

# North Lanarkshire Council

## Report

### Education and Families Committee

approval  noting

Ref AG/MF

Date 21/05/19

### Corporate Parenting Strategy and Improvement Plan 2019-2022

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#### Executive Summary

This report introduces and seeks approval for the North Lanarkshire Corporate Parenting Strategy and Improvement Plan 2019 – 2022 which has been developed in collaboration with key partners and in partnership with Today not Tomorrow (TNT) a group of care experienced young people who also lead on the ongoing development of our local Champions Board. The strategy and improvement plan which provides a key vehicle to drive forward our aspirations for our care experienced young people is attached as Appendix 1 to this report. These aspirations are reflected in a number of key pledges which frame the strategy and which also echo key themes within *We Aspire – a shared ambition*

A key element supporting the pledge to ensure care experienced children and young people have the opportunity to succeed in education and work is the development of the virtual school model and this report also provides an update to members on progress to date in this area.

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#### Recommendations

Committee are asked to:

- (1) Note the contents of the report
- (2) Approve North Lanarkshire's Corporate Parenting Strategy and Improvement Plan 2019-2022
- (3) Agree to receive further reports on progress and in line with the *Programme of Work* for Education and Families and the Council.

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#### Supporting Documents

**The plan for North Lanarkshire** Supporting all children and young people to realise their full potential

**Appendix 1** North Lanarkshire Corporate Parenting Strategy and Improvement Plan 2019-22

## 1. Background

- 1.1 The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and accompanying statutory guidance place duties on a range of public bodies with respect to looked after children and young people and care leavers. Collectively these duties are designed to ensure organisations commit resource and focus to promoting the wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers. The duties on corporate parents outlined in Section 58 of the Act include the need to:
- Be alert to matters which might adversely affect the wellbeing of an eligible young person
  - Assess the needs of eligible children and young people to any service or support provided
  - Seek to provide eligible children and young people with opportunities to promote their wellbeing

*And to*

- Keep their approach to corporate parenting under constant review, seeking out improvement wherever possible

In addition corporate parents must collaborate with each other, publish corporate parenting plans and report at prescribed intervals on these plans to Scottish Ministers.

- 1.2 The Council's own commitment to improving outcomes for care experienced young people has been reflected in a range of plans and actions including the decision to become a signatory to the Scottish Care Leaver's Covenant and the recent decision by Council to appoint a Champion for care experienced children and young people.
- 1.3 Whilst locally outcomes have improved in a number of key areas, for example through more young people being supported to remain in care or continuing care post 16, there remain a number of areas where our care experienced young people experience disproportionately negative outcomes, including with respect to engagement with education, exclusion and attainment.
- 1.4 Nationally a root and branch review of the care system is being progressed through the Independent Care Review with young people's voices to the fore. Locally we intend to build on previous engagement with the Care Review including in relation to the 'Stop-Go' work stream through which care experienced children and young people have articulated changes they would wish to see in practice and systems.

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## 2. Report

- 2.1 The North Lanarkshire Corporate Parenting Strategy and Improvement Plan 2019-22 has been produced by the North Lanarkshire Looked After Children and Young People's Group, a task group of our Children's Services Partnership and in partnership with Today Not Tomorrow (TNT). It continues the approach of the previous corporate parenting strategy in opening with a number of key pledges, with the linked improvement plan focussed around actions to support delivery on these pledges.

- 2.2 The Improvement Plan reflects a broader range of actions than those contained in the previous strategy addressing new areas, for example, around the maintenance of sibling relationships, a key concern raised by young people both nationally and locally. The plan will be reviewed at least annually.
- 2.3 Whilst the new strategy and plan are central to framing and delivering on our aspirations for care experienced children and young people it also has clear links and is supported by other key areas within the council's *Programme of Work* including the review of employability services, the review of ASN provision and actions to address poverty.
- 2.4 The intention to establish a new Virtual School model supported by new national Scottish Attainment Challenge funding targeted at raising attainment for care experienced children and young people has been referenced in previous reports. An appointment has since been made to the role of Virtual School Leader who will be supported by a small multi-disciplinary core team, currently being recruited. A range of scoping work has been undertaken to improve our understanding of the key barriers to attainment and the strengths and weaknesses of current approaches, most significantly through engagement with our care experienced children and young people. Amongst the areas they have asked us to address are:
- Improving access to mainstream educational opportunities
  - Ensuring trauma informed practice and that all staff understand the challenges they may face.
  - Greater flexibility within timetables/education plans including safe spaces for those who may need time out.
  - More involvement in decisions on whether or not to change school placement when a placement moves happen.
- 2.5 It is anticipated that the new Virtual School will support and challenge schools and other key professionals to improve educational outcomes and engagement. It will implement systems to track progress and with more rigour and will support more effective response to those children and young people experiencing challenges through the commissioning of appropriate tailored supports. A more detailed report on the Virtual School will be presented in the next committee cycle.
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### **3. Equality and Diversity**

#### **3.1 Fairer Scotland**

The North Lanarkshire Corporate Parenting Strategy and Improvement Plan will support improvement in outcomes for a group who have traditionally experienced disproportionately negative outcomes, exclusion and stigma.

#### **3.2 Equality Impact Assessment**

An EIA has been completed. Whilst being care experienced is not in itself a protected characteristic the duties set out in legislation and the commitments made within the Care Leavers Covenant place similar obligations on the council with respect to this group.

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#### **4. Implications**

##### **4.1 Financial Impact**

There is no direct impact arising from the approval of the Strategy and Plan. Actions within the plan which may require additional or reconfigured funding will be subject to further reports as appropriate.

##### **4.2 HR/Policy/Legislative Impact**

No direct HR impact with respect to the Strategy and Improvement Plan. Establishment of further posts and recruitment to the Virtual School are being progressed through relevant corporate procedures.

The Strategy and Improvement Plan support the council to meet the duties under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

##### **4.3 Environmental Impact**

None

##### **4.4 Risk Impact**

None

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#### **5. Measures of success**

5.1 These are as reflected in the attached Improvement Plan.

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**Chief Social Work Officer**