

# AGENDA ITEM No. 5

## NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

### REPORT

To: YOUTH & EQUALITIES COMMITTEE	Subject: Delivering our Corporate Parenting Strategy (1) Developing a Champions Board (2) Improving Employment Opportunities
From: ALISON GORDON, HEAD OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND JUSTICE SOCIAL WORK SERVICES	
Date: 25 <sup>TH</sup> August 2016	Ref:

#### 1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to outline proposals to (1) develop a Champions Board to enable the direct influence of care experienced young people on the development of initiatives to improve outcomes for all care experienced young people within North Lanarkshire and (2) to develop employment opportunities locally for care experienced young people.

#### 2. Background

- 2.1 Part 9 of The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act introduced specific responsibilities in terms of corporate parenting to a range of agencies including local authorities and health boards.

Corporate parenting responsibilities extend to all looked after children from birth to when they cease to be looked after and beyond. This includes children in foster care, residential care, secure care, 'looked after at home' (on Home Supervision Requirements) and those in formal kinship care. Corporate parenting responsibilities also apply to care leavers who were looked after on their 16th birthday (or subsequently) up to and including the age of 25. The Act outlines six key duties for corporate parents, these are:

- o To be alert to matters which, or which might, adversely affect the wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers.
- o To assess the needs of those children and young people for services and support it provides.
- o To promote the interests of those children and young people.
- o To seek to provide looked after children and care leavers with opportunities to participate in activities designed to promote their wellbeing.
- o To take action to help looked after children and care leavers:

- o access the opportunities being provided (as per number 4 above) and
- o make use of the services, and access the support, which they provide.
- o To take any other action it considers appropriate for the purpose of improving the way in which it exercises its functions in relation to looked after children and care leavers.

The corporate parenting strategy was launched by North Lanarkshire Partnership in April 2016.

- 2.2 In response and anticipation of the implementation of the Act, North Lanarkshire developed a corporate parenting strategy in conjunction with care experienced young people, carers and representatives from a wide range of agencies with corporate parenting responsibilities. The Corporate Parenting Strategy was endorsed by North Lanarkshire Partnership in October 2015, with a formal launch event taking place in February 2016.

- 2.3 The Corporate Parenting Strategy includes a signed pledge from North Lanarkshire Partnership. The pledge covers key areas which include; improving services to families where children are looked after at home or providing high quality alternative placements, to improve education and work success and opportunities, to improve access to health and leisure and to listen and involve young people.

### 3. Proposals/Considerations

- 3.1 The Corporate Parenting Sub Group of the Improving Children's Services Group is committed to taking forward the work necessary to meet the intended outcomes of the strategy, and work is underway with partners to establish baseline information which will allow for the monitoring of improvements. Actions undertaken to date have included new arrangements to improve the assessment of, and response to the health needs of looked after young people and enhanced support for kinship arrangements. However to fully meet the pledge within the strategy two areas of work have been identified which we wish to take forward and which require wider support from the council and partners. These two proposals are covered below:
- 3.2 A **Champions Board** would provide an opportunity for young people to have a voice and to make a significant contribution towards transforming the quality of life and wellbeing of all care experienced young people. It creates a forum where care experienced young people come together with strategic decision makers with the aim of stimulating transformational improvements. The Life Changes Trust are currently requesting bids for funding to support the development of champions boards and there is a small group of care experienced young people who wish to take this forward and submit a bid. Applications must include a three year activities plan which details the outcomes which are expected to be achieved and how the activities will achieve these outcomes. The group of local young people are currently being supported by Your Voice in the early stages of completing the application and plan. While this will be led by the young people there is a need for multi-agency strategic commitment to the application, and to the implementation of the Champions Board.
- 3.3 **Employment Opportunities:** The educational outcomes for looked after young people and care leavers are generally poor in comparison to those of the majority of young people in Scotland. Trauma, attachment issues, mental ill health, stigma, frequent placement moves, the multiple transitions and chaotic living arrangements that many care leavers experience are contributory factors leading to disrupted schooling and negative experiences of education. For example Scottish Government statistics highlight that 74% of looked after young people leave school at the age of 16 compared to 27% of the whole population and only 28% of care leavers were known to be in further education, training or employment. In North Lanarkshire an information Sharing protocol was set up in 2015 between the Social Work Service and Skills Development Scotland and this will lead to local data being available regarding post school destinations for formerly looked after young people from later this year.

Securing employment is an important step in any young person's transition to independence. It not only provides financial independence, it also provides a person with self-confidence and a sense of self-worth. The opportunity to engage in employment is widely recognised as an important element of social inclusion. Young people leaving care are more likely to experience homelessness or housing instability due to their vulnerability and limited economic and social resources.

- 3.4 North Lanarkshire Council is the largest employer in North Lanarkshire and has the capacity to offer a wide range of opportunities in order to improve long-term outcomes; inclusion and employability of looked after young people within the area. Although there have been significant work done to improve post school destinations for young people leaving school under the Opportunities for All policy, there is no specific structure or policy in place to prioritise the creation of opportunities for looked after young people. Some local authorities for example operate a "Family Firm" policy which creates posts and work experience for looked after young people to improve their chances of permanent employment.

It is therefore proposed that a proposal be developed to create a range of opportunities for looked after children within North Lanarkshire.

**4. Financial Implications**

4.1 To be detailed in further report

**5. Recommendation**

5.1 That the committee endorse the above two areas of work and request a further report from the Corporate Parenting Sub Group with more detailed proposals to be presented at a future committee



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