

Report Title:	Corporate Parenting Strategy
Contains Confidential or Exempt Information?	NO - Part I
Member reporting:	Councillor N Airey, Lead Member for Children's Services
Meeting and Date:	Council 26 February 2019
Responsible Officer(s):	Lin Ferguson - Director of Children's Social Care and Early Help
Wards affected:	All

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REPORT SUMMARY

This report accompanies the updated corporate parenting strategy, action plan and corporate parenting guide for councillors (see Appendices A,B and C) and sets out the progress made by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead in enhancing its corporate parenting responsibilities in respect of children and young people placed within the care of the local authority and care leavers.

1. DETAILS OF RECOMMENDATION(S)

RECOMMENDATION: That Full Council:

- i) Notes the report and appendices.**
- ii) Endorses the progress made by the Corporate Parenting Forum in developing a new corporate parenting strategy, action plan and guide for councillors, in order to ensure that the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead is supporting Children in Care and Care Leavers to reach their full potential.**
- iii) Reaffirms its commitment to Children In Care and Care Leavers.**

2. REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION(S) AND OPTIONS CONSIDERED

2.1 Corporate parenting is the collective responsibility of the local authority and its partners to ensure the care and protection of Child In Care and Care Leavers.

2.2 The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenheads corporate parenting strategy was due for revision in 2018.

2.3 Following the introduction of the Children and Social Work Act 2017, which strengthened the principles of corporate parenting, the chair of the Corporate Parenting Forum agreed that a review of how the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead can best meet its corporate parenting responsibilities going forward was undertaken in the form of an informal workshop. This workshop was attended

by Corporate Parenting Forum members, the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, council officers, partner services and young people.

- 2.4 The overall view of the group was that the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead has good corporate parenting structures in place which could be enhanced to help children in the care of the Borough to reach their full potential.
- 2.5 Following research into best practice examples highlighted by Ofsted and within other government documents, the Corporate Parenting Forum agreed to a complete redevelopment of the corporate parenting strategy, action plan and guide for councillors.
- 2.6 Young people have been involved throughout the process and initially wrote a letter to their corporate parents outlining their views which concluded *“We would like to get to know you better. We would like you to know us better. We would like you to better communicate with us and let us voice our opinions. We would like to be listened to and heard. We know you are not our mum or dad, but you are responsible for looking after us. Sometimes it feels like we are just names on a piece of paper..... prove us wrong”*
- 2.7 Young people have been part of focus groups in order to ensure that we have a strategy that has been truly co-produced.
- 2.8 The new strategy and supporting documents will ensure that children and young people feel safe, valued, loved and have support networks around them to help them through childhood and the transition into adulthood; including preparing them for independent living. This will reduce the likelihood of long term problems in adulthood e.g. offending, drug addiction, mental health problems, amongst others.
- 2.9 It is proposed that training for elected members and senior officers on their corporate parenting responsibilities will take place after the May elections.

Options

Table 1: Options arising from this report

Option	Comments
Endorse the new strategy and supporting documents. This is the recommended option	Endorsing the strategy and supporting documents will demonstrate the importance that the council is placing on its corporate parenting responsibilities.
Do not support the strategy and supporting documents	There will be no strategic framework for the deployment of the council's corporate parenting responsibilities.

3. KEY IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The Children and Social Work Act 2017 sets out the following key principles for corporate parenting:
- Act in the young person's best interest and promote physical and mental wellbeing

- Promote the expression of wishes and feelings and giving the young person's views
- Take into account their views, wishes and feelings
- To provide support with accessing the services needed
- To promote high aspirations
- To provide safety and stability their home lives, relationships and education, work and training
- To prepare young people for adulthood and independent living

3.2 To provide effective corporate parenting the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead will:

- Work together with young people, councillors, professionals and partner services
- Listen to our children and young people and act on their views and ensuring they know what to expect from us
- Ensure all professionals and elected members are aware of their corporate parenting responsibilities
- Support and encourage our children in care and care leavers to achieve their full potential

3.3 This is not a Children's Service responsibility alone, but a Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead responsibility.

4. FINANCIAL DETAILS / VALUE FOR MONEY

4.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

4.2 Decisions that the council decide to make in the future to support Children in Care and Care Leavers may have a financial impact.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 As a corporate parent there is a statutory duty towards our Children in Care and Care Leavers which is outlined in the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

6. RISK MANAGEMENT

6.1 Statistically Children in Care and Care Leavers are more vulnerable to harm than those children not in care through becoming victims of exploitation, committing criminal offences, becoming dependant on drugs and/or alcohol, involved in abusive relationships etc. By meeting its corporate parenting responsibilities, the council will have networks in place to empower and support young people to lead healthy and fulfilled lives.

6.2 The council has already made the positive decision to exempt Care Leavers from paying Council Tax.

Table 2: Impact of risk and mitigation

Risks	Uncontrolled risk	Controls	Controlled risk
Corporate parenting would be inspected as part of a full Ofsted inspection without having a clear strategy and action plan in place. This could affect the OFSTED grading and this could, in turn, have a reputational impact on RBWM.	High	Adoption of strategy and action plan with 6 monthly operational review.	Low
Children in care have co-produced the strategy and will scrutinise progress of the strategy and plan. Any delays will lead to our young people becoming disillusioned about giving their views.	High	Adoption of strategy and action plan with 6 monthly operational review.	Low
Other professionals will not be clear about our corporate parenting responsibilities and might question the priority given to it by RBWM.	High	Adoption of strategy and action plan with 6 monthly operational review.	Low

7. POTENTIAL IMPACTS

7.1 Effective corporate parenting will help focus on improving outcomes for our Children In Care and our Care Leaver`s and will support them to realise their full potential.

8. CONSULTATION

8.1 In July 2018 an informal review took place with Corporate Parenting Forum Members, the council/AfC officers, partner services and young people. The children and young people felt that although their basic needs were being met, they would

like more interaction and support from their corporate parents, as stated in the letter found within the strategy.

8.2 Between July 2018 and November 2018 a working group, which included the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, developed the strategy and supporting documents. Children in Care were involved in the production throughout the process and suggested designing a strategy and action plan that is easy to understand, 'not too adult' and something that children and young people will want to read.

8.3 The final strategy and supporting documents were agreed at November's Corporate Parenting Forum meeting and have also been agreed by Kickback (the Children in Care Council) who especially liked the design and reduced text (when compared with previous strategies).

9. TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

9.1 Work is already underway on the plan. However the key dates can be found in Table 3.

Table 3: Implementation timetable

Date	Details
29th November 2018	Strategy and action plan agreed at Corporate Parenting Forum
14th January 2019	Strategy and action plan agreed at Kickback
20th February 2019	Report and supporting documents discussed at the Corporate Leadership Team Meeting
June 2019	Training for elected members and senior officers (as appropriate) on their corporate parenting responsibilities
June, August, October, December 2019, February and April 2020	Progress of action plan monitored and discussed at the Corporate Parenting Forum

10. APPENDICES

10.1 This report is supported by three Appendices:

- Corporate Parenting Strategy (Appendix A)
- Corporate Parenting Action Plan (Appendix B)
- Corporate Parenting Guide for Councillors (Appendix C)

11. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

11.1 This report is supported by 1 background document:

- Corporate Parenting overview presentation

12. CONSULTATION (MANDATORY)

Name of consultee	Post held	Date sent	Date returned
Cllr N Airey	Lead Member for Children's Services	13/02/19	13/02/19
Duncan Sharkey	Managing Director	14/02/19	
Russell O'Keefe	Executive Director	14/02/19	
Rob Stubbs	Section 151 Officer	14/02/19	
Elaine Browne	Interim Head of Law and Governance	14/02/19	
Nikki Craig	Head of HR and Corporate Projects	14/02/19	
Louisa Dean	Communications	14/02/19	
Andy Jeffs	Executive Director	14/02/19	16/02/19
Kevin McDaniel	Director of Children's Services	12/02/19	12/02/19
Angela Morris	Director of Adult Social Services	14/02/19	
Hilary Hall	Deputy Director of Commissioning and Strategy	14/02/19	

REPORT HISTORY

Decision type: Non-key decision	Urgency item? No	To Follow item? No
Report Author: Lin Ferguson/Danny Gomm		

CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY

We want every child in care and care leaver from the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead to reach their full potential and be healthy, happy, safe and secure whilst feeling loved, valued and respected.

We will achieve this by:

- everyone working together - young people, councillors, professionals and partner services
- listening to our children and young people and acting on their views and ensuring they know what to expect from us
- ensuring all professionals and elected members are aware of their corporate parenting responsibilities
- supporting and encouraging our children in care and care leavers to achieve



**DID YOU KNOW?
DECEMBER 2018**

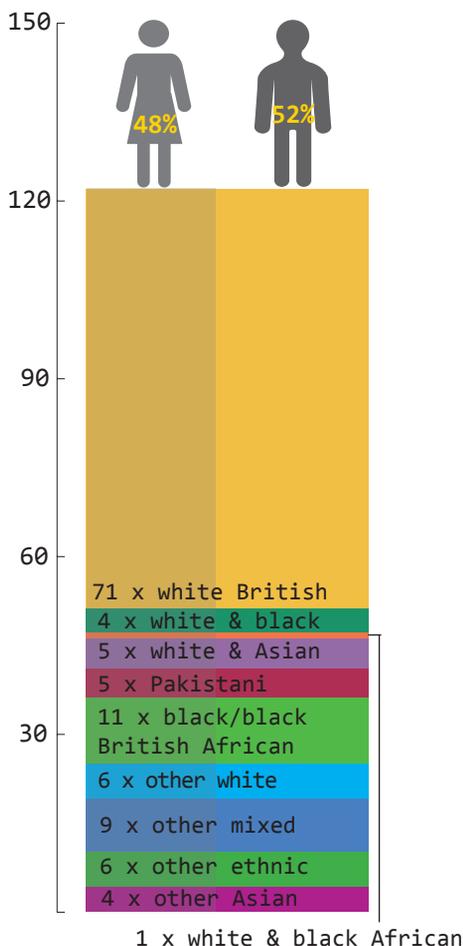


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122 children
in care
64 care leavers



DEAR CORPORATE PARENTS

At our last meeting we were asked who or what were our corporate parents.....75% of us didn't know. Is that our fault or yours?

If we didn't attend corporate parent forum meetings, would you even know what Kickback is, who attends and what it is we do? If you really knew who we were and cared for us, wouldn't you do simple things like send us a birthday card or a voucher at Christmas?

We are often asked our opinions about how things are working and what could be better...we give our opinions, but rarely get feedback and see very little change.

We would like to get to know you better. We would like you to know us better. We would like you to better communicate with us and let us voice our opinions. We would like to be listened to and heard. We know you are not our mum or dad, but you are responsible for looking after us.

Sometimes it feels like we are just names on a piece of paper..... prove us wrong.



From Kickback

CORPORATE PARENTING FORUM

The Corporate Parenting Forum is the champion, on behalf of elected members, for children in care and those leaving care. It receives information on how the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM) is fulfilling its corporate parenting responsibilities. There are approximately six meetings held a year and the views of young people are represented by Kickback members as part of the Corporate Parenting Forum.

Corporate parenting is the collective responsibility of the local authority and its partners to ensure the care and protection of child in care and care leavers

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 sets out the principles for the local authority so that all staff and departments consider the impact of their work on children and young people for whom the local authority is the corporate parent. The local authority is the corporate parent for a child that is looked after by the authority or is under 25 and was looked after by the local authority for at least 13 weeks after their 14th birthday.

It's every councillor's responsibility to make sure that the local authority is meeting its duties towards children in care and care leavers.

CORPORATE PARENTING PRINCIPLES

- Act in the young person's best interest and promote physical and mental wellbeing
- Promote the expression of wishes and feelings and giving the young person's views
- Take into account their views, wishes and feelings
- To provide support with accessing the services needed
- To promote high aspirations
- To provide safety and stability their home lives, relationships and education, work and training
- To prepare young people for adulthood and independent living

AFC RBWM LOCAL OFFER

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 requires each local authority to consult on and publish a local offer for its care leavers. AfC's RBWM Local Offer provides information about all the services and support that is available to care leavers from the local authority including information on their statutory entitlements as well as any discretionary support provided above our statutory duties.

We will also co-produce a local offer for children in care with young people promoting the opportunities available to them. The local offers can be found:

[www3.rbwm.gov.uk/downloads/download/567/
local_offer_for_care_leavers](http://www3.rbwm.gov.uk/downloads/download/567/local_offer_for_care_leavers)

CHILDREN IN CARE PLEDGES

0 TO 15 YEAR OLD PLEDGE

In order for all children and young people to reach their full potential, AfC has developed a set of pledges to ensure that, regardless of age, ability, background or whether placed in or outside of the borough, every child in its care:

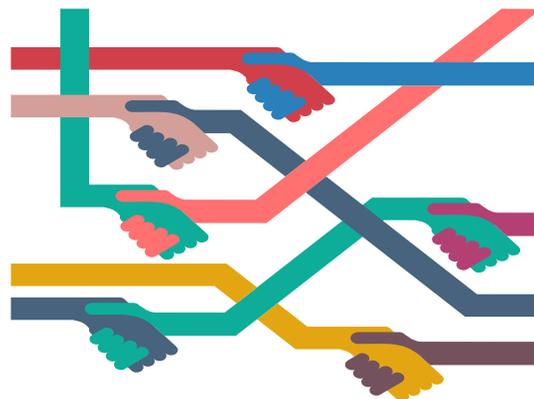
- gets a good education
- keeps healthy and happy
- keeps in touch with their family and friends
- gets involved
- is helped to stay safe
- is provided with good care

16 TO 18 YEAR OLDS PLEDGE

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and the Children Act Transition Guidance outlines the support that local authorities give 16 and 17 in order to assist them with successfully moving into adulthood.

In RBWM, eligible or relevant children (16 to 18) can expect:

- an allocated social worker or personal advisor
- a full assessment based on their needs
- a detailed pathway plan (PWP) based on their assessed needs, which will be overseen by a qualified social work team manager. The child will need to be a key contributor towards this. The plan will be reviewed every six months
- their personal advisor or social worker to keep in touch and visit them every six to eight weeks (more often if necessary or less as identified within their pathway plan)
- financial support as relevant
- support to help them to access safe and suitable accommodation
- Support with obtaining a bank account, National Insurance number and passport (unless your legal status prevents you)



18+ YEAR OLDS PLEDGE

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 extended the provision for care leavers to include young people aged 22 to 25 who are not in education.

For care leavers aged 21 or over, the new duty means that local authorities do not necessarily need to provide the same level of support to care leavers aged 21 to 25 as it does for those aged 18 to 20. The new duty does however enable local authorities to respond positively to requests for support from care leavers aged 21 to 25 who may be continuing to struggle with the transition to independence and adult life.

In RBWM, an adult aged 18+ and former relevant, can expect:

- an allocated personal advisor
- a full assessment based on their needs
- a detailed pathway plan (based on their assessed needs) which will be overseen by a social work team manager. The plan will be reviewed every six months
- their personal advisor to keep in touch and visit you every six to eight weeks (more often if necessary, less if they don't want this frequency of visits and as identified in your pathway plan)
- support with accessing relevant safe and suitable accommodation
- financial support to help maintain education, training or employment
- to be provided with vacation accommodation if in higher or further education
- council tax exemption for care leavers

If you do not feel that you are getting the support that you are entitled to as highlighted in the pledges please speak to your Social Worker, IRO or you can email Kickback@achieving-forchildren.org.uk

ENGAGING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Achieving for Children has multiple mechanisms in which children in care and care leavers can be involved in service design and delivery.



Kick Back

Kickback

Kickback (Children in Care council) gives children in care aged 12 to 18 years the chance to have honest, enjoyable and interactive discussions about the services that they receive.

Leaving Care Forum

A forum for care leavers to discuss their views on the services that they receive.

Interview panels

Children in care and care leavers have opportunities to engage in the recruitment process for new staff within Children's Services.

One off events and survey

Events and surveys are organised to collect feedback on either specific services or to gain general feedback about how children in care and care leavers experience services.

Total Respect training

A cohort of children in care and care leavers deliver training to elected members and professionals on how children and young people experience being looked after.

Individuals

Children in care and care leavers are involved in processes linked to their individual needs such as care plans, pathway plans and personal education plans.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

- Corporate Parenting Action Plan
- Children in Care Pledge
- Local Offer for care leavers
- Councillors Guide to Corporate Parenting
- Checklist of corporate parenting responsibility

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

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CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY ACTION 2018-2021

OBJECTIVE 1:

For all councillors, professionals, partner services and young people to work together to improve relationships and outcomes for children in care (CIC) and care leavers (CL)

#	Action	Timescale
1	A calendar of joint activities organised for corporate parenting forum (CPF) members and CIC/CL	March 2019
2	CPF members profiles developed and shared with CIC/CL	June 2019
3	Process to be setup for CPF to send birthday cards to CIC/CL	March 2019
4	Elected Members to mentor CIC/CL or help with relevant projects	June 2019
5	CPF members to host an annual meal for CIC/CL	January each year

OBJECTIVE 2:

For children in care and leaving care to be listened to and involved in service design and delivery

#	Action	Timescale
1	Develop annual plan of items for senior management to take to Kickback	March 2019
2	Develop mechanisms in which CIC/CL living out of borough can be involved in service design and delivery	March 2019
3	Provide training opportunities for CIC/CL to develop and/or enhance skills to enable them be activity involved in decision making processes	April 2019
4	Annual survey developed to gain the views of all CIC/CL on the boroughs corporate parenting responsibilities and feedback on the pledges - Feedback reviewed, acted upon and feedback to young people	Completed and feedback - May 2019. Updated annually
5	Amend cabinet report template to include views of CIC/CL and/or impact on them	May 2019



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OBJECTIVE 3:

For all professionals and elected members are aware of their corporate parenting responsibilities and are able to make informed decisions

#	Action	Timescale
1	Corporate parenting forum members to receive regular updates on the current and emerging issues facing young people in the borough	February 2019
2	Council officers and elected members to undertake a self-evaluation of their own knowledge of corporate parenting responsibilities	June 2019
3	Regular feedback item in borough bulletin from Kickback	March 2019
4	Include LGA resource pack and pledge on corporate parenting on the members' portal	May 2019
5	Development of a corporate parenting champions group from with AfC an RBWM. Champions would be identified from within each directorate or service and would be the contact for disseminating corporate parenting updates and messages within their team or directorate	May 2019
6	Elected members to all sign up to the pledge for CIC/CL and undertake DBS checks	June 2019
7	Corporate parenting overview training or presentation delivered to existing council officers and elected members	July 2019
8	Corporate parenting overview to be added to all council officers induction programmes	July 2019
9	Corporate parenting overview to be added to elected members induction programmes	July 2019
10	Monthly campaign by Communications Team to focus on corporate parenting	September 2019

OBJECTIVE 4:

For all children in care and care leavers to be supported and encouraged to achieve

#	Action	Timescale
1	Apprenticeship requirements to be added to new contracts awarded by the council and for CIC/CL to get priority on apprenticeships	September 2019
2	Revised housing strategy written to prioritise CIC/CL	June 2019
3	CIC/CL annual achievement awards event organised and achievement celebrated	September 2019 - then annually
4	Development of the local offer website for CIC and CL providing information on their entitlements and the opportunities available to them	September 2019
5	Formalisation of the Positive Activities for Children in Care Team (PACCT) with progress being fed into the CPF	August 2019
6	Development of a leaving care mentoring scheme to support children in care	September 2019
7	Organisation of annual events to bring together local businesses and care leavers in order to build relationships to help care leavers gain employment	September 2019

OBJECTIVE 5:

There is a clear framework for the governance and monitoring of corporate parenting responsibilities and the effectiveness of the corporate parenting forum

#	Action	Timescale
1	Corporate parenting action plan progress report to be regularly reviewed by the children and young people's overview and scrutiny panel	March 2019
2	CPF annual report presented to full council outlining progress against the corporate parenting responsibilities	March 2020

OBJECTIVE 6:

CPF meetings will effectively monitor the progress of CIC/CL, include the voice of CIC/CL and review the progress of how the new corporate parenting principles are being embedded

#	Action	Timescale
1	CPF to review the corporate parenting action plan on a quarterly basis	Ongoing from February 19
2	CPF meetings and reporting agenda to be set a year in advance and only moved in exceptional circumstances.	Set up March 2019
3	CIC/CL representatives to meet CPF chair before each meeting to discuss agenda	Ongoing from March 2019

The action plan is a working document and will be updated on a regular basis. The progress against the plan will be monitored every three months by the Corporate Parenting Forum and on an annual basis by full council.



A COUNCILLOR'S GUIDE TO CORPORATE PARENTING



CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Welcome	1
What the law says	2
Jargon busting	4
Scrutiny role of corporate parents	6

FOREWORD FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Did you know that when you became a councillor, you also became a parent? Congratulations! You are now one of the corporate parents of all our children in care in the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM). Welcome to the family!

The standard we set for corporate parenting in RBWM is to constantly ask ourselves 'Would this be good enough for my own child?', when we are talking about their care provision or their outcomes and as we continue developing the borough for the future. This is across every council department and in every meeting, not just those specifically to do with Children's Services.

You will enjoy meeting our wonderful children in care and the Kick Back council. They are talented, resilient and lots of fun. Each of these young people is unique and special to us and, as a group, they challenge us to deliver our best as corporate parents.

As you engage with Kick Back, listen to the voice of our young people and champion the wellbeing of our children in care and care leavers, you will be fulfilling your fundamental role of being a corporate parent. This is undoubtedly one of the most rewarding aspects of being a councillor as you will see.

Thank you for taking the time to read this leaflet. It will equip you to be the best corporate parent to our amazing children in care and care leavers, which they absolutely deserve.



INTRODUCTION

This guide will help you to understand what that really means, and how you can make the most of this rewarding responsibility. Corporate parenting is most effective when, like in a family, everyone involved works together to improve the experiences and outcomes of the children that are looked after. This includes you as a local councillor.

By becoming interested and involved in corporate parenting and promoting the welfare of our children in care and care leavers, you will be helping the authority meet its overall responsibility of ensuring the best outcomes for all children and young people in the borough.

By reading this leaflet we hope that you will understand the important role you play in helping the council to meet its legal obligations toward children in care and care leavers. Also think about what you can do, in supporting this vulnerable group of children and young people as a good corporate parent.

WELCOME

Hello,

We are the Children in Care Council of the RBWM - we call ourselves **Kick Back**.

We are all in your care. We meet at least once a month to talk about lots of different things like what is working well for us. We also talk about what we feel needs to be better so that as a child in care we can be better prepared and more confident as we go through adolescence and onto leaving care.

We accept everyone into our council no matter what their story is, where they are from, their background or culture. We are here to support each other, help everyone, form new friendships and be a listening ear to help each other.

We treat everyone how we would want to be treated.... we hope you do the same with us. We look forward to having you attend our Total Respect Training and to meeting you very soon.



WHAT THE LAW SAYS

Children and young people in care have a unique place in society. The law places a duty on local authorities to take young people into their care if:

- a court order is granted
- a voluntary agreement is entered with the birth parents

This can happen for a variety of reasons, but is always in the best interests of the child.

Central government, local authorities, partner agencies and of carers, all share responsibility for ensuring the best outcomes for children and young people in care. The bar should be set at the level of what you would want for your own children. Collectively this does not just mean their outcomes but how much they are cared for and cared about.

To maintain a high standard of corporate parenting, every local authority should have:

- have a 'Children in Care Council' with direct links to a Senior Children's Service Management team and the lead member. This will give children in care an opportunity to express their views and have some influence over the services and support they receive
- have, and regularly update, a pledge to children in care. The pledge will cover the services and support children in care should expect to receive, and be based on what children and young people want to be promised
- ensure the director of children's services and the lead member for children's services are responsible for leading improvements in corporate parenting

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 (the act) is intended to improve support for looked after children and care leavers, promote the welfare and safeguarding of children, make provisions about the regulation of social workers. The act sets out corporate parenting principles for the council as a whole to be the best parent it can be to children in its care.

Section 1 of the act introduces seven principles of corporate parenting which local authorities must have regard to for looked after children or care leavers, whether or not they are or were the local authority looking after the child.



The seven principles introduced in the act requires the local authority must take into account the need:

- to act in the best interests of, and to promote the health and well-being of relevant children and young people
- to encourage relevant children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
- to take account of a relevant child or young person's views, wishes and feelings
- to help relevant children and young persons to gain access to and get the best use of the services provided by the local authority, and by its relevant partners, as defined by section 10(4) of the Children Act 2004
- to promote high aspirations amongst relevant children and young people, and to have regard to the need to secure the best outcomes
- for relevant children and young people to be safe and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work
- to prepare relevant children and young people for adulthood and independent living

Section 3 of the act requires local authorities to appoint a personal advisor for care leavers who request one up until the age of 25, regardless of whether the young person intends to pursue education or training. The local authority also has a duty to carry out an assessment of children and young people's needs and to provide the necessary advice and support.

The Children and Young Persons Act (2008), reinforces the message that all councils, and particularly elected members, carry responsibility for ensuring good outcomes for children looked after by the local authority. You should consider whether the standards of care provided would be good enough for you own children and, if not, take steps to improve it.

Looked after children are not the sole responsibility of children's services. The Windsor and Maidenhead Borough as a whole is the corporate parent, and councillors have a key role in that. For these vulnerable children to thrive the entire council, both councillors and officers, must play their part.

- Every council is committed to improving the outcomes of looked after children and care leavers.
- All councillors, officers and partner agencies have a part to play in this shared task of corporate parenting.
- The lead member should have direct involvement in corporate parenting, with the support of all other councillors.
- Every councillor to ask themselves 'What if this were my child?' when making decisions linked to the corporate parenting principles.

JARGON BUSTING

As with all areas of council business, the world of children's services is full of jargon. Here are some definitions to help you understand some of the jargon you might hear in relation to children in care.

Children in care (CIC)

This is the term to describe children and young people who are in the care of the local authority. You may hear other, interchangeable, terms such as looked after children (LAC) and children looked after (CLA).

They could be looked after by other family members, foster carers or staff in a residential children's home. This refers both to the young people cared for due to a court order or a voluntary arrangement.

Why are some young people in care? This could be for a variety of, and multiple, reasons including abuse or neglect, family dysfunction, parental illness or disability or there may not be anyone to look after them.

A care leaver

A care leaver is someone that has previously been a child in care or is under 25 and was looked after by the authority for at least 13 weeks after their 14th birthday. This could be as a former relevant child who is eligible for the full support (including some financial) of the leaving care team, or as another qualifying care leaver who receives a reduced level of support focusing on information and advice.

Children in need

This term refers to a wider group of children and young people who need the help of services to achieve a reasonable standard of health or development and have been formally assessed by social workers as children in need, under section 17 of the Children's Act, 1989. This includes families with similar, but lower level issues than that of children in care, as well as a larger group of children with disabilities that need further support.

Children at risk of harm

If there are concerns that a child or young person is (or may be) at risk of suffering significant harm through abuse or neglect they are subject to a child protection (CP) plan. This plan outlines what support is needed to keep that young person safe and improve their outcomes and experiences. The plan is regularly reviewed by an independent reviewing officer (IRO).



Emergency protection order (EPO)

Under section 44 of the Children's Act 1989, a court may grant an EPO where there is reasonable cause to believe that a child is likely to suffer significant immediate harm if they are not removed to accommodation provided by, or on behalf of, the local authority.

Interim Care Order (ICO)

Section 38 of the Children's Act permits a local authority to apply to the courts for an ICO if they have evidence that the child concerned is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm. This is a time limited order granted by the courts and renewed throughout the care proceedings process.

Care order

If court care proceedings conclude that the threshold of significant harm is reached, and there is no likelihood of improvement in the standard of care provided, then an care order can be granted under Section 31 of the Children's Act (1989).

Adoption

This is the process where parental responsibility is permanently transferred from birth parents to adoptive parents.

Unaccompanied asylum seekers (UASC)

These children and young people become looked after if they have no one with parental responsibility in this country.

Regulation 44 visits

Under the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015, children's homes need to be visited monthly. This is done to ensure each home meets the National Minimum Standards. Following each visit, a report is provided to the registered provider and the registered manager detailing the findings and any recommended actions.

In addition to this, all children's homes are inspected twice a year by Ofsted. The Ofsted inspector writes a report which includes an overall rating for the home and any recommendations. Residential managers produce an action plan to demonstrate how they will meet those recommendations.



CORPORATE PARENTING FORUM

The Corporate Parenting Forum is the champion, on behalf of elected members, for children in care and those leaving care. It receives qualitative and quantitative data on services, which it uses to explore issues with officers and partner agencies and support children in care and young people leaving care.

SCRUTINY ROLE OF CORPORATE PARENTS

What can councillors do? As a local councillor, you have a duty to act as a good corporate parent. While officers and partner agencies have a duty to deliver care and support to children and young people, councillors must ensure that this happens as well as they would want it to for their own child. Largely this involves the role of scrutinising the delivery of officers in a range of ways.

Asking yourself the following questions is a good starting point.

- What are the characteristics of our cohort of children in care and care leavers?
- Do all of our councillors and officers know about their corporate parenting responsibilities?
- Do our partner agencies understand their role in supporting us as corporate parents?
- How are we giving children and young people the chance to express their views, wishes and feelings? How do we know these are being acted on?
- How do we show children in care that we have high aspirations for them?
- Are we providing stable environments for children in care?
- What are we doing to look after the health and wellbeing of children in care?
- What are outcomes like for our care leavers?
- How many children are we placing in out of area placements and why?
- How are we planning for the future and commissioning services?
- How well do we support our foster carers?