

REPORT TO: Cabinet

MEETING DATE: 9 April 2013

BY: Executive Director (Services for People)

SUBJECT: Corporate Parenting: New Commitments and Policy

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To inform the Cabinet of the key priorities identified at the Corporate Parenting Conference held on 28 November 2012, so that the Council and all associated agencies are working together to achieve the best outcomes for Looked After Children (LAC).

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Cabinet is asked to approve and adopt each of the commitments laid out in section 4 below and the refreshed action plan for the Corporate Parenting Policy. Appendix 1
- 2.2 The Cabinet is asked to delegate to the Corporate Parenting Planning Group (see Appendix 2) the overview of the implementation of the commitments and to ask it to report to it at regular intervals about progress.
- 2.3 The Cabinet is asked to support Who Cares? Scotland's '*Give me a chance: phase II*' campaign to tackle the stigma and discrimination faced by children and young people in care and care leavers.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The role of councils as corporate parents was central to the conclusions and recommendations of Extraordinary Lives (2005) which was based on listening to the views of young people who had been looked after, along with those of staff, and foster carers and kinship carers. These themes were developed in Looked after children and young people: we can and must do better (2007), and in the guidance for councils and community planning partnerships, These Are our Bairns (2008), on improving opportunities for looked after children.

Nationally the Scottish Government and Association of Directors of Social Work are currently supporting Who Cares? Scotland's '*Give me a chance: phase II*' campaign which will directly tackle the stigma and discrimination faced by children and young people in care and care leavers.

- 3.2 At a conference in May 2008, entitled “*Looking after our looked-after children*”, East Lothian Council and its partner agencies made a series of commitments to looked after children and young people which are the basis for the current Corporate Parenting Policy approved by cabinet in June 2010 (placed in the Members’ Library). The aim of this policy is to ensure a common vision and a set of standards and responsibilities to continually improve the life chances of looked after children and care leavers. The policy is council wide and also includes key responsibilities for partner agencies.
- 3.3 In November 2012 the Council organised a second Corporate Parenting conference. At this conference East Lothian Council and its partner agencies further developed the policy and made a series of fresh commitments to help improve the outcomes of the 203 children and young people currently looked after in East Lothian, with a particular focus on those looked after at home and in kinship care, for whom some of our current models of provision are less appropriate.
- 3.4 These commitments were considered and supported by the Corporate Management Team in January 2013 and worked up in a series of action plans which will be taken forward by the Corporate Parenting Group subject to Cabinet approval of the new commitments.
- 3.5 Intent on working as “One Council” to support children and families, deliver our corporate parenting responsibilities, and improve the long-term outcomes for all children, we will do this by:
- Delivering family interventions that work to strengthen families so that children can safely stay with them
 - Reducing the rate per thousand (0-18 population) of looked-after children and young people in East Lothian [ELC current rate 9.4; Scottish average (2011) 14.7]
 - Reducing the number of looked-after and accommodated children and young people [ELC current rate 73.1%, up from 70.3% in 2012]
 - Keeping more looked-after children and young people locally placed, either with their families or in other placements
 - Reducing placement moves and helping looked-after children and young people to build secure attachments [ELC current rate 22.5%, up from 19.1 % in 2012]
 - Improving the educational attainment of looked-after children and young people.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

NEW CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITMENTS 2013 ONWARDS

Arising from the November 2012 conference, a number of new Corporate Parenting commitments are proposed (see Appendix 1):

- 4.1 **Business Planning:** Recognising that all parts of the Council have a contribution to make to improve the outcomes for Looked After Children, the Chief Executive has suggested that all Departments have, as part of their annual Business Plan, commitments as to how they are meeting the

needs of Looked After Children. This means that all Council services accept a responsibility for looked after children, make their needs a priority and seek the same outcomes for them as any good parent would. This is now in place.

- 4.2 **Access to Leisure Activities:** Ensuring that there are no barriers to Looked After Children accessing mainstream leisure activities - can we offer more concessions to them, their parents, their foster parents? How can we include them in our youth clubs, playgroups, library services, summer activities? Looked After and Accommodated Children and their carers have been eligible for leisure passes for some time, and the Leisure Pass Plus Review Report approved at Cabinet on 12 March expands access for children looked after at home or in kinship care and also their kinship carers. But, how can we target these vulnerable, frequently excluded children and young people, and encourage and support them to become more involved? It may involve rethinking the design of leisure services, involving volunteers, reaching out to hard to reach families etc.
- 4.3 **Internship/Employability Skills:** We will aim to offer every looked after young person aged 15+ an internship with the council or its partners for a minimum of 6 months after they leave school. This will support them into appropriate employment, training or further education opportunities. It will be a corporate responsibility and will be led by the Education Service's Skills Centre within the Council's Employability Centre 'East Lothian Works' under the oversight of the Corporate Parenting Planning Group for LAC. We are also exploring ways to allow looked after young people access to East Lothian Council vehicles so they can learn to drive and enhance their employment opportunities.
- 4.4 **Developing Community Capacity:** There are opportunities in East Lothian for private sponsorship and support from local businesses for children who are looked after or on the cusp of being looked after, and their carers. We are tapping into this to some extent through initiatives such as Community Benefits, but there are opportunities within the Economic Development Strategy to focus on looked after young people and for Community Learning and Development to make linkages between businesses willing to offer support to families who need services, but also meaningful occupation. Such developments would need support from across the Council and its partner agencies, but also from the development of a network of volunteers through the implementation of a Volunteering Strategy.
- 4.5 **Educational Attainment:** We will continue to develop learning and support opportunities responsive to the needs of each LAC, to enable each young person to maximise the opportunities, potential and outcomes open to them throughout their education journey with East Lothian Council, to improve their future life chances beyond their school education.
- 4.6 **Care Leavers and Housing:** A protocol operates between Children's Wellbeing and Housing to ensure that the housing needs of ex looked after children are met. However there is a shortage of appropriate

properties, in particular for those young people with more complex needs.

- 4.7 **Looked after at home and Kinship Care:** We need to develop “new” and appropriate models for different kinds of care and levels of need. For instance, we need to work out how best to provide aftercare services for young people who have been in kin care or living at home, recognising the roles of their families. We may do this best in conjunction with the 3rd sector. Similarly, Health services are working on appropriate models for supporting the health care of children who are looked after at home or with relatives.
- 4.8 **Involvement of Young People:** The council should continue to consult with children and young people about how they would like to link with Council Management Team and Elected Members and how the Council might celebrate their achievements. We also need to consider how we can involve LAC in the recruitment and selection of a wider range of Council and partner agency staff whose remits focus on working with LAC.
- 4.9 **Development of Fostering Services:** To keep more looked-after children and young people locally placed in family placements, reduce placement moves and help looked-after children and young people to build secure attachments, we need to support families and kinship carers, but also to increase the capacity of our fostering service, maintaining and improving the buoyant fostering provision in East Lothian with minimal use of external agencies. Where children cannot remain with their own families, home grown fostering is the most effective and economical form of placement. We need to make Foster Caring more viable for people, in particular encouraging ELC employees to become foster carers.

Since the Conference funding has been identified in the 2013/14 Children’s Wellbeing budget for the development of fostering and kinship care, and corporate support has been offered to foster carers with:

- Credit Union - preferential rates as council staff
- Health Care cash plan at same rates as council staff
- mobile phone cash-back scheme
- appropriate e-learning.

5 EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment is not required at this time. However should this situation change an Equalities Impact Assessment will be carried out in the future if appropriate.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no immediate resource implications for this, however, there is an imperative to make better use of our existing council-wide resources

and services to meet the needs of our most vulnerable children and young people.

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 “Give me a chance: phase II”: <http://www.whocarescotland.org/pledge/>

Appendix 1: Updated Corporate Parenting Action Plan

Appendix 2: Integrated Children’s Services Planning Group for LAC - Members

AUTHOR’S NAME	Marion Wood: Service Manager Children’s Wellbeing Gill McMillan: Service Manager Children’s Wellbeing Sharon Saunders: Head of Children’s Wellbeing
CONTACT INFO	mwood@eastlothian.gov.uk / 01620 828116 gmcmillan@eastlothian.gov.uk / 01620 829910 ssaunders@eastlothian.gov.uk / 01620 827632
DATE	25 February 2013

Appendix : 1

Corporate Parenting Action Plan: East Lothian, April 2010-14 (updated February 2013)

Policy Objectives:

- Delivering family interventions that work to strengthen families so that children can safely stay with them
- Reducing further the rate per thousand of looked-after children and young people in East Lothian
- Reducing the number of looked-after and accommodated children and young people
- Keeping more looked-after children and young people locally placed, either with their families or in other placements
- Reducing placement moves and helping looked-after children and young people to build secure attachments
- Improving the educational attainment of looked-after children and young people.

Desired Outcomes/ Action Points	How	Lead Agencies/ Officers	Timescale/ progress
1. All relevant council services are clear about their responsibilities towards LAC and support them in consistent and comprehensive way	All ELC Services have, as part of their annual Business Plan, commitments as to how they are meeting the needs of Looked After Children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Paulo Vestri Corporate Policy and Improvement	Guidance issued January 2013
	This will also be taken forward by our Community Planning Partners through the GIRFECYP Group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Don Ledingham, Chair of GIRFECYP Group	Agenda Item: GIRFECYP meeting of 25 April 2013

Desired Outcomes/ Action Points	How	Lead Agencies/ Officers	Timescale/ progress
2. Ensure that there are no barriers to Looked After Children accessing mainstream leisure activities	Target looked after children and young people, and encourage and support them to become more involved in community activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tom Shearer, Policy and Partnerships • Bill Axon, Enjoy Leisure, • Eamon John, Healthy Living, Active Schools, 	Leisure Pass Plus Review Report approved at Cabinet on 12 March. A new scheme named "Access to Leisure" expands access for children looked after at home or in kinship care and also their kinship carers.
	Community Learning and Development Service will signpost and support all LAC referred and advise on other appropriate services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heather Fleming, CLD 	Agreement now in place with CLD to further engage Looked After Children
3. Internships - increase the number of work experience placements through the development of an internship programme within ELC/partner agencies	We will aim to offer every looked after young person aged 15+ an internship with the council or its partners for a minimum of 6 months after they leave school. This will support them into appropriate employment, training or further education opportunities. It will be a corporate responsibility and will be led by the Education Service's Skills Centre within the Council's Employability Centre 'East Lothian Works' under the oversight of the Corporate Parenting Planning Group for LAC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alison Hood, Education Service's Skills Centre • Greg McKenzie, Children's Wellbeing • Susan Smith, Economic Development Manager 	To be in place by Sep 2013 Discussions underway with partner agencies.

Desired Outcomes/ Action Points	How	Lead Agencies/ Officers	Timescale/ progress
	We are also exploring ways to allow looked after young people access to East Lothian Council vehicles so they can learn to drive and enhance their employment opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ray Montgomery Head of Infrastructure • Jim Lamond Head of Council Resources 	To be in place by June 2013
4. Explore opportunities in East Lothian for private sponsorship and support from local businesses for children who are looked after or on the cusp of being looked after, and their carers.	<p>Further develop Community Benefits and opportunities within the Economic Development Strategy.</p> <p>Make linkages between businesses willing to offer support to families who need services and meaningful occupation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Julie Caughey, Procurement Manager, Finance, • Susan Smith, Economic Development Manager, • Employability Centre 'East Lothian works' Manager, • Colin Forbes, Community Learning and Development 	<p>Policy in operation.</p> <p>Discussion started. Actions to be agreed by June 2013.</p>
	Develop Council Volunteering Strategy and network of volunteers/mentors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Murray Leys, • Elliot Stark, VDEL 	Proposals to be developed by August 2013

<p>5. Looked After Children achieve their full potential. Continue to develop learning and support opportunities responsive to the needs of each LAC, to enable each young person to maximise the opportunities, potential and outcomes open to them throughout their education journey with East Lothian Council, to improve their future life chances beyond their school education.</p>	<p>Each school improvement plan to contain specific proposals for improving the attainment of looked after children.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Darrin Nightingale, Head of Education 	<p>Proposals to be in place June 2013, implemented, September 2013</p>
	<p>Achieve greater involvement in education for parents and carers of LAC</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Head Teachers, • Sheila Ainslie, Education Quality Improvement Manager 	<p>Academic Sessions 2013/13 and ongoing</p>
	<p>Contribute to a flexible curriculum for LAC</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School staff, • Education Skills Centre Manager Alison Hood, • 16+ Hubs School Staff 	<p>As above.</p>
	<p>Develop prevention, early intervention and support in early years</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don Ledingham, Early Years Collaborative 	<p>Joint East and Midlothian Councils Collaborative team: National learning sessions January, May and October 2013</p>
	<p>Develop Council Volunteering Strategy and network of volunteers/mentors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Murray Leys, • Elliot Stark, VDEL 	<p>Proposals to be developed for CMT by August 2013</p>
	<p>Use Corporate IT contracts to obtain PCs for LAC</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alan Cruickshank IT Services Manager, • Karen Haspolat, Education Quality Improvement Officer 	<p>Proposals to be finalised for CMT consideration by June 2013</p>
<p>6. Ensure that the housing needs of ex looked after children are met, in particular for those young people with more complex needs.</p>	<p>Develop more specialised housing provision. Support for Young People who go away and need somewhere to return to (incl those in crisis).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Richard Jennings, Housing & Environment • Sharon Saunders Children's Wellbeing 	<p>Meeting between Housing and Children's Wellbeing 17 April 2013 to consider achievement of 2 dedicated units to be available by September 2013: item for</p>

Increase amount of accommodation available to meet needs of LAC	Explore joint arrangements with 3 rd sector.		Corporate Asset Management Group meeting
7. Provide appropriate services for all LAC, including LAC/Kincare Aftercare clients.	Develop “new” appropriate models for different levels of need. Create new support Hub for vulnerable young people, including LAC/Kincare Aftercare clients.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharon Saunders Children’s Wellbeing • 3rd Sector 	CW and 3 rd Sector exploring options with Life Changes Trust re possible funding streams for Aftercare and Kincare.
	Implement Health and Mental Health assessment for all LAC resulting in a care plan and review (CEL 16) for each LAC young person.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anne Neilson, Public Protection, NHS Lothian • Annemarie Burgess, CHP 	Plans in place for NHS health assessments in 2013.
8. Involvement of Young People	Consultation with young people on how they would like to link with Corporate Management Team and Elected Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lisa Shine, Young People’s User Involvement Officer • Council Management Team 	Proposals to CMT by August 2013
	Consultation with our looked after children about how the Council might celebrate their achievements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lisa Shine, User Involvement Officer 	Proposals to CMT by August 2013

	Wider involvement of young people who are LAC in Community Planning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Community Planning Officers 	Proposals to GIRFECYP Theme Group by August 2013
	Consider how we can involve LAC in the recruitment and selection of a wider range of Council and partner agency staff whose remits focus on working with LAC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sue Cormack, HR Manager 	Refresh current recruitment guidelines by June 2013.
	Promote positive image of LAC in the press and corporate communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> David Russell, Corporate Communications Manager 	Proposals to CMT by June 2013
9. Development of Fostering Services. Where children cannot remain with their own families, home grown fostering is the most effective and economical form of placement. We need to make Foster Caring more viable for people, in particular encouraging ELC employees to become foster carers.	Funding identified in 2013/14 Children's Consider how we can involve LAC in the recruitment and selection of a wider range of Council and partner agency staff whose remits focus on working with LAC. Wellbeing budget for development of fostering and kinship care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Celia Borland, Children's Wellbeing Resources Manager 	Feb 2013: Launch by Chief executive and Cabinet Member at Carers' Forum in April/May 2013
	Corporate support with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Credit Union -preferential rates as council staff Health Care cash plan at same rates as council staff mobile phone cash-back scheme appropriate e-learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paulo Vestri Corporate, Policy & Improvement 	Now in place.

Appendix 2: Corporate Parenting Planning Group - Members

Marion Wood	Service Manager, Children's Wellbeing, ELC, (Chair)
Gill McMillan	Service Development Manager, Children's Wellbeing, ELC
Celia Borland	Service Manager -Resources, Children's Wellbeing, ELC
Fraser Parkinson	Principal Inclusion & Equality Officer, Education, ELC
Lois Wilson	Educational Psychologist, Education, ELC
Alison Hood	Skills Centre/MCMC Lead Officer
Lisa Shine	Young People's Involvement Officer, ELC
Eileen McHendry	Training Officer, Children's Wellbeing, ELC
Carole Lesenger	Reviewing Officer (LAAC), Children's Wellbeing, ELC
Carol Watson	LAC Nurse, NHS Lothian
Charmian Currie	CAMHS, NHS Lothian
Greg McKenzie	Area Manager - Young People's Team, ELC
Lorraine Moore	Who Cares Scotland
Sheila Laing	Head Teacher, ELC
Raymy Boyle	Integration Manager, Children's Wellbeing, ELC
Carol Frith	Integration Manager, NHS Lothian
Sean Rafferty	Area Manager Practice, Children's Wellbeing, ELC
Paul Mulvanny	Reporter, SCRA
