

**November 2017**

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## **ADCS response to the consultation on the corporate parenting principles, local offer, and extending personal advisor support**

1. The Association of Directors of Children's Services Ltd (ADCS) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Department for Education's consultation on the new corporate parenting principles, the local offer, and the extension of personal adviser support for care leavers to the age of 25. ADCS is the professional association for directors of children's services (DCS) and their senior management teams. Under the provisions of the Children Act 2004, the DCS is the chief officer responsible for the discharge of local authority functions regarding education and children's social care and acts as a champion for children and young people living in the locality.

### **Corporate parenting principles**

2. ADCS welcomes the clear articulation and drawing together of the unique and important responsibilities local authorities have for children in care and care leavers, outlined in the seven corporate parenting principles. Many local authorities already operate within the spirit of the corporate parenting principles, actively supporting their public sector partners to engage in partnership parenting – one where not only the local authority, but health, housing, police, probation, schools and colleges understand the part they each play in supporting children in care and care leavers.
3. Local authorities will work closely with 'relevant partners' to promote co-operation however it remains the case that the duty to have regard to the principles only applies to local authorities. The system needs additional levers to ensure all partners embrace their role in partnership parenting. For example, point 4.13 of the draft guidance refers to a local authority's role in choosing the best school to meet the needs of a child in care. ADCS members believe that a local authority as corporate parent, through the office of the DCS should have the power to direct a school, irrespective of its status, to admit a child who is in care. It is disappointing that the draft guidance does not reference how the Department for Education itself might embrace the seven corporate parenting principles and promote these across other central government departments to ensure we are ambitious and aspirational for looked after children and care leavers at both a national and local level.
4. The case studies contained within the draft guidance provide some helpful examples of the work taking place locally to fully embrace the principles however a number of them are very specific and do little to help change the public and political narratives about children in care and the care system. We would welcome a review of the case studies to reflect fully the achievements and successes of many children in care and care leavers.

## **The local offer**

5. Introducing a local offer for care leavers which brings together information about the support available to them in the area they live will help to provide a single point of access for this information. The requirements on local authorities to consult upon and publish a local offer must not be overly complex, burdensome or costly. Making such information available is part of the role of a good corporate parent and many local authorities already have in place arrangements to share and update this on a regular basis.

## **Extending support from personal advisers to all care leavers age 25**

6. The extension of personal advisor (PA) support to all care leavers up to the age of 25 is clearly a new burden for local authorities and as such, must be fully funded. According to the latest available figures, there were 27,010 care leavers aged between 19 -21 in the year ending March 2017. Extending the cohort of care leavers who can access support from a PA to those aged up to 25 will more than double the number of young adults who are eligible.
7. While the guidance suggests that the new duty provides only for the provision of PA support, and assessment of need and pathway plan where deemed appropriate, a local authority has both a moral and ethical duty to meet any needs identified during this process. To suggest otherwise is not in keeping with the seven corporate principles which form part of this consultation. Further, it is not clear how any refusal to meet assessed need will be viewed by the inspectorate.
8. The consultation document suggests local authorities should consider the structure and capacity of their PA teams to ensure they are able to meet the requirements of the new duty. While the needs of individual care leavers will range significantly, ADCS members would argue that the impact of the new duty will not be contained to the structure and capacity of PA teams, it will have significant financial implications across both children's and adult services. Any new burdens funding must take this into account. ADCS would welcome the opportunity to work with the DfE to identify all new burdens associated with this duty to help inform a new burdens assessment.
9. There is a tension in the new duty which requires local authorities to make all care leavers aware of the available PA support on an annual basis. There is currently no requirement to proactively keep in touch with care leavers aged over 21 up to age 25 therefore local authorities may not have contact details for this group of care leavers. Where this is the case, it is not clear how a local authority can meet this duty.
10. ADCS would be happy to welcome representatives from the DfE to a future meeting of the Association's Health, Care & Additional Needs or Resources & Sustainability Policy Committees to discuss this further. Please contact Esther Kavanagh Dixon, ADCS Policy Officer via [esther@adcs.org.uk](mailto:esther@adcs.org.uk).