



Wiltshire Council Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report 2023 - 2024

children and Young Person Version

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Young Person Report

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FORWARD



What's the Scoop?

Get ready for the yearly check-in from the Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP) They'll be shining a spotlight on the work the council has done to back up kids in care and grown-ups with care backgrounds, all while looking for ways to improve.

These corporate parenting principles are like the golden rule here - everyone in the Council is on board to champion the happiness and wellness of kids in care.

Main Goals and Principles:

- Act in the best interest of children and young people in care.
- Encourage and consider their views and feelings.
- Help them access services and support.
- Promote their aspirations and achievements.
- Ensure their safety and stability.
- Prepare them for adulthood and independent living.

Panel Responsibilities:

- Check and challenge the Council's performance as a Corporate Parent.
- Engage with children and young people to ensure their voices are heard.
- Support them in challenging services that need improvement.
- Oversee their progress and the effectiveness of support services.

CPP PRIORITIES

To keep things on track, the corporate parenting strategic goals guide the watchful eye of the corporate parenting panel. The Corporate Parenting Strategy got its last check-up in 2023 and received a thumbs up from the Full Council on October 17, 2023. below are the priorities and the Councillors responsible for making sure they are kept to.



Cllr Peter Hutton



Cllr Mary Champion

Priority 1: To feel safe and happy in a stable home and in my local community



Cllr Dominic Muns

Priority 2: To be the best that I can be, to achieve personally and educationally throughout my life and be supported to engage with training and employment opportunities



Cllr Stuart Palmen

Priority 3: Ensuring my physical and emotional wellbeing is supported and at a time and place that suits me.



Cllr Laura Mayes

Priority 4: To have positive relationships with people who are important to me and for me to be part of my local community where I am trusted, respected, accepted and feel included.



Cllr Sam Pearce-Kearney

Priority 5: For my voice to be heard and for it to matter and influence decision making and drive change

KEY FIGURES

Wiltshire Council takes care of many awesome children and young people, looking after **468 children in care** and **340 young adults with care experience** ranging from 16-year-olds to 25-year-olds. 20% of children in care are looked after on a voluntary care order meaning their families have agreed to the arrangement. Our care rate for 0-17-year-olds is lower than average compared to our neighbours and the whole country. This is thanks to our early help and prevention efforts, families get to stay together.

“Leaders across the council are incredibly proud and motivated corporate parents. There is robust scrutiny of the development and impact of services for children in care and care leavers through a high-functioning corporate board. Children in care and care leavers take part in a regular programme of activities to help increase their confidence and life skills as well as influencing how services and support are developed and provided”.



Congratulations!

Wiltshire Council is Outstanding

From Ofsted 2023

WHAT HAVE WE LOOKED AT?



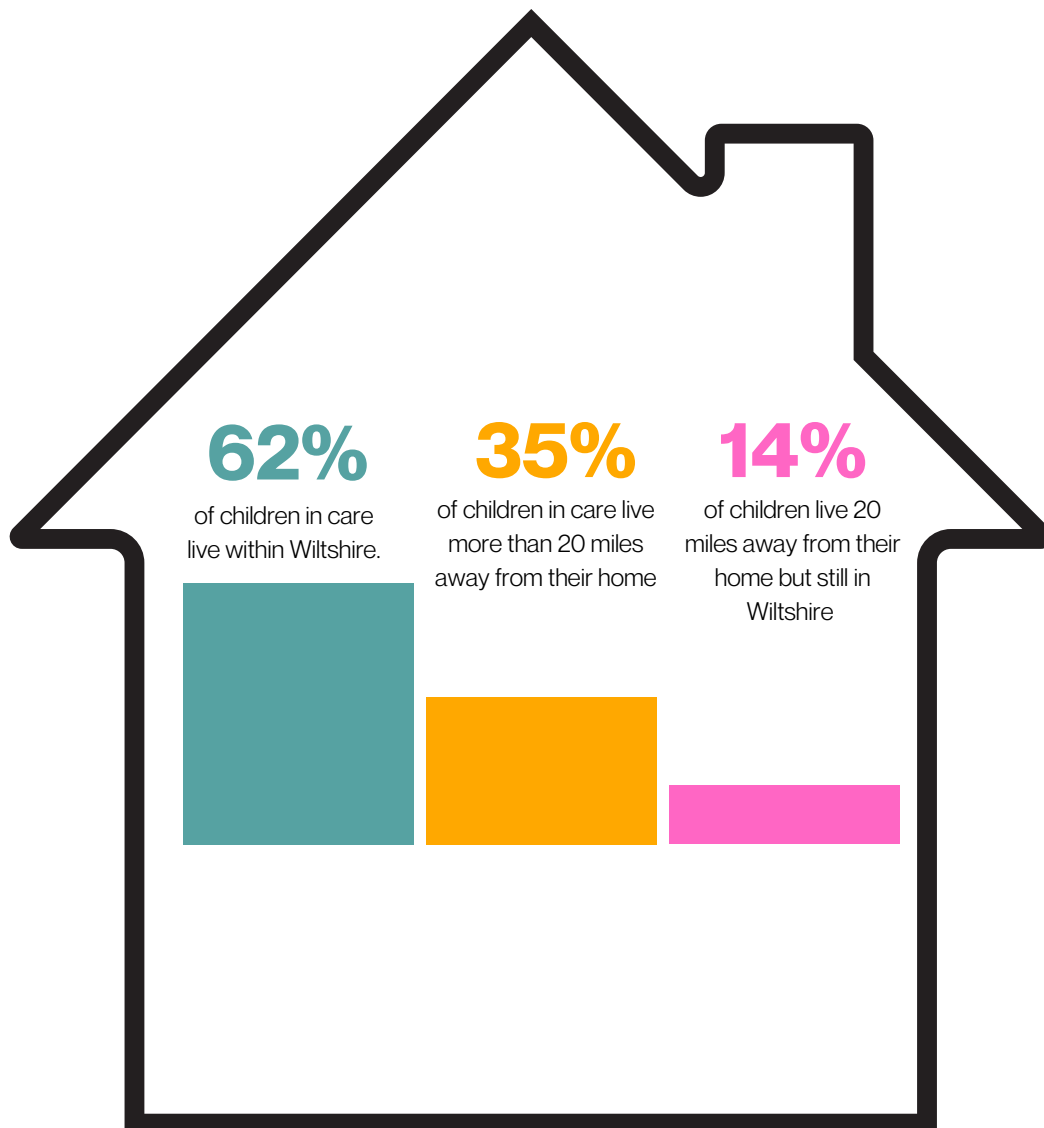
Over the past year, the Corporate Parenting Panel has been busy with 5 meetings, diving into performance reviews, budget talks, and catching up with the Voice and Participation Service. The Children in Care Council (CiCC) and Voice Ambassadors added their views at every meeting, steering the ship with their vital advice. Panel members didn't just stop there - they reviewed reports from the Voice and Participation Service updates to the Missing Children and Young People scheme, Wiltshire Fostering Annual Report, Grandmentors scheme, and heartwarming the Adoption Service. There were also updates on CAMHS, the young people's drugs and alcohol service, and more.

CHILDREN IN CARE TEAM

“children in care make good progress and live in stable homes. They are supported to stay healthy, to attend and to achieve in their education, to enjoy family time and to pursue their hobbies and interests,. Children in care are supported by caring social workers who are proud of their children’s achievements and social workers build enduring relationships with children and have high aspirations for them”.

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HOW FAR DO CHILDREN LIVE AWAY FROM THEIR BIRTH FAMILIES?



How We Keep Track

A weekly Placement Panel oversees all changes in where children live. The panel also tracks the destinations of care-experienced young people every month.

How Wiltshire Compares to Other Areas



ENGLAND

56% of children in care lived within their local area.
21% lived more than 20 miles from home.
4% of those still lived within their local authority area.



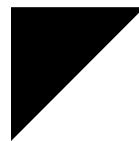
SIMILAR AREAS TO WILTSHIRE

59% of children lived within their local area.
32% lived more than 20 miles from home.
11% of those still lived within their local authority area.



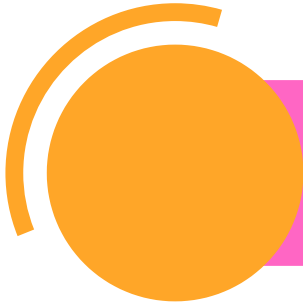
TOP PERFORMING AUTHORITIES

51% of children lived within their local area.
20% lived more than 20 miles from home.
6% of those still lived within their local authority area.



WHAT THIS MEANS

Wiltshire has more children living more than 20 miles away from home compared to national averages and top-performing areas. However, Wiltshire's numbers are on par with areas with similar populations and geography (statistical neighbours).



CHILDREN IN CARE DATA



Two-year stability means how many children in care have stayed in the same home for at least two years. Two-year stability for children in care slightly dropped from 67% to 66%, which is below our goal, but we're working hard to improve this.




The Children in Care teams are doing well, with 95% of Placement Plans and 94% of PEPs completed, and only 6.1% of children having 3 or more placements in the past year.



91% of children in care had their statutory visits on time, meeting our target of 90%.

HEALTH



Last year, 92% of children in care had their health checks and 84% had their dental checks, which is better than before. We now keep better track of these checks to make sure everyone gets them on time. Our numbers are better than the national average, but we still want to improve dental checks. Most children in Wiltshire got their health checks on time, but some outside Wiltshire had delays because of doctor availability. We are working with health providers to fix this. We're also making health reports easier to understand, and we'll share more updates soon.

MISSING CHILDREN

We keep a close watch on children who go missing through regular reviews by the Risk Outside The Home (ROTH) panel. This year, the number of missing incidents is nearly back to pre-Covid levels. The percentage of missing children who are in care has stayed the same, with 10% of children in care going missing at least once. We offer return interviews to understand why they went missing, and 94% were offered an interview, with 64% accepting. We're working to find out why some children don't take the interviews and to reduce the risk of them going missing again. We review all missing reports every three months to keep improving our support.



FOSTER CARER RECRUITMENT & SUPPORT



We are working on recruiting new foster carers and also supporting the ones we have to stay. Nationally there is a real difficulty in this area and Wiltshire is feeling a challenge in this space too. We have 156 foster and kinship carers looking after 259 children. The number of kinship carers has increased to 46. The the last 3 months of the year the team made contact with 168 people who showed an interest in fostering and 17 of those were taken forward to have an assessment. We are also leading a new program to recruit and keep more foster carers with Cornwall Council.

Our foster carers get good support and feedback, and almost all have their reviews on time. We now have Fostering Independent Reviewing Officers (FIROs) who help keep high standards and conduct exit interviews to understand why some carers leave. We keep track of data around foster carers support and almost all visits, checks, and supervisions were completed on time. A private fostering arrangement is made between a parent and a carer, with the intention of lasting for 28 days or more.

For private fostering, we received 45 new notifications last year, with all initial visits done within seven days. We help children move to permanent arrangements like Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs), which allow for ongoing support. To thank our carers, we held a celebration event in September 2023 and the STAR awards for our children in care in April 2024.

MAKING SURE WE HAVE ENOUGH HOMES

We are working hard to make sure there are enough good places for children in care to live. Our Director for Families and Children leads a group that meets every month to check how we're doing.

We've made a new plan to improve the number of places available. There are not enough foster homes and residential places across the country, but we're keeping a close eye on this. We're also working with other nearby areas to solve this problem together.

We're trying to make sure children in Wiltshire have more local places to stay. We're working with fostering agencies to prioritise Wiltshire children for any available foster homes. We've also made a 10-year deal to open more children's homes in Wiltshire.

We've got different kinds of supported accommodation for young people, including those aged 16-17, and are working closely with important organisations to make sure they are well taken care of.

The council has approved some money to provide housing for 68 young people who have been in care or are seeking asylum. We're also adding more supported accommodation and individual flats to help these young people live independently.

We've made a 10-year deal to open more children's homes for those with complex needs. These homes will start opening in June and should all be ready by the end of 2024.

We're starting a new project called Mockingbird, which helps create supportive networks for foster families. The first group is ready, and we're planning to start the second group soon.

This investment in housing will:

- Increase the number of places for young people in care in Wiltshire.
- Provide homes close to transport, schools, and jobs.
- Help young people live independently and stay healthy and happy.
- Ensure we can keep providing good support and homes for young people in Wiltshire.
- Keep children and young people closer to home.



Whole **C**hild **C**are & **S**upport

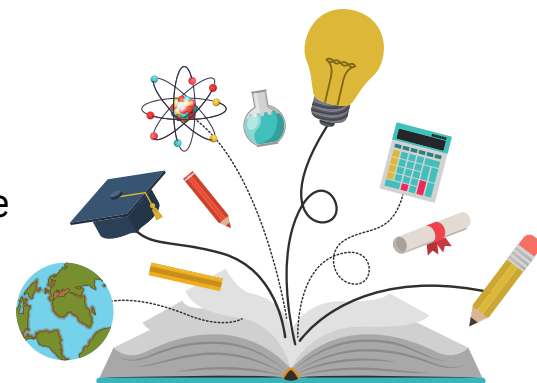
Canons House is a special place where children with additional needs can stay for short breaks. It's like a home away from home, where they can feel safe and have fun. Right now, 30 children stay there overnight for up to 24 nights each year. The house is open six days a week, but they close on Mondays to give the staff time to learn new things and get better at their jobs.

They use a system called Padlet to talk and share things with the carers, which everyone likes. They also have something called Transitions Thursday, where older kids learn how to do more things on their own as they get ready to grow up. Recently, Canons House got inspected by Ofsted, who said it's a good place for children to be, which is even better than before.

EDUCATION

Our Virtual School helps kids in care do well in school. In 2024, our results show we're doing great compared to other places:

- For Year 11, 24.2% got good grades in English and Maths, better than the rest of the country.
- In Year 6, 59% reached the expected level in reading, writing, and maths, which is also above average.
- Suspension rates are low at 10.6%, better than most places.
- Only 8.2% of kids were absent overall, which is lower than average.



We also help 27 young people go to college with a special bursary. Our plans for each child's education are rated very good, and we work hard to keep improving them every term.

STAR AWARDS

Our annual Star Awards in April 2024 gave us the opportunity to celebrate the successes of our cared for and care experienced children and young people at a shared event with nominations being made by Teachers, Personal Advisors and Social Workers across three categories and age groups:



Smashed It! – for those young people who have overcome significant challenges, have done something special in their lives or have proactively excelled in their personal development (e.g. sports, hobbies, character building).

Future Pioneers! – for young people who have made progress in their education or are excelling in employment



Taking Part! – for young people who have done something to help others in their community.

VOICE AND PARTICIAPTION

The Voice and Participation Service is all about making sure children in care and care experienced adults have a say in their lives and are heard. They do fun things like holidays and activities where kids can make friends and feel part of a group. Some even make podcasts to tell their stories and help adults make things better. There's a special group called the Children in Care Council where 46 kids meet up regularly to share ideas and have fun together. They do lots of activities like climbing, drama, and trips away to places like Cornwall.

The team also asks older young people and adults who've been in care for their opinions to improve how things are run. They found that most children in care feel loved and supported by their foster families and communities. They also use surveys to check how well they're doing and to make things even better. Plus, they have young people who've been in care helping out by talking to new foster families to make sure they understand what children need.

Overall, the team works closely with children and families to make sure they're happy and safe, and their ideas help shape what happens next. For more information about this please see our Voice and Participation Annual Report



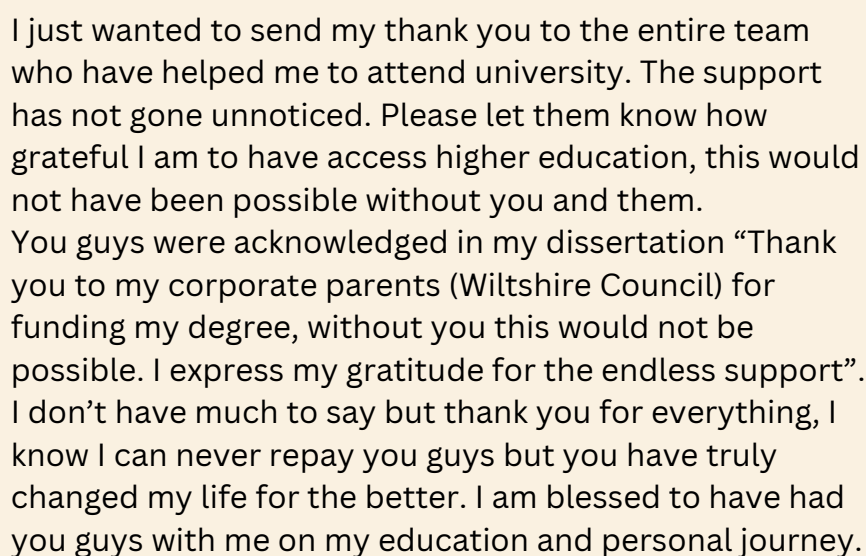
I get to meet new people, make my friends and have a say about how things can change!

CiCC Member

Care Experienced Adults

Personal Advisors are given to young people at 15 years and 9 months old to help with the transition when their social worker's support ends at 18. In March 2024, there were 340 care-experienced young people in Wiltshire, up from 326 in December 2023. Each team now has a Senior Personal Advisor for extra support and an emotional well-being Personal Advisor to provide focused help when needed.

We stay in close touch with almost all our care-experienced young people, with 98% for ages 19-21 and 99% for ages 22+. We offer work experience and apprenticeships and are just below our education and training target for ages 17-18 at 63%, but meeting our 55% target for ages 19-21. We're working to improve these numbers and recently held our first Careers Fair. Despite housing challenges, 93% of young people aged 19-21 and 95% aged 22+ are in suitable accommodation. A special advisor helps prevent homelessness, and a monthly panel plans housing options for young people aged 16 and over.



I just wanted to send my thank you to the entire team who have helped me to attend university. The support has not gone unnoticed. Please let them know how grateful I am to have access higher education, this would not have been possible without you and them. You guys were acknowledged in my dissertation "Thank you to my corporate parents (Wiltshire Council) for funding my degree, without you this would not be possible. I express my gratitude for the endless support". I don't have much to say but thank you for everything, I know I can never repay you guys but you have truly changed my life for the better. I am blessed to have had you guys with me on my education and personal journey.

Care Experienced Adult

"Care Leavers are exceptionally well supported by caring and compassionate personal advisors who are determined in their efforts to provide the right support to help them achieve their ambitions. Care leavers are supported in their education, training, apprenticeship and employment and they are helped to pursue further and higher education and benefit from support packages to help them achieve further qualifications".

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Achievements Linked to the Strategic Priorities

We have a plan just for young people who've been in care. Starting in January 2023, we've promised to give top priority to finding homes for them until they're 25. We also make sure they can live on their own by checking if they're ready.

We've made a special app called 'Our Words' for young people who have been in care. It helps them find support and jobs. We're also part of a group with other councils to make sure all young people in care get the same help no matter where they live.

We've made it easier for young people in care to get work experience and jobs at our council. From March 2023 to November 2023, 279 young people applied for jobs and 13 were hired. We want to help even more young people find jobs by making special roles just for them.

We made a guide called "Care Experience Matters" to help people in prison, on probation, or getting help from councils. It tells everyone how to give the right support to young people who've been in care.

At every Jobcentre, there's someone just for young people who've been in care. They can get help early when they need it, like getting money for housing and support to find work. There's also extra help for learning and tools they might need.

More Achievements!

We're also helping young people who come to Wiltshire on their own. We're making sure they have a good place to live and feel welcome here. We've even made a special hub for young people at County Hall where they can learn new things and get support from staff.


We're trying new things like Lifelong Links to make sure young people in care have someone to support them as they grow up. Our Staying Close program helps young people come back to Wiltshire to live with family or friends.

We have a program called Grandmentors where older people help and teach young people who've been in care. They've helped many young people learn new skills and feel confident.


For young people turning 18 after April 2023, we're giving them more money to help out. We've also set rules to make sure they don't lose their homes on purpose.

Conclusions and Next Steps

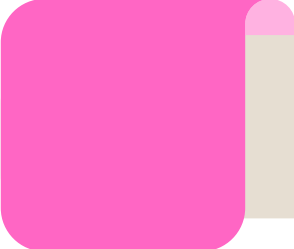
We've been doing a great job at understanding and improving the lives of children and young people in care. Our regular reports and meetings help us see what life is like for them. Young people have been sharing their thoughts and experiences, which helps us make better decisions and build stronger relationships with them




Check Our Goals: We'll make sure we're meeting our goals to improve the lives of young people in care.




Listen to Children & Young People: We'll keep working with the Children in Care Council to hear what young people think and feel.




Find More Homes: We'll keep working on finding more and better places for young people to live.




Health Checks: We'll keep making sure health checks for young people in care happen on time.




Help Care Experienced Young People: We'll improve support for young people who have left care, even if they live outside Wiltshire



Support Unaccompanied Young People: We'll make sure young people who come to Wiltshire on their own get the help they need.



Missing Children: We'll better understand and keep track of children who go missing.



Housing Needs: We'll work on providing more housing and support for care experienced young people.

Contributors:

John Spring (Head of Service of Targeted Education/Virtual School Head)

Michele Llewellyn (Service Manager – Children in Care, Fostering and Kinship)

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