

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**CABINET
MONDAY 29 JANUARY 2001 at 10.00 a.m.**

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
MONDAY 29 JANUARY 2001 at 2.15 p.m.**

**Agenda Item
No.**

10

POLICY FOR THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN IN PUBLIC CARE

Report of the Director of Education

Author:- David Ring, Head of Education Welfare and Student Support Service
(Tel: 01992 588582)

Executive Member:- Derrick Ashley

1. Purpose of the report

To seek approval to adopt a Policy for the Education of Children in Public Care.

2. Summary

- 2.1 On 2 March 2000 the Corporate Parenting Panel requested that work should be undertaken on producing a Policy for the Education of Children in Public Care. It was agreed that this policy should take account of the DfEE/DoH guidance that was due to be issued later in the spring, the lessons learnt from the implementation of the existing protocol and the development of the Children, Schools and Families Service that will be in place from April 2001.
- 2.2 The Corporate Parenting Panel received a progress report on 1 June 2000 and a draft policy was presented to the Panel on 13 October 2000.
- 2.3 Following the Panel's request that the draft policy should be sent out for wide consultation, copies of the draft policy were sent to all schools and over 200 people from agencies that play a part in the education of children in public care. The draft policy was also considered by over 300 Designated Teachers who attended training sessions during November and by 50 Social Workers at the Child Care Summit on 1 November 2000.

- 2.4 The Childrens' Rights Officers and Advisory Service (CROA) was commissioned to seek the views of 58 young people in public care as part of the consultation.
- 2.5 The responses received during the consultation overwhelmingly indicated agreement with the contents of the policy and a general welcoming of its aims.
- 2.6 A report providing details about the outcomes from the consultation on the draft Policy for the Education of Children in Public Care, together with an implementation plan, was presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel on 7 December 2000. A number of amendments have been made to the draft policy in accordance with the wishes of the Panel.
- 2.7 Further amendments to the draft policy have been made in accordance with comments received from the group spokes and the executive member.
- 2.8 The draft policy and the implementation plan are attached to this report.

3. Conclusions

- 3.1 The Cabinet is asked to propose to the Executive Committee that the Policy for the Education of Children in Public Care should be adopted and implemented in accordance with the implementation plan.

4. Background

- 4.1 The significant under-achievement of children in public care and the resulting damage to their life chances has been a source of national concern for some years.
- 4.2 Hertfordshire adopted an operational protocol on the Education of Looked After Children in February 1998. This protocol contains a statement of the responsibilities placed on the Education Department, the Social Services Department and schools, as well as details of the actions and targets needed to ensure that children in public care receive appropriate education.
- 4.3 On 2 March 2000 the Corporate Parenting Panel requested that work should be undertaken on producing a Policy for the Education of Children in Public Care, which should take account of the soon to be issued DfEE and DoH guidance, the lessons learnt from the implementation of the existing protocol and the development of the Children, Schools and Families Service that will be in place from April 2001
- 4.4 In May 2000 the DfEE and DoH jointly issued new guidance on the Education of Children and Young People in Public Care. This document, which builds upon and replaces DfEE Circular 13/94, emphasises the steps that must be taken to ensure effective collaborative action at a local level. Some measures within the guidance will be subject to statutory force.

- 4.5 A report outlining progress on the development of the policy was brought to the Corporate Parenting Panel on 1 June 2000. This report noted that, as part of the preparation for the drafting of the policy, representatives from key services and agencies involved in the education of children in public care, foster carers and care users had been asked for their views through focus group discussions, individual interviews and questionnaires. The purpose of this initial consultation was to ensure that the draft policy:
- Was based upon good knowledge of current practice and local outcomes;
 - Fitted in with other authority/agency priorities;
 - Reflected experience and aspirations;
 - Was jointly owned and workable.
- 4.6 A draft policy was presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel on 13 October. The Panel requested that the draft policy should be sent out for wide consultation in order to obtain the views of all those who play a part in the education of children in public care.
- 4.7 The draft policy was sent to all schools and over 200 people from agencies that play a part in the education of children in public care. It was also considered by over 300 Designated Teachers who attended training sessions during November and by 50 Social Workers at the Child Care Summit on 1 November 2000
- 4.8 The views of 58 children in care in Hertfordshire have been obtained through personal and telephone interviews conducted independently by CROA. The young people were aged between 10 and 15.
- 4.9 98% of respondents said that they were broadly in agreement with the contents of the policy. The remaining respondents did not answer this question.
- 4.10 Feedback from CROA indicated that the draft policy was very well received by the young people who felt that most of the suggestions would improve their chances for a successful education.
- 4.11 The Corporate Parenting Panel considered a full report of the outcomes of the consultation on 7 December. A number of amendments were subsequently made to the draft policy in accordance with the wishes of the Panel. These amendments included:
- (i) The inclusion of unaccompanied minors who are asylum seekers in the explanation of children who are in care (paragraph 3.1)
 - (ii) The inclusion of monitoring outcomes in sporting and recreational activities, as well as in academic activities (paragraph 3.3)
 - (iii) The addition of a new paragraph regarding school governing bodies in the section on operational roles (paragraph 4.9)

- (iv) The addition of a new paragraph regarding children who are in the care of other authorities in the section on operational procedures (paragraph 5.5)
- (v) The inclusion of other measures of achievement for individual children, which will be recorded in their Personal Educational Plans and reviewed annually (paragraph 7.2)

5. Amendments to the draft policy following comments from the group spokes and the executive member

5.1 The draft cabinet report and the draft policy were circulated to the group spokes and the executive member under the urgency procedures. All responses confirmed approval for the policy, although the following additional amendments to the draft policy were requested:

- (i) Section 3.3 of the draft policy has been amended to state that ‘all members play a key role in corporate parenting.’
- (ii) In order to ensure that there is clear accountability for each child in public care section 4.1 has been amended to include the following statement:

Every child in public care will be allocated a named case co-ordinator who will be accountable for the case plan and associated work, as well as for monitoring the outcomes for the child. The allocation of the case co-ordinator will depend upon the nature of the concerns and the child’s needs.

- (iii) The implementation plan has been amended to include the following action in section 2:

Check with the governing body of each school whether a Designated Governor for children in public care has been appointed

6. Financial Implications

6.1 In order to support the implementation of the policy and the local authority’s commitment to improving the educational performance and attainment of the children in its care is intended that:

- Consideration be given to allocating £130,000 from the 2001/02 Standards Fund Grant 202 to provide support for individual children in public care who experience significantly difficulties in accessing their education
- As part of this year’s budget discussions consideration be given to attaching an additional £546 to the AWPU for each child in the care of Hertfordshire County Council who attends a maintained mainstream primary or secondary school. This proposal is in line with the LEA’s commitment to improving the educational achievement of children in public care and acknowledges the additional costs often associated with supporting these pupils.

- 6.2 Consideration will need to be given to developing a separate budget to meet the cost of home-to-school transport for children in public care, as outlined in Section 5.2 of the draft policy. The cost of this would be met from existing expenditure within the Education and Social Services Departments budgets.

Background information referred to by author

Guidance on the Education of Children and Young People in Public Care; DfEE and DH; May 2000

The Joint Social Services-Education Protocol For the Education of Looked After Children; February 1998

Policy for The Education of Children in Public Care – report to the Corporate Parenting Panel, June 2000

Policy for the Education of Children in Public Care – Report to the Corporate Parenting Panel, 13 October 2000

Policy for the Education of Children in Public Care – Report to the Corporate Parenting Panel, 7 December 2000