



## City of York Corporate Parenting and Children in Care Strategy 2020 - 2023

### Foreword:

We are committed to York being an effective, caring, and ambitious corporate parent and we will do everything we can to make sure that children in our care and care leavers receive the best possible care and support.

We have combined our corporate parenting strategy and children in care strategy into one overarching strategy because our commitment to being the best Corporate Parent we possibly can, informs and drives our activity for children and young people in our care and care leavers over the next 3 years. The two are inextricably linked. This also includes ensuring children and young people who no longer need to be in our care are safely discharged from our care.

The overarching **vision** of City of York Council is “**A better start for children and young people**” and we look to achieve this through our **mission** statement; “**every conversation starts with the child.**”

Through our practice, social workers have proposed and agreed to adhere to **our values** that ensure we can deliver positive outcomes:

- **Everyone feels safe**
- **Risk is understood and managed well**
- **Practice is consistently good**

Our strategy builds on the strong engagement the council has with children and young people in care and care leavers and what more they say we should be doing to further improve their lives and future outcomes. The Children in Care Council and Care Leavers forum (Show Me That I Matter and I Still Matter) has a strong voice representing children and young people and care leavers and works hard to tell us what works well and what needs to change, providing ideas and advice about how best to do this. The Council highly values their experiences and we are committed to involving them in decisions that affect their lives.

The strategy sets out our ambition for our children and young people and care leavers and how we intend to fulfil our corporate parenting responsibilities and strategic priorities in a way which puts children and young people and care leavers at the centre of improvements in the planning, delivery and evaluation of our services. To do this, the strategy outlines the areas we are going to work together on to improve and why.

To make sure we deliver what we say we will do and know when we have been successful, the strategy is accompanied by an action plan which also includes our partners and regular progress updates will be reported to the Strategic Partnership for Children in Care and Care Leavers and the Corporate Parenting Board.

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## Introduction:

### *Our Improvement Journey*

There have been significant changes at a senior leadership level in the last 18 months and a commitment to rigorous and external review of services to drive forward continuous improvement. The Director of Children’s Services and Assistant Director have undertaken a range of service audit and review activity since taking up their posts and have a clear understanding of what we do well and what we need to improve. As a result, a significant improvement programme has been put in place and which is overseen by an Improvement Board. This strategy is forward looking and does not seek to look back over previous strategies.

External review and audit has found that our work with children in care and care leavers is some of our strongest areas of practice and this strategy seeks to build on this solid foundation.

### *What is Corporate Parenting?*

‘Corporate Parenting’ is the term used to refer to the collective responsibility of the Council to provide the best possible care and

protection for children and young people who are in the care of the local authority, that is, children and young people for whom the authority has, or shares, parental responsibility, or for whom the authority provides care and accommodation on behalf of their parent.

Sometimes it is not possible for children and young people to be looked after safely by their families without support from social workers. When this happens they come into care and live with foster carers, residential carers, with extended family and in other types of placements. The obligations of their parents become the responsibility of everyone at the council and our partner organisations. This is reflected in the Children Act 1989 duty on partners including Health, Education and Housing services to assist Children's Services to fulfil their functions under the Act – providing help, support and services in order to meet Corporate Parenting responsibilities.

The Authority also has a duty and responsibility towards care leavers aged 16 to 25 years.

This strategy should also be read alongside The **action plan** that accompanies this strategy and also ***City of York Sufficiency Strategy 2020-2023***, which sets out how the council and its partners will provide the best possible environments for children in care and care leavers to thrive and achieve their potential.

### *What are the Legal Duties?*

This collective responsibility was first laid out in the Children Act 1989. Government guidance for Councillors, *'If this were my child'* (DfES 2003), emphasised their role in ensuring that all CYPIC receive a good standard of care and the high-quality outcomes that every parent would want for their own child are sought. This means being their Corporate Parents and “providing them with the stability and support they need to make progress and helping them to access new opportunities and experiences that inspire them to set ambitious goals for themselves” (Keep on Caring 2016). As a Corporate Parent we have the same goals for children in our care and moving on to independence as every good parent. We will always ask ourselves-

“If this was my child, I would .....

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 outlined the seven key corporate parenting principles which local authorities should have regard

to when exercising their functions in relation to children and young people in care and care leavers. For the first time, legislation enshrined our collective responsibilities in a duty to: -

1. Act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and young people
2. Encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
3. Take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people
4. Help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners
5. Promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people
6. For those children and young people to be safe and have stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work
7. Prepare children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

### Framing the Strategy:

The Corporate Parenting and Children in Care Strategy has been aligned with our values and beliefs.

- Children, young people and care leavers at the heart of everything we do.
- Delivering high quality effective services
- Working with families
- Being outcome driven and impactful
- Supporting services around families
- Effective early help
- Effective partnership working
- Being part of a committed workforce
- Being part of high performing teams
- Being reflective and responsive to change

Our Values and Beliefs are also linked to our Guarantee to CYPIC.

The strategy is also part of a broad range of activity to support CYPIC and care leavers as follows:

Early Help Strategy  
Sufficiency Strategy  
Adolescence Strategy  
Virtual School Head (VSH) annual report  
Children's Services Improvement Plan  
Children and Young People Plan  
The Council's overarching Corporate Strategy/Plan  
Safeguarding Children Partnership - Independent scrutiny of all issues impacting on the safety of children and young people.

During the lifetime of this strategy we will also take account of new legislation and statutory guidance.

#### Corporate Parenting Board:

Our Corporate Parenting Board meets quarterly to review our response to CYPIC and care leavers and going forward this will also include progress against the strategy action plan.

The Board has responsibility for ensuring that we, as a whole Council, are delivering the corporate parenting agenda. Membership includes the Corporate Director of Children, Education and Communities, Assistant Director Children's Services, Lead Member for Children's Services and other elected members. We are reviewing the membership so that we have a broader representation from partner agencies and children and young people in care.

#### Messages from York Children and Young People in Care:

York Children and Young People in Care have told us via various means what is important to them as follows: -

- Children and young people should be listened to more and should be a priority for all professionals working with children and young people.
- Good quality relationships between young people and professionals is vital.
- Mental Health should still be a priority. In particular -
  - o Waiting lists for mental health services should be shorter.
  - o Priority should be given to young people in need.

- Worker knowledge of mental health varies and so training for professionals should be prioritised.
- More awareness is needed about the risks and potential impact that social media can have on young people's mental health.

CYPIC and care leavers who took part in the 2019 U Matter survey report told us: -

- They feel happy and safe in their placements and are able to identify an adult in their life that they can trust.
- Improvements have been seen in young people's experience of having a social worker, with most knowing how to contact their social worker and describing them as being reliable.
- Support to care leavers is viewed by young people as very positive, with care leavers reporting they are happy with the support they receive, including support with their education, training and employment.
- The majority of young people report that they have access to the health information they need and know who to talk to if they need support with their emotional wellbeing or access to support in school.
- On the whole, young people in care and care leavers have a good awareness of their rights and entitlements. Improvements could be made in ensuring that young people have access to the 'New to Care' Packs when they first come into care and also written information about a placement prior to a move.
- Consideration should be given to involving young people more in their CYPIC Reviews and Personal Education Plans (PEP) meetings, with more of an emphasis on young people having an opportunity to meet their IRO before the meeting and to be involved in the planning of Reviews and PEP meetings.

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In relation to the Corporate Parenting Board Young people told us they would like:

- Stronger links developed between the Corporate Parenting Board and young people/groups
- More representatives at the Corporate Parenting Board from different services so teams have a better understanding of corporate parenting
- A more relaxed and interactive Corporate Parenting Board to better engage young people
- Young people like the current format of the Corporate Parenting Board with Officers attending quarterly panel meetings to give updates.

### Our Strategic Priorities:

**Objective 1** – Our Children and Young People have a voice in the way we deliver our services and we will act upon what they tell us.

'To ensure that children and young people are consulted and actively participate in the decisions we make about how we deliver our services'.

#### **How will we achieve this:**

'We will continue to engage our young people regarding the services we deliver and ensure we act on their feedback. We will do this through various avenues with individuals or through the Children in Care Council - (Show Me That I Matter) and the Care Leavers forum (I Still Matter) and bi-annual surveys'

**Objective 2** - Children and Young People in York can remain safely at home

'To ensure that early support is provided at the right time to prevent the need for statutory intervention'

#### **How will we achieve this:**

'We will work with our social workers and managers to ensure that they are equipped to manage complexity and provide intervention that brings about change to allow children to remain at home wherever possible and return home when they can'

**Objective 3** - Our Care Leavers in York have a comprehensive 'Local Offer'

'To ensure that all care leavers feel supported and can access a range of services to promote their continued wellbeing into adulthood'.

**How will we achieve this:**

'The Offer is a live document that is continually updated and published bi-annually. We will use feedback from the care leavers forum (I still matter) to inform the offer'.

**Objective 4 – Children and Young People will be supported in their Education, Employment and Training.**

'Children and young people in care are meeting their potential and making at least, expected progress from their starting points. We will seek to boost and accelerate children's learning. Schools, education settings and foster carers are actively using the PEP'.

**How will we achieve this:**

'We will ensure that our social workers and managers use each child and young person's Personal Education Plan as an active tool to inform where support is required to boost and accelerate children's learning.'

**Objective 5 – Children and Young People will have a suitable place to live and be cared for, secured through timely permanence planning.**

'To ensure that the Children and Young People in our Care have a range of suitable and appropriate accommodation to meet their immediate and long term needs'.

**How will we achieve this:**

'We will continue to review our Sufficiency Strategy to ensure that it is informed by feedback from children and young people in our care and the feedback is used to reshape our services'. 'We will also strengthen our approach to permanence planning'

**Objective 6 – The Health and Wellbeing of our Children and Young People will be a priority for City of York Council.**

'To maximise the health and wellbeing of the children and young people we care for'.



### **How will we achieve this:**

'We will work in partnership with our health colleagues to ensure that the health needs of children and young people in our care are prioritised and met and our children are involved in their assessments.'

**Objective 7** - Our Children and Young People are protected from harm and/or Risk of Exploitation

'To ensure that children are protected from harm and exploitation and ensure that they are provided with support to overcome any pull factors that would lead them to being exploited'.

### **How will we achieve this:**

' We will work with our partner's - police, health, housing, commissioned services and the Safeguarding Children Partnership to ensure that we are sharing information and targeting activity and services to deal with exploitation at every opportunity'. 'We will also develop an Adolescence Strategy'.

**Objective 8** - Children and Young People in our Care and Care leavers' achievements are celebrated.

'To ensure that the children we care for and have cared for, are recognised for their achievements and successes'.

### **How will we achieve this:**

'We have great aspirations for our children in care and we will acknowledge and celebrate their achievements'. We will develop a strategy across the Children, Education and Communities Directorate.

### Oversight & Accountability:

The Corporate Parenting Board will have oversight of progress on this strategy and the associated action plan. Through regular updates, they will ensure that the right progress is being made towards the vision and priorities set out in this document.

Children's Scrutiny will be updated on progress relating to this strategy.

The Improvement Board will receive ongoing updates as part of its responsibilities in guiding the Council's improvement journey.

Key stakeholders that will receive updates on our corporate parenting include:

- Children's Services SMT and DMT
- Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategic Partnership
- City of York Safeguarding Children Partnership
- Health and Wellbeing Board?
- Show Me That I Matter and I Still Matter (children in care council and care leavers forum)