

Meeting date: 19th January 2021
Report to: Health and Well-being Board



Subject/report title: Update report – Corporate Parenting in Solihull
Report from: Frank McSheffrey – Assistant Director for Children, Young People and Families
Report author/lead contact officer: Yvonne Obaidy - Children’s Improvement and Standards Manager

Wards affected:

- All Wards | Bickenhill | Blythe | Castle Bromwich | Chelmsley Wood |
 Dorridge/Hockley Heath | Elmdon | Kingshurst/Fordbridge | Knowle |
 Lyndon | Meriden | Olton | Shirley East | Shirley South |
 Shirley West | Silhill | Smith’s Wood | St Alphege

Public/private report: Public

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1** To inform Board members of the progress and current position in relation to corporate parenting in Solihull.
- 1.2** To outline how Solihull MBC and its partners have supported our children in care and care experienced young people, by being excellent corporate parents, taking corporate parenting into service areas and ensuring that teams understand what it is and how they can support.

To raise awareness both of the needs of children looked after and care experienced young people and OVOS (Our Voice Our Services) our children in care council, which gives a voice to children and young people through monthly meet ups and supports them to take part in local and national forums, chair their own review meetings, as well as planning events and activities for all Solihull children and young people who are looked after or care experienced.

2. Decision(s) recommended

- 2.1** To receive this report, be aware of current progress and take relevant actions to support the development of corporate parenting in Solihull.

To note and implement the preference of Children and young people that all council officers and partners to use these new terms - “Children looked after and care

experienced young people”.

3. Matters for Consideration

- 3.1** Corporate Parenting is the term used to describe the duties and responsibilities that the local authority has to ensure the children it looks after are safe, their needs met and their aspirations promoted. This responsibility is held by all council officers, particularly senior leaders, as well as elected members. It means that we should all champion the interests of children in care and care experienced young people as if they were our own children.
- 3.2** This includes making corporate parenting a regular agenda item at team meetings, ensuring that the “Corporate Parenting in Solihull” document is read as part of new employee induction, routinely considering how we can champion the interests of children in care and care experienced young people, understanding how we can take practical steps that will enable children in care and care experienced young people to lead safe, fulfilling and economically independent lives.
- 3.3** In Solihull there are currently 529 children looked after and 287 care experienced young people who we are responsible for as their corporate parents.
- 3.4** Every child or young person needs a good parent who looks out for them, speaks out on their behalf and responds to their needs. For children in care and care experienced young people, this is a statutory role for Local Authorities. Everybody who is employed by, or a partner to the council is a corporate parent and part of the corporate parenting family and your role is one that can have a huge impact on the children and young people we look after.
- 3.5** The “Corporate Parenting in Solihull” document leads you through the new vision for corporate parenting, describing what corporate parenting is as well as outlining how we can support the vision across the entire council. Every Directorate and service area will have something to offer. Each of the offers will be unique and each will support our children in care and care experienced young people in a way that is different but equally valuable.
- 3.6** The “Corporate Parenting in Solihull” document is now part of mandatory induction training for all new staff when they join the organisation. This has contributed to awareness raising. Some teams have added corporate parenting as an agenda item to their team meeting to make sure that they have considered the needs of children looked after and care experienced young people. We still need more teams to do this.
- 3.7** Holding our children in mind is one of the most important things that we can do as corporate parents. This was exemplified when Nicky Pettit from University Hospital Birmingham made contact offering to work with us to support young people. As a result, both SMBC’s Improvements and Standards Manager, the designated nurse for looked after children and the OVOS team are working to promote the needs of our young people. When UHB is looking for young people to join forums to share their experiences to bring about change to services, understand the volunteering opportunities available at the hospital and to share job and apprenticeship information, we can flag them up to young people who would be interested.

A colleague from the Resources directorate also approached a stationery supplier who in turn donated packs of stationery to support young people going to college and university.

3.7 Corporate parenting achievements this year.

- The corporate parenting board is working to refreshed terms of reference which ensures that everything we do benefits our children and young people.
- The corporate parenting document is now part of mandatory induction training for all new employees.
- The employment and skills team have set up a training and skills centre in Chelmsley Wood which benefits our young people who are care experienced.
- Fundraising prior to the pandemic had increased due to staff sharing their understanding of corporate parenting with colleagues and friends as well as being aware of how to support OVOS.
- Exceeding our donation target for the care experienced young people's Christmas appeal to make sure that every young person receives a gift voucher from us, with over £4000 being raised.
- The Lions Club of Solihull and the Shirley Round table have donated £400 and £1000 respectively to OVOS
- The OVOS Just Giving donation page raised over £4,400 toward the cost of shopping vouchers for our care experienced young people.
- Councillors voted for our care experienced young people up to the age of 25 to be exempt from paying council tax when they live in Solihull. This means that 87 young people are supported.
- Young people still have access to free gym membership
- Support for OVOS has gone online with meetings being held regularly
- During care leavers week the focus was on our young people with cooking demonstrations, a bake off competition and a quiz and pizza evening.
- The lockdown newsletter is shared with all young people once every two weeks giving them tips for their well-being as well as healthy eating recipes and information that will be of interest to them.
- The annual picnic in the park event was held virtually this year with picnics taking place in offices, lounges and gardens across the borough connecting via the internet.
- 35 Corporate Parenting Awards were due to be given to outstanding corporate parents who had gone over and above to support our children. These will be awarded shortly.
- Each of our children and young people have received their certificates and awards for the celebration event with a lovely video message from the Head of Service congratulating them on their achievement.
- Moving support for children and young people onto virtual platforms to keep in touch and offer support
- Vulnerable children and young people who needed them were given laptops from the DfE– this was organised by the 16+team with support from Corporate ICT and our Schools ICT lead.
- Federation meetings have continued with partners working together to improve services for our children and young people

- Corporate parenting champions in place in some teams across the council but we still need more.

3.8 Corporate parenting challenges this year.

- This year has been a challenging one with regard to delivering our responsibilities as corporate parents. The plan for this year was to make our offer broader and more consistent for each child or young person who needs our support and ensure our offer was equitable for all. We also wanted to raise awareness around corporate parenting itself so that every officer and our partners fully understood both its meaning and what they could do to support.
- Due to the pandemic, all pledges which were for fundraising are on hold, so OVOS is maintaining enthusiasm for the pledges people made several months ago and preparing to reenergise pledges as soon as it is safe to do so.
- Mentor support for children and young people is on hold due to restrictions on face to face meetings. We are looking at virtual options moving forward.
- The Celebration event for Children Looked After and Care Experienced young people was due to be held on 14th March 2020 but was postponed due to the initial lockdown restrictions. It is difficult to set a new date for this event, but once we have certainty around the Covid 19 situation we will rearrange as soon as we are able.
- The Local Offer review with external partners is on hold. We are reviewing the needs of our young people in the light of the pandemic to ensure that we request the right support from our partners.
- Opportunities to engage with wider partners and establish new relationships in the community to support children looked after has been limited due to Covid-19, but this is set to change once it is safe to pursue this agenda.

4. What options have been considered and what is the evidence telling us about them?

- 4.1** The “Corporate Parenting in Solihull” document supports all staff and partners to understand their role as a corporate parent and what they can do to support individually as teams as well as in Services and Directorates. This document can be used to support each Directorate as well as our external partners to consider their corporate parenting offer
- 4.2** Having begun raising awareness regarding corporate parenting within Solihull MBC our wish for this year was to share our new approach more broadly and gather further support from our partners. Due to the pandemic activity has been restricted but we have still managed to develop some relationships which we will be able to capitalise on in the future. We have forged partnerships with University Hospital Birmingham and the Josiah Mason Trust and these will benefit our corporate children as we move forward. Our plan for working together is robust and has our children looked after and

care experienced young people firmly at the heart of all of its activities.

- 4.3 If you work with external partners and want to invite them to join our corporate family then we can work together to welcome them. This will ensure that our approach to corporate parenting evolves to involve the whole of the organisation and its partners, wherein partners become corporate ‘aunts and uncles’.
- 4.4 Partnerships developed through services we commission can also be part of our corporate parenting family by using their corporate social value to support our children and young people through the use of employment and training opportunities or work place experiences for our care experienced young people.
- 4.5 If you require any further information or support for developing your corporate parenting offer please contact;

Yvonne Obaidy on 07795602066 yobaidy@solihull.gov.uk

5. Reasons for recommending preferred option

- 5.1 By using all of the above options and sharing this approach within our directorates and teams as well as with our partners we can offer greater opportunities more equitably to our children looked after and care experienced young people.
- 5.2 It will also offer a more consistent approach to corporate parenting where each service clearly understands their role with regard to corporate parenting and has a bespoke offer.
- 5.3 It will keep children in care and care experienced young people at the forefront of our thinking.
- 5.4 Partners of Solihull MBC will be welcomed into our corporate family and their role as well as how to be involved will be clear.

6. Implications and Considerations

- 6.1 State how the proposals in this report contribute to the priorities in the [Council Plan](#):

Priority:	Contribution:
People and Communities: Take action to improve life chances in our most disadvantaged communities. Enable communities to thrive.	Support from the Solihull Corporate Parenting Family will help to equalise opportunities for our children looked after and care experienced young people.

Sustainable, quality, affordable provision for adults & children with complex needs.	<p>Each of our children looked after and care experienced young people will be able to draw upon greater resources from both Solihull MBC and its partners than currently exist to help them at key transition points in their lives by maximising their chances</p> <p>Greater funding opportunities from private business will support children looked after and care experienced young people.</p>
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6.2 Consultation and Scrutiny:

6.2.1 The “Corporate Parenting in Solihull” document has been written with partners from across the Council.

6.2.2 The Assistant Director group is committed to supporting the strategy and have been instrumental in the document reaching its final iteration.

6.2.3 Children’s Services and Skills DLT have approved the document and it is supported by CLT

6.3 Financial implications:

6.3.1 Fundraising during this year has been impacted by the pandemic but the good will of pledges from this year will be capitalised upon as soon as it is practicable to do so.

6.3.2 Offers from private business teams to mentor or tutor children will be followed up once it is safe to do so

6.4 Legal implications:

6.4.1 Solihull MBC has a statutory responsibility to act as a corporate parent and ensure the needs of children in care and care experienced young people are met.

6.5 Risk implications:

6.5.1 Being unable to capitalise on pledges made for OVOS which would have been converted to opportunities or revenue for children and young people; we have prepared to follow up all pledges once the pandemic situation makes it possible for them to be carried out.

6.5.2 The continuing pandemic situation has meant that it isn’t possible for mentoring to take place. We will prepare for the time when we can offer this opportunity by

contacting volunteers and preparing them for working with our children and young people

6.5.3 With the Local Offer review with partners on hold it could mean that we miss out on opportunities that would support our children and young people. We are preparing a new timeline for the review of the Local Offer to ensure that we can capitalise on existing relationships and opportunities as well as developing new relationships and exploring opportunities

6.6 Equality implications:

This meets our Statutory Equality Duty

7. List of appendices referred to

7.1 None

8. Background papers used to compile this report

8.1 Corporate Parenting in Solihull and Solihull Local Offer

9. List of other relevant documents

9.1 None