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## **SOMERSET CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD - ANNUAL REPORT 2019 - 2020**

Cabinet Member(s): Cllr Frances Nicholson - Cabinet Member for Children and Families  
Local Member(s) and Division: Jill Johnson OBE, Independent Chair, Somerset Corporate Parenting Board

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### **1. Summary**

- 1.1.** The Somerset Corporate Parenting Board meets every 3 months to take reports from its four sub-groups on progress to improving the lives of children and young people in care. It is also responsible for making sure that Somerset's Corporate Parenting Strategy is met. In 2019 – 20 the Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) continues to function effectively with reports from officers and partners showing clear progress against the 7 Principles of Corporate Parenting and our Ofsted Improvement programme. This annual report highlights the high quality of delivery that our front-line staff undertake on a daily basis and the Board's ability to influence this delivery through its direct contact with operational leads in its subgroups.
- 1.2.** The Board has shown increased maturity this year with officers, sub-groups and members evidencing a higher level of competence and confidence that has led to a more forensic approach to the information available and a more holistic approach to the solutions needed to keep our children looked after and care leavers safe, well and prepared for adult life. Nevertheless, this report highlights areas that still need to improve in order that all the young people in our care can achieve this.

### **2. Recommendations**

#### **2.1. The Corporate Parenting Board requests:**

- **That Council recommends a focus on the inconsistency of Council Tax exemption across the county and the impact of this on Care Leavers**
- **That Council invites District Councillor representation on the Corporate Parenting Board to provide support on housing and leisure issues**
- **That Council supports the commitment by Somerset County Council to create practical and specific offers to Care Leavers**

### **through our Local Offer**

- **That Council extend its thanks to the young people of the Somerset Care Council for all the hard work that they undertake.**

## **3. Background**

- 3.1.** The role of the Somerset Corporate Parenting Board is to ensure that Somerset County Council, together with the five District Councils, fulfil their duties towards children looked after (CLA), corporately and in partnership with other statutory agencies, including the NHS and Police. The existing Corporate
- 3.2.** Parenting Strategy and Terms of Reference (TOR), including membership, of the Corporate Parenting Board were agreed by Council in 2017.

- The overall aim of the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2019- 2022 is to
- 3.3.** strengthen good practice through a whole council approach to corporate parenting and a strong and effective approach to partnership working, thus improving the achievement, life chances and opportunities for all children
  - 3.4.** looked after and care leavers.

The Council's corporate parenting arrangements were reviewed following May 2017 Local Elections to ensure Somerset continues to provide a robust Corporate Parenting approach.

Full council in June 2017 approved the new elected members, and the updated annual action plan, and the arrangements set out in the corporate parenting strategy. Following a review of attendance at the Board this year, one member has resigned and another is absent through long term ill-health.

- 3.5.** The Corporate Parenting Board has met quarterly throughout the year, receiving regular updates from officers, partners and the Somerset In Care Council (SiCC) and Somerset Leaving Care Council (SLCC) who are a representative group of young people looked after or leaving care and are supported to meet by a Participation Worker (see Appendix B for their report). The voice of the child is a key aspect of the Strategy and the Board has continued to engage with young people, both through their representation on the Board, and through SiCC and SLCC which is well established and has an effective and regular link with the Board.

2019 – 2020 Achievements - (see Appendix A in Corporate Parenting Report 2019-2020) : this information evaluates the progress against the annual priorities set for 2019/20

- 3.6.** The format/governance of the Corporate Parenting Board:
  - The Board has changed to quarterly meetings and quarterly reporting commenced from May 2019 . This brings the Corporate Parenting reports in line with the newly formed Somerset Safeguarding Children's

Partnership reporting and aligns to the Children & Young People's Plan 2019 – 2022.

- The key staff changes made in 2019-20 (the Head of Service - Children Looked After and Care Leavers, Jayne Shelbourn-Barrow; Interim Head of Virtual School, Emily Walters; and Designated Nurse Children Looked After, Sarah Ashe) have shown more robust sub-groups with improved governance and commitment from sub-group members. The Board welcomes Alison Pennells as a member. Alison is the Engagement & Participation Worker supporting SICC and SLCC.

The chair especially wishes to highlight the many positive outcomes from the work of the Board and sub-groups especially:

- Additional capacity in operational teams especially in health (CLA Nursing team and Clinical team) and the Virtual School
- Stronger leadership evidenced in education (school leaders working more effectively with the Virtual School (VS)); health ( new Designated doctor and Senior nurse in the CLA Nursing team) and Children's Social Care (through a management and geographical restructure)
- A more forensic approach to data by subgroups and the Board including Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET) data, children placed in Somerset from other counties, dental data and health assessment data
- A more holistic approach to finding solutions ( Leaving Care team working with Emotional Health & Wellbeing (EHWB) team, commissioners and providers; education working with placements team; commissioners and providers supporting young tenants)
- Better system alignment and information sharing ( Health and Children's Social Care (CSC) aligning internal systems; Virtual School aligning internal systems)
- For the sixth consecutive academic year no CLA has been permanently excluded
- Better monitoring and interventions of care leavers who are NEET
- Project work to determine extent and risk of children from other local authorities placed in Somerset completed and Board assured.

#### **4. Background papers**

- 4.1.** Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report 2019 – 2020 – Appendix A Addendum to the CPB Annual Report