Executive summary

Lambeth Corporate Parenting Board was established in 2004 to enable elected members, officers and partners to fulfil their legal responsibilities to over 900 looked after children and care leavers aged from 0-25. In line with proposals set out in Care Matters: Time for Change. The board maintains a comprehensive overview of the progress of children who are looked after and for care leavers, scrutinising the quality, effectiveness and performance of the services that support them.

Central to the role of the Corporate Parenting Board is renewing its responsibility and accountability for the well-being and future prospects for children looked after and care leavers and ensuring that this vulnerable group have an opportunity to shape and influence the services which they receive.

This report sets out an annual update on the Corporate Parenting arrangements in Lambeth; particularly progress and outcomes of the board and the Children in Care Council. It advises members on key legislation and guidance, which has seen a plethora of change in recent years. In addition the report aims to strengthen the role and responsibilities of corporate parents.

Excellent Corporate Parenting requires ownership and leadership at a senior level, including elected members.

Summary of financial implications

There are no direct resource implications arising from this report. However, the development and delivery of interventions to support the needs of children looked after and care leavers will have resource implications which will need consideration within the budget setting processes.
Recommendations

Council

(1) To note the roles and responsibilities of all councillors as corporate parents to children looked after and care leavers.

(2) To note progress being achieved by the Corporate Parenting Board in 2012-13.

(3) To agree the next steps and proposals as set out in section 7 of this report

(4) To invite all councillors to identify those areas falling within their remit, and that of other councillors, to be reviewed in order to support the work of the Corporate Parenting Board and to either write accordingly to the Executive Director of Children and Young People’s Service or raise by formal amendment to this report.

(5) To endorse the Lambeth pledge promises to looked after children and young people and invite all Lambeth councillors to sign accordingly.

Corporate Parenting Board

(1) To note the report.

Consultation

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Racheal Ireton Development Worker
020 7926 7408 rireton@lambeth.gov.uk

Appendices

1: Lambeth Pledge for children looked after

2: Key legislation and background documents
Corporate Parenting Board: Annual Report 2012-13

1. Context

1.1 This report sets out an annual update on the corporate parenting arrangements in Lambeth; particularly progress and outcomes of the Board and the Children in Care Council during 2012-13. It advises members on key legislation and guidance, which has seen a plethora of change in recent years. The report aims to strengthen the role and responsibilities of corporate parents in improving outcomes for children and young people.

1.2 The information presented in this report does not include all children looked after end of year figures for April 2012 – March 2013 as these were not available at the time of writing.

2. Proposals and reasons: Corporate Parenting – our responsibilities

Legal Framework

2.1 The Children Act 1989 and the Leaving Care Act 2000 place clear statutory duties upon the Council to protect children from suffering significant harm and to provide continued financial and transition support to care leavers aged up to 21 (or 25 if in full time education). Underpinning corporate parenting is a wide range of national policies, guidance, regulations and legislation, which are subject to change by High Court rulings, such as the Southwalk ruling in 2009.

3. The Munro review has significantly impacted on the work we do with children and young people looked after. The Final Report of the Munro Review of Child Protection Services published in May 2011 includes Professor Munro’s 15 recommendations which have significant implications for the way that child protection services will be run at a local level. In relation to children looked after, key reforms to be taken forward include building the capacity of social workers and strengthening their professional practice; a reduction in the amount of central prescription; increased evaluation of the effectiveness of the help provided to children and families; and greater recognition that safeguarding is a multi-agency responsibility.

3.1 The revised care planning regulations and guidance, including The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Volume 3: Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers and the Statutory Guidance on Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked After Children March 2010, place increased emphasis on effective care planning with a focus on the child, and are designed to improve the quality and consistency of care planning, placement and case review for looked after children. They also aim to improve the care and support provided to care leavers.
3.2 The UK Government has made significant reforms to the youth remand framework with the implementation of the LASPO Act in December 2012. The Act implicitly attributes further responsibility to Local Authorities by means of children and young people being remanded to youth detention accommodation, being treated as children looked after and being eligible for leaving care services if they are looked after beyond 13-weeks.

3.3 Since Every Child Matters (ECM), major steps have been taken to integrate services and move towards a preventative programme through the development of extended schools, Common Assessment Framework (CAF), Team Around the Child (TAC) and Children’s Centres. The establishment of a Multi-Agency Family Support panel has been successful at improving family support to enable children to remain living safely at home and, where possible, avoid the need for them to become looked after. In addition, the Edge of Care Team works with young people and their families where there is a risk of family breakdown.

**Corporate Parenting in Lambeth**

3.4 Lambeth is ranked the 8th most deprived borough in London and 14th most deprived in England. Lambeth is placed 10th amongst London Local Authorities with the highest number of children and young people in poverty, and 15th in the UK. In Lambeth 35.7% of children and young people aged below 17 years live in families claiming out of work or in work benefits, compared with 24% nationally (Ofsted 2012). Lambeth is a ‘rich’ and diverse borough and is in a very real sense “the world in one borough”.

3.5 Children Looked After (CLA) are those children and young people aged 0 - 18 years who cannot safely remain with their family and are cared for by the local authority. The local authority has continuing legal and financial responsibilities to many of these children until they are 21 (or 25 if in full time education). This includes all unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) and children with multiple disabilities. Children looked after and young people are one of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in our community.

3.6 There are clear thresholds for admitting children into care and in Lambeth effective arrangements are in place to support children and young people to remain safely with their families or within their communities. However, where this is not in the best interest of the child, local authorities have a statutory obligation to protect and safeguard vulnerable children.

3.7 As at 31 March 2013 there were 500 children looked after which represents a slight reduction from 2012 with 510. In England and Wales there were 67,050 looked after children at March 2012 an increase of 2% compared to the previous year. Despite the increasing national trend for children becoming looked after in Lambeth the numbers have remained stable and they are decreasing; this is against an increase of Child
Protection cases and Children in Need numbers in Lambeth. In addition Lambeth has approximately 440 young people aged 19 to 25 years across the Leaving Care Service making Lambeth a corporate parent to over 900 vulnerable children and young people.

3.8 In the previous quarter (September to December 2012) there were 91 new admissions into care; infants aged 4-years and under remained the largest cohort at 26% of children entering care. The second largest cohort of children entering care was children aged 14-15 years representing 18% of entries into care. This is consistent with the previous reporting period where the largest cohort of children entering care was 0-4 years at 24% and the second largest cohort aged 14-15 years representing 19%. Of the 91 new admissions, 58% were male and 42% were female – this compares with 56% male and 44% females in the previous reporting period. Caribbean children continue to represent the largest cohort of newly looked after children at 27% this compares with 64% of children in the previous reporting period. Children from African backgrounds were the second largest cohort of children entering care with 20%, this compares with 26% in the previous reporting period.

3.9 Children are looked after in a variety of settings; in children’s homes, foster care and adoptive families, in residential special schools and a small number are placed at home with their parents on Care Orders. In 2012 approximately 80% of Lambeth looked after children live out of borough in independent fostering settings and the majority of care leavers live in Lambeth in council or housing association accommodation. In March 2013 348 (70%) of Lambeth looked after children lived in foster care which is slightly below the national average of 75% of the care population in England and Wales.

**Corporate Parenting – the role and responsibility of Councillors**

3.10 Effective corporate parenting requires knowledge and awareness of the needs of children and young people looked after and the services they receive. This is a shared responsibility by the Council as a whole. The role of the corporate parent is therefore:

a. To receive and consider accurate and timely management information reports on the numbers, characteristics and needs of looked after children and care leavers

b. To receive and consider reports demonstrating how effectively Lambeth is serving its looked after population through the provision of services and targeted initiatives

c. To receive briefings on new national and local initiatives designed to improve children and young people’s life chances

d. To gain knowledge of services based on direct involvement and opportunities to meet and gain the views of stakeholders, especially
listening to the views of children and young people looked after and members of the Children in Care Council

e. To monitor and review progress on the delivery of the Pledge to children looked after and care leavers

f. Ensure that decisive action is taken to address any shortcomings in the services provided to children and young people

3. Corporate Parenting Board overview

3.1 The Corporate Parenting Board is chaired by the Lead Member for Children and Young People.

3.2 The Board meets five times each year and themes board meetings on the five Every Child Matters outcomes.

3.3 There continues to be high attendance at meetings by the full range of partners.

3.4 Over the past year the Board has considered reports on topics including:

- Educational progress of children looked after
- Children’s Rights and Advocacy
- Participation of children with Disabilities
- Annual Consultation findings and action-plan
- New regulations for children looked after
- Munro Review
- Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act (LASPO)
- Trends in the care population
- Independent Reviewing Team annual report
- Housing needs for care leavers
- Health and immunisations for children looked after
- Steps to Success (S2S) and Apprenticeship update
- Teenage Pregnancy conceptions
- Emotional and mental health needs of children looked after

3.5 The Corporate Parenting Board has continued to oversee the Council’s Corporate Parenting strategy. An important element of this strategy is the ‘Lambeth Pledge’ this sets out 18 promises to all children in care and leaving care of Lambeth. In 2013 the Annual Consultation project action plan 2012-13 (should this be 2013-14) will form part of the pledge and support Lambeth to apply SMART monitoring and make the pledge more real for children and young people.

4. Corporate Parenting Progress throughout the year 2012-13

4.1 The decline in the care population is complex but largely due to Specialist Services actively promoting family support services and early intervention strategies which avoid children becoming looked after; these include
effective Family Group Conferencing, development of the Edge of Care Service, the Multi-Agency Rapid Response Team and establishment of a Multi-Agency Family Support Panel.

4.2 Placement stability and satisfaction in Lambeth is good and improving. Lambeth has developed and implemented a placement stability toolkit to identify risk and protective factors for placement stability. In a recent Annual Consultation (2012-13) with children looked after 78% felt the standard of care they receive from Lambeth was ‘very good’ compared to 75% of children in the UK. 93% felt they were ‘living in the right placement’ compared to 87% of looked after children in the UK. Twice as many children in the UK had ‘changed schools’ due to a placement move compared to children in Lambeth. Research highlights the importance of stability, security and lasting relationships as fundamental for the healthy development of children. Lambeth is committed to wherever possible protecting rights to family life and placing siblings together; 30% of children told us they were ‘placed with a sibling’ compared to 22% in the UK.

4.3 In December 2012 Ofsted inspected Lambeth Fostering Service the inspection focussed on five distinct areas and provided individual ratings:

- The overall effectiveness of the Fostering Service was judged to be **outstanding**
- Outcomes for children and young people are **outstanding**
- The quality of the service is **good**
- The service is **outstanding** at keeping children and young people safe and feeling safe.
- The leadership and management of the local authority fostering agency is **outstanding**

4.4 Lambeth provides “an excellent service to children and young people, family and foster carers. Children and young people are kept safe by processes, systems and procedures that are routinely and vigorously reviewed by an experienced and dedicated staff and management team. The outcomes for children and young people in foster care are excellent. Placement stability is very good with very few unplanned endings. Children and young people are healthy and enjoy taking part in a wide range of activities that promote their social and emotional development. They enjoy very good relationships with their carers and report that they are looked after very well. Young people are very well supported in transition to adulthood” (Ofsted January 2013).

4.5 The Corporate Parenting Board have listened to the Children in care Council and championed housing developments for care leavers in Lambeth. Over the past 12-months there have been significant housing developments; Lambeth Living and the Children in Care Council have developed an action plan to address concerns raised by care leavers the action plan includes;
• Preparing a joint protocol between CYPS, Housing and Lambeth Living for new leaving care tenants

• Housing will provide team meeting updates for colleagues in CYPS to keep them informed of allocations and housing option issues and processes in Housing

• Lambeth Living will produce, in conjunction with the Leaving Care Team and Housing Needs, a new housing resource pack to help support new tenants

4.6 The Service Development Team regularly consults with children and young people one method of consultation takes the form of an Annual Consultation project for children and young people aged 5 to 24 years. In 2012-13 83 children and young people participated in postal, online surveys and telephone interviews. The findings provided an excellent snapshot of children and young people’s views on the standard of their care, relationships and placements. From the key findings an action plan was developed in consultation with the Children in Care Council and senior management to address issues raised and drive forward real change. The action plan addresses the following points and progress will be monitored and reported to the board in February 2014:

• Every child over 2 years of age is to be seen on their own at each social work visit

• Identify a lead social worker in each social work team to attend a Visions of Success meeting and be the main point of communication

• Pilot reviews being chaired by children and young people

• Run a bullying awareness raising event for children looked after

• To ensure the Lambeth pledge is SMART and meaningful each Annual Consultation ‘action-plan’ will be monitored and promoted as the pledge for C&YP

• Review and simplify the complaints process for C&YP

4.7 In April 2012 Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission inspected Lambeth Safeguarding and Children Looked after Services; Lambeth was awarded an outstanding judgement and provided with 12 recommendations to be implemented. An action plan for implementing these recommendations within specific timeframes was developed with multi-agency partners and the Safeguarding Looked after Children (SLAC) multi agency action plan group was established. The groups focus was on monitoring the implementation of actions arising from the inspection and all 12 recommendations have been successfully implemented.

4.8 Lambeth are one of seven local authorities across England that provides an “Outstanding Adoption Service”. “Children coming into Lambeth Council Adoption Service receive an outstanding quality of care. Children who are
assessed for adoption make significant progress in their lives and achieve significant improvement across all outcome areas. A strong commitment to inter-agency working arrangements, particularly with health and education, positively enhances this”. (Ofsted April 2012). Adoption provides a child with the opportunity to be secured with permanent parent/s out of the Council’s care. Our three year average for 2009-2011 for this performance indicator is 79% compared with the England and Wales average of 74% with a rank of 47. This reflects a significant improvement from our rank of 99 for the period 2008-2010.

4.9 The Virtual School is now fully embedded within the Children’s Looked after Service which has led to a greater level of integration. There has been a clear focus in the work of the school to ensure that the educational needs of pupils with special educational needs, including those with complex needs are appropriately met. The Virtual School provides training for foster carers through the new Foster Care Forum that has been set up. Over the academic year 2011-12 the virtual school has assisted in the arrangement and completion of 350 Personal Education Plan’s (PEPs) and has attended around 150 PEP and Strategy Meetings. Compared with national figures, young people in Lambeth Schools have done very well however this positive trend does not apply to our children looked after. In 2012 80% of all pupils in Lambeth schools achieved 5+ A to C grades at GCSEs or equivalent and 13% of Lambeth children looked after achieved the same. There are a number of factors which contribute to educational achievement including the high level of special educational need of children looked after. In 2012 nearly half of the key stage 4 cohort were not in mainstream schools so would have been entered for exams other than GCSEs. Approximately 70% of children are placed out of the borough therefore are not educated in Lambeth schools.

4.10 The table below highlights the standard of education children and young people feel they receive (Annual Consultation Report 2012-13)

<table>
<thead>
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<th>How good is the education you receive?</th>
<th>Lambeth</th>
<th>National</th>
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<tr>
<td>very good/good</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>89%</td>
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<tr>
<td>just about OK</td>
<td>9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>bad/very bad</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
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4.11 Specialist Services have developed a multi-agency Virtual Health Team that work in partnership with the Looked after Children’s Service and support the holistic health needs of children and young people. Services promote good emotional and mental health, management of substance
misuse, management of blood borne illnesses, sexual health, immunisations and dental health.

4.12 There has been a positive increase in the number of referrals to the Substance Misuse Service which allows children and young people access to confidential advice and information. This specialist in-house provision aims to ensure that looked after children and care leavers have open access to an effective system of screening, support and specialist treatment. Since 2010 when the service began 164 referrals have been received and referrals have increased steadily year on year. Excellent joint working partnerships and protocols with the Youth Offending Service, Virtual Health Team and Looked after Children’s Services have proven successful in developing this effective Substance Misuse Service.

4.13 The Children Looked after Mental Health Service (CLAMHS) supports children who have been traumatised by their pre care experiences and those with mental health needs. The service offers a wide range of clinical interventions. Some of these are offered to children directly in other cases it will be the foster carer who will be receiving direct support in order to support the child. The service also offers consultation to social workers where they have some concerns about the behaviour of a child and require additional guidance about how best to offer support or to seek appropriate services. The CLAMHS service is now fully staffed and has received 12 referrals in the last quarter which is an increase from the previous quarter.

4.14 In England and Wales there were 31,051 under-18 conception rates in 2011 this represents a decrease from the previous year with 34,633. Figures in Lambeth have declined in line with the national trend, in 2010-11 there were 204 conceptions in Lambeth compared with 192 in Southwark. In 2011-12 the conception rates in Lambeth have significantly improved with 147 reported conceptions compared to 180 for the same year in Southwark. The 2011-12 under-18 conception rates for Lambeth were 34.8 per 1,000 girls aged 15-17 years, representing an overall decline of 59.2% since 1998 for the same year the overall decline in Southwark was 51%.

4.15 In 2012 21.6% of care leavers in England and Wales were NEET (Not in Education Training or Employment) in Lambeth this figure was 19% for 16-24 year olds. Care leaver performance indicators for 19-year olds recorded over the last three years (2009-2011) show that Lambeth have the 12th best care leaver EET (in Education Employment and Training) figures out of 420 Local Authorities in the UK. Lambeth has 47 care leavers in Higher Education which represents 15% of the 18-25 cohort. In 2011 there were 23 graduates including an Oxford engineering graduate and a first class honours in Mathematics from East Anglia. In 2012 there were 21 graduates with degrees as diverse as Engineering, Psychology, Bio Medical Science, Accountancy and Pharmacy. An Education Specialist is based within the Leaving Care Team and provides Financial Support and Advice to NEET care leavers and those in further or higher education. In Lambeth 79% of young people said leaving care was in their
best interest compared to 66% of the national average. (Annual Consultation Report 2012-13). This figure reflects the level of support care leavers receive to help them prepare to leave care. The Leaving Care team run a popular Independence Programme called 'What Happens Next' which provides help and guidance with practical life skills on a variety of topics ranging from budgeting and cooking to interview skills.

4.16 In 2012 Lambeth had 27 (12%) care leavers in apprenticeships or in employment with training. In March 2012 the Children in Care Council made a presentation to the council’s senior management team, who agreed to ring fence 20% of all Council wide apprenticeships for care leavers. The Steps to Success (S2S) programme has continued to improve the employability of Lambeth’s young people leaving care and has supported over 55 care leavers to successfully complete paid work placements within council departments since the scheme began in 2008. Currently there are 12 young people on full time paid work placements within the Council, the youngest employee is scheduled to start work in June 2013 aged 18-years and prior to employment was NEET. S2S roles range from Customer Services Advisors to Legal and Administration Assistants, young people are employed on fixed-term contracts ranging from 3-12 months and 1 young person secured permanent employment with the Council in 2012. The scheme is the envy of many local authorities and it works closely with colleagues from Leaving Care and the Apprenticeship steering group.

4.17 The Children’s Rights Service provides children looked after and care leavers with an in-house Advocacy and Rights Service complimented by an independent external advocacy provider. Barnardo’s and the Children’s Rights Officer work in partnership to communicate advocacy themes, improve practice delivery and influence service development. From April 2011 to March 2012 67 young people accessed the Advocacy Service of these 22% were male and 76% were female; the largest cohort accessing the Advocacy Service were children and young people aged 12-16 years. 42% of advocacy cases were looked after children, 45% care leavers and 13% were children in need. The service is active and responsive to the changing needs of children and young people in care and advocacy themes are mostly translated into service development projects. The two most common reasons for children and young people accessing advocacy provision in 2012 were:

- Children and young people wanting to move placement
- Children and young people wanting to stay in their placement

4.18 The active participation of children and young people is a key priority for Specialist Services and Lambeth has a long history of developing best practice guidelines for engagement and participation. Our Corporate Parenting Strategy sets out a clear vision for practice, and a designated Service Development Team facilitates effective consultation, involvement and participation of children and young people who are looked after, enabling significant progress in service development, and sustaining a
wide range of tangible outcomes for children, young people and social work practice.

4.19 Children and young people participate in a range of regional and national children rights and participation events and activities. In Lambeth young people participate in the recruitment and training of workers. 'Listening to the Voice of Young People' training is delivered to social workers, elected members, managers and foster carers and is delivered to all new social workers as part of the 10-day Specialist Services induction. A range of targeted consultation events and activities are facilitated covering a range of areas including health, communication for children with disabilities to developing services for children who are privately fostered and receiving child protection services. Targeted projects support Lambeth to listen to specific groups including, children with disabilities, out of borough children, younger children, care leavers and young people who are difficult to engage i.e. who may live in residential care or be at risk of offending behaviour. An annual awards ceremony recognises the achievements and contribution of children and young people looked after. The 'Reach for the Stars' awards, commissioned by the Corporate Parenting Board, celebrated its 10th anniversary on March 16 2013 and approximately 400 children, sponsors, foster carers and senior managers attended the event which was facilitated by an army of 40 volunteers from Specialist Services. Lambeth is effective at championing the needs of vulnerable children looked after resulting in priority access to Universal Services including:

- 75 children looked after received priority access to the Summer University Scheme which enabled participation in learning and educational courses in 2012.

- Free 'Real Sport' leisure passes are available for children looked after and care leavers aged 4-25 years and enable access to any of Lambeth leisure centres the scheme also enables foster carers to a discounted membership fee. Currently 113 children looked after have free gym membership.

- In March 2012 the Children in Care Council made a presentation to the council’s senior management team, who agreed to ring fence 20% of all Council wide apprenticeships for care leavers.

- In March 2013 96 looked after children and foster carers were provided with FREE tickets to the Zippo Circus

4.20 The Annual Consultation Project (2012-13) asked children looked after if they felt their views made a difference to how they are looked after; more Lambeth children looked after felt their views ‘always’ make a difference than the national average:
4.21 Early years provision for children looked after: Wriggle and Roar is a weekly targeted play and learn group for children looked after aged 0-4 years which aims to facilitate foster carers in supporting their children’s early literacy skills, including speaking, listening and enjoying books, songs and rhymes. This service was rated at outstanding by Ofsted in 2012. Recently the group has lost valuable input from the Lambeth Music Service and the Speech and Language Therapist however Lambeth Library Service have continued their support and the group plan to recruit more foster carers and strengthen partnership working with Specialist Services.

4.22 The UK Government has made significant reforms to the youth remand framework with the implementation of the LASPO Act 2012. The Act implicitly attributes further responsibility to the Local Authority by means of children and young people being remanded to youth detention accommodation and being eligible for leaving care services. The LASPO team which sits within the Leaving Care Team has been in operation since December 2012 and is developing well but at a slower pace than initially expected.

4.23 Implementing Munro reforms in Lambeth are underpinned by a 3-year strategy called ‘Getting to the Heart of Practice’. The Social Work Practice Advisory group (SWPAG) has been established as a mechanism to ensure strategic decision-making and reform is informed by social workers on the front-line. SWPAG is the consultative forum for professional practice development in Lambeth and members act as the champions of quality outcome focused practice. In the last year SWPAG has initiated and developed new Framework forms, reducing the size; giving social workers more opportunity to be reflective in their assessments and freeing up social workers so more time is dedicated to direct work with children and their families and less on paperwork. SWPAG are developing a new model of social work intervention which will support a culture change in how we work with families; ensuring that families understand the risks, highlighting their strengths, and working more in partnership with families. SWPAG is also developing a Practice Guide for social workers that will give information, research and practical advice for social workers on
specific issues, i.e. child development, direct work with children, engaging parents and assessment writing. The implementation of the Munro reform agenda is overseen by the Corporate Parenting Board.

5. Children in Care Council

5.1 The Children in Care Council directly supports the Corporate Parenting Board to measure and monitor the effectiveness and quality of ‘Corporate Parenting’ to children and young people; according to the views and experiences of the children who are in care. The board remains fully committed to listening to the voice of service users and the active involvement of children and young people within the decision-making processes.

5.2 The group currently consists of 9 members aged 13 – 25. The group meet on a monthly basis they set their own agenda and have a Chair, Co-chair and Secretary. The group regularly meet with senior managers to discuss important issues affecting children and young people in care. The Children in Care Council have a regular agenda item and the Chair and Co-chair attend all Corporate Parenting Board meetings.

5.3 In the last year members of the Children in Care Council have been very active and have attended a large number of key meetings including: Heads of Service, the Assistant Director, Divisional Director, Chief Executive, Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Executive Director and service managers. Visions of Success are scheduling a meeting with Councillor Lib Peck, the new Leader of the Council.

5.4 The role of the Lambeth Children in Care Council:

- Provide a voice for the wider population of children looked after and care leavers
- Help to monitor and implement the Lambeth Pledge
- Bring together service users and senior managers to influence positive change
- Develops skills and confidence building

5.5 In the past twelve months the Corporate Parenting Board has supported the Children in Care Council to raise practice standards on a range of issues including; contact cards, ‘staying put’ policy, life story work, foster care profiles and entry to care packs. A new younger group has also been established called ‘Junior’ VOS.

5.6 Children in Care Council activities over the past 12-months have included:

- Monthly Visions of Success meetings
- Full participated in three Ofsted inspections and the IRO thematic assessment
• Participated in the Young Lambeth Cooperative
• Organising a taster day and recruiting 17 new members
• The Vice Chair attended the ADCS event with Debbie Jones, Executive Director for Children and Young People’s Service
• VOS members attended CICC Regional meetings with Children’s Right’s Officer
• Held a VOS away day for members to reflect and plan ahead
• VOS Vice Chair delivered a presentation to middle and senior managers from across CS in Richmond
• VOS members attended national consultation and APOG meetings
• Members were involved in the Local Government Chronicle submission
• VOS members have been instrumental in developing ‘Junior’ Visions of Success which is a consultation group of children aged between 8 to 13 years
• Attend monthly Corporate Parenting Board pre-meetings

5.7 ‘Junior’ Visions of Success are a consultation group of approximately 15 members aged between 8 to 13 years who meet during the holiday period to consult and provide views based on their first hand experience of accessing services, ‘Junior’ VOS are consulted on a broad range of important themes and findings are fed back to decision-makers to influence positive change and service development. Targeted ‘Junior’ VOS consultation activities have included:

- Foster Care provision and Foster Care profiles
- Health provision for children looked after

6. Priorities for the year ahead

6.1 The Children Looked After Strategy 2012-15 contains 11 strategic priorities over a three-year period and this report highlights the considerable progress made across all areas. The Corporate Parenting Board forward plan 2013-14 will monitor future progress made on the strategic priorities during the next 12-months.

1. Increased permanence – A stable and loving placement where a child can develop positive and consistent relationships is the bedrock for improving life chances.

2. Ensuring that the right children are looked after – Where children can live at home having the right services available will enable children to do that.

3. Commissioning sufficient placements – A number of children looked after do not live within Lambeth, having a greater level of placement choice will benefit children and provide better value for money.

4. Improving educational outcomes – We will provide a range of actions to improve education attainment for children looked after.
5. **Ensuring that children looked after receive appropriate health care, including mental health** – We will provide access to good quality health care and meet the individual health needs of children.

6. **Improving outcomes for care leavers** – All 11 priorities relate to care leavers we aim to ensure that all young people leaving care will be able to enjoy stable and fulfilling adult lives.

7. **Embedding the care planning regulations 2010** – We will ensure to meet all new regulations and standards.

8. **Increasing the participation of children and young people** – Further promote service user participation as this is central to improve and develop services accordingly.

9. **Ensuring that children and young people are safely cared for** – Children must be cared for in a safe and secure environment and have clear arrangements for ensuring that their safety is considered.

10. **Reducing offending behaviour** – Children should be kept safe from being victims of crime and should receive diversion from offending behaviour.

11. **Ensuring that outcomes demonstrate the effectiveness of equalities and diversity initiatives** – Outcomes should be monitored and children should have equal opportunities to succeed and have access to services.

**7 Next Steps**

7.1 During this period of austerity measures the Council as a whole must remain committed to its parental responsibility towards over 900 vulnerable children and young people. This group must remain a priority and future cuts must not negatively impact upon them.

7.2 Lambeth must remain outstanding at upholding its corporate parenting duties.

7.3 Elected members note their responsibility in promoting positive outcomes for children and young people in care.

7.4 Every child matters and corporate parents must encourage each and every child/young person to achieve their full potential in life and make good choices.

7.5 The gap between looked after children, care leavers and their peers is still too wide and there is much to be done to improve educational outcomes for looked after children and young people in Lambeth.
8. Conclusion

8.1 It is with the corporate parent that responsibility and accountability for the wellbeing and future prospects for over 900 Lambeth children in care ultimately rest. A good corporate parent must offer everything that a good parent would, including stability. It must address both the difficulties which children looked after experience and the challenges of parenting within a complex system of different services.

9. Finance Comments

9.1 The report set out an annual update on the Corporate Parenting arrangements in Lambeth; particularly progress and outcomes of the board and the Children in Care Council.

9.2 The report aims to strengthen the roles and responsibilities of corporate parenting in improving outcomes for children and young people and the forward plan that sets out the key priorities for 2012-15 highlighting recent key changes in legislations and guidance.

9.3 There are no financial implications arising from the report however any resource implication will be met within Specialist & Commissioning budget and its partners.

10. Comments from Director of Governance & Democracy

10.1 All Members have individual and collective responsibility as the Corporate Parents for Lambeth’s looked after children. The Corporate Parenting Board is required to submit an annual report to Full Council on its corporate parenting arrangements.

11. Organisational Implications

Risk Management:

11.1 The Council has a very strong commitment to its corporate parenting role and needs to maintain its ‘outstanding’ standard.

Equalities impact assessment:

11.2 Whilst a formal Equality Impact Assessment has not been undertaken for this report; the Corporate Parenting Strategy has had an Equality Impact Assessment, taking into account different groups of children looked after based on their age, ethnicity, gender, abilities and accessibility. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken with regard to the overall service for Children Looked After. This has been presented to the Equalities Board. There is an over-representation of children from Black Caribbean backgrounds and Mixed Race backgrounds relative to the overall population of children. This mirrors similar over-representations of these groups within Children in Need and Child Protection services. An analysis of outcomes
showed that there was no significant difference in performance between children and Care Leavers from different ethnic backgrounds.

**Community safety implications:**

11.3 The capacity of the Council and its partners to engage vulnerable young people looked after will contribute directly to the achievement of our corporate priorities to reduce crime and disorder.

**Environmental implications:**

11.4 None

**Staffing and accommodation implications:**

11.5 The Corporate Parenting and Service Development Team will continue to take operational lead in supporting the Council to raise the profile of corporate parenting, support the function of the Corporate Parenting Board and the Children in Care Council.

**Any other implications:**

11.6 None

**12. Timetable for implementation**

12.1 Not applicable
13.1 Appendix One – Lambeth Pledge for children and young people looked after

Lambeth Council: Our Pledge for Children and Young People in Care

Our Pledge lists things that will happen from the people who look after you and work with you when you are in care. All of these people like your social worker, foster carer, independent reviewing officer and other corporate parents need to make sure that the things they do for you, and things they allow you to do, keep you safe and well.

Being safe and well are the most important rights, so they have been put first and will always come first if they ever clash with another promise.

These are our promises to you.

We Promise:

**Staying Safe and Feeling Supported**
- To help you be safe and feel safe
- To give careful thought to where you live so that you live in a home that feels like a home and live with a carer that really cares
- You will have a social worker who is there for you and will try to make sure they don’t change too often

**Get Involved, Make a Difference, Have Your Say**
- You will have a say, be listened to and treated with respect
- To only make promises we can keep
- We will provide you with information about what’s happening with your care

**Your Happiness and Well-being**
- To listen if you are unhappy and to let you know how you can speak to an advocate
- To help you stay healthy and well and go to a doctor, dentist, optician or other professional for help when you need to
- To help you keep in contact with your family, friends and people and places that matter to you
- To help you keep photos and memories about important people in your life and places you have been
- To help you feel proud and strong with your own culture, language and religion
- To encourage you to take part in family traditions and learn about and be involved with cultural and religious groups that are important to you
- To give you extra help if you have a disability or additional needs and to support you to have your say and tell us what you need

**Enjoy and Achieve**
- To make sure you are provided with the best possible education and training and get extra help when you need it
- To help you get involved in leisure and cultural activities that you enjoy and to have fun

**Support for your future**
- To celebrate your achievements with you
- To support you to develop life skills and grow up to become the best you can
- To help you prepare to leave care and support you after you leave care so you have the best opportunities for your future
13.2 Appendix Two – Key legislation and background documents

- Department for Education (2010), The Care Planning Regulations
- Department for Education (2012), The Care Leavers (England) Regulations and Associated Guidance
- Department for Education (2011), The Fostering regulations, guidance and national minimal standards
- Department for Education (2011), The Adoption Guidance and National Minimum Standards
- Department for Education (2011), The Children’s homes regulations, guidance and national minimal standards
- Department for Education (2011), Friends and Family Care: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities
- Department for Education (1989), Guidance and Regulations regarding Local Authority responsibilities towards former looked after children in custody
- Department for Education (2010), Working Together
- Department for Education (2000), Leaving Care Act
- Department for Education (1989), Children Act
- Department for Education (2008), Children and Young Persons Act
- DFES (2007), Care Matters: Time for Change White Paper
- DFES (2003), If this were my child…A Councillors guide to being a good corporate parent
- Lambeth Council (2011), This is what it’s like to be looked after by Lambeth
- DFES (2003), Every Child Matters
- Local Government, Improving and Development (2011), 10 questions to ask if you’re scrutinising services for looked after children
- Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act (LASPO) December 2012