

Staffordshire's
Corporate
Parenting Strategy
2023 - 2028

Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum.

We are a group of young people who are cared for and have joined together to form the Children in Care Council.

It is important to us that our voice is heard in shaping the services that support us through our care journey. We require support to ensure we are happy, healthy, safe and have access to a good education.

We want those supporting us to share our ambitions and support us to thrive, to join us in celebrating our successes and guide us when we are struggling.

The Corporate Parenting Panel work alongside us and help us to influence positive change through the consultation and action plans we work on together.

Staffordshire Children in Care Council

Welcome

It is our shared privilege to introduce this strategy which is a cumulation of conversations with children and young people who are experts in their experience, and with the families, carers and partner agencies who are involved in their journey. It sets out our vision for improving the experience of children in care and care leavers through corporate parenting.

Using a partnership approach, we will remain relentlessly focused on helping keep children and their families together. Our approach will continue to be responsive and respectful and when children and young people do need to come into our care, we will be committed to ensuring they have opportunities to experience:

- › a home where they feel loved, valued, and nurtured
- › loving and lasting relationships
- › a quality education
- › fulfilling work and training opportunities
- › good health

We aim to build on the great progress and achievements made so far (see Appendix 1 for the detail) and continue to strive to be the best corporate parents we can be for our children and young people. We will remain aspirational in everything we do and ensure children, young people and their families' voices are heard during their care journey with us.

Their views will also help shape future direction and services. We will also continue to build children and young people's emotional resilience in readiness for their transition into adulthood and beyond.



Mark Sutton,
Cabinet Member
for Children and
Young People



Neelam Bhardwaja,
Director for Children
and Families



Claire Cartwright,
Head of Children in our
Care and Care Leavers

Who are corporate parents?

For those children and young people who are unable to live with their parents or guardians, it is our legal duty under the Children Act 1989 to act as corporate parents when they become cared for.

This duty is not just for social workers, it is everyone's responsibility. For example, professionals working with the child/young person, and everyone who works at the council including all councillors. It is also the responsibility of all our partners such as health, police, education, and housing.

It takes a whole team to support a cared for child/young person and care leaver, not just one person.

Everyone needs to be concerned about the child/young person as if they were their own, and it is important that our partners understand how they too can support our shared corporate parenting responsibilities.

"I would like the same approach to be applied to children in care as any good parenting would involve. Recognising the individual, providing opportunities for holistic developing of social, spiritual, physical, psychological and educational growth as a rounded response."

Staffordshire Foster Carer

"Immensely important and meaningful responsibility for people's lives - it can't be a dry paper/business response."

Staffordshire Care Leaver

Who are the Corporate Parenting Panel?

The Corporate Parenting Panel's role is to raise awareness and promote a shared responsibility of corporate parenting with all councillors, County Council and partner colleagues.

They are a critical friend to help and challenge the whole system to improve outcomes for our cared for children, young people and care leavers.

The Panel will be working throughout the life of this strategy to raise awareness of corporate parenting so that they can influence colleagues and partners to help address the challenges that are being identified.



Corporate Parenting principles

In Staffordshire we will:



Make sure children and young people have access to:



loving stable homes



quality education



fulfilling work or training opportunities

any other services that they need.



Act in the child's best interest.



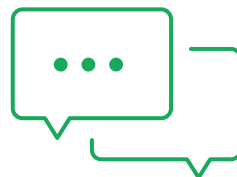
Prioritise and promote relationships in our interaction.



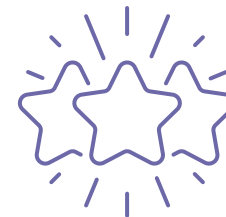
Be attachment aware and trauma informed understanding children's lived experience.



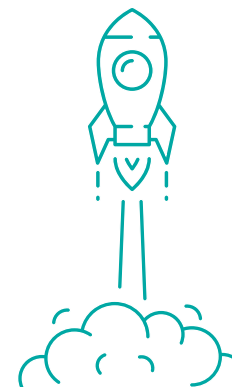
Promote the physical, mental health and wellbeing for children and build their emotional resilience.



Find creative ways to encourage children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings.



Always celebrate your successes



Be inspirational and aspirational in planning for our children and young people.



Embed a culture of reflection and learning.



Appropriately prepare children and young people for adulthood and independent living throughout their care journey.

Making it happen

We will **SUPPORT** children and young people in our care or leaving care to **GROW WELL** and **LIVE WELL**.

Together with our cared for children/young people, care leavers and their carers, the Corporate Parenting Panel has developed four promises which set out how it will support them and deliver the vision.

A key focus will also be to work with our partners to help them understand their corporate parenting responsibilities and use our influence to make sure our children in care and care leavers receive the services they need at the time they need them.

“Corporate parenting is also about being the voice and the advocate to ensure the child’s wishes, views and feelings are heard, and to also champion ways and strategies for children to have positive experiences throughout their care journey and to achieve better outcomes.”

Registered manager
at children’s home



Our four promises

We promise to
ALWAYS LISTEN

We promise to support
your **HEALTH, HAPPINESS**
and **WELLBEING**

We promise to **SUPPORT YOU**
to **FEEL VALUED** at home,
in school, and live in a
LOVING STABLE HOME

We promise to **ENCOURAGE**
you to **SUCCEED** in your goals
and **CELEBRATE** with you

We promise to ALWAYS LISTEN

Having your
voice heard

Trusted
relationship

Keeping
the right
information

Keeping you at
the heart of
decisions

Making
plans
together

Continually
improving



You said:

It's important to me to have the chance to speak to my social worker on my own, over the phone and face to face.

"I need to see who they are (faces and names) and understand what they can do."

Care experienced child talking about corporate parenting

The Voice Project encourages young people to join its forums to have their say on the services supporting them.

Delegated Authority needs to be clearer to young people and communicated in very simple terms.

Having your voice heard

You have someone you feel able to talk to.

You are aware of your rights from the moment you become cared for, including how to hold us to account.

You, your parents, and carers know how to make a compliment or complaint and we'll ask for feedback on how well we are doing from time to time.

You have access to advocacy, independent visitor and children's rights services. Ensuring everyone involved is aware of how to feed back about your experiences.

You get invited to join the Children in Care Council, or Care Leavers Forum.

Keeping you at the heart of decisions

We will always think about what is right for you and do our best by you.

We will involve you when planning for your future.

We review how we work with and those who care for you, to make sure our approach consistently meets your needs.

We explain decisions to you in a way you and your family understand.

We visit you when we say we will visit.

Trusted relationship

We strive for a consistent approach to building trusting relationships.

We see you alone to hear your wishes, views and opinions on matters important to you.

Your assessments and plans are written to you in a way that you understand.

Making plans together

We ask you and those who support you your views about the things that matter to you, including the support you're provided.

You have opportunities to influence, shape and work with us to develop services that are provided to you.

We take your views into account when support is reviewed or developed.

Keeping the right information

We always keep a true record of our visits and contact with you.

You know your right to access the information we hold about you.

The records about you are always kept up to date.

The Corporate Parenting Panel will keep you at the heart of its decisions. As corporate parents we will use information gathered to ensure the services meet your needs.

Continually improving

We support our staff to think about and learn from the way we work with you, your family, carers and partners.

Look at opportunities to work with and improve relationships with partners.

We are continually looking at ways to make the service we provide to you better.

You and your carers' feedback is used when we are planning new services or changes to existing ones.

We always think creatively about ways to gain your views.

When we look at how well we've done at delivering our promises to you, you work with us to see what we have done and what we still need to do.



We promise to support your HEALTH, HAPPINESS and WELLBEING

Good health

Understand who you are and develop your own identity

Support you to succeed

Healthy and safe relationships

Build emotional resilience

Support you to be a good parent when the time comes



You said:

“The corporate parents need to be made aware that it is a big issue, and that young people need support through it, even when they are in an unstable placement.”

Care experienced young person talking about mental health

“It’s important for young people to know where they have come from, their past and their identity.”

“Make sure I’m happy.”

“Support me with my health conditions, taking me to appointments and asking how I am feeling.”



Good health

Before you come into care, ask your family about you and your family's health history (this is to find out if there are conditions such as diabetes in the family).

Ask you to have a basic health check when you come into care - helping us and you understand how healthy you are (really informal and you won't need to undress or talk about things you don't want to). You can have a health check every year for as long as you are in our care if you want to.

You are registered straight away with a doctor, dentist and optician.

Talk about your health at every cared for/ pathway plan review. Making sure all your plans are joined up.

Help you attend appointments if you are a care leaver.

Provide information and advice for you and your carers on how to lead a healthy lifestyle.

Provide a leisure allowance for care leavers.

Create a health passport for when you leave care which lists things such as the injections you've had.

Healthy and safe relationships

Help you to develop and maintain relationships with people that are important to you.

Promote family time that meets your needs.

Help you to maintain or regain contact with people important to you.

Help you to understand the dangers of risky relationships and misusing drugs and alcohol.

Understand who you are and develop your own identity

During assessments before you come into care, we will gather as much information about you and your family as possible.

Help you to understand your past and what's happening in your future.

Ensure you have access to support to help you develop your identity, including social activities.

Create opportunities for you to meet other cared for children or care leavers through the Children in Care Council, Care Leavers Forum and other events.



Build emotional resilience

Continue to work with you and your family during your care journey to see if there are any opportunities for you to safely return home.

Provide you with access to advocacy and independent visitor service when you need it.

Help you to manage your mental health by making sure you know which services can support you.

Make sure, every year, your foster carers (if you are aged between 2 and 17) complete a strengths and difficulties questionnaire which helps us understand how you are feeling emotionally.

Support you to succeed

Support you to feel happy and healthy.

Support you to do well at home and at school/ college.

Support you to have friends and a strong support network.

Support you to be a good parent when the time comes

Provide you with the support you need at the earliest opportunity.

Provide you with a mentor who has parenting experience if you want one.

We promise to **SUPPORT YOU** to **FEEL VALUED** at home, in school, and live in a **LOVING STABLE HOME**

Safe place to live

Sense of belonging

Clarity in decision making

Loving stable home

Prepared for adulthood

Living independently



You said:

Supportive housing: to give me more training to manage own tenancy.

“Make sure they are always in contact and make the effort to stay in contact with the young person. To make sure that the young person knows they can trust them.”

Care experienced young person talking about corporate parents

The social workers call me out the blue to check in and see if I am alright.

Young people wanted someone in their local community for advice on the local area and any local issues they were experiencing.



Safe place to live

Before you come into care, fully assess your needs so we understand who is best to care for you.

Wherever you live, ensure it is safe and you have opportunities to have loving relationships with, feel valued and are nurtured by those people.

We visit you regularly and talk to you alone to ask if you feel safe. If you don't, we will work with you to understand why and what needs to happen next.



Stable home

We continue to work with you and your family during your care journey to see if there are any opportunities for you to safely return home.

If it is not safe for you to return home, ensure that your forever home is planned for quickly.

We only change your school, college or university if we absolutely have to. If there are any concerns identified with your school or college, we will address them quickly.

Sense of belonging

You are supported to build new relationships where you are now living, whilst making sure you can keep in touch with the people who are important to you where you used to live if you are unable to continue living in or near your community.

If you are living outside of Staffordshire, we offer you the same support as if you were living in Staffordshire.

Protecting you from harm

The people who work for us are safe adults.

We provide regular training for our staff, foster carers and residential care workers on how to keep you safe.

We provide information and advice about the risks you may face whilst growing up, such as drugs and alcohol misuse, criminal and sexual exploitation.

You have someone to talk to if you are worried.

You are made safe, as quickly as possible if you are at risk.

Clarity in decision making

When decisions need to be made about you, they are done in a timely way.

The people looking after you know what decisions they can make for you from the moment they start to look after you, such as having a sleepover (delegated authority).

Our staff, foster carers and residential care staff receive a good level of training to help them to understand your needs and have the confidence to make decisions.

Preparation for living independently

You are prepared for adulthood at the earliest opportunity and support you to complete the independence programme as soon as you are ready.

This gives you the skills to live independently. There is a clear plan for your future which allows time for you to get ready for independence.

You are supported to live independently when you leave care. You are provided with opportunities to 'stay put' with your foster carer or 'stay close' to your residential home when you turn 18.

You are provided with opportunities to move into supported accommodation or your own tenancy.

We continue to work with housing providers to enable you to have a permanent and safe home. We provide a smooth transition to adult services where this is appropriate.

Our care leaver offer remains ambitious and inspirational.

We promise to ENCOURAGE you to SUCCEED in your goals and CELEBRATE with you

High aspirations

Good education

Range of experiences

Ambitious plans

Opportunities and support

Celebration events



You said:

“Treat them as individuals and ensure their care plans reflect their individual needs”.

Staffordshire foster carer

“Involve me in activities which I find interesting and fun so I can learn.”

Care experienced child



Support from secondary school to help me choose the right course to help me reach my career goals.

High aspirations

We will ensure everyone has high aspirations for you. You are supported to “reach for the stars” in everything you want to do.

We will think big and want you to do the same. If things don’t work out, we will always be there for you and never give up on you.

We will all celebrate your successes.

We will support you to have a stable education.

We will aspire for our education settings to be trauma informed and attachment aware.

Ambitious plans

When we write your plans with you, you feel inspired by the opportunities you have.

Your plans are aspirational, regularly reviewed and joined up.

Your plans have clear actions, you understand what is happening and when.

When there are any changes in your situation, they are fully planned for and you always know what is happening next (this includes your care plan or pathway plan, placement plan, personal education plan and an Education Health and Care Plan if you have one).

We support you to learn from your mistakes (because there will be some) and help you to grow from those experiences.

Schools, colleges and universities know about Raising Attainment for Disadvantaged Youngsters (RADY) and encourage them to take part in it.



Good education

You attend nurseries, schools or colleges that are ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’.

You have regular Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings and we address any needs that you might have.

Education settings follow the corporate parenting principles.

You attend school regularly and take part in your lessons.

You receive the support you need in school or college to be the best that you can be.

A mentoring scheme is provided for care leavers.

Care leavers are supported to progress to further or higher education.

Opportunities and support

You are supported to attend educational trips.

We create good work experience and apprenticeship opportunities for you.

You have a passport so you can travel abroad. We will ensure you have a wide range of experiences such as going to the theatre, eating out at a restaurant, having a holiday and enjoying a hobby.

Celebration events

When you have achieved something, this is always recognised.

There will be a celebration event for you and your carers every year if you wish to attend.

We will ensure your education achievements are celebrated if you wish.



Implementing the strategy

Each year the **Corporate Parenting Panel**, alongside the **Children in Care Council**, the **Care Leavers Forum**, and our **partners and carers** will measure how well we have delivered against the promises and an **annual delivery plan** will be created.

The Head of Service for Children in Our Care and Care Leavers will manage the delivery of the plan, bringing a progress update to the Corporate Parenting Panel every three months.

The strategy will also be shared with all those involved in children and young people's lives.



Appendix

Progress against the corporate parenting priorities from the previous strategy





Working Together
Artwork by Summer, aged 12



NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME
BOROUGH COUNCIL



South Staffordshire Council



STAFFORDSHIRE COMMISSIONER
Police | Fire and Rescue | Crime



Staffordshire
Fire and Rescue Service
preventing • protecting • responding



STAFFORDSHIRE
POLICE