



## City of York Council Approach to the Corporate Parenting Board

### **Introduction:**

An initial report was presented to the Corporate Parenting Board in January 2021, which introduced the Corporate Parenting and Children in Care Strategy 2020-2023 and reinforced the corporate parenting legal duties and the Council's responsibilities. The report also recommended broadening the contribution made to the Corporate Parenting Board by children and young people in care and partner agencies and also some changes to the membership of the Board.

The purpose of this report is to build on the January report and make proposals for how the Corporate Parenting Board could be delivered as discussed and agreed at the Corporate Parenting Board on the 19<sup>th</sup> January 2021. It was recognised at the meeting that there was a need for change.

To inform this report, information was obtained from other local authorities on how they run their Corporate Parenting Boards and also discussions with young people, senior leaders including the Director of Governance and two elected members who sit on the Corporate Parenting Board.

Research on other local authority approaches to Corporate Parenting Boards highlight consistent themes – Children in care and care leaver membership, a flexible membership linked to agenda items, a young person in care or care leaver as joint chair, young people leading the meetings, an informal and interactive approach to meetings with the needs of young people at the centre i.e. flexibility regarding venue, timing of meetings and a link to full council.

### **What Young People in Care have told us?**

Children and young people in care and care leavers would like stronger links between the Corporate Parenting Board and young people/groups and more representation at the Corporate Parenting Board from different agencies/services. They would also like a less formal, more relaxed and interactive Corporate Parenting Board that better engages young people.

Further consultation was held with the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum in March 2021 and they told us that they would like representatives from the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum to be members of the Corporate Parenting Board, being supported to attend and fully participate at each meeting

We asked the Care Leavers Forum how we could best facilitate this and young people told us the following:

1. They would like to have access to the right support and training to enable them to fully participate within discussions in a meaningful way.
2. They would like to have access to written information about each member of the Corporate Parenting Board, explaining a bit about themselves and their role.
3. They would like to receive the agenda items and reports in advance to ensure they have sufficient time to view these and formulate any questions or points of interest.
4. They would like Corporate Parenting Board meetings to remain professional as it is important to them to know that decision makers take their role in relation to children in care seriously.
5. Young people would like meetings to remain professional whilst trying to ensure that young people feel at ease; they should be regularly given the opportunity to speak up within the meetings, whilst ensuring that young people are not put on the spot.
6. Whilst some young people might be confident in this environment, others might feel less comfortable and so attempts must be made to ensure that young people feel at ease by allowing them to submit questions in advance or use the chat function during remote meetings.
7. Young people would like to be treated as equals and respected for their lived experience of the care system.

### **Corporate Parenting Board:**

The purpose of the Corporate Parenting Board is to:-

- Provide leadership across the city to create a more effective and efficient health and wellbeing for children and young people in care and care leavers

- Make sure that the whole council and relevant partner agencies commit to excellent standards of corporate parenting.
- Set high expectations and stable relationships for all children and young people in care
- Seek improved long term outcomes for children and young people in care and their families – for their happiness; well-being; educational success; and future prospects
- Make sure that the voice of the child and young person in care influences both policy and the services that they receive, and that young people are engaged with any action intended to develop and improve services or to recruit key staff members
- Oversee and monitor key performance indicators for the health, well-being and education of looked after children
- Champion the provision of Council based work placements and apprenticeships for children and young people in care and care leavers.
- Review and monitor progress on the actions identified in the Corporate Parenting and Children in Care Strategy
- Monitor the delivery of York's Guarantee to children and young people in care
- Consider the outcomes of regulatory visits and inspection reports on provision for children in care
- Celebrate the achievements of children and young people in care and their carers
- Determine ways in which the role of corporate parenting can be improved, using examples from other local authorities/organisations.

### **Membership of the Board:**

It is proposed that the Board will be Co-Chaired by a representative of Show Me That I Matter and I Still Matter (a young person in care or a care leaver) and an Elected Member.

The Co-Chairs would be nominated at the first meeting of each year.

The Membership of the Board would consist of: -

Up to 4 representatives from Show Me That I Matter and I Still Matter.

A maximum of 4 Elected Members drawn from:

- The Executive Member for Education, Children and Young People's Services.
- The elected Members on the Show Me That I Matter Panel (children in care council).

The Board would also have the power to co-opt non-voting Members to advise, which would include the following:

- 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
- Representatives from Health
- Care experienced young people as recommended by Show Me That I Matter and I Still Matter
- Up to two foster carers
- Other significant agencies/services involved in corporate parenting as and when required i.e. Police
- Representative of DWP
- Housing Representative
- CAMHS/Mental Health representative

The revised membership, would mean that there is a reduction in the number of elected members sitting on the Board but which in turn would enable young people to join the membership along with representation from partner agencies. Young people would therefore directly contribute to Board meetings and which would mean that the reports and contributions from Officers and partner agencies would be open to more scrutiny and challenge from young people with direct experience of services.

The Board would be able to make changes to the co-opted representation at any time, with the agreement of the voting members of

the Board and having receiving a suitable recommendation from the advisors.

### **Meetings of the Board:**

It is proposed that the Board would be delivered under a new format and be divided into 2 parts. The first part of the meeting would be young people led, on a topic of their choice, perhaps linked to the work plan of Show Me That I Matter and I Still Matter or a particular piece of work they have been working on and the findings. Areas of strength and development would be identified and any actions arising would be taken forward and progress updates provided at future meetings.

The second part of the meeting would be specifically business focussed, be co-chaired and would relate to specific areas of the Corporate Parenting and Children in Care Strategy and include relevant performance information. Crucially, young people's lived experiences and also their direct contribution would feed into the work and inform any actions arising. Progress updates would be provided at future Boards.

The meetings of the Board will take place in private, in the interests of children and young people who attend and participate in the Board meetings. The Board would also become less of a formal body, rather an open forum for engaging with and listening directly to the lived experiences and views of young people in care and care leavers and which will hold Officers to account more.

It is proposed that prior to each Board meeting starting, The Board comes together beforehand, perhaps 30-40 minutes and shares food and a drink such as sandwiches or similar so as to socialise and build relationships. This would also contribute to the informal nature of the meetings.

The Board would meet quarterly. It would not have decision making powers and would not be a formal Board (Committee) of the Council due to the changes in format and membership.

### **Annual Report:**

The Board whilst receiving information and updates and discussing issues relevant to children and young people in care and care leavers and agreeing actions, would not be a scrutiny committee. The Board will prepare an Annual Report from the young person as co-chair to a meeting of Full Council. This will provide elected members with

information about the work of the Board and its effectiveness and also how well council services support children in care and care leavers and how well the Council undertakes its Corporate Parenting Responsibilities.

### **Next Steps:**

A transition process would need to be put in place in order to move to the proposed format and structure of future Boards. We would move towards Boards being of a 'hybrid nature' initially.

Training and support would need to be provided to Show Me That I Matter and I Still Matter, so that young people feel comfortable in engaging and contributing. Arrangements could be made for them to visit or speak with young people from other local authorities that deliver their Corporate Parenting Boards in a similar way. Some preparation work would be needed with the elected member who would co-chair the meetings with a young person as this would be new to them. Work on building their relationship in the context of co-chairing may also be required. Some development sessions may be required involving the elected member representatives and young people representatives.

Time and measures would need to be put in place in order for Officers to share and go through Council reports with young people in advance of Board meetings.

Support from the Voice Service will most likely be needed at each Board and in any development sessions.

Revised formal Terms of Reference would need to be provided and agreed by the Board and Member representation on the new Board would need to be approved by Council.

A workshop to be held with members of the Board and Show Me That I Matter to develop how we will work together. It is also proposed that Mark Riddel, national lead for care leavers with the DFE will come to the workshop to talk more about what works and his vision for care leavers.

**RECOMMENDATION:** To invite comments on the information gathered and on the suggested new direction for Board and to note the next steps needed to be taken.

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