



**Corporate Parenting Committee
19 April 2017**

**Report from the Strategic
Director of Children and Young People**

Wards Affected: All Wards

**Children and Social Work Bill Summary – Implications for
Looked After Children and Care Leavers**

1.0 Background

- 1.1 This briefing provides information regarding the Children and Social Work Bill, currently awaiting Royal Assent. It has implications for social work practice as it relates to looked after children and care leavers with particular reference to the principles of corporate parenting, the education of looked after children and the regulation of social workers.

2.0 The Corporate Parenting Principles

- 2.1 The Bill outlines seven Corporate Parenting Principles that Local Authorities must have regard to in respect of Looked After Children and those leaving care in order to establish what it means for the authority as a whole to act as a good parent.

- 2.2 The seven corporate parenting principles are:

- To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people;
- To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
- To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;
- To help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;
- To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;
- For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work;
- To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

- 2.3 Under the Bill the Local Authority is required to publish its “local offer” setting out the statutory services available to care leavers.

- 2.4 The Bill allows all former relevant children aged under 25 years, as opposed to those in education or training as is currently the case, to continuing receiving support from a personal adviser on request.

3.0 Education of looked after and previously looked after children

- 3.1 Local authorities and maintained schools in England currently have a range of statutory duties in relation to supporting the education of looked after children.
- 3.2 The Bill would extend many of these duties to previously looked after children who have left care through adoption, Special Guardianship Order, or Child Arrangements Order. It places academy schools under similar statutory duties to maintained schools.

4.0 Adoption

- 4.1 The Bill extends the “permanence provisions” in relation to a child in care so that when a court is making decisions about the long term placement of children it must include an assessment of the child’s current and future needs, including any current and future needs resulting from the impact of harm that a child has suffered (or are likely to have suffered). This is intended to fully test out the long-term suitability of proposed special guardianship arrangements to ensure they are robust enough to last throughout a child’s minority.

5.0 Social Work regulation in England

- 5.1. Social workers in England are currently regulated alongside 15 other health and care professions by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). The HCPC’s role is to protect the public by ensuring that only qualified and competent practitioners are allowed to practice as social workers.
- 5.2. Under the Bill and as part of the wider social care reform a social work specific regulatory body would be established. The new regulator will be required to keep a register of social workers in England; set social work professional, education and training standards; determine an individual social worker’s fitness to practice; and cooperate with the other social work regulators in the UK.

6.0 Brent’s Response and Preparation

- 6.1 The principles of corporate parenting will be incorporated into the current pledge for looked after children and care leavers. It is suggested that a specific development session with Members in 17-18 Civic Year is held, to focus on how the principles of corporate parenting can be translated into practice across the Council.
- 6.2 The implications of changes to permanency planning practice will be considered by the Head of Service for Looked After Children and Permanency and changes to practice will be made as appropriate. Currently a robust assessment is in place to test the suitability of proposed special guardians for looked after children and this will be reviewed once the Bill is enacted.
- 6.3 The impact of new social work regulation will not be known until the new regulatory body has been established. Through established national and regional networks Brent will ensure that any changes and implications for practice are translated into our service planning.

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