

# Corporate Parenting Strategy

2024-2027



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## ■ Introduction

The Corporate Parenting Strategy for the City of York outlines our ambitions for children and young people who are looked after by us, the local authority, as their corporate parents. The strategy also sets out our long-term aspirations for care experienced young people as they become adults.

We recognise that the best outcomes for children and young people are achieved when they can live safely within their own families. This fundamental principle underpins our mission to implement the “Building Better Futures” practice model, which incorporates Signs of Safety and Family Seeing. By adopting a Family Seeing approach, we aim to change the way we support vulnerable children and young people.

The benefits of Family Seeing is how it supports reconnecting children and young people with their extended families and networks, fostering a sense of belonging and continuity that is vital for their well-being. Family Seeing promotes partnership with families and networks, which leads to more sustainable and successful outcomes. Lastly, the Family Seeing approach aligns perfectly with our core values of empowerment, inclusivity, and holistic support, as it recognises that strong families, networks, and relationships serve as the cornerstone for a brighter and more stable future for our children and young people. Through this approach, we are not only investing in the welfare of the children but also in the strength and resilience of families and networks, truly building better futures for all involved.

Written in partnership with care-experienced young people, their carers, and professionals, this strategy provides a holistic, inclusive and ambitious long term plan for a city that cares.





## ■ Foreword

### **Annie, Cody and Abbie – ‘Show Me That I Matter’ and ‘I Still Matter’**

Members of York’s Children in care council and care leavers forum have a well-established involvement with the corporate parenting board and understand that their role as corporate parents is to support and enhance the opportunities for looked after children and care leavers. Both Show Me That I Matter (York’s Children in Care Council) and I Still Matter (York’s Care Leavers Forum) members meet monthly to discuss and raise suggestions of how the support for care experienced young people can continuously improve, with their own experiences being an influence for positive change.

As young people we find opportunities like the ‘Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum’ (CICC & CLF) a good opportunity to have our voices heard, which are then fed into the Corporate Parenting Board. Members of the groups feel that the Corporate Parenting Strategy outlines a clear and innovative approach to achieving the most positive journey into adulthood for all looked after young people. Support around building and maintaining relationships, as well as working together as an integrative team, is a key element of the proposed strategy, that care experienced people feel will reflect best on how to successfully support young people.

Members of the CICC & CLF feel it is vital for any professionals working with care experienced young people to be mindful of treating each young person as their own individual and support them to excel in their own lives, as they create their unique path in life. The chairs of both groups think it is of high importance for professionals to be held accountable for what they say they will do and to stand by the statement of ‘treat me like you would your own child’.

### **Cllr. Bob Webb - Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education**

As a City of York Councillor and a Corporate Parent our first responsibility must always be to the children and young people in our care. This is, of course, a responsibility but also a privilege. I am really proud to lead by example on this as the Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education as well as the Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board.

The role of a Corporate Parent should obviously be about the safety of the child, but it should be much more than that; it should be about hearing a young person’s voice and listening and acting on what is said; it should be about doing all we can to strengthen families to support each other and it should be about providing support at the right time to make positive change to a child’s life.

This strategy lays out the detail of how we can work together with our partners, with our communities and importantly with our families and the young people themselves to make these positive changes.

## **Martin Kelly – Corporate Director for Children’s Services**

As a longstanding resident of this beautiful city, I am passionate about all young people in York getting the very best start in life. It is therefore an extreme privilege to share the role of corporate parent, working with and alongside parents and guardians to provide the best care and support for looked after children, young people, and care leavers. I am committed long term to create an environment where young people are respected, feel listened to, are valued, and feel a deep sense trust, love and belonging.

We have a shared commitment in York to think about every young person’s long-term future, not just working in the moment. Our practice model is designed to help us think deeply about building the right foundations using friends, networks and opportunities which empower and build long term resilience.

Our Corporate Parenting Strategy builds on the things that matter to young people and provides a framework to hold our system to account in delivering ambitious, hopeful, and meaningful outcomes. It is my commitment that we will always seek to ask, ‘Is it good enough for my child?’



## ■ What does it mean to be ‘in care’ or ‘care experienced’?

Below are formal definitions of what it means to be ‘in care’ or ‘care experienced’.

**Children and Young People in Care:** These are young people who are in the care and supervision of the local authority, residing in foster care, residential care, or other care arrangements. They receive support and guidance from the local authority to ensure their well-being and development.

**Care Experienced Young People:** These are individuals who have previously been in the care system, including those who may still receive support from the local authority or are transitioning into independent living.

Everyone’s personal experience of what being in care meant to them will be unique. Below is a summary of what children and young people have said being in care or care experienced means to them.

*Even if things have been really difficult at home, it is likely that you will feel really sad and unsettled leaving your family and the familiarity of the place you lived. Coming into the care of the local authority is a new beginning for any young person – it can feel like life starting all over again, meeting a new family, living somewhere completely different, potentially even having to move schools. It can sometimes feel like you have to grow up at a much younger age than other children and get used to being involved in lots of decisions about yourself. Going into foster care can be an anxiety provoking and confusing time, especially with meetings and check ins from professionals and other people now involved in your life. As time goes on, and the more settled you become, you can gradually begin to find your feet and adapt to this new life.*

*Even if things have been difficult at home before you came into care, you have mixed emotions about not living with your biological family. It can be a big adjustment, and especially difficult if your siblings are going to be living with different carers. Having to move outside of the area you grew up in can make you feel isolated and if contact with family members isn’t supported then you can feel cut off. Life can feel out of control and settling in with new carers can take some time.*

*Once you are in a settled in your placement things can get a whole lot better. In the right placement you can feel loved and cared for and part of a family, perhaps for the first time. Having your own room can give you the space you need, and it can be fun having other young people to live with. Having lots of key workers may sometimes feel overwhelming, but you also have their support, and it’s comforting to know there are always people there for you. Being in care doesn’t mean you are loved any less. You now have extended an family who all want what’s best for you.*

*Children who have experienced being in care sometimes feel judged by their peers, by key workers and by society at large. This is the reason that York’s Children in Care Council and Care leavers Forum have welcomed the recommendation in the 2023 Independent Care Review on Protected Characteristics, which backs this position up, stating:*



*“Many care experienced people face discrimination, stigma, and prejudice in their day to day lives. Public perceptions of care experience centre on the idea that children are irredeemably damaged and that can lead to discrimination and assumptions being made.”*

*There are sometimes new opportunities open to young people who have been in care, but you need to be told about them and be supported to find the confidence to apply for those opportunities. In York young people are currently campaigning for care experience to be a protected characteristic, to open up more opportunities and to challenge discrimination.*

## ■ Corporate Parenting Principles

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 lays out seven Corporate Parenting Principles to ensure the best possible outcomes for Children in Care and Care Leavers. As our children grow into adulthood, we uphold these principles to provide our care leavers with the support and stability they need, just like any child would expect when preparing to leave home.

- To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of children and young people.
- To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings.
- To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people.
- To 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.
- To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people.
- For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work.
- To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

## ■ Stable Homes Built on Love

The Stable Homes Built on Love review was published in 2022 and sets out a vision for reform of the children's social care system in England. The review's makes a number of recommendations. Key recommendations include:

- **Reforming the experience of being in care:** The review found that the experience of being in care can be very different for different children, and that some children do not receive the care and support they need. The review recommends a "corporate parenting" approach extended to partners not just the local authority.
- **Providing more support for kinship carers and wider family networks:** The review found that kinship carers often do not receive the support they need, and that this can

have a negative impact on the children they care for. The review recommends that local authorities provide more assistance, practical support, and emotional support to kinship carers.

- **Supporting the workforce:** The review found that the workforce in children's social care is under pressure, and that this can impact the quality of care that children receive. The review recommends more training and resources for the workforce.
- **Delivering system reform:** The review found that the children's social care system is fragmented. The review recommends that local authorities work together to deliver system reform, and that they make better use of technology.

The review's implementation is still ongoing, and it is too early to say what the full outcome will be. The review provides a valuable opportunity to reflect on the current state of children's social care and to make positive changes for the future. We will need to adapt our implementation of our Corporate Parenting Strategy to take the opportunities created by the review as it begins to become more fully formed.

## ■ **UMatter – What children and young people tell us about their care experience**

The U Matter Survey is a chance for children and young people in care and care leavers aged 11 + to have their say about their care experience. The survey is carried out every two years and made available to young people over a three-month period. Below is a of summary messages from children and young people gathered through the 2023 U Matter Survey. Responses were received from 80 care experienced young people.

### Children in Care

#### Where I live

- The majority of young people feel safe where they are living (95%)
- The majority of young people feel happy where they are living (86%)
- The majority of young people say the adults they live with notice how they are feeling (85%)

#### My Social Worker

- The majority of young people felt that their Social Worker listens to them (91%)
- Of the young people who have had a change of Social Worker in the last 12 months 52% were unhappy with how this was done
- The majority of young people knew how to contact their Social Worker (87%)
- Just over three quarters of young people had a good understanding about the decisions made about them and their family (79%)



## Reviews

- 79% of young people who responded knew who their IRO was
- Just over half of young people who responded said they were able to speak to their IRO before review meetings (52%)
- 49% of young people said they routinely attend their review meetings

## Health

- 86% of young people know what a Health Assessment is
- Most young people who said they had attended their health assessment found it useful (71%)
- Just over three quarters of young people felt confident in asking for help with their emotions and mental health (79%)

## Education

- 52% of young people said they have a copy of their personal education plan
- 70% of young people said they contributed to their Personal Education Plan
- 74% of young people said they attended their Personal Education Plan meeting
- The majority of young people report that their Personal Education Plan (meeting) was useful (81%).

## Relationships

- 100% of young people said they had someone in their life who they trust and who helps them when they need them
- 100% of young people knew who to speak to if they were unhappy about arrangements for seeing their family
- Most young people felt they had had the right support to keep in touch with family and friends (84%)

## Rights and entitlements

- Just over three quarters of young people said someone had talked to them about having an Advocate (79%)
- The majority of young people said someone had talked to them about having an Independent Visitor (82%)
- 79% of young people know they have a right to make a complaint if they are unhappy about the service they have received from the Local Authority

## Care Leavers

### Where I live

- The majority of care leavers feel safe where they are living (92%)
- The majority of care leavers feel happy where they are living (86%)
- The majority of care leavers felt their needs and views were considered when exploring their housing options (91%)
- The majority of care leavers have access to the internet (94%)

### Pathway Worker

- The majority of care leavers reported that they had a good / very good relationship with their Pathway Worker (75%)
- The majority of care leavers said that their worker did what they said they would (94%)
- 100% of care leavers knew how to contact their pathway worker
- The majority of care leavers said that their worker listened to them (86%)
- Pathway Plan and Preparing for Independence
- The majority of care leavers felt involved in their pathway planning (91%)
- Over half of care leavers reported that they consulted their Pathway Plan for information, and it was important to them (65%)
- The majority of care leavers felt they were able to discuss their goals and aspirations (90%)

### Health

- The majority of care leavers know who to talk to if they needed support for their emotional health (85%) and would feel comfortable asking adults around them for support to gain information or to access health services (76%).
- Only 58% of care leavers are registered with a dentist (80%)
- The majority of care leavers are registered with a GP (94%)

### Relationships

- The majority of care leavers report to have someone in their life who they trust and helps them when needed (97%)
- 79% of care leavers felt they had support to keep in touch with the people that are important to them in their life's
- The majority of care leavers report to have a good social network that they can rely on (85%)

## Education

- The majority of care leavers are aware of the support available to access Education, Training and Employment and report to have received the right amount of support (97%)
- The majority of care leavers felt they had had the opportunity to discuss their education, training and employment options (90%)

## Local Offer

- 69% of care leavers report that they are aware of the Local Offer and are aware of their leaving care entitlements.
- Only 54% of care leavers know how to access the Local Offer
- 100% of care leavers know about the support available to them from the Children's Rights Service and all Care Leavers said a worker had spoken to them about advocacy.
- 94% of care leavers know that they have a right to make a complaint if they are unhappy about the service they receive.

## York's Guarantee for children and young people in care

The Guarantee is York's Pledge to children and young people in care. It has been created by young people in care and it says how the council should support you when you are in care. When we say 'council', this means any workers that work for the council such as your social worker, independent reviewing officer, advocate, managers, directors and more.

### Where you live

We will find you carers who will get to know you and help you feel safe, comfortable and cared for. We will listen to you so we can find you the right place to live.

### Family and friends

We will support you to keep in touch with family and friends and if this is not possible, we will help you to understand why.

### Education

We will help you to identify a teacher in school who you feel you can talk to and can attend your reviews. We will work together to develop a Personal Education Plan (PEP) which works for you and ensures you have the right support to do well. We will support and guide you to make the best choices after school to help you achieve your goals.

### Your review

Your review is all about you, therefore, it is really important that everyone knows your views. You will have the opportunity to talk to your Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) before your review whose role it is to make sure this happens. They will talk to you about



how you want your review to take place and can support you to chair your review if you wish.

### **Your social worker**

Your social worker will get to know you, listen to you and involve you in decisions which affect your life. This will help to create a care plan that is right for you. We will make sure you can contact your social worker, or a member of their team, so that you can get a response when you really need it.

### **Health**

We will make sure that you have the chance to talk about your health and emotional wellbeing and that you've got all the information and advice you may need.

### **Support until you're an adult**

To help you feel more prepared for your future, your social worker will work with you when you turn 16 to help you develop your pathway to independence. Once you turn 18 your pathway plan will identify the support available to you up until you are 25, if you need it.

## **■ The Corporate Parenting Board**

The Corporate Parenting Board in York serves as the strategic partnership responsible for overseeing and driving efforts to ensure the best possible outcomes for children in the care of the local authority, as well as care leavers. The board consists of elected members, key service leaders, council officers, care experienced young people and their representatives. It plays a leadership role by advocating for the unique needs of children and young people with care experience. The board ensures a coordinated approach across different services and agencies, maximizing the resources available to support successful outcomes for children and care leavers.

The Corporate Parenting Board will regularly take strategic ownership of this strategy and the action plan to implement it.

## ■ Our Strategic Priorities

Our strategic priorities reflect the corporate parenting principles, our strategic foundations and our guarantee to children and young people in care.

### 1) Where you live

We will do our best to find you carers who will get to know you and help you feel safe, comfortable and cared for. We will listen to you so we can try to find you the right place to live.

We recognise the need to develop our Sufficiency Strategy so that there are more options for where children and young people in care can live.

#### We will do this by:

- Updating our sufficiency strategy to ensure we have a range of placement options available to meet need.
- Continue the work of Make York Home to ensure children and young people are in placements that best meet their needs and support more young people to live in York near to the networks and relationships that matter most.
- Deliver on our Fostering recruitment plan to recruit more foster carers locally.
- Developing our approach locally to build an enhanced approach to residential care that works in an integrated way with local fostering provision.

#### What does success look like?

- More children live in York provision.
- Ensure children have placement stability.
- More young people tell us that where they live is right for them.

### 2) Family and Friends

We recognise how important relationships are in supporting young people to thrive and become independent. We will work hard to support you to keep in touch with family and friends and if this is not possible, we will help you to understand why.

We will prioritise the development of positive and stable relationships between children and young people in care and their support network.

#### We will do this by:

- Implementing our Family Seeing approach and supporting children and young people to develop the positive relationships and networks they need to thrive and sustain them throughout their life.
- Continuing to develop our Life Story work so that children can understand what is happening and why.

- Ensure 'My Care Plans' identify who is important to children and young people and how they are able to keep in touch.
- We will develop our model of family time to make better use of family networks and develop new ways of keeping in touch.
- We will implement our Building Better Futures practice model and the use of Family Seeing to help develop positive relationships in children's support network.

#### **What does success look like?**

- Children and young people tell us they understand their life story and are able to keep in touch with people that matter.
- Improved take up and feedback on the use of family time.

### **3) Education**

We will work to support young people engage with education that helps them to reach their potential. We want to make sure children and young people have a sense of 'belonging' in schools. We will also develop our approach to apprenticeships and access to employment so young people can realise their ambitions.

#### **We will do this by:**

- We will work to ensure Personal Education Plans (PEP) are good quality, aspirational and ambitious.
- We will work with all partners to ensure young people have the right support to be in school and to succeed.
- We will support and young people to plan for their future after school to help achieve their goals.
- As a corporate parent we will develop our approach to apprenticeships to help care experienced young people have another route to gaining experience and qualifications to help them in their career.
- We will have high expectations of partners in the city to improve their offer of support for care experienced young people to have access to apprenticeships and employment opportunities.

#### **What does success look like?**

- Children tell us that their PEPs are meaningful and reflect their aspirations.
- Our Quality Assurance tells us the quality of PEPs is consistently good.
- We know that children and young people have a sense of 'belonging' in schools and have a positive experience of education.
- Our data tells us that children and young people are attending and engaged with their education.



- We know care experienced people are in education, employment or training.
- We know young people are accessing apprenticeships and education through the local authority and partners.

#### **4) Health**

We will work in partnership with health to ensure that the health needs of children and young people in our care are prioritised and met. We will do our best to ensure children have access to appropriate support in relation to their well-being and mental health.

##### **We will do this by:**

- Improve time timeliness of Initial and Review Health Assessments.
- Work with partners in health to maximise access to dentistry and regular check ups.
- Improving support for children and young people's well-being through the development of No Wrong Door and Staying Close.
- Developing how we work with CAMHS for care experienced young people to improve access and coordinate support.
- Work with health to ensure children and young people have access to a dentist.

##### **What does success look like?**

- Children and young people tell us about their well-being and access to support.
- We deliver against our targets for dental checks, Initial and Review Health Assessments.
- We can demonstrate the impact of No Wrong Door and Staying Close on children's well-being.
- We can demonstrate with health access to and the impact of CAMHS support for children and young people in care.

#### **5) Support into adulthood and independence**

We will support care-experienced young people prepare for independence, developing essential skills, and nurturing meaningful relationships to empower them in their journey towards a successful and fulfilling life.

##### **We will do this by:**

- Update our leaving care pathway so it supports young people to prepare for successfully leaving care.
- Update our local offer for care leavers that allows for more bespoke support for each young person.
- Develop the advice and support offer for care experienced young people beyond the age of 25.
- Review the impact of our housing protocol for care experienced young people.

## **What does success look like?**

- Care leavers tell us how well pathway planning is working.
- We are in contact with care leavers and can demonstrate the impact of pathway planning.
- Care leavers are in suitable accommodation/housing.

## **6) Good corporate parents**

Everyone will play their part in being a good corporate parent by actively fostering a nurturing and inclusive environment that empowers care-experienced young individuals to thrive. Our Children and Young People have a voice in the way we deliver our services and we will act upon what they tell us.

### **We will do this by:**

- We will ensure the workforce across the city understands their responsibilities as corporate parents.
- The Corporate Parenting Board will provide support and challenge the system to continue to improve.
- We will continue to develop how children and young people can have a voice through Show Me That I Matter, I Still Matter, Advocacy, U\_Matter and through implementing Mind of My Own.
- We will make sure that we celebrate key milestones and achievements with children and young people's.
- We will deliver on our commitments as set out in this strategy.

## **What does success look like?**

- Children and young people tell us they feel listened to and that their voice makes a difference.
- Children and young people tell us they see their milestones and achievements are celebrated.
- We can see Mind of My Own is being used and making a positive difference.
- We are assured the workforce understand their responsibilities as corporate parents
- The Corporate Parenting Board is able to demonstrate the difference it is making.

## ■ Delivering this strategy


The Corporate Parenting Strategy will be implemented through an action plan that will be developed and overseen by the Corporate Parenting Board. The board will review progress on a regular basis and ask for assurance that the strategy is being implemented effectively.

At the heart of tracking progress will be the corporate parenting board hearing directly from children and young people about their lived experience. The board will use this feedback to inform its decision-making and to ensure that the strategy is meeting the needs of children and young people.





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It is available in the following languages:

我們也用您們的語言提供這個信息 (Cantonese)

এই তথ্য আপনার নিজের ভাষায় দেয়া যেতে পারে। (Bengali)

Ta informacja może być dostarczona w twoim własnym języku. (Polish)

Bu bilgiyi kendi dilinizde almanız mümkündür. (Turkish)

یہ معلومات آپ کی اپنی زبان (بولی) میں بھی مہیا کی جاسکتی ہیں۔ (Urdu)

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