

Meeting:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Date:	8 th October 2007
Subject:	Summary report on "Care Matters - Time for Change" White Paper
Key Decision: (Executive-side only)	No
Responsible Officer:	Paul Clark, Corporate Director, Children Services
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Janet Mote – Children's Services
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	

SECTION 1 – SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report presents a summary of the government White Paper "Care Matters: Time for Change", which was published on 21st June 2007. It builds on the Green Paper consultation process, which closed on 15th January 2007. Harrow was one of the Councils that responded. This followed 2 consultation events, the first with Young People, and the second with Councillors, Officers and a Young Person from the first event.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Panel is requested to note the scope of the White paper and to consider the changes and recommendations therein in terms of service delivery and impact on Children Looked After

REASON: (For recommendation - Executive-side reports only)

SECTION 2 – REPORT

1. Background

1.1. The White Paper sets out the government's proposals for closing the gap between the quality of life of children looked after, compared to that of the general population of children and young people. The backdrop of this is that, nationally, despite good intentions and working together outcomes for children looked after have not improved sufficiently well.

1.2. Children looked after statistically face a number of barriers to achieving similar outcomes to the general population of children, including: poorer educational performance, poorer health outcomes, greater exclusion from positive activities in the community, a greater propensity to commit crime and reduced chances of being in employment, education and training by their 19th birthday.

1.3. The White Paper emphasises the need for a partnership approach through the Children's Trust in order to achieve improvement in performance on these outcomes.

1.4. The idea of corporate parenting, introduced by the Government through the Quality Protects programme in the late 1990s, is given renewed emphasis. **“As corporate parents, we must champion the needs of children in care and deliver the best for them”**.

2. Chapter 1. Corporate Parenting

2.1 The White Paper proposes:

2.2 The establishment of a “Children In Care Council”, with direct links to the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children Services. This will give children looked after (CLA) a forum to express their views and influence service delivery

2.3 Local Authorities will be expected to develop a “pledge” to CLA, covering the services and support they can expect to receive from the council and its partners

2.4 That the Director and the Lead Member for Children's should be responsible for leading improvements in corporate parenting

2.5 the introduction of an annual government stock take of the outcomes for CLA, with ministers reviewing their progress in consultation with key stakeholders, representatives of local government, health and CLA themselves

2.6 The introduction of a 3-year programme of OFSTED inspections, which will be proportionate to the local performance for CLA.

2.7 National corporate parenting training materials being made available to help authorities ensure that effective arrangements are in place locally

2.8 LA's will be expected to develop a “Pledge” for all CLA, which will cover the support and services they can expect from the LA and associated partners

3. Chapter 2: Family and Parenting Support

This chapter emphasises the importance of, if at all possible, supporting children within their own homes or family networks

3.1 The white paper proposes:

3.2 That local authorities analyse the profile of their care population to make sure they have the range of services appropriate to their needs

3.3 The funding of multi-systemic therapy to help young people on the edge of care. This approach combines traditional therapeutic interventions with a range of other family support services, including health and education services

3.4 Providing LA's with monies to improve the availability of short break placements for parents, including parents of disabled children

3.5 Enabling foster carers who are relatives to apply for residence orders in relation to children who have been with them on a continuous basis for 12 months

3.6 Guidance to ensure that birth parents are actively and appropriately involved whilst their children are looked after and that services are available to enable a safe return home.

4. Chapter 4: Care Placements

This part of the White Paper includes a series of proposals to improve the quality of placements for children in care

4.1 The white paper proposes:

4.2 The piloting of Regional Commissioning Units to improve LA commissioning of placements, that is, individual councils will be better placed to provide a greater range of placements if they pool resources with other LA's

4.3 Legislating to prevent children being placed outside their own area, unless it is clearly in their best interests. This is to ensure that children receive the same levels of support as those placed locally

4.4 Revising the National Minimum Standards, outlining the skills, training and support foster carers should have as well as expectations of residential care

4.5 The introduction of an explicit requirement for children in care to be visited by their social workers, regardless of placement type

4.6 The piloting the effectiveness of "social pedagogy", that is building relationships through practical engagement with children and young people using skills such as art and music or outdoor activities.

5. Chapter 4: Education

The message here is that a first class education is vital to improving outcomes for CLA

5.1 The White Paper proposes:

5.2 An expectation that local authorities will use early years provision for CLA under five years

5.3 Priority for CLA in school admission arrangements, which includes the LA power to insist on their admission even when a school is fully subscribed.

5.4 That a child's education is not disrupted by placement changes and that in particular young people do not move schools in years 10 and 11, except in exceptional circumstances.

5.5 Putting the role of the designated teacher for CLA on a statutory footing, to support the progress of CLA in schools.

5.6 Personalising the learning of CLA, including providing a sum of £500 per year to support CLA at risk of not achieving their potential. This may include increasing the availability of personal tutors

5.7 Schools and local authorities expected to put in place strategies for improving attendance and reducing exclusion for CLA.

5.8 The piloting of the Virtual School Head in 11 local authorities. A Virtual School Head would oversee the education of CLA across all of the schools both inside and outside of the local authority area, as if they were the head of a single school

6. Chapter 5: Health and Well-being

This chapter stresses the message that improving health and well-being needs to be approached holistically. It is not just the concern of health and social care services, but includes secure attachments, positive leisure experiences and healthy living.

6.1 The white paper proposes:

6.2 "*Promoting the Health of Looked After Children*" will become statutory for health care bodies in 2008

6.3 New standards for supporting pregnant young women and mothers in care and leaving care, and introducing named health professionals for all children in care

6.4 That individuals in day to day contact with children in care are better able to provide sex and relationship education

6.5 Consideration to introducing a new indicator on the emotional and behavioural difficulties of CLA within a new local authority performance management framework

6.6 The expectation on LA's to facilitate positive activities for children and young people in care, including free part time access to extended activities, free music tuition in schools and priority status for CLA within local authority youth work

6.7 An expectation that local authorities will make their own leisure provision free for children and young people who are looked after, consistent with the role of the corporate parent

7. Chapter 6: Transition to Adulthood

The transition to adulthood for children in care tends to take place much earlier. The White paper stresses the importance of ensuring that young people are prepared and ready to move on.

7.1 The White Paper proposes:

7.2 Piloting ways to enable young people to remain with foster carers up to the age of 21

7.3 Extending the entitlement to the support of a personal advisor up to the age of 25 for all care leavers who are either in education, or wish to return to education

7.4 Introducing a national bursary of a minimum of £2000 for all young people in care who go on to Higher Education

7.5 Expecting local authorities to consider, when developing their pledges to CLA, what employment opportunities they and their partners can offer young people.

8. Chapter 7: The role of the practitioner

The message in this chapter is that the day-to-day function of the corporate parent is carried out by the work of the practitioner

8.1 To improve the role of the practitioner the White Paper proposes:

8.2 Revising the social care workforce to enable social workers to spend more time with children, delivering integrated and multi agency support to improve outcomes for children and young people

8.3 Improving the skills and training of social workers to increase their child development expertise. This includes setting up the status of “Newly Qualified Social Worker”, guaranteeing minimum standards of support, training and induction for child and family social workers

8.4 Strengthening the role of Independent Reviewing Officers to ensure they provide a more effective check on care planning on behalf of the child

8.5 That all children in care who need them have access to independent visitors and advocates to support complaints.

8.6 The piloting independent social work practices for CLA. A practice would be an autonomous organisation, led by private, voluntary or statutory organisations registered with OFSTED and employing social workers.

9. Chapter 8: Next Steps

9.1 Some of the proposals will require changes to the legislative and regulatory framework, including guidance and relevant national minimum standards

9.2 A detailed implementation plan will be published later in 2007

9.3 Financial support will become available – estimated at £300 million- over the next 3 years using the context of the Comprehensive Spending Review

10. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

10.1 This report is for information. No options are presented at this stage.

11. Financial Implications

11.1 This report is for information. No options are presented at this stage.

12. Performance Issues

12.1 This report is for information. No options are presented at this stage.

SECTION 3 - STATUTORY OFFICER CLEARANCE

Chief Finance Officer	<input type="checkbox"/>	Name:... Bharat Jashapara Date:
Monitoring Officer	<input type="checkbox"/>	Name: Helen White Date:

SECTION 4 - CONTACT DETAILS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

Contact: Andreas Kyriacou, Senior Co-ordinator, Children Looked After 0208
424 7642

Background Papers:

IF APPROPRIATE, does the report include the following considerations?

1.	Consultation	YES/ <u>NO</u>
2.	Corporate Priorities	YES / <u>NO</u>
3.	Manifesto Pledge Reference Number	