

## **Somerset Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report 2020 - 2021**

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 2020-2021 children looked after, care leavers, their carers and the services that support them in Somerset have had their lives disrupted in almost every aspect. The CPB has strived for assurance that those experiences and needs have been understood and met during lockdown and the COVID pandemic. We also want to ensure those needs shape our local conversation and actions about what happens next for our young people and the people who care for them.

**1.2.** During this momentous period the 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, currently under very difficult conditions; and the Board's ability to influence this delivery through its direct contact with operational leads in its subgroups.

The Board has needed to adapt to new ways of communicating and reporting progress this year with officers, sub-groups and members developing their use of technology and applying flexibility and understanding around changed priorities. Nevertheless, this report highlights clear signs of progress and success as well as acknowledging areas that still need to improve in order to support our children looked after and care leavers to be safe, well and prepared for adult life

### **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 supports and promotes a whole Council approach to create practical and specific offers to Care Leavers through our Local Offer and the Care Leaver Covenant
- That Council supports and promotes a Care Leavers Guaranteed Interview Scheme for all care leavers of any age, where the essential criteria of the job are met
- That Council extend its thanks to the Somerset Care Council's young people 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 four 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 Parenting Strategy and Terms of Reference (TOR), including membership, of the Corporate Parenting Board were agreed by Council in 2017.

**3.2** 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 by a Participation Worker (see Appendix B in the attached report 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.

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

**3.4** 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. Currently, nine elected members are committed to the Board.

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

- Better awareness of performance through new Health dashboard
- Improved communications around quality and timeliness of Initial Health Assessments (IHAs)
- Increased area provision for IHAs and Adoption medical Reviews
- Stronger voice of the looked after child through the Mind of my Own consultation and re-licensing. Care experienced young people have a voice on the Somerset Youth Forum
- Significant increase in the use of advocacy within children protection conferences to represent the voice of the child – now at over 90% of young people are represented.
- The launch of on-line Corporate Parenting training to all SCC staff has resulted in 317 completed modules
- A strong multi-agency approach to sufficiency and stability of homes through the new Sufficiency Statement and the co-design of the new P2i contract
- Stronger education processes in place with improved communication between agencies and services, including greater support at exam years
- Improved oversight of Children Looked After and Care Leavers with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and good alignment with the inclusion priorities of the Written Statement of Action
- Increased support to care leavers who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) through an improved NEET Personal Education Plan (PEP) and robust links with the Somerset Transitions College and the Somerset Works project
- Successful recruitment and development of 4 Leaving Care Apprentices
- Extended emotional health and wellbeing (EHWB) support from EHWB team to Leaving Care workers supporting care leavers.

## **4. Background papers**

**4.1.** Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report 2020 – 2021, available on request.

**Note:** For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author