

Swindon Borough Council's 'making the Looked After Children and Care Leaver Strategy a Reality' 2018-2020

Corporate Parenting Advisory Board Date: 24th September 2018

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Wards:	All
Parishes Affected:	All

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 To seek the Corporate Parenting Board's approval for this Implementation report for the draft Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy report which was presented to the previous Board on 3rd July.
- 1.2 The draft Looked After Children and Care Leaver's strategy presented to the previous committee was a priority outcome of Swindon's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy which prioritised that all children and young people in Swindon deserve the best start in life. The Strategy also links to the Council Plan 2016-2020 which sets out vision for Swindon. Priority 4 of the plan outlines the Council's commitment to ensure that every child is given the support they need to grow and thrive. We want them to enjoy life, establish healthy relationships, achieve, stay safe from harm, be healthy and grow up to reach their full potential making a positive contribution to society. The quality and responsiveness of children's social care can transform the life chances of the most vulnerable children in Swindon. It can offer every child who has had a difficult start the promise of a brighter future, with every prospect of success.
- 1.3 The Board accepted the Strategy as a draft but required that children in care and young people should be consulted on the strategy and that a robust action plan to demonstrate how objectives and aspirations were to become real services with measurable outcomes. The revised report should then be presented to the Board at the next meeting.
- 1.4 An anonymous online survey has been conducted with children in care and the Care leavers group was consulted on the guiding principles of the draft strategy. The responses to the questionnaire which was completed by 28 children and young people and are being analysed. However, initial results are reported in the report presented today as are the connections to the changes we have made to the operational plan. The survey reported high levels of satisfaction with their placements and carers, emphasised the importance they give to education and employment as their way forward in life and how relationship with their families were so important to them.

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1.5 The department has implemented a Director-led Service Improvement Plan based on six pillars of improvement for a whole service improvement. The pillars focus on the workforce, ICT improvements, developing Partnerships, improving the Quality of Social Work practice, Early Help and troubled families and Children Looked After and Care Leavers. Each pillar has a detailed action plan for senior managers to lead and which will be overseen by the executive group led by the director. Rather than manage several different improvement plans such as fostering, care leavers, education and health, the strategy is to incorporate them into one improvement plan which is mostly encapsulated in Pillar 6. This improvement plan therefore becomes the vehicle for translating the aims and objectives of the draft strategy into operational reality. The plan is iterative and developing as actions are completed and redefined. The plan will be reviewed and monitored by the executive group and progress examined by the Corporate Parenting Board as such intervals as the Board decides.

1.6 Children growing up in care and care leavers must have equal life chances to all children growing up in Swindon as set out in Swindon's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2017-2022) and the Council Plan (2016-2020). This operational report aimed at making the strategy a reality converts our aims and objectives into actions to improve outcomes for our looked after children and care leavers over the next 2 years.

2. Recommendations

The board is recommended to:-

2.1 Approve the Swindon Borough Council's draft Looked After Children and Care Leavers' report and this Operational Plan 'Making Looked After Children's and Care Leavers Strategy a Reality' 2018-2020 as final reports.

2.2 Recommend to cabinet that it adopts the Swindon Borough Council's draft Looked After Children and Care Leavers' report and this Operational Plan 'Making Looked After Children's and Care Leavers Strategy a Reality' 2018-2020.

3. Detail

3.1 When a child comes into care, Swindon Borough Council becomes the Corporate Parent. This means the council, elected members, employees and partner agencies all have collective responsibility to safeguard and provide the best care for the children who are looked after or have left care. Every member and employee of the Council has statutory responsibility to act for that child or young

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person in the same way that any good parent would act for their own child informed

- 3.2 The statutory responsibilities of councils are set out in the Children Act 1989, including amendments made by the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and the Children and Families Act 2014. The Children and Social Care Work Act 2017 made additional provisions for care leavers, and outlined in law for the first time what it means for a local authority to be a good corporate parent. Section 27 of the Children's Act 1989 also places a duty on health, housing and education authorities to assist Children's Services in carrying out functions under the Act. This includes assisting in the Corporate Parenting function and providing joined up services that best meet the needs of children and young people.
- 3.3 The next steps are for the operational groups such as the CSMT, Fostering Improvement group and the Care Leavers' partnership to drive their component parts of the action plan to full implementation ensuring outcome are achieved within timescales. Senior managers will oversee progress, the achievement milestones and timescales for delivery.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 There are no suggested alternative options. The draft Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy and this operational Making the Looked after and Care Leavers' Strategy a Reality' reports are the main drivers to improving the life chances of our children and young people in care and care leavers.

5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 The Council already provides resources to fund looked after children and care leavers. No further financial resources are being sought at this time.

Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.2 Legal and Human Rights considerations have been taken fully into account in compiling this report. It is considered that the recommendations of this report are compatible with Convention Rights

All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- 5.3 None have been identified at this stage

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Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.4 The Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy will positively impact on vulnerable children and young people living in Swindon's community.

Risk Management

- 5.5 No specific risks have been identified at this stage for this report

6. Consultees

- 6.1 Corporate Director of Children's Services (DCS), Interim Head of Children's Social Care, Interim Head of Looked After Children and Care Leavers, Head of Transitions, Head of Finance (Children's), Members of Care Leavers Partnership and Delivery Group, Children's Management Team, Children's Strategic Leadership Team
- 6.2 The Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) and the Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.

7. Background Papers

- 7.1 None

8. Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1 – Swindon Borough Council's 'Making the Looked After and Care Leavers Strategy a Reality' 2018-2020
- 8.2 Appendix 2 - Swindon Borough Council Children Looked After and Care Leavers Draft Strategy 2018-2020