

To: Full Council Members

My Ref: RDS/SH

Date: 23rd May 2023

Dear Members

Ref: Amendments to Terms of Reference – Corporate Parenting Board

Between October and December 2022, the Local Government Association (LGA) and Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council worked in partnership to deliver Corporate Parenting training to Cabinet members, Elected members, and the Corporate Parenting Board members.

As a result, the LGA recommended that the Corporate Parenting Board review its terms of reference to raise awareness and ensure the right partners are present and the right decisions are made for Sandwell children in care and care leavers.

In January 2023, as Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board together with the LGA, we identified the key areas for amendment:

- The frequency of meetings
- Membership
- The pledges and promises
- Quorum

The changes and redrafted terms of reference have been reviewed and agreed by the Strategic Corporate Parenting Group and Corporate Parenting Board.

I'd like to confirm that they are ready to be presented to the Annual Council on Tuesday 23rd May 2023.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Simon Hackett

Elected Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education

Corporate Parenting Board Terms of Reference

1. Purpose and Role

1.1 The Corporate Parenting Board assists the Council in fulfilling its legal obligations and responsibilities towards children in care and children leaving care, under the Children Act 1989 and Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000. The role of local authorities and seven key corporate parenting principles are set out in section 1 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

1.2 The seven key corporate parenting principles are:

- To act in the best interests, and promote physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people
- to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings -
- to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people
- to help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners
- to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people
- for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and
- to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

1.3 The Council will through the Corporate Parenting Board ensure that relevant partners understand how they can assist it to apply the principles in relation to the services those partners may provide.

1.4 The key aims of the Corporate Parenting Board are therefore to:

- Ensure the Council effectively discharges its role as Corporate Parent for all the children and young people in its care.
- Scrutinise the work of the SCPG to ensure it is effectively delivering the CPB's priorities.
- Develop and embed a strong corporate parenting ethos in Sandwell, which means that everyone from elected council members and the Chief Executive down to front line staff in the Council and in partner agencies are concerned about those children and care leavers as if they were their own.
- Act strategically to ensure that looked after children and care leavers are effectively supported to reach their potential through the provision of excellent parenting, high quality education, opportunities to develop their talents and skills, and effective support for their transition to adulthood.
- Set high expectations and promote stable relationships for all children in care and care leavers.
- Celebrate the achievements of children in care, their carers and care leavers.
- Make recommendations to the relevant committees and forums regarding key decisions for the benefit of children in care and care leavers.

1.5 It will achieve this by:

- Raising awareness of the Council's corporate parenting responsibilities and developing expertise and knowledge among elected members, officers and partners.
- Monitoring and reviewing the quality and effectiveness of services for children in care and care leavers delivered by corporate parents: the Council, partner agencies and commissioned services.
- Engaging with partner agencies, confirming expectations and scrutinising the quality of all services delivered to children in care and care leavers.

- Challenging and holding all partners to account for their role in the delivery of services to looked after children and care leavers.
- Overseeing the implementation of the Pledge, Corporate Parenting Strategy and Corporate Parenting Action Plan.
- Maintaining an overview of the needs of children in care and care leavers.
- Receiving reports on the outcomes of regulatory visits and inspections of provision for children in care and care leavers.
- Listening to the voices of children in care and care leavers in order to understand their experience of the services provided to them.
- Facilitating children and young people's participation and co-production within the decision-making process.

2. Status of the Board

2.1 The Corporate Parenting Board is accountable to the Full Council of Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council and will make an Annual Report to the Council that will be presented by Children in Care and Care Experienced young people, with the support of the Corporate Parenting Board Chair and Sandwell Children's Trust's Participation team.

2.2 A number of groups which contribute to the delivery of the Corporate Parenting principles and strategy will report into the Board. These include the Strategic Health Group, the Virtual School Management Committee and the Strategic Corporate Parenting Group.

3. Chair

3.1 The Corporate Parenting Board will be co-chaired by the Council's Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education and the Chair of the Care Leavers' Forum. If either Chair is absent, their Vice/Co-Chairs, will chair in their place.

1. Membership

4.1 The Board will be made up of:

- i. Chair and Co-Chair of the Voices of Sandwell Board plus the Chair and Co-Chair of the Care Leavers' Forum;
- ii. Eight elected Members of Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC), including the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education, and the leader or deputy leader of the opposition.
- iii. Leader or the deputy leader of the Council.
- iv. Chair of the Children's Services Scrutiny Board and Vice Chair of the Children's Services Scrutiny Board
- v. Chair of Sandwell Children's Trust Board.

4.2 The Board will call on the professional advice and assistance of **Advisors to the Board**, as follows:

Sandwell Council Officers:

- Director of Children's Services and Education (DCS);
- Assistant Director – Children's Commissioning, Partnerships and Improvement.
- Head of Virtual School.
- Director of Housing.

Sandwell Children's Trust Officers:

- Chief Executive of the Sandwell Children's Trust
- Director of Sandwell Children's Trust
- Head of Service Children in Care and Care Leavers
- Engagement Manager and/or Children's Participation Officer

Relevant Partner Agencies:

- Associate Director of Safeguarding and Partnerships - Black Country Integrated Care Board
- Designated Doctor for Looked After Children
- Designated Nurse for Looked After Children
- West Midlands Police
- Black Country Foundation Partnership Trust CAMHS Service
- Representative of Sandwell Foster Care Association

Other relevant agencies (to attend as appropriate):

- West Midlands Fire Service
- Adoption@Heart
- Department for Work and Pensions

4.3 Other staff from the Council, Sandwell Children's Trust, relevant partner agencies and other partner organisations will attend and report to the Board as required, for example Director of Adult services, Senior Commissioning Manager for Statutory Services Service Manager, 16- 19 and Connexions & Sandwell Adult Family Learning and Service Manager, CIC 14+ and Care leavers service from Sandwell Children's Trust.

5 Pledge and promises

5.1 All board members and officers are to sign 5 pledges and 25 promises developed by the young people from the forums for Children in Care (VOS) and Care Leavers (FIYA).

6. Meeting Frequency

6.1 The Board will meet every 10 weeks, in accordance with a programme of meetings agreed annually at the start of each calendar year.

6.2 Additional meetings may be called at the discretion of the Co-Chairs at times to be determined by the Secretary in consultation with the Co-Chairs.

7. Quorum

7.1 At least four elected members, one senior officer from The Trust, one representative partner, one young person from Voices of Sandwell Forum (VOS) or the Forum for Independent Young Adults Forum (FIYA) and one senior officer from the council.

8. Ways of Working

8.1 To ensure that the principles are delivered, the Corporate Parenting Board will work with Children in Care and Care Experienced young people to create and keep under review a Corporate Parenting Strategy which identifies priorities that will drive the work of the Board, and a dynamic action plan which implements the strategy.

8.2 Leads will be identified to take forward the priorities within the action plan. Where appropriate, task and finish groups will be established to take forward specific priorities or actions. There will be regular updates on the delivery of the strategy and the action plan to Corporate Parenting Board. These updates will be underpinned by review of a data dashboard, which will be used to understand where outcomes are improving or where there are gaps or issues which need to be addressed.

8.3 In addition, each Corporate Parenting Board meeting will receive a review report on a specific issue relating to the corporate parenting principles to enable Board members to gain an in-depth understanding of the issue and direct further action where appropriate. An annual programme of reviews will be agreed at the first meeting of each Municipal Year.

9. Administration

- 9.1 Meetings will be arranged by and a note of the proceedings will be taken by a representative of the SMBC Governance Team.
- 9.2 Agenda and supporting papers will be circulated 1 week before any meeting.

10. Decision Making

- 10.1 Decision are reached by consensus. If a vote on any matter is necessary, in the event of an equality of votes, the person presiding shall have a second and casting vote.

11. Reporting

- 11.1 The Board may make reports and recommendations on the work of the Board directly to any relevant council body, officer, partnership or partner body, and will report to the full Council on an annual basis.

12. Confidentiality

- 12.1 Meetings of the Board are not open to the public.