

**Subject:** Corporate Parenting Strategy  
**Date of Meeting:** 17<sup>th</sup> May 2010  
**Report of:** *Di Smith*  
**Contact Officer:** Name: **James Dougan** Tel: **295511**  
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**Key Decision:** No  
**Wards Affected:** All

### FOR GENERAL RELEASE

#### 1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 To inform the Board of the work being undertaken to develop the next phase of Brighton & Hove's Corporate Parenting Strategy.
- 1.2 Corporate Parenting describes the collective responsibilities that members and officers of Brighton & Hove City Council and its partner organisations have towards children and young people in care of the Local Authority.
- 1.3 The strategy is about ensuring that these children and young people are safe, secure and healthy, are encouraged and supported to achieve their potential and aspirations, are encouraged to lead fulfilled lives and are successfully prepared for a future where they will be valued and involved citizens who are economically independent and able to contribute positively to the communities in which they live.
- 1.4 As Corporate Parents, members, officers and partners need to ask two questions:  
"If this was my child, would this be good enough for them?"  
"If I was that child or young person, would this have been good enough for me?"
- 1.5 Development of the Corporate Parenting Strategy is the next chapter of a longer story of the Brighton and Hove Corporate Parenting journey (**See Appendix 1 – Introduction to Corporate Parenting**). The Strategy will set out our next steps as we continue to work together to build improvement in the outcomes of Brighton and Hove looked after children and young people.

The Strategy will mark an important shift in not just how we view the issues and barriers faced by looked after children and young people, but also a shift in our emphasis on how we intend to make an impact on these outcomes.

Together as Whole system partnership we can improve life outcomes for Brighton and Hove looked after children and young people.

We want all our children and young people to have successful, productive lives and we want to provide the services and supports that will help them succeed, particularly when they have problems to overcome.

The new strategy will strengthen our corporate parenting work and it will help us to express what we are collectively trying to achieve in terms of outcomes in the overarching strategy.

As corporate parents, the overarching outcomes we are collectively aiming for are:

Children and young people who have experienced the care system to be successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors whose life outcomes mirror those of their peers.

The specific outcome relating to the function of corporate parenting is:

The Council and its partners will fully understand and accept their responsibilities as corporate parents and governance arrangements will be in place to make sure that work within councils and their partner organisations is child-centred and focused on achieving the overarching outcome.

## **2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

2.1 To agree the proposals for the development of the corporate parenting Strategy.

## **3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:**

### **3.1 Development of Strategy**

In spite of considerable attention over recent years, the gap between outcomes for looked after children and their peers has continued to widen. The Government nationally has responded over the years by having a number of initiatives to improve the outcomes of looked after children. The last major initiative was Care Matters which was designed to ensure that the State's responsibility and the role of local authorities in discharging their responsibility in being an effective corporate parent.

Brighton & Hove has been engaged for sometime in corporate parenting developments. It was a pilot area for the Who Cares Trust Equal Chances Project in 2000 and since then there has been a continuous strengthening of

work to bridge the gap between looked after children's outcomes and those of the general population of children's outcomes.

In developing the new strategy a comprehensive audit/self assessment has been undertaken using the Ofsted Framework for Inspection. This audit/self assessment highlights very good and outstanding practice as well as areas for practice development and will help shape and strengthen the next phase strategy.

The strategy will provide us with the opportunity to make a significant step change by looking more closely and in more detail at some of the factors which may impact on the outcomes for children who are looked after. It will give us an opportunity to understand the complexities of inter-relationships and to respond to them in a way that acknowledges and takes account of this complexity. The strategy is about us setting out how we will take forward positive and definitive action. We will build on both the positive work that has been undertaken and is ongoing in Brighton & Hove.

### 3.2 Corporate Parenting Forum

The Council has established a Corporate Parenting Forum. The Forum consists of the Lead Member for Children and Young People, an elected member from the Conservative, Labour, Green and Liberal Democrats groups, 2 children looked after and/or care leavers, representatives of Brighton & Hove Foster Carers Association, and the Director of Children's Services.

The Corporate Parenting Forum acts as the advisory consultation body to the Council to enable the effective discharge of the duty of corporate parent.

The role of the Corporate Parenting Forum is to monitor and review services and establish the objectives and priorities for looked after children by council departments and partner agencies. The central role is to achieve continuing improvements for looked after children and care leavers. The forum will oversee the implementation of the strategy.

### 3.3 Next Steps

The strategy will be constructed around the five Every Child Matters outcomes: Being Healthy, Staying Safe, Enjoy and Achieve, Making a Positive Contribution, Achieving Economic Wellbeing. A section on the strategy will look at each of these outcome areas and will give clear principles, good practice and commitments in each of the five outcome areas.

## Being Healthy

While promoting physical and sexual health and emotional well-being are obvious priorities, preventative strategies, including education to encourage healthy lifestyle choices and leisure interests are key elements of our work. Children and young people in care may have additional health needs caused by earlier abuse or neglect and these must be taken into account under the key aim of ensuring their life chances are improved by promoting their health and well being.

Some corporate parenting initiatives to date:

- Priority access to health services including Morley Street dental service
- 16+ Nurse providing a personalised and flexible service to increase take up of advice and support including sexual health and contraception
- Listen Up card ensures free access to swimming and other leisure activities
- Dedicated pathway for access to Children and Adolescent mental Health Services

## Staying Safe

Most children and young people who come into care do so as a result of not being safe from physical and sexual harm and neglect while living at home. Robust arrangements need to be in place therefore to ensure that they live in safe, secure and nurturing placements that provide continuity and stability. As they move towards adulthood we must ensure that they have access to safe, secure and affordable permanent accommodation.

Some corporate parenting initiatives to date:

- Joint Protocol with Housing Department ensure that the corporate responsibility for meeting the diverse accommodation needs of young people who have been Looked After by B&HCC are met.
- Pan Sussex 'Missing from Care' Protocol with Sussex Police

## Enjoy and Achieve

The main focus is on improving the educational attainment of children and young people in care. This is the single most important contribution those involved in corporate parenting can make because it is about investing in their future. It must be acknowledged that children and young people in care have significantly poorer educational outcomes than their peers. However, we must move away from the assumption that this is an inevitable consequence of their often disadvantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds. What it does mean is that we need to invest in specific and targeted additional support to improve these outcomes.

Some corporate parenting initiatives to date:

- Entry2Learning partnership with Sussex Central YMCA
- Partnership with Aim Higher Sussex
- Appointment of Virtual Head teacher
- Tickets for shows at B&H venues

### **Making a Positive Contribution**

Participation and engagement of children and young people in care is key to the success of any corporate parenting strategy. This outcome area is about more than just involving them in the development of services. We must support them to: engage in law abiding and socially acceptable activity and behaviour; develop positive relationships by choosing not to bully or discriminate; develop self-confidence and learning to deal successfully with significant life changes and challenges.

The key aim is to ensure that all children and young people in care have the opportunity to be listened to and heard, are involved and participate in the planning and development of services they receive

Some corporate parenting initiatives to date:

- Development of websites for Listen Up Care Council (LUCC) and 16 Plus Advisory Group with private sector partner

### **Achieving Economic Wellbeing**

Children and young people in Care find it more difficult than their peers to attain a good standard of living when they become adult and independent. We must promote and provide work experience, taster days, training and employment opportunities with all employers and employer organisations in the city and to continue to ensure that these care leavers are fully supported to move positively into adulthood.

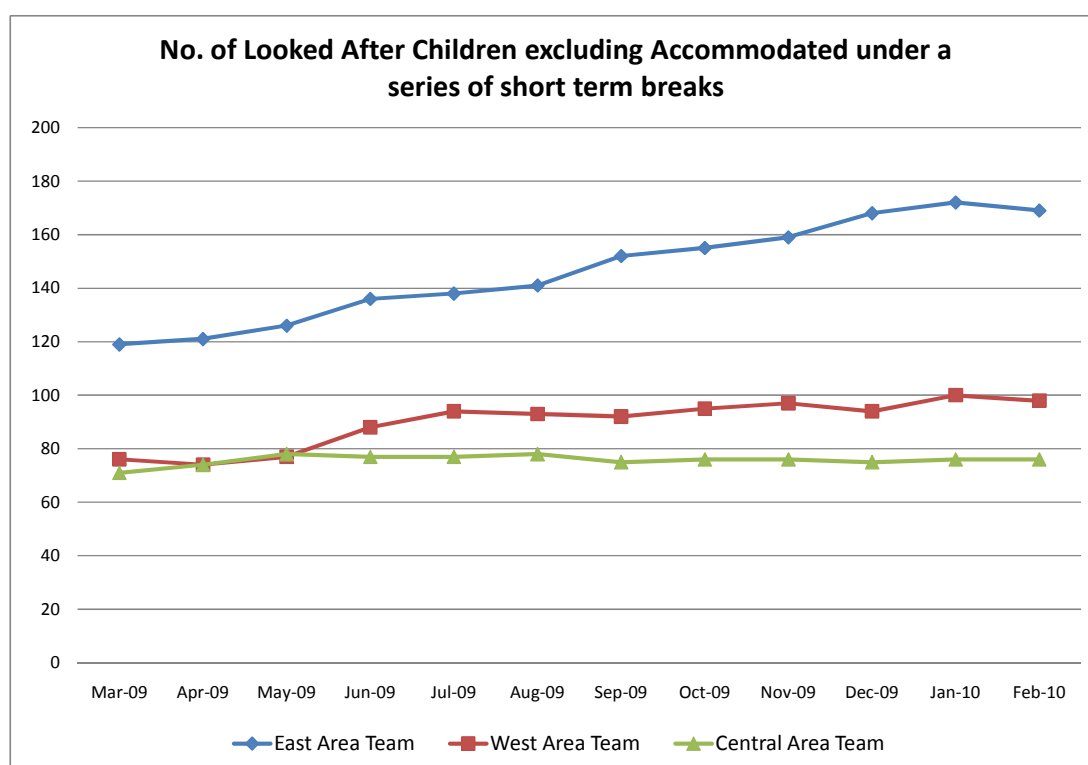
Some corporate parenting initiatives to date:

- Directorate offers of council wide opportunities from taster days to apprenticeships
- Extension of support post-18 (Supported Lodgings and Supporting People) so that care leavers move to their own accommodation when ready and able

### 3.4 Who are our looked after children - Profile of Looked After Children

Source: Monthly Monitoring Social Care Data February 2010

Figure 1: Number of Looked After Children by Area Team

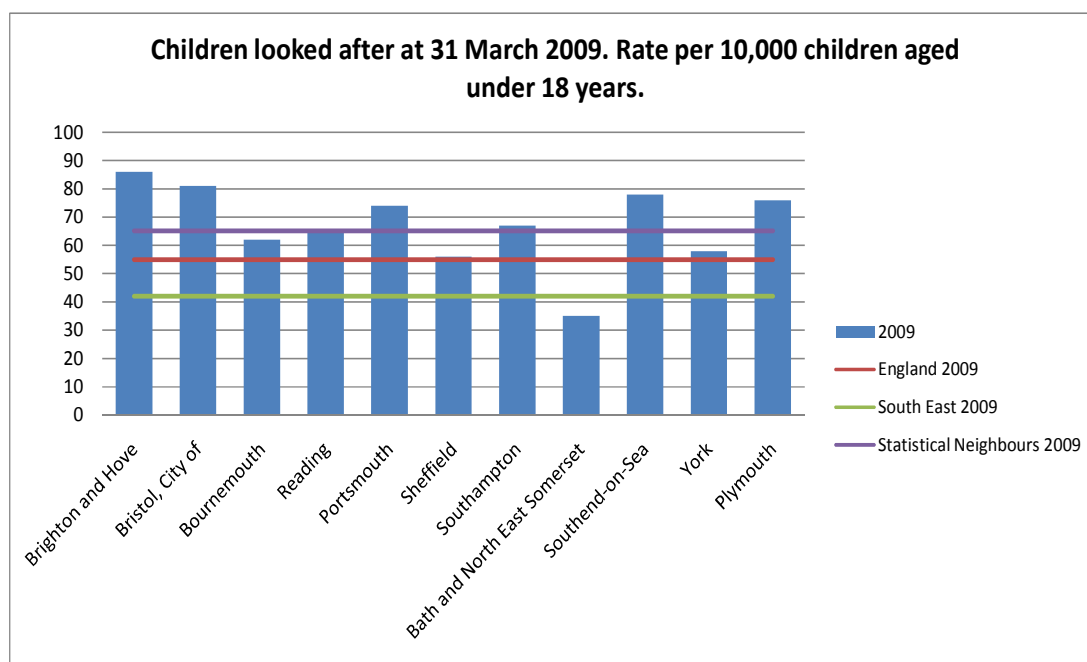


The graph shows that the CYPT Safeguarding teams in the East of the city continue to carry the majority of Looked after Children. There has been an increase in the number of Looked after Children in all of the Area Teams, with the most striking rises being located in East and West Area where the number has increased by 34% and 26% respectively.

Table 1: Percentage Increase in Looked After Children by Area Team

Team	February 2009	February 2010	Increase	Percentage Increase
<b>All Teams</b>	<b>401</b>	<b>473</b>	<b>+72</b>	<b>18%</b>
<b>East Area Team</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>+43</b>	<b>34%</b>
<b>West Area Team</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>+20</b>	<b>26%</b>
<b>Central Area Team</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>+8</b>	<b>12%</b>

Figure 2a: Children looked after at 31 March 2009. Rate per 10,000 children aged under 18 years.

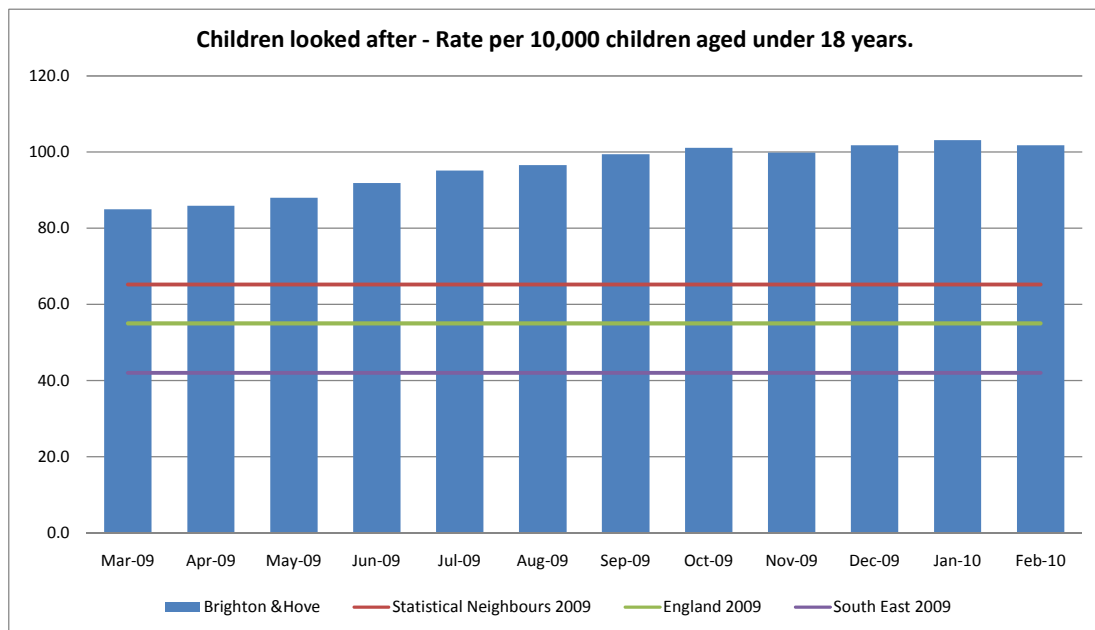


There were 473 Looked after Children as at February 2010. The city has a higher proportion of Looked after Children<sup>1</sup> than the national average (86 per 10,000 as at March 31<sup>st</sup> 2009 compared with 55 per 10,000 in England and 65 per 10,000 amongst benchmark authorities)<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Number of children looked after on 31 March expressed as a rate per 10,000 children aged under 18. Source: <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000878/index.shtml>

<sup>2</sup> Statistical Neighbours (SN) are ranked in order of statistical closeness, with the top SN being closest: Bristol, Bournemouth, Portsmouth, Reading ,Sheffield ,Southampton, Bath and North East Somerset, Southend, York and Plymouth

Figure 2b: Children Looked After - Rate per 10,000 children aged under 18 years.



The rate of Looked after Children per 10,000 children has increased from 86 per 10,000 as at March 2009 to 102 per 10,000 as at February 2010.

Figure 3: Children Starting and Ceasing to be Looked After Each Month March 2009 to February 2010.



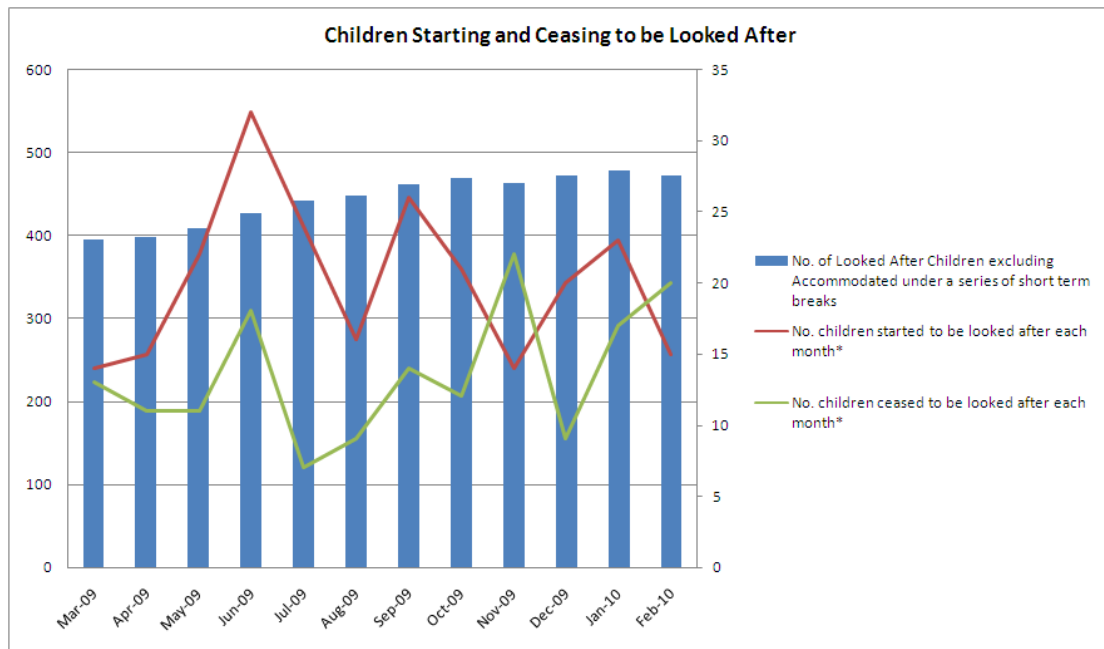


Figure 3 illustrates the number of children starting and ceasing to be looked after over the last 12 months. There has only been two occasions during that period (November 2009 and February 2010) where the number of children who have ceased to be looked after is greater than the number of children who started to be looked after.

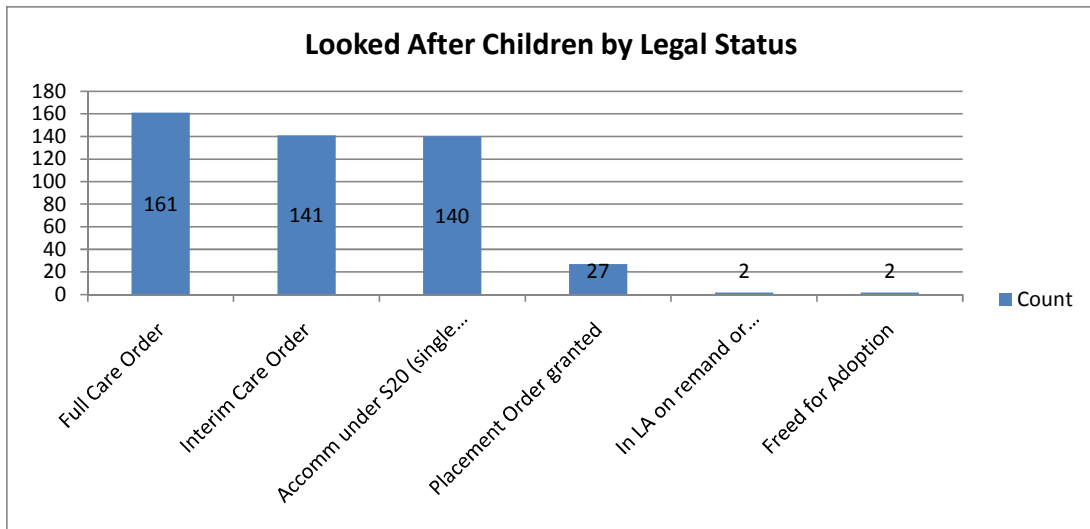
Table 2: Children Looked After by Area Team and Placement Area February 2010

	Placement Area			
	EAST	CENTRAL	WEST	Out of Area
<b>East Area Team</b>	69%	13%	8%	11%
<b>Central Area Team</b>	25%	54%	4%	17%
<b>West Area Team</b>	10%	15%	71%	3%

N.B 'Out of Area' includes children with post codes outside of Brighton and Hove and children whose placement address has not been disclosed.

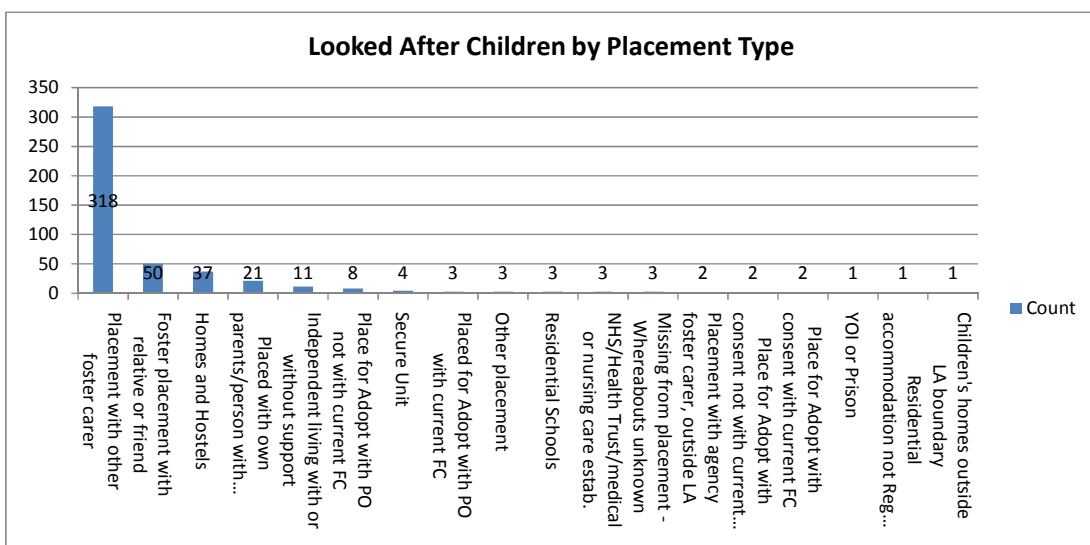
Table 2 illustrates the percentage of Looked after Children by Area Team allocation and their geographical placement area. Just over half of children allocated to the Central Area Team were placed in the Central Area, with a quarter of that cohort placed in the East Area of the city.

Figure 4: Children Looked After by Legal Status February 2010.



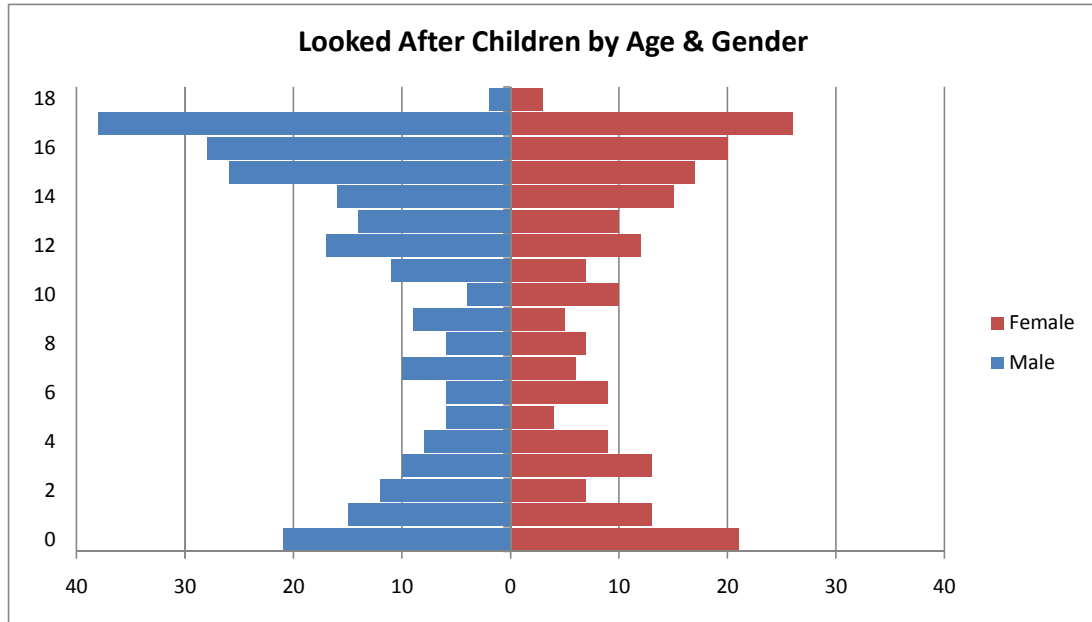
The majority of Looked after Children are on were on a Care Order (302 out of 473 children as at February 2010). However, the number of children Looked After on an Interim Care Order has increased significantly over the last twelve months, from 51 in February 2009 to 141 as at February 2010. Further analysis shows that younger children are more likely to be in court proceedings whereas older children are more likely to be voluntarily accommodated.

Figure 5: Children Looked After by Placement Type February 2010.



The majority of Looked after children were placed with 'other foster carer' (318 as at February 2010) with the next highest category being 'foster placement with relative or friend' (50 children).

Figure 6: Children Looked After by Age and Gender February 2010

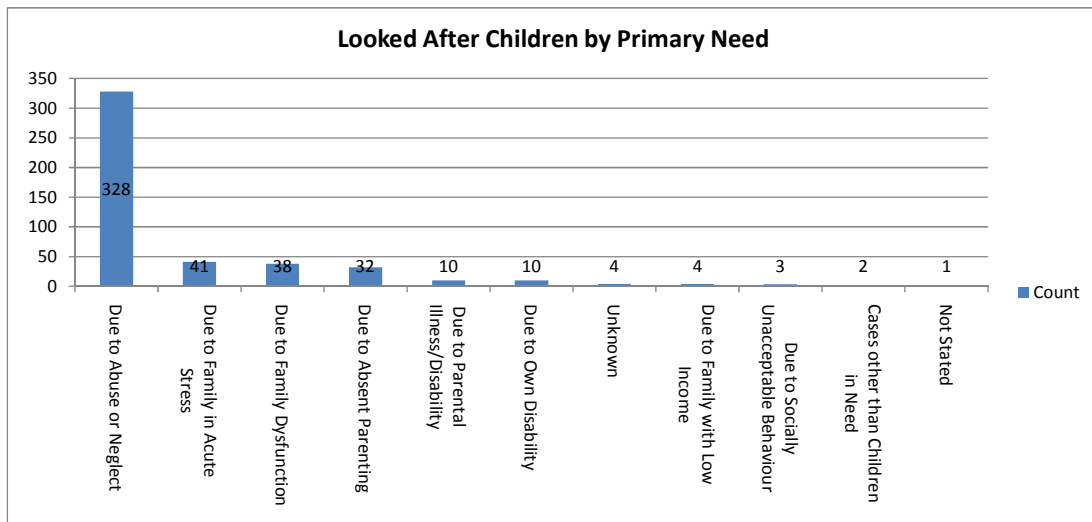


The age and gender split of Looked after Children is illustrated in Figure 6. Approximately 55% of the cohort was male as at February 2010. Around a third of Looked after Children (160 children) were aged 15 and over, with males accounting for 59% of children in this age range.

Table 3: Looked After Children by Age and Gender February 2010

Age	Male	Female
0	21	21
1	15	13
2	12	7
3	10	13
4	8	9
5	6	4
6	6	9
7	10	6
8	6	7
9	9	5
10	4	10
11	11	7
12	17	12
13	14	10
14	16	15
15	26	17
16	28	20
17	38	26
18	2	3

Figure 7: Looked After Children by Primary Need February 2010



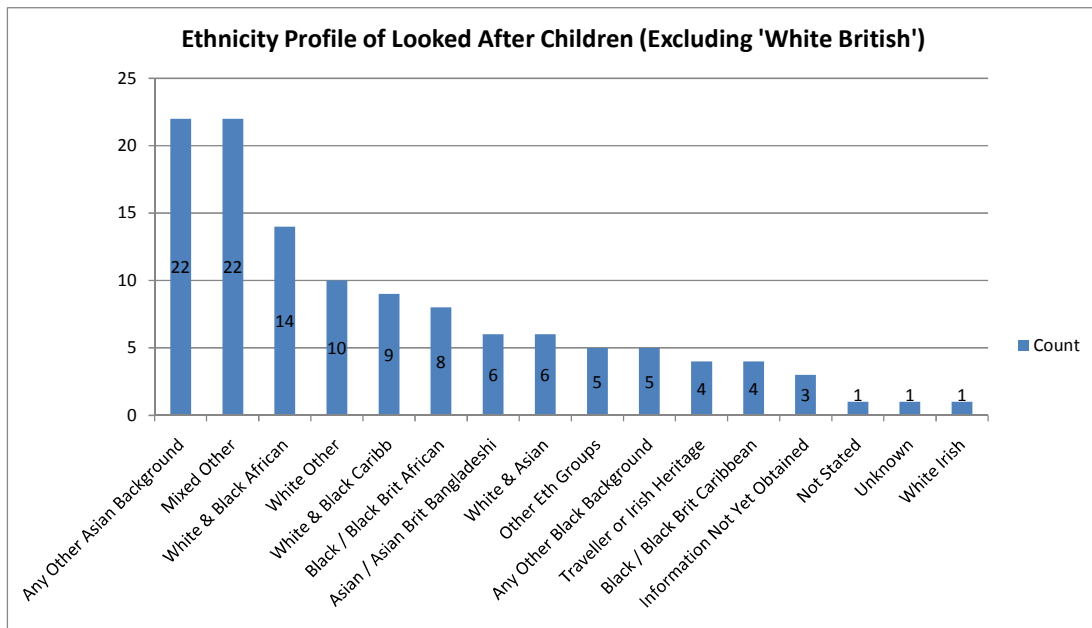
The majority of Looked after Children have a primary need<sup>3</sup> code of 'Due to Abuse or Neglect' (328 as at February 2010) with 'Family in Acute Stress' and 'Family Dysfunction' the next highest categories.

Table 4: Children Looked After by Primary Need Code February 2010

<sup>3</sup> 'Category of Need codes record the main reason why a child is being provided with services' and 'provides a further insight as to why a particular child is being looked after'. [SSDA 903 guidance 2008-09 Version 1.3 Issued January 09](#) p28

<b>Primary Need</b>	<b>Count</b>
Due to Abuse or Neglect	328
Due to Family in Acute Stress	41
Due to Family Dysfunction	38
Due to Absent Parenting	32
Due to Parental Illness/Disability	10
Due to Own Disability	10
Unknown	4
Due to Family with Low Income	4
Due to Socially Unacceptable Behaviour	3
Cases other than Children in Need	2
Not Stated	1

Figure 8: Ethnicity Profile of Looked After Children February 2010



The 'White British' ethnicity Category has been removed from the Figure 8 to allow for easier comparison of other Ethnicity categories. The majority of Looked after Children in Brighton and Hove have a recorded ethnicity as 'White British' (352 as at February 2010) with 'Any Other Asian Background' and 'Mixed Other' the next highest categories (22 children in each category).

### 3.5 The Pledge

Within Care Matters policy guidance one of the requirements was that each local authority should have a pledge developed in conjunction with children and young people that clearly identifies what children and young people can expect from the council. **(See Appendix 2)**

### 3.6 Report Card

We will monitor the success of our corporate parenting strategy by the corporate parenting report card. **(See Appendix 3)**

## 4. CONSULTATION

4.1 We are also involving children and young people who are in care and care leavers in the development of the strategy. As a council and as a partnership we have been committed to listening to children and young people in our care and providing them with a range of opportunities to enable them to make the

decisions about how they want to get involved. These opportunities afford the children and young people the ability to effect change in services. But they also provide the young people with opportunities to develop their skills and levels of understanding in areas most relevant to their own interests and personal development. We have two formal processes within the care system. We have the 16+ Advisory Group for young people and we have the Listen Up Care Council Group for children and young people. The new strategy will advance a whole range of consultative and involvement initiatives.

## **5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

### Financial Implications:

- 5.1 There are currently no direct financial implications arising from the recommendation in this report. If additional costs arise as a result of the future development of the corporate parenting strategy then it would be necessary to identify appropriate funding.

*Finance Officer Consulted: Jeff Coates Date: 4<sup>th</sup> May 2010*

### Legal Implications:

- 5.2 The Corporate Parenting Strategy will assist the partners to the Children's Trust in meeting their duties to looked after children and care leavers. It mirrors the ECM agenda, and reflects the duty to promote the well being of children contained in S10 of the Children Act 2004. The Board will be aware that no child can be accommodated without either the consent of their parents, or by way of an Interim Care Order (ICO) sanctioned by the Court. An ICO can only be made where the threshold criteria that the child is suffering or is at risk of suffering significant harm is proved to the satisfaction of the court AND the court are satisfied that such an order is necessary to secure the welfare of the child.

*Lawyer Consulted: Natasha Watson: 05.05.2010*

### 5.3 Equalities Implications:

The Corporate Parenting Strategy is critical to the implementation of the council's equalities policies and to the achievement of the priorities set out in the Children and Young people's Plan.

### 5.4 Sustainability Implications:

There are no immediate sustainability implications.

5.5 Crime & Disorder Implications:

The Corporate Parenting Strategy aims to support young people to engage in law abiding and socially acceptable activity and behaviour.

5.6 Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

The Corporate Parenting Strategy will assist the partners to the Children's Trust in meeting their duties to looked after children and care leavers and this includes the management of significant risks, including risk to reputation and financial risk.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

Corporate Parenting Strategy describes the collective responsibilities that members and officers of Brighton & Hove City Council and its partner organisations have towards children and young people in care of the Local Authority.

**6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):**

6.1 The Corporate Parenting Strategy meets a statutory duty for the council in respect of to looked after children and care leavers.

**7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

7.1 To meet the Council's statutory duty in respect of looked after children and care leavers.

**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

**Appendices:**

None

**Documents In Members' Rooms**

None

**Background Documents**

None