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**Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting**

Cabinet - 22 January 2024

**Report Title**

Corporate Parenting Strategy

**Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?**

Yes

**Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report**

Nicola Curley, Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services

**Report Author(s)**

Jane Wood, Head of Service, Children in Care and Corporate Parenting.

**Ward(s) Affected**

Borough-Wide

**Report Summary**

The Corporate Parenting Strategy outlines the three-year plan for corporate parenting responsibilities for children and young people. This sets out priorities for children and young people and outlines improvements to services and practice for children who are looked after or have care experience.

**Recommendations**

That Cabinet:

1. Approve the Corporate Parenting Strategy and approve the three-year plan as set out within the Strategy;
2. Note the Responsibility of the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People to Chair and convene the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board;
3. Approve the Governance Arrangements for the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board and delegate authority to the Strategic Director for Children and Young People's Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, Chief Executive and Assistant Director of Legal Services to amend the Terms of Reference.

**List of Appendices Included**

- Appendix 1 Corporate Parenting Strategy 2024-2027
- Appendix 2 Part A Initial Equality Screening Assessment
- Appendix 3 Part B Equality Analysis Form
- Appendix 4 Carbon Impact Assessment

**Exempt from the Press and Public**

No

**Background Papers**

None

**Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel**

No

**Council Approval Required**

No

## Corporate Parenting Strategy 2024 – 2027

### 1. Background

- 1.1 *'The responsibility of local authorities in improving outcomes and actively promoting the life chances of children they look after has become known as 'corporate parenting' in recognition that the task must be shared by the whole local authority and partner agencies. The role of the corporate parent is to act as the best possible parent for each child they look after and to advocate on his/her behalf to secure the best possible outcomes'* (The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations Volume 2: care planning, placement and case review, 2021). Rotherham takes its corporate parenting responsibilities seriously and wants to ensure that it is doing the best job it can for our children and young people.
- 1.2 This report introduces the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2024-2027. The purpose of this report is to outline the Council's ambitions, priorities and plans in respect of children in care and care leavers for the next three years. This also outlines the corporate parenting responsibilities of Rotherham Council and wider partners.
- 1.3 There are currently 509 children in care and 323 care leavers in Rotherham, with some overlaps between the two groups (due to young people being considered care leavers aged 16). These children and young people have a range of needs and experiences and live in a variety of placements, suited to their needs. As such the Strategy must outline priorities which meet the needs of all children in care and care leavers and determine how these needs may be met over the next three years.
- 1.4 The Strategy demonstrates how partners across Rotherham will work together to ensure that we are meeting the needs of children in care and care leavers. This also outlines how we will parent our children in care as a whole council approach.
- 1.5 The priorities set out in the Corporate Parenting Strategy are;
  - Strategic Priority One: Children and Young People's Voice.
  - Strategic Priority Two: Placement Sufficiency.
  - Strategic Priority Three: Education and Attainment.
  - Strategic Priority Four: Wellbeing and Independence.
  - Strategic Priority Five: Delivering an Outstanding Care Leaver Service.
  - Strategic Priority Six: Workforce Development.

### 2. Key Issues

- 2.1 The previous Corporate Parenting (Children in Care and Care Leavers) Strategy was published in 2017. Progress against the previous Strategy has been reviewed for completion and the targets set are mainly outdated due to the position of children's social care at that time. Progress has been made in all areas which were set out in 2017 and a refreshed action plan has been devised to address the new areas of focus.
- 2.2 The key achievements within corporate parenting since 2017 are as follows;
  - Improved placement sufficiency through the residential transformation programme and the fostering plan.
  - Improved stability of placements for children in care.

- Destination and permanence planning for children in care.
- Stability of the workforce.

- 2.3 Initially, the Corporate Parenting Panel, alongside performance clinics, will review the progress of the Corporate Parenting Strategy, 2024-2027 and of the service plans which sit alongside this document.
- 2.4 Quality assurance and performance data will be utilised to review the progress of the strategy and the impact for children and families on a monthly basis.
- 2.5 Activity will continue to engage partner agencies, officers and elected members in corporate parenting responsibilities. This will include contribution to a refreshed children in care pledge and exploring a covenant for care leavers to determine what agencies can offer to support young people achieve success.
- 2.6 As part of the development of the oversight of the Service, evaluation of other Local Authority services (for example, Hertfordshire County Council and Leeds City Council) has suggested that the Corporate Parenting Panel is reconstituted as a Board, with external partners involved, in the new municipal year. This would reinforce the importance of the wider partnership across the Borough to support these vulnerable children and young people and provide the collective leadership required to improve outcomes for children in care and care leavers. Partners provide the additional commitment to children in care and care leavers that a parent who is ambitious for their children would make, and it is important to continue to build upon this. It would also ensure that detailed discussions took place with Members about a range of confidential issues, including placements and direct service delivery.
- 2.7 The Board would continue to be chaired by the Lead Member for Children and Young People's Services with a cross party group of Members invited to attend the meetings. Membership would also include key corporate leads across all services relevant to children in care and care leavers, as well as health and education representatives. In order to facilitate the full attendance of children and young people, representatives will be restricted to attendees and documents will not be made public. It is essential to ensure that the voice of our children in care and care leavers is heard clearly and in a way that ensures they genuinely influence the development of policy and strategy moving forward. To ensure proper scrutiny continues for this important area of work, it is recommended that the Board report formally annually to council and to the Improving Lives Select Commission.
- 2.8 The Council is determined to ensure that all children in care and care leavers needs are met and that they are supported to achieve their aspirations. The proposed strategy and governance arrangements are an important of this.

### **3. Options considered and recommended proposal**

- 3.1 Cabinet is asked to approve the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2024-2027. Approval of this Strategy will ensure that the Council has met its statutory duties to set out actions to be taken around corporate parenting responsibility. This will also ensure that the plan is carried out, impacting positively for children in care and care leavers, as well as the workforce.

- 3.2 Cabinet is also asked to approve the governance arrangements for the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board and put in place the Terms of Reference for the Partnership Board. These arrangements ensure that the Board will report back to both council and Scrutiny to ensure proper oversight of the actions of the Board in supporting the Council in its role as corporate parent.
- 3.3 The alternative options are to not have a new strategy or to endorse the Strategy. This is not recommended as this document sets out the strategic plan for children in care and care leavers and it is essential that the Council and partner agencies understand their corporate parenting responsibilities.
- 3.4 The Corporate Parenting Panel could remain as currently constituted. This is not recommended as the current model does not allow for full discussion of items, unrestricted attendance of children and young people or a formal reporting process to council.

#### **4. Consultation on proposal**

- 4.1 The development of this Strategy has involved a number of partner agencies across Rotherham, including health, education, commissioning, performance, legal services and finance. The Children in Care Council are scheduled to offer their views about the strategy, to enable these to be built into the specific service plans. The Children in Care Council will be asked to support the review of this plan.

#### **5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision**

- 5.1 This new strategy will cover the period 2024 – 2027.
- 5.2 The progress of this Strategy will be reviewed in various forums, including monthly performance clinics and boards and the Corporate Parenting Panel. Annual reports will be provided by the Board and reported formally to council and to the Improving Lives Select Commission.
- 5.3 The new arrangements will commence in June 2024, from the date of the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board.

#### **6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications**

- 6.1 There are no financial implications arising from the Strategy.
- 6.2 Where there is a need for the Council to commission services from third party organisations to deliver the Strategy, this must be done in compliance with the Council's own Financial and Procurement Procedure Rules and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. Early consideration needs to be given in the development of any commissioned services to ensure the chosen delivery vehicle includes the flexibility to meet the requirements of the Strategy.

#### **7. Legal Advice and Implications**

- 7.1 The concept of corporate parenting stems from the Children Act 1989, continued in the Children and Families Act 2014 and, in the Children, and Social Work Act 2017

there is the definition of the role of the corporate parent along with the requirement of a clear local offer. The statutory guidance, “Applying corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers 2018”, highlights the co-operation required to promote and ensure a joined up approach with other agencies to support the Local Authority carry out its responsibilities to be a good corporate parent. There has been consideration of the corporate parenting principles which has included details about implementation within the strategy proposed. In view of this, there are no legal implications arising from the implementation of this Strategy.

## **8. Human Resources Advice and Implications**

8.1 There are no direct HR implications within this report.

## **9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults**

9.1 Implications to vulnerable children and young people are covered within the report.

## **10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications**

10.1 Equality and human rights are considered within the report.

## **11. Implications for CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions and Climate Change**

11.1 Any implications are included in Appendix 4 Carbon Impact Assessment

## **12. Implications for Partners**

12.1 Implications for partners are reflected in the report.

## **13. Risks and Mitigation**

13.1 These are referred to in the report.

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	<b>Named Officer</b>	<b>Date</b>
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp	08/01/24
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	04/01/24
Assistant Director, Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phil Horsfield	04/01/24

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