

Wiltshire Council
Corporate
Parenting
Strategy

Why the Corporate Parenting Strategy is important?

Hello and welcome to Wiltshire Council's Corporate Parenting Strategy, which is about what looked after children and care leavers expect our corporate parents to do and work towards to be good in their role.

The strategy is about us – the children and young people in and leaving Wiltshire Council's care. It's about how we are looked after and how things can be made better for us – not just while we are in care but also afterwards.

Within the strategy the corporate parents have worked with the Children in Care Council to set out a number of priorities. This is important as it means our views are included within the strategy.

As the Children in Care Council represent that voice of all looked after children and care leavers, it is really important to us that the strategy works, so that children and young peoples' experience of being in Wiltshire's care is a positive one and builds solid foundations for our future.

We run this programme to benefit all Children in Care. As young people, we feel like our voice is not always heard and we ask that all Corporate Parents commit to spending time listening to us.

- Children in Care Council members, January 2017 (reviewed Sept 2020)

1. Introduction

Wiltshire Council (the “Council”) recognises that Children Looked After and Care Experienced are among the most vulnerable children and young people in our society.

The Council has a legal duty to act as a good and effective Corporate Parent to children and young people in its care.

The Council is guided in its duty as a Corporate Parent by The Children and Social Work Act, 2017, the legal and policy guidance that informs Corporate Parenting. The Children and Social Work Act introduced 7 corporate parenting principles:

- to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those 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; and
- to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

This strategy has been developed having regard to those principles.

An effective Corporate Parent will ensure that looked after children and care leavers have at least the same care, nurture, support and life chances as any other child in our society might expect. Where these opportunities are not provided Corporate Parents will have failed in their primary duty.

As a responsible and reasonable Corporate Parent, the Council will deliver on our Promise to looked after children. This Promise was reviewed and updated in the Autumn of 2017 at a Shared Guardian Session with the Corporate Parents and representatives from the Children in Care Council and all Panel Members agreed and signed The Promise as detailed below on 14 November 2017. The Promise continues to be agreed by Panel Members and was signed by them all again in March 2020 due to membership changes:

We, the Corporate Parents commit to the following promise for the children and young people in care

We promise:

- A choice of home where you can stay until you are ready to move on from care
- To keep you together with brothers and sisters whenever we can, and to help you stay in close contact with your family if that's what is right for you

- To listen to your views, act on them when we can and be honest when we cannot
- That your social worker will work hard for you to solve problems
- To tell you what your rights are and what you are entitled to
- That you will be involved in decisions taken during your looked after child review
- To involve you in decisions about school and to help you get to school so that your education can continue
- To arrange transport for you that is reliable and gets you to school, and important meetings, on time
- To invite you to group activities with other children living in care, and those leaving care, to help you feel more confident
- That we will deal with bullying quickly and efficiently
- To support you when you need help with school, leaving school and preparing for employment and training

The aim of this strategy is to ensure that the Council's Corporate Parenting functions support improvement in services and to ensure the best possible outcomes for children and young people. To achieve this, it is essential that Councillors:

- Understand their roles and responsibilities as Corporate Parents.
- Scrutinise and challenge how the Council performs in delivering its services as a Corporate Parent.
- Engage effectively, with energy, consistency, and confidence with children and young people so that their voice is heard and has influence.
- Support and enable children and young people to challenge where services need to improve.
- Maintain a comprehensive overview of the progress of children looked after and for care experienced young people, ensuring they consistently scrutinise the quality, effectiveness and performance of the services that support them.

2. Corporate Parenting Responsibilities

Services for children looked after and care experienced young people need to be coordinated, focused and effective. Responsibility for this rests at a corporate level with councillors who will work with senior officers for the implementation of strategies and services. It is important for all those who provide a service for children looked after and care experienced young people to work together to ensure a more joined up approach.

The corporate parenting principles are about embedding a positive culture in the local authority towards children looked after and care experienced young people and their success will depend on the extent to which directors, councillors, heads of service and front line managers champion and promote the understanding of them. (DfE - "Applying

corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers”, Statutory Guidance, February 2018).

Councillors and senior officers will promote the idea that children looked after and care experienced young people are part of the council “family”.

Councillors and senior officers will demonstrate that they care about what happens to their children looked after and care experienced young people by taking their corporate parenting role seriously.

3. Corporate Parenting Panel – Functions and Terms of Reference

The Corporate Parenting Panel is the primary vehicle for Councillors to meet with key officers and to make sure that the council is meeting its duties towards children looked after and care experienced young people leavers and scrutinise the performance, quality and efficacy of Wiltshire Council’s services and those of partner agencies.

The Corporate Parenting Panel will comprise up to 8 Core Members drawn from elected Councillors politically balanced and nominated by group leaders. Group leaders will ensure that they appoint substitute members to cover absences.

Associate Members will include officers from the council and key partner agencies and comprise of:

1. Corporate Director for People (DCS/DASS)
2. Director – Families and Children’s Services
3. Head of Care in Care and Young People
4. Senior Commissioning Officer – Children’s Social Care (Voice and Influence)
5. A Representative/s from the Children in Care Council
6. Cabinet Member for Children’s Services
7. Chair or representative of Wiltshire Fostering Association
8. Service Manager – Quality Outcomes
9. Designated Doctor/Nurse for Looked After Children
10. Virtual School Head/Service Manager – Vulnerable Groups

If any of the core members are unable to attend a meeting they will send a substitute representative.

On behalf of all Councillors acting as Corporate Parents, the Corporate Parenting Panel will ensure delivery of the following eight strategic priorities which were revised and agreed by representatives of the Children in Care Council:

Corporate Parenting Panel – Strategic Priorities 2020-2021

I need:

1. To have links with my local community where I am trusted, respected and accepted. This means I can access the local community and I am not left out. *Cllr Laura Mayes - Support Officer – Iona Payne*
2. Support for as long as I need it. *Cllr Pat Aves – Support Officer – Neil Adlam*
3. To feel and be safe. *Cllr Peter Hutton – Support Officer – Sara James*
4. To be heard – my voice is not the only way I am heard, it may come out as my behaviour. *Cllr James Sheppard – Support Officer – Sarah Banks/Gary Binstead*
5. Support with my mental health especially at school, at a time and a place that suits me and not services. *Cllr Stewart Palmen – Support Officer – Judy Edwards*
6. Support to be the best I can. *Cllr Jane Davies – Support Officer – Kathryn Davis*
7. Support to be healthy and this includes opportunities to be involved in new activities. *Cllr George Jeans – Support Officer – Sally Ellis*

A loving home where I have good relationships, respect and the opportunity to see my family. *Cllr Mary Champion – Support Officer – Matthew Turner*

The Panel will appoint a Chairperson on an annual basis.

To ensure that strategic oversight and critical challenge is effective, each member of board will have a lead role in relation to delivery of one strategic priority.

4. Quorum

The quorum of the Corporate Parenting Panel will be 75% (6) Councillors, 70% (7) Associate Members in attendance. Where the meeting is not quorate, the Chairperson will adjourn the meeting.

5. Frequency of meetings

The Corporate Parenting Panel will meet a minimum of 5 times a year.

6. Reporting

The Panel would report its work through the Wiltshire Council Children's Select Committee. Following each meeting the Chairperson will send a copy of the Panel minutes to the Chairman of Children's Select Committee. On a six-monthly basis the Panel Chairperson will prepare a report for Chairman of the Children's Select Committee, addressing progress against each of the eight strategic priorities.

In addition to this the Chairperson of the Corporate Parenting Panel will present an annual report to Full Council which will be shared with the Children's Select Committee prior to

submission.

7. Terms of Reference

Corporate Parenting Panel will;

- Make a commitment to prioritising the needs of children looked after children and care experienced young people and their carers and ensure that all departments within the Council prioritise the needs of this group
- Receive reports from the Children in Care Council and act on their views
- Provide clear strategic and political direction in relation to corporate parenting
- Show ambition and aspirations for all looked after children and care leavers
- Ensure that all councillors and Wiltshire Council departments are fulfilling their roles and responsibilities as corporate parents proactively. This may involve, for example, the Corporate Parenting Panel organising specific education and training events for all members to ensure they are equipped with the knowledge and skills to be corporate parents
- Investigate on behalf of all Councillors ways in which the role of Corporate Parenting can be improved, using examples of research and effective practice from other local authorities
- Listen to the views of children, young people and their carers to involve them in the assessment and development of services
- Engage with children and young people who are looked after, or have left care, by inviting them to act as advisers to the Panel
- Monitor the performance, quality and outcomes of the Council's services in relation to children and young people in public care and identify any areas for improvement
- Scrutinise key performance indicators in relation to children and young people in the care of Wiltshire Council
- Meet with government inspectors, where appropriate, for their input into inspections
- Participate as members of the adoption and fostering panels
- Agree a work plan, review progress, membership of the panel and attainment of its role and terms of reference and report to the Cabinet and Children's Services Select Committee as appropriate, and in any case to the Full Council annually.

Revised and agreed September 2020