

Joint report of the Director of Children’s Services and the Director of Place to the meeting of The Corporate Parenting Panel to be held on 8th March 2021

Subject:

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This is a joint report presented by Place and Children’s Services focussing on how we support children in care and care leavers to access culture and arts activities and how we may increase this in the future.

Summary statement:

This report provides the members of the Corporate Parenting Panel with an overview of current activity undertaken by Department of Place and Children’s Services. This report was requested following a report to the CPP in January 2021 by Department of Place in relation to support for children in care. This led to further discussion about support specifically in relation to cultural activities and the arts and the extent to which we help our children and young people to access these. It was agreed that Children’s Services and Department of Place would come together to review current activity, think about future activity and jointly prepare a report.

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY:

It is important that children in care and care leavers are not disadvantaged in comparison with their peers. Care leavers are potentially particularly disadvantaged group due to their often limited financial means and inability to fund activities that carers would normally fund for children in care.

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Portfolio:

Children and Families

Overview & Scrutiny Area:

Children’s Services

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 Following discussion at the Corporate Parenting Panel in January 2021 officers from Department of Place and Children's Services came together in February to hold a workshop to consider what was already done in respect of promoting children in care and care leaver's access to culture and the arts in Bradford.
- 1.2 This workshop was held in the context of Bradford's Culture is our Plan initiative and the need for children in care and care leavers to be included in this work.
- 1.3 In the meeting we highlighted what was already done but began to develop new links between the two services and to consider things that we can do to extend our cultural and arts offer to our children and young people.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The extent to which a child in care accesses culture and the arts will depend on a number of factors including:
 - Their experiences when they were at home and the extent to which their birth families accessed these things
 - The lifestyle and interests of the family that they now live in
 - Any other activities that they engage in for example via their school.
- 2.2 However we aspire to ensure that our children in care are encouraged and supported to widen their horizons and to have new experiences, in addition to promoting and encouraging interests that they already have. One benefit of them being in the care system should be that they have chances and opportunities that they would not have had within their own families.
- 2.3 For young people who have now left care the challenge is greater because they often no longer have a carer to encourage or fund any activities that have an associated cost attached.
- 2.3 Within children's services it would be fair to say that access to culture and the arts has not been our top strategic priority. Factors such as placement stability, permanence, emotional health and wellbeing, education and employment have all tended to be of greater focus.
- 2.4 Therefore the process of linking with colleagues in Place has started a joined-up conversation that has not happened previously and which will hopefully open up more cultural and arts activities to our children in care.

- 2.5 In terms of what is already available to children in care, as already stated many will participate in the activities that their foster families or children's homes engage in. Some young people will have specific interests or likes that are supported by their carers and different families will have different levels of interest in the arts. It is quite difficult to capture all of this activity in a single report.
- 2.6 However we are seeking to go beyond this and to actively encourage and support children in care to access these types of activities whether they live with foster carers, friends and family or in children's homes particularly where their families or carers may not be accessing these types of activity as part of their own lifestyle.
- 2.7 Within Bradford there are a wealth of cultural and arts activities that young people can engage with including events run via the theatres, museums and libraries. Examples include:
- Shows and events at our theatres
 - The opportunity for young people with a particular interest in drama or theatre to become volunteers or gain work experience
 - Family Film Festival
 - Cinema and music events (accepting that some music events may happen in licensed premises and thus not accessible to young people or people whose culture would prohibit them from attending)
 - Events taking place at libraries relating to promoting literacy and reading and the opportunity for young people to volunteer and act as Young Ambassadors.
 - Similar events hosted in our museums
- 2.8 Most of these activities are open to all children, young people and families. There is a cost associated with some of them.
- 2.9 Another example is that prior to Christmas our museums service distributed craft/art activity packs to families and already work with schools in relation local heritage. This work could be expanded to help us better engage with children in care and care leavers and there is an opportunity to consider how we can make additional efforts to engage children in care in activities at the museums or even via outreach work.

The next steps

- 2.9 One challenge for Children's Services is to make our carers and young people (and their social workers, IROs and Independent Visitors) aware of these opportunities and to reduce any barriers to them engaging with them. An example includes the potential for us to be offered tickets for the theatre at reduced cost.
- 2.10 Another challenge for us in Children's Services is to know what our gaps are and what our young people would like to get involved with that they have not yet had the opportunity to. Carers, social workers, PAs, IROs and Independent Visitors are

potentially key to this because of the close work that they do with our young people. Our Children in Care Council could potentially assist us with knowing more about what our children are interested in. We have already undertaken some of this work within our children's homes and thus have some understanding already of what kinds of things they would want to engage with. As an example of this, we know that musical events were a key interest but that theatre was low interest. However, we do not yet know whether this was simply because theatre was "not on their radar" and something that they associated with other people.

- 2.11 One important and tangible outcome of the initial meeting that was held was that a number of key people across Place and Children's Services came together to discuss this and have thus now formed the beginnings of links as well as sharing the same goal. Some tangible things like the sharing of contact details and the updating of distribution lists will help children's services be aware of what is going on in the district and to share this with our service and our carers, as well as enabling children's services to know who to contact within Place when there is a need for example if a young person wanted to gain work experience in a theatre.
- 2.12 In relation to the libraries service they will now be linking with colleagues in Children's Services so that we can jointly make sure that all children in care and care leavers have the opportunity to have library tickets and know how to use their local library.
- 2.13 A specific idea generated within the workshop was about the library services working with the children's homes to develop a book group for any of our young people who we can engage with this and to give them the opportunity to become actively involved in selecting the books that are held within the library and also having a stock of books within the home as well as an identified "champion" in each home. In addition, providing targeted support to access Bookstart and the Summer Reading Challenge will also be one of our next steps.
- 2.14 We know that the theatres have offered reduced or free pantomime tickets every year and also reduced tickets for other events where the promoters are agreeable to this. They can also offer backstage tours and other activities to engage young people. The sharing of contact details between Theatres and Children's Services will foster these links and maximise the opportunities.
- 2.15 Overall this meeting was energetic and constructive and is hopefully the start of a new relationship between Children's Services and Place. There will inevitably be further discussions particularly in the light of the council's Culture is our Plan initiative and the need for us to make a concerted effort to help children to have experiences that they would not have otherwise had and to enable care leavers to be able to continue to be engaged with these activities despite the financial challenges that they often experience.
- 2.16 This issue has now been added to our Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy and we will identify specific actions aimed at ensuring that we maximise the opportunities on offer in the district as well as supporting our young people to contribute to the developing offer in Bradford.
- 2.17 A working group consisting of officers from both Children's Services and Place will

now continue to meet to take this work forward on a quarterly basis.

3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1.1 As corporate parents to our children in care and care leavers it is our responsibility to ensure that they have the same opportunities that we would wish for our own children, including the opportunity to experience culture and arts even if they choose not to then engage with them on a longer term basis. If as a result of our new links even a small number of our children develop an interest or passion for something that they had not previously experienced, then this will be a good outcome for them and something that may stay with them for the rest of their life.

4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

- None

5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

None

6. LEGAL APPRAISAL

- None

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

- None

7.2 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

- None

7.3 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- None

7.4 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

- NA

7.5 TRADE UNION

- NA

7.6 WARD IMPLICATIONS

- No specific implications

**7.7 AREA COMMITTEE ACTION PLAN IMPLICATIONS
(for reports to Area Committees only)**

- NA

7.8 IMPLICATIONS FOR CORPORATE PARENTING

Please see information above.

7.9 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESMENT

NA

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

- None.

9. OPTIONS

- 9.1 This report is for information only.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 This report is for information only.

11. APPENDICES

None

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- None