not appear on the council's website for reasons of confidentiality.
19. It was acknowledged that the work of the Panel should be communicated to members by some method and it was proposed to submit an Annual Report to Council.
20. With regard to the current Membership of the Corporate Parenting Panel Members agreed that all political groups should be represented and that the Virtual Heads should be included in the membership.
21. To maximise attendance at the meetings of the Panel it was proposed that Members of the Panel be allowed to have named substitutes to attend meetings that they are unable to attend.
22. Again to maximise attendance at meetings and increase awareness of the Corporate Parenting Panel it was proposed that meetings of the Panel be included in the Municipal Calendar agreed at the commencement of the Municipal Year.
23. With regard to work of the Children in Care Council ('Darlo Care Crew'), regular reports are received by the Corporate Parenting Panel however, the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee do not have any links with the young people therefore it was suggested that those reports are also submitted to Scrutiny. It was also suggested that the Scrutiny Committee could receive updates on achievements and 'good news' stories relating to the young people.

## **Recommendation**

24. It is recommended :-
  - (a) That the Membership of the Panel be increased to include a Liberal Democrat Member and also the Virtual Heads.
  - (b) That meetings of the Corporate Parenting Panel be formally agreed as part of the Municipal Calendar for 2013/14.

- (c) That Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel be allowed named substitutes.
- (d) That the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee receive regular reports on the work of the Children in Care Council (the 'Darlo Care Crew').
- (e) To actively seek to promote the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel across the authority and to present an annual report to Council.

### **Corporate Parenting Panel Review Group**



**Terms of Reference**

**Title:** The Role of the Corporate Parenting Panel  
**Scrutiny:** Children and Young People Scrutiny

**Start Date:** March 2012 **End Date:** July 2012

| <b>PURPOSE/AIM</b>  | <b>RESOURCE</b>  |
|---|--|
| <p>To examine the role of the Corporate Parenting Panel.</p>  | <p>Members<br/>                     Relevant Portfolio Holder<br/>                     Chief Executive<br/>                     Assistant Director – Children, Families and Learning<br/>                     Children in Care Council (Darlo Care Crew)<br/>                     Foster Carers<br/>                     Social Workers<br/>                     Democratic Services<br/>                     Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel</p> |
| <b>PROCESS</b>  | <b>OUTCOME</b>   |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To examine the role of the Corporate Parenting Panel.</li> <li>2. To speak with Members of the Children in Care Council.</li> <li>3. To take into account the recommendations of the Peer Review 2011 in relation to the membership of the Corporate Parenting Panel and the production of an Annual Report.</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Members to have an overview of role of the Corporate Parenting Panel.</li> <li>2. To gain an understanding of the Children in Care Council and take into account the views of the Children in Care Council.</li> <li>3. To undertake a detailed review of the Corporate Parenting Panel and make recommendations for any changes thereon.</li> </ol>   |

**COUNCILLOR** .....  
 (TO BE SIGNED BY MEMBER OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REQUESTING TOPIC)

**CHAIR** .....  
 (TO BE SIGNED BY CHAIR OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEE)

**CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL TASK AND FINISH REVIEW GROUP**

**2<sup>ND</sup> APRIL, 2012**

**PRESENT** – Councillor C. Taylor (in the Chair); Councillors Curry, E.A. Richmond; and B. Egan.

**OFFICERS** – Jenni Cooke, Assistant Director Children, Families and Learning; Mary Sweeney, Service Manager, Children in our Care; Andy Whittam, Youth Service Participation Officer and Allison Hill, Democratic Officer.

**DISCUSSION –**

- Members received an overview of the role of the Corporate Parenting Panel and its responsibilities under the 1989 Children Act and the Children Act 2004 for partnership arrangements.
- Emphasis that all Councillors share the corporate parenting responsibility.
- Under the Children Act 2004 (Section 10 and 11) examined the responsibility of other public services i.e. Health, Police, Youth Offending Service and Education ('virtual Head') to 'promote co-operation between the Authority and its relevant partners'.
- Considered the levels of responsibility i.e. Universal (minimum expectation of every Member); Targeted (specific interest of Ward Councillors); and Specialist (Lead Member, Scrutiny and Panel/Board arrangements).
- Members discussed the current Membership of the Corporate Parenting Panel which consists of 4 elected Members and Chaired by the Chief Executive. There is also a Foster Care and a Residential Worker on the Panel. It was noted that the Corporate Parenting Panel does not have any member representation from the Liberal Democrats.
- It was discussed whether there was a need for further representation on the Corporate Parenting Panel from the partners i.e. Health and the Police.
- There is currently no reporting mechanism in place for the Corporate Parenting Panel and the Minutes of each meeting do not appear on the Council's Web Site, therefore not open to the public. Discussion ensued around the need to report work of the Panel and how this can be communicated to all Members.
- Members discussed the role of Scrutiny and future links to the Corporate Parenting Panel.

- Consideration was given to the Safeguarding and Looked After Inspection in November, 2011 which made no specific recommendations however suggested that consideration be given to an Annual Corporate Parenting Plan or Report. Members of the Group felt that reporting was important, however felt that 12 months was too long to find any potential problems.
- Members also considered the comments from the Peer Challenge in July 2011 which suggested more multi agency representation on the Panel.
- A Member suggested that it would be useful for Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to meet the authority's Children in Care Council (Darlo Care Crew) and it was agreed to invite the young people to attend a meeting of the Scrutiny.

**NEXT MEETING** – It was agreed that a further meeting of this Task and Finish Review Group be arranged to discuss the matters above further, and as there were limited Members and no Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel present, it is imperative that a Member of the Corporate Parenting Panel is present at the next meeting. Date and time to be confirmed.

## **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL TASK AND FINISH REVIEW GROUP**

**11<sup>th</sup> July, 2012**

**PRESENT** – Councillor Lister (in the Chair); Councillors Crudass, Kelley, H. Scott, C. Taylor; and B. Egan.

**OFFICERS** – Ada Burns, Chief Executive and Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel; Jenni Cooke, Assistant Director Children, Families and Learning; Andy Whittam, Participation Officer and Allison Hill, Democratic Officer.

### **DISCUSSION –**

- Members received an overview of the role of the Corporate Parenting Panel and its responsibilities under the 1989 Children Act and the Children Act 2004 for partnership arrangements.
- 1998 renewed impetus to remind Councils of the need to be proactive in promoting life-chances of looked after children. The expression ‘corporate parenting’ more widely used.
- Under the Children Act 2004 (Section 10 and 11) examined the responsibility of other public services i.e. Health, Police, Youth Offending Service and Education (‘virtual Head’) to ‘promote co-operation between the Authority and its relevant partners’.
- 2008 was the last review of the Corporate Parenting Panel.
- It was emphasised that all Councillors share the corporate parenting responsibility and it is a local authority responsibility and not just of Children’s Services.
- Educational standards have improved with the designated teacher for Looked After Children and the role of the ‘virtual heads’ however there is still an achievement gap with LAC. Members also discussed the possibility of the Virtual Heads being Members on the Panel.
- Considered the levels of responsibility i.e. Universal (minimum expectation of every Member); Targeted (specific interest of Ward Councillors); and Specialist (Lead Member, Scrutiny and Panel/Board arrangements).
- Members discussed the current Membership of the Corporate Parenting Panel which consists of 4 elected Members and Chaired by the Chief Executive. There is also a Foster Care and a Residential Worker on the Panel. It was noted that the Corporate

Parenting Panel does not have any member representation from the Liberal Democrats. The need for substitute Members.

- It was discussed whether there was a need for further representation on the Corporate Parenting Panel from the partners i.e. Health and the Police.
- There has recently been 2 external inspections - the Safeguarding and Looked After Inspection in November, 2011 which made no specific recommendations however suggested that consideration be given to an Annual Corporate Parenting Plan or Report to monitor its own effectiveness and challenge outcomes for children and the Peer Challenge in July 2011 which made a suggestion for wider multi-agency representation on the Panel other than just from Childrens' Services.
- Members also discussed the involvement of the Children in Care Council 'Darlo Care crew' which it was acknowledged was working well and that the Crew do a fantastic job and that two representatives had recently attend the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee. Members also discussed how to proceed with reporting achievements and 'good news' stories regarding the Looked After Children. It was also suggested that the report of the Youth Service Participation Officer on the role of the Darlo Care Crew could also be submitted to Scrutiny.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

It was agreed that the Corporate Parenting Panel are doing a good job and engagement with the Looked After Children has greatly improved however this good work is not being communicated very well to the rest of the authority. The Panel requires a PR exercise to highlight what is being done and what is planned for the future. The main areas for recommendations relate to membership, reporting and scheduling of meetings.

**IT WAS AGREED** – that the final report and recommendations of this Review Group be submitted to the next meeting of Scrutiny held on 10<sup>th</sup> September, 2012.