



City of York Council Approach to Corporate Parenting

Introduction:

The purpose of this report is to reinforce the importance of the Council meeting its responsibilities as a Corporate Parent and in light of the refreshed Corporate Parenting and Children in Care Strategy 2020 – 2023, propose the approach to be taken by elected members, officers, partners and the Corporate Parenting Board in delivering the strategy.

This report should be read alongside the City of York Corporate Parenting and Children in Care Strategy 2020 – 2023 and the associated action plan, which set out the key priorities relating to children and young people in care and care leavers including performance information/reporting. The Strategy also highlights the importance of the Corporate Parenting Board further strengthening its relationship with Children and Young People in Care (CYPIC) and Care Leavers and broadening the contribution made by children in care and partner agencies.

Children and young people in care and care leavers can face challenges as they grow up and move on to independence. In order to make this journey as smooth as possible and to ensure they go on to fulfil their potential, it is vital that Members, Officers and Services across the Council work together in their interests.

The Corporate Parenting Legal Duty:

As highlighted in the City of York Corporate Parenting and Children in Care Strategy 2020 -2023, under the Children and Social Work Act 2017, when a child or young person comes into the care of the local authority, or is under 25 and was looked-after by the authority for at least 13 weeks after their 14th birthday, the authority becomes their corporate parent. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 now compels local authorities to evidence how they meet the seven Corporate Parenting Principles as they are statutory in relation to children in care and care leavers. Partner Organisations also have a duty to support the Council in delivering their obligations.

This means that we must:

- act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and young people
- encourage them to express their views, wishes and feelings, and take them into account, while promoting high aspirations and trying to secure the best outcomes for them
- make sure they have access to services
- make sure that they are safe, with stable home lives, relationships and education or work
- prepare them for adulthood and independent living.

The Three Levels of Corporate Parenting Responsibility:

The National Children's Bureau and Local Government Association helpfully identify three levels of understanding and responsibility for Councils in relation to Corporate Parenting. The Corporate Parenting Board plays an important role in ensuring every part of the council considers how its work impacts on children in care and care leavers and also the challenges children in care and care leavers face. Elected members should receive training on how to be an effective corporate parent.

Level 1 - Universal Responsibility

This is the minimum standard which requires all elected members and officers within the Council and other partner agencies to have an understanding of:

- the needs of our children and young people in care and why they need to be looked after
- the profile of children and young people in care and the outcomes they are achieving compared with other local children
- their responsibility for promoting the welfare of children and young people in care and care leavers

Elected members and officers should:

- be sure we are providing the best possible care for our children and young people in care and care leavers asking, 'would it be good enough for our children?'

- be aware of and, where relevant, implement ‘The Guarantee’ to children and young people in care and care leavers
- know what is most important to our children and young people in care and care leavers. This takes on even more significance due to the Covid 19 pandemic.

Level 2 - Targeted Responsibility

This standard relates to elected members who are members with designated corporate parenting responsibilities (visit children’s homes, sit on Fostering or Adoption Panels or the Corporate Parenting Board) and members who carry out Corporate Parenting responsibilities through fulfilling a scrutiny function. It requires that they:

- are aware of relevant issues and know the expectations regarding services for children in care and care leavers
- have access to qualitative and quantitative information about services and outcomes for children and young people and are able to evaluate this information
- consider how they are going to hear the voice of the child / young person and take action, in conjunction with managers and other agencies, to improve services
- ensure, with senior managers across the council and its partner agencies, that improving outcomes for this group of children is a consideration in all decision making
- ensure the Council and partner agencies work together to improve the service and respond to changing needs. The participation of partners in work to promote the wellbeing of all children and young people is vital, and it’s important that they understand the specific needs of children in care so that this can be taken account of in their plans.
- know what our children and young people in care and care leavers think of the services provided for them.

Level 3 - Specialist Responsibility

This specialist responsibility is for key senior roles within the Council - the Executive Member for Children’s Services and the Corporate Director of People and Assistant Director, Children’s Services. In addition to the responsibilities detailed above, they will:

- provide systematic leadership across the authority in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people in care and care leavers
- ensure arrangements are in place to implement any key policy decisions in this regard
- ensure that there is an in-depth understanding of the needs of the Council's children and young people in care and care leavers and that this informs service improvement
- ensure that effective governance arrangements are in place to implement any decisions regarding children and young people in care and care leavers across the partnership
- ensure that the strategic plans of Children's Services and joint plans with partner agencies meet the needs of children and young people in care and care leavers
- ensure there are strong links with 'Show Me That I Matter' and 'I Still Matter' and that they are supported to be effective.

The Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategic Partnership:

To support the Corporate Board in fulfilling its responsibilities, a strategic partnership which is made up of colleagues from the Council, Police, Education and Health meets bi-monthly and is chaired by the Assistant Director, Children's Services. These colleagues are at an appropriate senior level within their organisation to be able to influence policy and strategy within their organisation. They are also able to assist with the raising of opportunities and aspirations of our children and young people in care and care leavers in line with the seven Corporate Parenting Principles and will oversee delivery of the City of York Corporate Parenting and Children in Care Strategy and Action Plan. The actions and recommendations agreed by this group will be shared with the Corporate Parenting Board and 'Show Me That I Matter' and 'I Still Matter'.

A Children in Care and Care Leavers Operational Group will meet monthly to deliver the City of York Corporate Parenting Strategy Action Plan and will report to the Strategic Partnership.

Corporate Parenting Board

The Board provides leadership across the city to create a more effective and efficient health and wellbeing for looked after children and has responsibility for the quality of services for children and young people in care and care leavers. It strives to make a positive difference, improving the outcomes for all children and young people in care and care leavers and those who use our services.

Children and young people in care and care leavers have told us what they would like to see in relation to the Corporate Parenting Board: -

- 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.

It is therefore proposed that the membership of the Board is formally expanded to include not just the Executive Member for Education, Children and Young People's Services and relevant elected Members but also relevant Council Officers and Partners and people with direct experience of either working with children in care and care leavers or having experienced what it is like to be a young person in care or care leaver. Elected Members would continue to be drawn from: -

- The Executive Member for Education, Children and Young People's Services.
- Elected Members on the Adoption Panel and Fostering and Sharing Care Panel.
- Elected Members on the 'Show Me That I Matter' Panel (children in care council).
- The elected Members who visit Wenlock Terrace and The Glen.
- Another appropriate elected Member.

The following new members are proposed: -

- Corporate Director of People/Director of Children's Services
- Assistant Director of Children's Services
- Group Manager – Achieved Permanence

- Assistant Director - Education/Virtual School Head
- Representative from Health
- A care experienced young person
- 2 Foster carers

On a quarterly basis, the Corporate Parenting Board will receive an update from ‘Show Me That I Matter’ and ‘I Still Matter’ involving a report and/or direct input from young people in care and an update from the Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategic Partnership. The Board will also receive performance information and data via the scorecard for Children and Young People in Care and Care Leavers. Agenda items for each Board will reflect activity relating to the Corporate Parenting and Children in Care Strategy action Plan and other items as agreed by the Board. This will include the Independent Reviewing Officer annual report.

Through these changes, the Board would become more than a forum for elected members to oversee progress for children and young people in care and care leavers but more interactive and young person friendly and less like a Council Committee. It is important that the Board fully understands and directly hears the experiences of Children in Care and Care Leavers and that young people are comfortable in participating, particularly given the impact of Covid 19.

END.