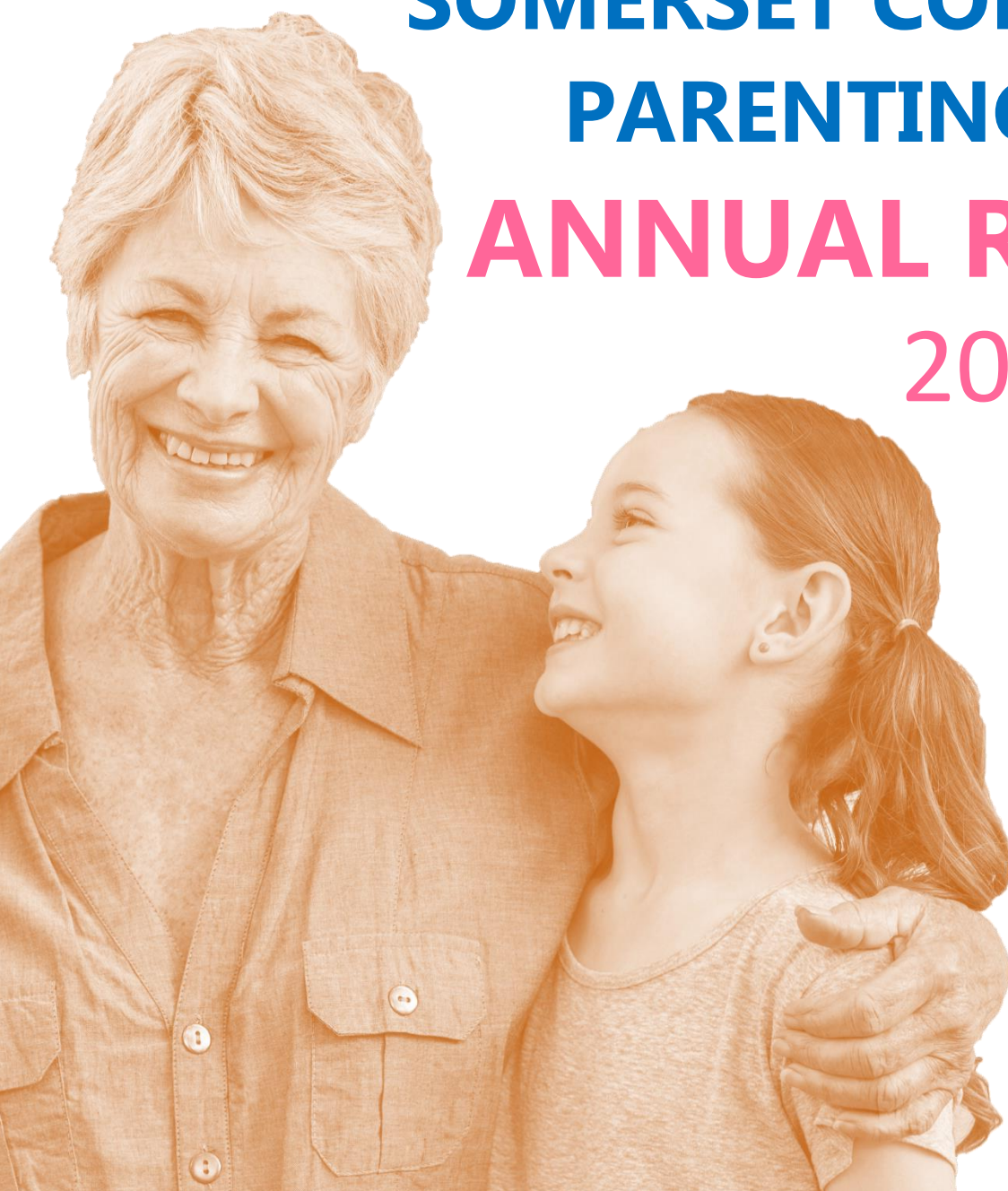




# SOMERSET CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020



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# ANNUAL REPORT 2019 – 2020

## 1. Summary

- 1.1.** The Somerset Corporate Parenting Board meets every 3 months to take reports from its four sub-groups on progress to improving the lives of children and young people in care. It is also responsible for making sure that Somerset's Corporate Parenting Strategy is met. In 2019 – 20 the Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) continues to function effectively with reports from officers and partners showing clear progress against the 7 Principles of Corporate Parenting and our Ofsted Improvement programme. This annual report highlights the high quality of delivery that our front-line staff undertake on a daily basis and the Board's ability to influence this delivery through its direct contact with operational leads in its subgroups. The Board has shown increased maturity this year with officers, sub-groups and members evidencing a higher level of competence and confidence that has led to a more forensic approach to the information available and a more holistic approach to the solutions needed to keep our children looked after and care leavers safe, well and prepared for adult life. Nevertheless, this report highlights areas that still need to improve in order that all the young people in our care can achieve this.

## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1.** The Corporate Parenting Board requests;
- That Council recommends a focus on the inconsistency of Council Tax exemption and the impact of this on Care Leavers
  - That Council invites District Councillor representation on the Corporate Parenting Board to provide support on housing and leisure issues
  - That Council supports and promotes a whole council approach to create practical and specific offers to Care Leavers through our Local Offer and the Care Leaver Covenant
  - That Council extend its thanks to the Somerset Care Council's young people for all the hard work that they undertake.





### 3. Background

- 3.1.** The role of the Somerset Corporate Parenting Board is to ensure that Somerset County Council, together with the four District Councils, fulfil their duties towards children looked after (CLA), corporately and in partnership with other statutory agencies, including the NHS and Police. The existing Corporate Parenting Strategy and Terms of Reference (TOR), including membership, of the Corporate Parenting Board were agreed by Council in 2017.


The Corporate Parenting Board has met quarterly throughout the year, receiving regular updates from officers, partners and the Somerset In Care Council (SiCC) and Somerset Leaving Care Council (SLCC) who are a representative group of young people looked after or leaving care and are supported by a Participation Worker (see **Appendix B** for their report). The voice of the child is a key aspect of the Strategy and the Board has continued to engage with young people, both through their representation on the Board, and through SiCC and SLCC which is well established and has an effective and regular link with the Board.

The Council's corporate parenting arrangements were reviewed following May 2017 Local Elections to ensure Somerset continues to provide a robust Corporate Parenting approach.

Full council in June 2017 approved the new elected members, and the updated annual action plan, and the arrangements set out in the corporate parenting strategy. Following a review of attendance at the Board this year, one member has resigned, and another is absent through long term ill-health.

The overall aim of the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2019 - 2022 is to strengthen good practice through a whole council approach to corporate parenting and a strong and effective approach to partnership working, thus improving the achievement, life chances and opportunities for all children looked after and care leavers.

- 3.2.** Promotion of the 7 Principles of Corporate Parenting:  
In order to thrive, children and young people have certain key needs that good parents generally meet. The corporate parenting principles set out 7 Principles (identified in section 1 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017) that local authorities must have regard to when exercising their functions in relation to looked after children and young people as follows:
1. to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and young people
  2. to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
  3. to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people
  4. 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
  5. to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people

- 
6. for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and
  7. to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

These principles form the structure of our actions and guide the decisions and challenges we make as a board.

- 3.3.** The focus of the Corporate Parenting Board is on the delivery of five priorities covering placement sufficiency and stability, education, health, voice of the child and leaving care through well-established sub-groups with good cross agency working, led by a senior officer, and supported by a Councillor from the Board. Additionally, the key area of foster carer development is led by the council's fostering service. Action owners on the groups take responsibility for issues to deliver solutions within deadlines.

The outcomes of this work are reported quarterly through the Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership (SSCP) performance reporting arrangements, against eight improvement programmes. Reports are complemented by detailed data and performance measures provided to the Board to support them in their role in leading and challenging service delivery.

- 3.4.** This report provides an update of the function and impact of the Board over the past 12 months.

## **4. 2019 – 2020 Achievements**

- 4.1.** Achievements 2019 - 2020 (see **Appendix A**) : this information evaluates the progress against the annual priorities set for 2019/20

- 4.2.** The format/governance of the Corporate Parenting Board:  
The Board has changed to quarterly meetings and quarterly reporting commenced from May 2019 . This brings the Corporate Parenting reports in line with the newly formed Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership reporting and aligns to the Children & Young People's Plan 2019 – 2022.

The key staff changes made in 2019-20 (the Head of Service - Children Looked After and Care Leavers, Jayne Shelbourn-Barrow; Interim Head of Virtual School, Emily Walters; and Designated Nurse Children Looked After, Sarah Ashe) have shown more robust sub-groups with improved governance and commitment from sub-group members.

The Board welcomes Alison Pennells as a member. Alison is the Engagement & Participation Worker supporting SiCC and SLCC.

The implementation group for Mind of My Own and the Voice of the Child sub-group amalgamated, and this has led to a more effective function.

- 4.3.** The chair especially wishes to highlight the many positive outcomes from the work of the Board and sub-groups especially:
  - Additional capacity in operational teams especially in health (CLA Nursing team and Clinical team)



- Stronger leadership evidenced in education (school leaders working more effectively with the Virtual School (VS)); health ( new Designated doctor and Senior nurse in the CLA Nursing team) and Children’s Social Care (through a management and geographical restructure)
- A more forensic approach to data by subgroups and the Board including Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET) data, children placed in Somerset from other counties, dental data and health assessment data
- A more holistic approach to finding solutions (Leaving Care team working with Emotional Health & Wellbeing (EHWB) team, commissioners and providers; education working with placements team; commissioners and providers supporting young tenants)
- Better system alignment and information sharing ( Health and Children’s Social Care (CSC) aligning internal systems; Virtual School aligning internal systems) ’
- Following the significant restructure of the Virtual School in September 2019, and the appointment of a new Leadership Team, the Virtual School welcomes support and challenge to ensure the best outcomes are achieved for CLA. As the structure now aligns much more closely with that of a physical school, it was felt that a Governing Body would be the most appropriate vehicle to deliver this role. This suggestion was taken to Corporate Parenting Board, where agreement to replace the Education subgroup with a Virtual School Governance Board was secured.
- The Governors of the Virtual School consists of two Members, as well as a number of professionals who currently serve as Chairs of Governors for Somerset Schools. The board members bring a wealth of experience to their roles, with a wide range of backgrounds from education to HR. The Board hopes to expand in future to ensure that representatives of Carers and Children’s Social Care also feature, and we are able to also include the voice of the young people. The Governors have appointed a Clerk, to ensure all meetings are recorded and held in accordance with Governance Principles.’
- For the sixth consecutive academic year no CLA has been permanently excluded
- Better monitoring and interventions of care leavers who are NEET
- Project work to determine extent and risk of children from other local authorities placed in Somerset completed and Board assured.

**4.4.** SiCC & SLCC update: (see **Appendix B**)

The recruitment of a new Engagement & Participation Worker this year gave impetus to the work of the In-Care Council’s (SiCC & SLCC); with excellent support from staff and volunteers and the young people themselves.

Members of SiCC and SLCC have commenced a review with Alison on how they would like to meet and conduct the business of their council.

Particular thanks should be noted to elected members who raised funds and donated gifts for the SiCC and SLCC Christmas Party.

## **5. Areas for Development**

- 5.1.** Areas for Development (see **Appendix A**) this information evaluates the progress against the annual priorities set for 2018/19.



## 6. Appendices

- **Page 7: Appendix A** – Corporate Parenting Board Achievements and Areas for Development 2019 – 2021
- **Page 14: Appendix B** – SiCC and SLCC Annual Report 2019 - 2020
- **Page 25: Appendix C** – Corporate Parenting Board Strategy 2019 - 2022
- **Page 51: Appendix D** – Corporate Parenting Board Terms of Reference 2019 – 2022
- **Page 56:** Glossary of Terms
- **Link to Somerset's [Local Offer for Care Leavers](#)**

## APPENDIX A - Corporate Parenting Board Achievements and Areas for Development 2019 - 2021

7 PRINCIPLES	ACHIEVEMENTS 2019-20	AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT 2020-21	RESPONSIBILITY
<p><b>1:</b> <b>To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of children and young people</b></p>	<p>Whole service review by Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) of CLA, Adoption and Care leavers services resulted in a business case for 3-year Investment and Transformation programme to significantly increase workforce and move from a 42 week to a 52 week per year service.</p> <p>Business case to also support bringing more mental health expertise into the CLA Health team and also support pressures on Out of County Health Assessments.</p> <p>Interim funding in place to support a Medical Advisor for Fostering &amp; Adoption from 3 x weekly sessions to 6 x weekly sessions.</p> <p>Substantive funding resulted in the recruitment of a Clinical Co-ordinator for the CLA Health team.</p> <p>The alignment of Liquidlogic Children's Social Care System (LCS) with the health RIO system has enabled better information sharing to inform Education, Health and Wellbeing Pathways.</p> <p>Providers have increased more sessions for Initial Health Assessments (IHAs) and a Designated Doctor to undertake IHAs for all ages which has increased capacity of the</p>	<p>Develop a comprehensive Activity &amp; Performance data dashboard to collate all CLA Health Service providers activity</p> <p>Request and review rates of pregnancies in CLA and Care Leavers to ascertain any additional actions required</p> <p>Strengthen information sharing to enable information from Health Assessments to be used in Education, Health &amp; Care Plans (EHCPs)</p> <p>Strengthen the escalation process for social workers and CLA Nurses to raise concerns in respect of timely notification.</p> <p>Strengthen multi agency systems and processes to ensure statutory health assessments are delivered on time</p> <p>Continue the work on triangulation of, and appropriate interventions of Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ's); commenced in 2019-20 by looking at other models and testing the usefulness of the obtained data.</p> <p>Facilitate the delivery of Year 1 of the CLA Transformation Programme, focusing on the provision of additional Emotional Health and Wellbeing Services and strengthening the current service provision for Initial Health</p>	<p><b>Health and Wellbeing Sub-Group</b></p>



Nursing team and improved the timeliness of IHAs.

A Named Nurse for CLA has been appointed which gives greater leadership in the CLA Nursing team

5 additional health assessment clinics have been provided by Taunton & Somerset Partnership and an additional 3 months nursing resource to clear backlog.

A process map has been designed for social workers to encourage consent to be in place as soon as a child becomes looked after so that IHA can be arranged as soon as possible.

Assessments delivered by Paediatricians and timely provision of Adoption Medical Reviews

**2:  
To encourage children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings**

One-year licence of Mind of My Own app and a work plan that included team and individual competitions, promotions and training for social workers led to a 200% increase in usage and a decision to extend the licence for a further year.

A review of CLA Annual reviews has led to a redesign and promoted use of Mind of My Own to prepare for review meetings. The new process is live on LCS.

The refreshed Participation Strategy has been aligned to the newly formed SSCP and includes Top Tips to Involving young people in Staff Interviews.

Monitor use of Mind of My Own and prepare business case in December 2020 to decide on future use.

Continue to monitor new Annual Review process and embed into practice

Consult with SiCC and SLCC on CSC Practice Standards

Involve members of SiCC and SLCC in newly formed SSCP Youth Forum

**Voice of the Child Sub-Group**





### **3: To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people**

Increased engagement with Route One advocacy leading to work towards increased capacity and to raise awareness of the service.

Use of advocates in Child Protection meetings is increasing, 67% support compared to low 40s a year ago.

The Social Care Worker of the Year Award 2019 (previously included in SCC Staff Awards) was incorporated into the Annual Achievements Awards 2019 held in July and 2 excellent winners were celebrated.

Over 300 young people were nominated for an Annual Achievement Award and 200 children, their carers and social workers celebrated on a fun filled occasion.

Somerset took part in a national Community Care Live conference and hosted a workshop on successfully listening to the voice of the child and young person to develop good practice. Subsequently an article about Somerset's practice was published in the Community Care magazine.

A Corporate Parenting training film has been developed and approved by the CPB in February 2020. It has now been incorporated into a learning module for internal SCC staff to use as part of their induction training. Due to COVID19 this has not yet been launched.

Launch CPB training internally through The Learning System (TLS) and externally to partners in district councils, health, police and voluntary organisations.

SiCC and SLCC to work with Route One advocacy to promote their services to young people; potential to make a film.

Secure funding for Annual Achievements Awards 2020

### **Voice of the Child Sub-Group**

### **Corporate Parenting Board – Partnership Team**



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<p><b>4:</b> <b>To help children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners</b></p>	<p>Launch of the refreshed Corporate Parenting Strategy and terms of reference</p> <p>Launch of Our Plan – The Somerset Plan for Children, Young People and Families 2019-2022 in April 2019</p> <p>Quarterly quality and performance reporting commenced April 2019</p>	<p>Ongoing audits of CSC case files which have shown inconsistencies where workers have not followed upon on promises made to CLA.</p> <p>Work with Children’s Commissioning team and members of SiCC and SLCC to support the work on recommissioning the P2i Contract.</p>	<p><b>Corporate Parenting Board – Partnership Team</b></p> <p><b>Voice of the Child Sub-Group</b></p>
<p><b>5:</b> <b>To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for children and young people</b></p>	<p>A VS re-structure at the beginning of 2019 saw permanent leadership and greater capacity. This led to a case load reduction from 70 to 50 for CLA Advisory teachers.</p> <p>Produced an Emergency List of students at risk of exclusions, not receiving their full education entitlement and those placed in school that Requires Improvement or are Inadequate. This gives focussed actions for Advisory teachers and Education Support Workers.</p> <p>This focus on preventing exclusions saw a dip in fixed term exclusions from 400 days lost in 2017- 2018 to 363 days lost in 2018-19; through better partnership work with school leaders. There have been no permanent exclusions again this year.</p> <p>Refreshed Personal Education Plan (PEP) documentation and now, through training and awareness, seeing greater VS attendance</p>	<p>Ongoing improvement of monitoring systems and the redeveloped processes, following Capita training for VS staff</p> <p>Development of newly formed Governance Board who hold head teachers to account for outcomes; develop termly and annual reports from Board to CPB.</p> <p>Continued focus on lowering number of fixed term exclusions. Deliver training to school on alternatives to exclusion.</p> <p>Offer PEP surgeries to schools.</p> <p>Develop an enhanced offer of extracurricular activities i.e. working with Somerset Outdoor Learning residential team.</p> <p>Continue to ensure that all CLA have an education placement; currently there are 6 CLA with none- this has reduced from 10 in 2018-2019 and the children are being supported in other ways.</p>	<p><b>Education Sub-Group – Virtual School</b></p>

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at PEP meetings and more targeted funding for support. All year 11s now have 2 PEPs to support them for GCSEs and transition to Year 12.

Increases in GCSE standard passes in English and maths increased from 8% in 2017-20218 to 16% in 2018- 2019. There is a greater focus on attainment data with interventions at year 6 and year 11. All CLA now have an Advisory teacher and an attainment action plan with Learning Mentors available to support demand.

A VS post in the Placements Team has led to a reduction in education placement disruption – from over 9 per month in Oct 2018 – Feb 2019 to 6 per month between Mar 2019 and June 2019.

There has been an increase in the capacity of the Post 16 team.

VS training and inclusion audit support offered to schools has been successful ; 135 schools signed up for Special Education Needs Co-Ordinator (SENCO) training and 150 schools signed up to complete their inclusion audits online.

Embedded systems are now working well to track absence, exclusions, attendance and PEP data.

Embed processes that support progress and reduce the attainment gap between CLA and non CLA students.

Develop post 16 processes that include routinely held PEP meetings for CLA that are NEET.

Continue to develop the joint working between CSC, VS and SEND in order to improve placement stability and access to and engagement with good educational provision.



**6:  
For children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work**

CPB worked with social care colleagues in children's and adults and the data management team to look at information on children from other Local Authorities placed in Somerset and taken to the Joint Strategic Protocol Board. Work has been completed to cleanse the data, but processes still need to be improved to monitor children and young people coming in and out of Somerset placements.

SiCC and SLCC reviewed the Living Away From Home information packs and worked with CSC Business Support to ensure correct documentation in place.

Further investigation on Care Leavers Tax Exemption to ensure consistency and equality of offer remained revealed this was not the case for 2019- 20. CPB wrote to Chief Executive to ask for support from District Councils to improve process and awareness.

A workshop was held in October with members of the board, members of SiCC and SLCC, commissioners and other officers and providers to look at what makes a good placement in preparation for the refresh of the Sufficiency Statement.

Ongoing review by SiCC and SLCC of the quality of information given to children and young people coming into care through regular review meetings with children's social care business support.

Leaving Care service to collect case studies to show the impact of lack of consistency in council tax exemption.

Refresh of Sufficiency Statement and Action Plan.

Instigate changes highlighted in a self-assessment survey to Board members that include :

- raising awareness of Corporate Parenting with partners
- better representation on CPB by senior officers from partner agencies
- more input from foster carers to influence the work of the CPB; especially to understand that they have the right support to be a carer
- more consideration of children in care when commissioning health services
- support to other partnerships boards and forums to take into account the needs of children in care into their plans and ambitions
- better board understanding of social work capacity
- CPB to be more confident about extracurricular activities which contribute to a child's well-being and sense of belonging

**Corporate Parenting Board – Partnership Team  
Sufficiency Statement  
Fostering and Adoption**



- more intelligence to CPB about missing children and their vulnerabilities
- more information to CPB about CLA and CL in the youth justice system
- more assurance that we are meeting our Sufficiency duty

**7:  
To prepare children  
and young people for  
adulthood and  
independent living**

A sustained and improved Education, Training and Employment (ETE) offer to care leavers from SCC Human Relations & Organisational Development (HR&OD) dept; this includes more care leaver apprentices in SCC including a proposal for 4 apprentices in the Leaving Care team. This is part of a commitment by SCC to create practical and specific offers to Care Leavers through our local offer.

An increased offer from the Emotional Health & Wellbeing team to support the Leaving Care team to be equipped to work with young people's emotional health needs.

Improved Pathways to Independence (P2i) offer including better engagement between providers, the Leaving Care service, commissioners and young tenants.

Post 16 panels are evidencing effective planning and support.

Improved participation work means that we are better hearing the voice of the Care Leaver.

A forensic review of CLA and CL who are able and available for, but not engaged in, education, training or employment (ETE) revealed that the situation was not as clear cut as originally thought. The sub-group will relook at NEETs in this cohort and find improved methods of support.

Raise awareness and improve the Local Offer for Care leavers; awareness is currently too low.

Recruit and develop 4 apprentices into the Leaving Care team.

Improve the difficulty in recruiting fostering and supported lodgings (Stepping Stones).

A focus on improvement of Transition Plans.

Develop plans for the re-commissioning of the P2i offer

**Care Leavers Sub-Group**





# WHAT WE DID IN 2019/20...



APRIL

- Reviewed the draft **PEP** with Gary – sent the findings to **Virtual School**
- **Early Help Assessment (EHA)** – looked at case studies and had a go at filling in forms with Fiona
- Agreed on **Health Assessment leaflets** for **Children Looked After** packs with Angela





- **CLA nurse Sarah Ashe** met the group and discussed issues
- **Coming Into Care** packs refreshed – ideas sent to Children’s Social Care
- **Keeping Good Relationships With Families** – shared ideas to take to Jayne Shelbourne-Barrow
- Decided on **fundraising ideas** for the Annual Achievement Awards





- Premiere of animation **Listening to Young People** - Sue Walton, Anna Elliot and UWE created resource for social workers to improve their practice by listening and putting the child first
- Further work on **Keeping Good Relationships With Families** with Jayne Shelbourne-Barrow – turning ideas into action
- Creating factsheets to inform **Family Court Training** for Family Court staff with Fiona
- Planning the **Annual Achievement Awards**



#### ACTIVITY 1:

- Preparing interview questions for **Participation Workers**

#### ACTIVITY 2:

- Preparation for the **Annual Achievement Awards**



JULY: SiCC & SLCC

# ANNUAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS!!



## ACTIVITIES:

- **Route1 Advocacy** with Julie Rickwood – knowing your rights and thinking about how to promote the service
- **What Makes a Good Social Worker?** - in preparation for the Community Care Live Event
- **Dear Future Me** – wrote postcards for a national campaign
- **Who Is a Corporate Parent? What Makes a Good Corporate Parent?** – with Fiona and Rebecca







- **Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)** Anna Partridge met the group and discussed issues
- **Coming Into Care packs** reviewed and discussed
- **CLA Reviews** - paperwork looked at with Liz Pearson to see what changes have been made in response to SiCC/SLCC's input
- **Skills Timeline** – 'What skills do young people need when?' Results taken to Foster Carer Network, Children's Commissioning and Residential Providers
- SiCC/SLCC promotional material - stock check and order



- **Safety** – 'Taking Care of Yourself' results taken to Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership (SSCP) and Jess King
- **Feedback** from Corporate Parent Board workshop about 'What Makes a Good Placement'
- **Mind Of My Own** discussion and demo of the app for young people
- **Providers Conference** – Presented the Skills Timeline 'supporting young people to develop life skill' to residential care providers





- **Safety Consultation** – how do young people keep themselves safe (part of a county wide consultation)
- **Corporate Parenting** – ‘What is a Good Corporate Parent?’ CPB film animation premiere with Rebecca
- **Training for Foster Carers and residential staff** – looked at how to improve training with Liz Pearson







# FEB

- **Getting to Know You** – activity
- **Social Work Practice Standards** – reviewed with Liz Pearson
- **Route1 Advocacy Film Planning** with Julie Rickwood and Rebecca –session to look at ideas for promoting Route1 advocacy and independent visitors



# MARCH

## BARRIERS:

- **Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire** – the SDQ was reviewed, rated, and improvements were suggested to take to the Health sub-group
- **Continuum** – opinions were given on SiCC and SLCC governance and structure of meetings
- **Social Media and Carers**



# IN 2019/20 WE VOLUNTEERED FOR THESE ROLES...

*Sitting on the Corporate  
Parenting Board*

*Representing SiCC & SLCC  
at Getting to Know You Day*

*Meeting new social workers  
in training at Yeovil College*

*Hosting the Annual  
Achievement Awards*

*Step up to Social Work  
Interviews*

*Attending the Health  
Inequalities Consultation  
with University of West of  
England*

*Corporate Parent Training  
The Voice of the Resident  
Workshop*

*Joining a P2i Focus Group  
improving the voice of the  
resident*





- ✓ Refreshed **PEP forms** and **PEP process**
- ✓ Influenced the refreshed **Early Help Assessment** process
- ✓ Supported the Health sub group's work on **SDQs** and **IHAs**
- ✓ Improved **Coming Into Care packs**
- ✓ Placement stability work to inform **Sufficiency Statement** refresh
- ✓ The Contact Team are now called the **Family Time** team
- ✓ We helped make a training presentation to **Family Court**
- ✓ Our **Skills Timeline** supports carers to develop young people
- ✓ **CLA Review paperwork and process** has changed
- ✓ **Corporate Parenting training** film made and ready to launch
- ✓ **Route1 advocacy** work planning to make a film
- ✓ Supported promotion of **Mind of My Own** app





***Covid-19: Somerset young people's experiences - what is it like for us?***

***Develop the group***

***Annual Achievement Awards??***

***Senior Leadership role Interviews***

***Planning and updating the SiCC/SLCC website***

***Route1 Advocacy films***

***Launch the Corporate Parent training***

***Plan some things we want to work on next ...***



## ***Would you like to know more about Somerset Care Councils?***

Find out more on the SiCC/SLCC website at:

***[www.somersetincarecouncils.org.uk](http://www.somersetincarecouncils.org.uk)***

***[www.mindofmyown.org.uk](http://www.mindofmyown.org.uk)***

You can also contact the Participation Officer at:

***[APennells@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:APennells@somerset.gov.uk)***





# SOMERSET CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY

April 2019 to March 2022



[WWW.SOMERSET.GOV.UK](http://WWW.SOMERSET.GOV.UK)



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## Foreword

Dear Colleagues,

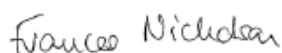
I am delighted to have been asked to write the foreword to our new Corporate Parenting Strategy. This strategy takes account of what our children looked after, and our care leavers have been telling us about their experiences of being in our care, as well as linking with the key priorities of the Somerset Plan for Children, Young People and Families 2019 - 2022 and our Sufficiency Statement.

We have a strong and energetic child in care and care leavers council that works hard to tell us what needs to change and to offer ideas about how best to make the changes. This strategy sets out how we intend to move forward together, prioritising our ambition for all our children looked after and care leavers so that they are all supported to reach for their dreams and to achieve their individual potential.

Our common purpose is to involve children looked after and care leavers in all the decisions that affect their lives, by asking what they want and need, listening to what they tell us, and taking action. This is part of our pledge to all our children looked after and care leavers and forms the underlying principle of this strategy.

The strategy sets out how Somerset intends to fulfil its corporate parenting responsibilities in a way that puts children and young people at the centre of improvements in the planning, delivery and evaluation of our services. It forms the framework in which Somerset staff, elected members and relevant partners will work.

I look forward to supporting the independent chair of our Corporate Parenting Board in leading member support to the delivery of this strategy.



**Frances Nicholson**  
Lead Member for Children and Families



**Cllr Frances Nicholson**  
Cabinet member, Children  
and Families



**Julian Wooster**  
Director of Children's  
Services



**Jill Johnson OBE**  
Chair of the Somerset  
Corporate Parenting Board



## Introduction

When a child comes into care, they become “looked after” and Somerset County Council (SCC) becomes their Corporate Parent. This means that everyone who works for SCC, in any capacity, its elected members and its partners have a special and important responsibility in fulfilling the corporate parent role, underpinned by The Seven Principles of Corporate Parenting.

A child or young person is looked after if they are subject to a Care Order or are being looked after under a voluntary agreement, subject to the Children Act 1989. The local authority has a statutory duty to those aged 0 to 18 years, and up to 25 years as care leavers.

Somerset County Council is committed to being an effective and trustworthy corporate parent for any child or young person who is in our care irrespective of their age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, faith or ability. The values underpinning this strategy are contained in Somerset County Council’s Corporate Parenting Pledge and in the Local Offer for Care Leavers’ and the national Care Leavers’ Charter, and their principles are embedded throughout this document.

Every good parent knows that children require a safe and nurturing environment in which to grow and thrive. Parents protect and support their children in coping with the dangers and risks of everyday life. Parents are ambitious for their children and strive to support them to reach their potential. Parents celebrate and share in their children’s achievements, however large or small. A child who is cared for by the Council has the right to expect everything from a corporate parent that they would expect from a good parent in the community.

### **This means the Council will:**

- ✓ Preface all our thinking, planning, actions and decisions with: “If this were my child I would...”
- ✓ Know our children, their needs, talents and aspirations and promote their interests
- ✓ Recognise, support and respect their identity in all aspects
- ✓ Support children’s physical health and emotional wellbeing and resilience
- ✓ Ensure children and young people are consulted about their own lives and plans
- ✓ Listen to their views and ensure they influence practice, service developments and policy
- ✓ Hold high aspirations for our children’s future and expect the best for and from them
- ✓ Ensure children take full advantage of the education offered to them, i.e. attend regularly and achieve their educational potential
- ✓ Promote and support high academic and vocational achievement by working with our schools and carers to ensure that the needs of our children are understood and met
- ✓ Take an interest in their successes and problems and show our pride in their achievements, and celebrate them

- ✓ Support transition to adult life, and promote a young person's economic prospects and prepare them to become responsible citizens
- ✓ Learn from outcomes of complaints from children and young people.

For corporate parenting to be effective it needs commitment from all elected members, and council employees in a council-wide approach. The whole council needs to be involved, as well as our partners, i.e. Health, Police, other councils and the voluntary sector, all acting as good parents, committing resources and working together to improve the lives of all children and young people in our care and care leavers. It is about prioritising children and young people's needs, listening to what they want and supporting them to make the most of their lives and opportunities.





## Aims and objectives of the strategy

**The overall aim of this strategy is to further embed good practice through a whole council approach to corporate parenting and a strong and effective approach to partnership working, thus continue to improve the achievement, life chances and opportunities for all our children looked after and care leavers.**

We have a Corporate Parenting Strategy in order to help support children who come into care, as the majority of them need extra support in their lives because they have experienced a lot of disruption and hurt. Their experience may make it harder for them to do as well as they could, for example in their education, looking after their health and in making good relationships. This strategy looks at the areas of work that are needed to support young people and care leavers over the next three years. The Corporate Parenting Plan delivers on five key areas. The key areas are:

**Voice of the Child** – as set out in the “Listening and Informing” section of our Pledge for all children looked after – the Somerset Children’s Trust Participation Strategy enables the voice of children looked after and care leavers to be heard in a more structured way and develop mechanisms to feed back to young people on action taken because of what they have told us.

**Foster Care Development** – one of the recommendations from the Sufficiency Statement<sup>1</sup> is to make sure we have enough skilled foster care placements for children looked after, in particular more homes for children in the 11+ age range, and for sibling groups to be able to live together. We also expect that young people leaving care will be encouraged to stay put in their foster home beyond the age of 18.

**Care Leavers** – from the age of 18 young people who are not in a foster home where they want to remain, will be supported to access good quality and affordable accommodation, and all care leavers successfully take up/remain in further education, apprenticeship/traineeship or employment.

**Education** – we will ensure that children looked after have the best opportunities to fulfil their potential, and that we have high aspirations for their futures, with the right support being offered, at the right time.

**Health of children looked after and Care Leavers** – we will ensure that children looked after and care leavers have access to good health and wellbeing services, and are enabled to become responsible for their own health and wellbeing. They will know their health history, in particular when leaving care.

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<sup>1</sup> The sufficiency guidance requires local authorities “to take steps to secure so far as its reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation within the authority area which meets the needs of children that the local authority is looking after and whose circumstances are such that it would be consistent with their welfare for them to be provided with accommodation in the local authority’s area.”



**Corporate parenting operates at strategic, operational and individual levels. It has three key elements:**

1. A statutory duty, detailed in the Children Act 1989 and the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 and the Children and Social Work Act 2017, on all parts of a local authority to co-operate in promoting the welfare of children and young people looked after and care leavers; underpinned by the Seven Principles of Corporate Parenting<sup>2</sup>, and a duty on other partners and agencies to co-operate in fulfilling that duty
2. Co-ordinating the activities of the many different professionals and carers who are involved in a child or young person's life and taking a strategic, child centred approach to the delivery of services
3. Shifting the emphasis from "corporate" to "parenting", making sure our moral and statutory responsibilities towards children looked after and care leavers are being fulfilled.

**'Act in the best interests,  
and promote the physical  
and mental health and  
wellbeing, of children and  
young people'**

Seven Principles of  
Corporate Parenting



<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 3 for the Seven Principles of Corporate Parenting



## Drivers from Somerset Key Strategic Plans

The Somerset Plan for Children, Young People and Families 2019 - 2022 has set the overall priorities for the Council and its partners to fulfil our duties and promote good outcomes for all our children and young people. Along with the Sufficiency Statement the Corporate Parenting Strategy sets out how agencies in Somerset meet the needs of children looked after and care leavers including commitment to the Somerset's Corporate Parenting Pledge, the Local Offer for Care Leavers, and the national Charter for Care Leavers.

The strategy builds on the recommendations from the recent external inspections including the Ofsted inspection November 2017.

This strategy also provides the link between all our corporate and cross-service plans and strategies relating to children and young people many of which have specific targets and key priorities to meet the needs of children and families.

### **Key Priorities from the Plan for Children, Young People and Families 2019 - 2022 – the overarching plan for improving the outcomes for children in Somerset**

- Supported Families - strengthening families and building resilient communities
- Healthy Lives - families making the right choices to support happy healthy lifestyles
- Great Education - high aspirations, opportunities and achievement for all
- Positive Activities - getting the most out of life through play, leisure, cultural and sporting opportunities

### **Key Priorities in the Sufficiency Statement <sup>3</sup>**

The key areas of work for the Corporate Parenting Plan 2019–2022, developed from the Strategy, are based on the priorities set in the Somerset Sufficiency Statement 2018–2020. These cover the Voice of the Child, Foster Care Development, Care Leavers' accommodation and support for Education Attainment, Training, Employment, and Health and Wellbeing for Children in Care and Care Leavers.

### **Corporate Parenting Board Plan - 2019-2022**

A number of sub-groups will take lead responsibility for the delivery of the strategy and action plans in each of the key areas. The Corporate Parenting Board will oversee their activities.

Each sub-group will have a nominated lead officer, and lead member, who will engage with the work of the sub-group and support the lead officer in achieving the outcomes of the sub-group. There will be a standing Corporate Parent Board agenda item for a report on progress and actions from each sub-group at each Board meeting.

There are overarching Terms of Reference for each sub-group, these are responsive to current and emerging guidance, and also ensure roles and responsibilities across

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<sup>3</sup> The Sufficiency Statement 2018–2020 was approved by the Corporate Parenting Board in 2018



professions and agencies are clarified. Each ensures appropriate membership and co-opts members as and when necessary. Each ensures that lessons learnt locally and nationally, in particular from Ofsted inspections, and good practice are embedded into its work.

**'Take into account the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people'**

Seven Principles of Corporate Parenting



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## The Somerset context – Children Looked After and Care Leavers

### National and Local Context

In the last three years the number of children looked after in Somerset has been consistently between 480 and 520 with approximately 650 care leavers between the ages of 17 and 24 years old. The local and national trend has shown a steady increase in the number of children becoming looked after.

### Outcomes for Children Looked After

The majority of children looked after start from a position of increased vulnerability and disadvantage that needs additional support to overcome. The educational attainment of Somerset's children looked after against the performance of all pupils in Somerset's schools, shows they fall consistently behind their peers. Poor attainment, in addition to other barriers, makes it more difficult for our children looked after to move successfully into further education, training and work.

The proportion of care leavers in Somerset aged 17-19 years who are in Education, Training or Employment (ETE), is well below that of the general population of Somerset's 17-19 year olds. Currently 65% of care leavers are in Education, Training or Employment, as against 83% of their peers (17-19 years). Despite the gap between the Somerset general population and care leavers remaining wide, Somerset care leavers in ETE has shown an improvement of 17% over three years, whilst their peers have fallen by 7%. Somerset's performance is currently above that of its statistical neighbours and equal to the national average.



Lack of opportunities for care leavers to successfully gain employment can also be exacerbated by inappropriate accommodation which is either in a location where job opportunities are scarce or does not have the support needed for care leavers to develop their life skills or sustain their tenancy. Currently 96% of Somerset's care leavers aged 17-21 years are in suitable accommodation. This is 12% above the England average.

Just as children looked after often have a difficult start in life; they also tend to have higher physical, psychological and emotional ill health than their peers. About 60% of those looked after in England have been reported to have emotional and mental health problems, which is four times the rate for children generally. 42% of Somerset's children looked after assessed under a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) were found to have an emotional and wellbeing score that poses concern (2017/18). Many children looked after have experienced early trauma including conditions such as foetal alcohol syndrome and attachment disorders, which can lead to behaviour problems and conduct disorders. Children looked after in

Somerset now have access to an Emotional Health and Wellbeing team. This team deploys a pathway to Tier 1-3 emotional and mental health resources. Additionally, resources such as the Mental Health Toolkit, Kooth and the SHARE Project are also available.

Despite the continuing fall in teenage pregnancy rates in England and Wales which have halved since 1998, vulnerable young women in care are three times more likely to become teenage mothers than peers who have not experienced state care. Factors which are common to teenage pregnancy include having poor educational attainment, not being in education, training or employment, risk-taking behaviours, self-harming, and early sexual activity which may be the result of child sexual exploitation.

**'Promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for children and young people'**

Seven Principles of Corporate Parenting





## The role and responsibilities of county and district councillors, council departments, and other partners

All services that support children looked after are corporate parents, and we are all accountable to the children and young people who are looked after in Somerset. We must all strive for children in our care to succeed in the same way that any parent would strive for their own child/ren. This can mean providing advice and guidance to a young person who is starting to live independently, supporting carers, ensuring that children's mental health is safeguarded, helping a young person find a job, or listening to their hopes and dreams, problems and insecurities. There is a wide range of people and organisations who need to work together.

All Councillors should be aware of their corporate parenting responsibilities and must:

- ✓ Have a clear understanding and awareness of the issues for children looked after and care leavers in the authority area and those placed out of area
- ✓ Champion the interests of children looked after and care leavers in all they do
- ✓ Ask questions about outcomes for children looked after and care leavers
- ✓ Communicate with children looked after and care leavers so that they can have a say in how decisions are made about the services that affect them, and so that they can influence those decisions. This may include some councillors engaging with the looked after council and the leaving care council
- ✓ Lead on securing work based training opportunities, including apprenticeships for care leavers within the Council and its partners and contractors to improve their future prospects
- ✓ Be equally mindful and responsive in their role of corporate parent to children placed out of county
- ✓ Question whether the Council, as corporate parent, is keeping the promise it has made in the Corporate Parenting Pledge, and the Care Leavers' Charter
- ✓ Demand evidence of positive outcomes for Somerset children looked after
- ✓ Ask how all elements of council business have an impact for children looked after
- ✓ Make connections and links between council plans, strategies and decision-making for children looked after
- ✓ Consistently ask *"Would this be good enough for my own child?"*





### **Somerset County Councillors**

All County Councillors are in the unique position of being able to promote opportunities for children looked after and care leavers through their political power and influence and; through their connections to the community, schools, health services, youth justice, local businesses, employers and voluntary organisations. The Somerset County Council Cabinet Member for Children and Families has the lead political role in ensuring that children looked after by the local authority have their interests protected, their opportunities maximised, their educational achievement enhanced, their voices heard and have services shaped to meet their needs. Other councillors who are members of the Corporate Parenting Board have a specific role in ensuring that corporate parenting responsibilities towards children looked after and care leavers are being fulfilled.<sup>4</sup>

**District Councillors' specific responsibilities** – (Somerset West and Taunton Council, Sedgemoor, South Somerset, and Mendip District Councils)

- ✓ Help support the development of work experience opportunities for young people looked after and care leavers within their respective organisations across Somerset, and with key partner agencies
- ✓ Help support the development of apprenticeships and employment opportunities, having a buddying system, so individual support can be given to young people
- ✓ Have a system in place to support and prioritise care leavers for housing/move-on housing in all areas
- ✓ Support working care leavers to be Council Tax exempt
- ✓ Provide priority access to leisure facilities to children looked after and care leavers up to the age of 25 years old
- ✓ Promote fostering for Somerset at a local level
- ✓ Be champions for children looked after and care leavers at every opportunity.



### **All Council Services**

All councillors and council officers share corporate parenting responsibilities and cannot abdicate this responsibility.

Somerset's most important collective contribution to corporate parenting is how we as the "family firm" in all council departments, can deliver better graduate schemes, employment, apprenticeship, traineeship, and work experience opportunities for children looked after and most importantly care leavers up to the age of 25 years old. These opportunities are promoted by the Virtual School Employment Advisor and designed to:

- ✓ Offer care leaver graduates opportunities to work in a graduate scheme
- ✓ Help young people meet their potential and achieve their ambitions, hopes and aspirations
- ✓ Help them become confident individuals

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<sup>4</sup> See Appendix 1 for specific responsibilities of councillors who are Corporate Parenting Board Members.

- ✓ Give them a taste of the world of work
- ✓ Broaden their horizons from little or no experience of employment options
- ✓ Help them become economically and socially contributing citizens.

### Children's Services

Corporate parenting principles will form part of the staff induction programme. The quality of relationships that young people have with their carers and the professionals closest to them is crucial to their success whilst in, and leaving, care. Young people looked after have told us again and again about their need for good relationships that provide love, stability and continuity in the home and in learning, their need to be listened to and involved in decision making, and most of all their need to be parented like other children. This is the basis of our strategy. A good corporate parent encompasses our Pledge to children looked after, and the Local Offer for Care Leavers and the national Leaving Care Charter for our care leavers, and supports the gap between being parented by birth parents to being in the care of, or leaving the care of, the local authority.



### Virtual School

The Somerset Virtual School for children looked after is responsible for providing leadership, strategic direction, good inclusion and partnership working with schools to secure successful educational outcomes for all children and young people looked after. It maintains an overview of all children looked after to ensure they can sustain a school place and has in place support designed to meet their individual needs. The relationship between being looked after and poor educational outcomes is explained, in part, by the trauma of pre-care experiences, such as physical or sexual abuse and neglect. In addition, many children looked after have had, gaps in their education, which can sometimes be a continuing

significant factor whilst they are looked after. Children looked after are more likely to be excluded from education than their peers. The assumption that being looked after leads to poor outcomes is incorrect. Educational targets are often set too low, or are not sufficiently challenging, or the support required for a child who is not attaining educationally is not provided. Aspirational education targets would better reflect our ambition for children looked after, accompanied by appropriate and targeted support, having proper regard to the use of

**‘Prepare children and young people for adulthood and independent living’**

Seven Principles of Corporate Parenting





the pupil premium, for each and every child and young person in our care.

**Schools, Colleges and other Education Providers**

Have a range of responsibilities including ensuring that every child looked after has a Personal Education Plan (PEP) and is supported to achieve. Maintaining children looked after and care leavers in school and endeavoring to avoid exclusions is an important part of achieving this. All schools should have a designated teacher with special responsibility for children looked after. School governors have statutory responsibilities which include monitoring the progress made by children looked after. Schools must engage with the Virtual School and respect the role of the Corporate Parent.



**Health Service Providers**

Have important responsibilities for improving the health, both physical and psychological, of all children looked after. Health assessments must be undertaken and Specialist nurses for children looked after must ensure that Personal Health Plans (Health Passports) are developed with the child or young person and that they are fully implemented.

**Housing Providers**

Have an essential role to play in working with Somerset County Council to provide enough good quality accommodation for care leavers who are ready to live more independently and provide a range of move-on accommodation for care leavers

wanting to move from more supported accommodation. Housing Providers must ensure that young people are supported to find employment that does not conflict with their ability to meet rent payments.

**Community Organisations**

There is a wide range of community organisations throughout Somerset, who provide important services and support for children looked after and care leavers, including advice and guidance, mentoring, supported housing, and drug and alcohol services. These services are vital to the task of preventing care leavers from needing the intervention of statutory services.

**‘Children and young people will be safe, and have stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work’**

Seven Principles of Corporate Parenting

## Leadership and the Corporate Parenting Board

This Strategy has been adopted by Full Council. The Somerset County Council Cabinet Member for Children and Families has the lead political role in ensuring this strategy is taken forward and the Director for Children's Services provides the strategic service leadership. The Corporate Parenting Board will be responsible for the delivery of the identified key objectives and the Board's annual plan.

The Somerset Corporate Parenting Board will lead and support all corporate parenting activity of Somerset County Council and its partner organisations, some of whom will be Board members<sup>5</sup>. The Board will reflect its key role of representing the wider corporate parenting responsibilities of all elected members and officers. The Board has formal accountabilities to the County Council and it also has important relationships with the Health Service, District Councils and Police as well as partnerships such as the Children's Trust and the Somerset Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB).

The Corporate Parenting Board will act as a leadership, advisory and consultative body to the Council and its partners and will provide challenge to ensure that Corporate Parenting duties are carried out effectively and consistently. It will ensure that the outcomes and life chances of children looked after and care leavers are maximised, so they are in line with their peers, and will act as the champion for these children and young people. It is the role of the Corporate Parenting Board, to monitor the delivery of the Corporate Parenting Strategy and Somerset's Corporate Parenting Pledge and Local Offer for care leavers.



The Board will hold the Council and its partners to account if there are gaps in service provision to children looked after, or in the performance of their corporate parenting responsibilities. The Board will have access to good qualitative and quantitative management information in order to monitor performance effectively against outcomes, and track delivery of the Pledge commitments. Individual Board members must attend appropriate training to be prepared for their task. In 2017/18 43 out of 55 elected members have undertaken Corporate Parenting Board training.

**43**

**Elected Members  
have undertaken  
Corporate Parenting  
Training (2017)**

The views of Somerset in Care Council (SICC) and Somerset Leaving Care Council (SLCC) will be made available to the Board through the Voice of the Child Participation Officer. This elected Board member has a specific role to engage with young people, through SICC and SLCC's monthly meetings, in addition to seeking out other opportunities to reach out to all children looked after.

<sup>5</sup> See Appendix 1 for Corporate Parenting Board Terms of Reference

## Measures of success – How do we know if our services to Children Looked After are Good?

The Board will seek to ensure that current and future priorities and decisions and deployment of resources relating to Children Looked After reflecting **their** needs and concerns.

Data will be provided to support and evidence progress on the priorities of the Corporate Parenting Board. On reading the data provided to the Board, the first question the Board must answer, is, would this be good enough for my child? Elected members are ultimately accountable for the quality of the service, so is the data telling them what they need to know? The Corporate Parenting Board has a three-year plan with priority areas. SiCC and SLCC annually evaluate improvement through their 'We Said, You Did' report to the Board.

A Quality Assurance and performance management framework for the Board is used in its reporting and governance. Data will be provided so that individual elected members can see the outcomes for children looked after living and attending schools in their division. It is anticipated that councillors will be able to build relationships with key partners and groups who deliver services, and to hear feedback from children living in their own division on the issues important to them.



**'Help children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners'**

Seven Principles of Corporate Parenting



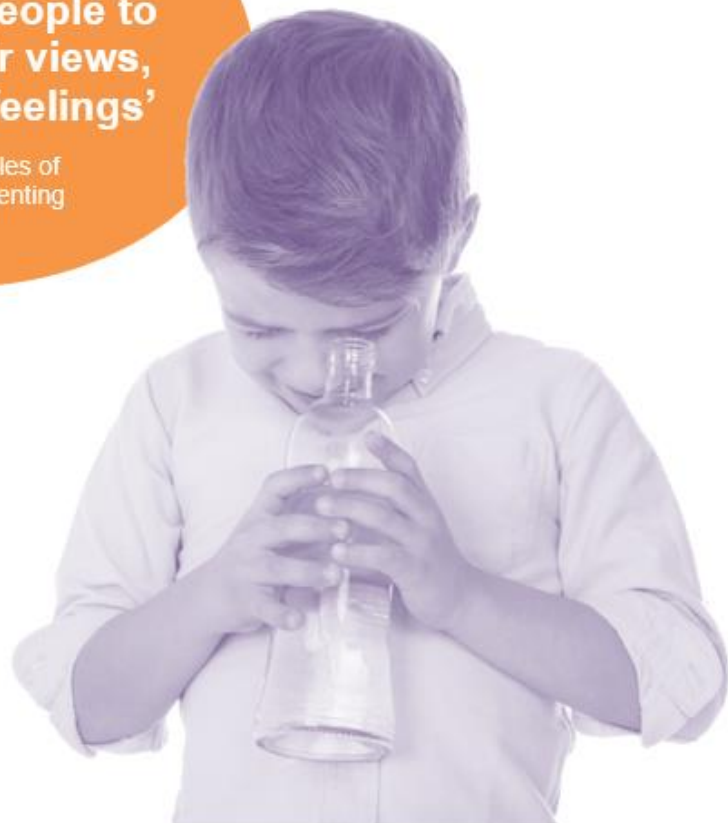
## Monitoring and evaluation

This strategy will be monitored and evaluated by the successful delivery of the corporate parenting plan through:

- ✓ Listening to children and young people who are looked after
- ✓ The effective use of local data to identify areas for improvement and the extent to which national and local indicators around children looked after are being met
- ✓ The Corporate Parenting Board receiving reports from across service areas and from partners as required
- ✓ Seeking external evaluation of Somerset's effectiveness in delivering this strategy.
  - ✓ This is essential to ensure that agencies in Somerset deliver continuous improvement. Peer review and challenge will also be sought
- ✓ Feedback from partners, agencies, parents, carers and children and young people about services
- ✓ Continued revision of actions in the plan in the light of monitoring and evaluation to ensure effective delivery of the strategy.

**'Encourage children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings'**

Seven Principles of  
Corporate Parenting



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## Appendix 2: The Statutory and Legislative Framework

The Children Act 1989 is the primary legislation setting out local authority responsibilities to children in need, including children looked after. Section 22 imposes a legal duty on local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of each child they look after. The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 extended the responsibility of the local authority to young people leaving care, requiring them to plan the young person's transition to adulthood and provide ongoing advice and assistance until at least the age of 21, with a duty to keep in touch until a young person is 25, and in higher education.

The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations and Guidance clarify the expectations of care planning and review for children looked after and strengthen the role of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) to challenge when identified needs are not being met. The manager of the IRO service is required to prepare an annual report that must be made available to corporate parents.

The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 3: Planning Transitions to Adulthood for Care Leavers gives details of how care leavers should be provided with comprehensive and holistic personal support so that they are able to achieve their full potential as they make their transition to adulthood. It includes the need for care leavers to be living in suitable and safe accommodation and to receive appropriate, consistent and timely support to continue in education or training and to find employment.


Children and Social Work Act 2017 establishes a set of seven principles aimed at bringing the focus back to the looked after child. It reminds the local authority (LA) what it means to be a "corporate parent". It also advises local authorities that they must publish a Local offer for Care Leavers. The main purpose of the legislation is to:

- Improve decision making and support for looked after and previously looked after children in England and Wales.
- Improve joint work at the local level to safeguard children and enable better learning at the local and national levels to improve practice in child protection.
- Promote the safeguarding of children by providing for relationships and sex education in schools.
- Enable the establishment of a new regulatory regime specifically for the social work profession in England.

The Adoption and Children Act 2002 introduced Special Guardianship Orders as an additional legal order to Adoption to secure permanence for children. The Act also required IROs to ensure children looked after have plans for permanence.

Local authorities have been entitled to expect other agencies, e.g. Housing and Health to assist them in discharging their functions since the implementation of the Children Act 1989 (Section 27). The Children Act 2004 introduced a legal duty on named agencies both to co-operate with the local authority (Section 10) and to ensure that they take account of the need





to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in fulfilling their own functions (Section 11). It also made provision for local authority areas to set up Children's Trusts, bringing together relevant agencies, and to develop a Children and Young People's Plan, through which it can be evidenced that partners are fulfilling their responsibilities. These are now not mandatory however the 'duty to cooperate' (Section 10, Children Act 2004) remains with the requirement to improve the well-being of children in Somerset in relation to: (a) physical and mental health, and emotional well-being; (b) protection from harm and neglect; (c) education, training and recreation; (d) the contribution made by them to society; and (e) social and economic well-being.

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 placed a duty on upper-tier Local Authorities and Local Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG) to undertake a joint strategic needs assessment (JSNA) of their local population.

The Children and Young Persons Act 2008 requires local authorities to take steps to secure sufficient suitable accommodation for children looked after within their area that meets their needs. It also strengthens the care planning process and the role of the IRO in monitoring the care plan. Children's health and education plans are essential components of the care plan.


The Health and Social Care Act 2012 transferred responsibility for commissioning local health services, apart from primary care, to Clinical Commissioning Groups. Primary care and specialist services are commissioned by the NHS Commissioning Board, who are also responsible for holding the CCG to account. The Act also established Health and Wellbeing Boards, led by the Director of Public Health within the local authority, to improve the health and wellbeing of the local population and reduce health inequalities.

The Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 has introduced a single remand order for children and young people under the age of 18 who are refused bail, which will mean that they become the responsibility of the local authority and will be regarded as a young person in the care of the local authority for the duration of the remand, and may mean that they are entitled to leaving care service, depending upon the length of time they remain looked after.

Promoting the Educational Achievement of children looked after: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities clarified the duty to actively support the education of children looked after. Measures include the priority that must be given to children looked after in terms of school admission, restriction on the use of school exclusion and the introduction of the Pupil Premium to purchase tailored support.

#### **Virtual Head Teacher for Children Looked After**

The Children & Families Act 2014 required every Local Authority to have a 'virtual school head' to champion the education of children in the authority's care, as if they all attended the same school. The person appointed to this role has three key areas of responsibility and is accountable for:

- 
- Making sure that there is a system in place to track and monitor the attainment and progress of children looked after
  - Ensuring that all children looked after have a robust and effective personal education plan (PEP), and access to one to one support, including personal tuition where appropriate (using the Pupil Premium)
  - Championing the educational needs of children looked after across the authority including those placed out of authority.

Under the Children and Social Work Act 2017 the Department for Education published statutory guidance for Local Authorities to promote the education of Looked After Children and previously Looked After Children (2018).

Statutory Guidance: Securing Sufficient Accommodation for children looked after requires local authorities to develop a plan to secure sufficient accommodation for children looked after within their local authority area that meets their needs. They can only do this if they work in partnership with other agencies as the requirement is not just about accommodation and placements but also securing a “diverse range of universal, targeted and specialist services working together to meet children’s needs” and applies not only to looked after children but also those on the edge of care and at risk of custody. The Somerset Sufficiency Statement 2018–2020 has recommendations that are incorporated into the Corporate Parenting Strategy and the Corporate Parenting Board Plan.

Statutory Guidance on the Roles and Responsibilities of the Director of Children’s Services and the Lead Member for Children’s Services. This covers both the social care and education services of the local authority. These individuals should provide strong leadership and ensure that there is a clear line of accountability for children’s wellbeing. They have particular responsibility for vulnerable groups of children, including those for whom they are corporate parents. The Lead Member should provide political leadership whilst the Director of Children’s Services should provide professional leadership.

The Equality Act 2010 places an additional responsibility on public organisations to consider the needs of protected characteristics (age, disability, sex, ethnicity, religion and belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, plus locally determined protected characteristics) and the effect of changes on them. This legislation also asks public organisations to support communities to get along better and understand each other. Both requirements are valid for adults and children. This work is captured in the Somerset Children and Young People’s Plan 2019–2022.

### **The Inspection Framework**

Ofsted’s framework and evaluation schedule for the inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers was published in November 2017 and came into force in January 2018.

The Ofsted single inspection regime consists of:

- Short inspections: Authorities judged to be ‘good’ or better will be inspected for a one-week short inspection every three years



- Standard inspections: Authorities judged to be 'requires improvement to be good' will be inspected for two weeks every three years
- Monitoring visits: Authorities rated 'inadequate' will be visited quarterly. Those rated 'inadequate' across all or most areas will repeat a full single inspection, while local authorities with only some areas 'inadequate' may be subject to a 'post-monitoring single inspection', which is a shorter inspection under the single inspection framework
- Focused visits: Authorities rated above 'inadequate' will receive at least one focused visit between their short or standard inspections.

The Somerset Children and Young People's Plan sets out the key priorities for achieving a good service for all children in Somerset, and partners are integral to that plan. These key priorities are also reflected in the Corporate Parenting Strategy, and the Corporate Parenting Board's Work Plan.



## Appendix 3: The Seven Principles of Corporate Parenting

In order to thrive, children and young people have certain key needs that good parents generally meet. The corporate parenting principles set out seven principles that local authorities must have regard to when exercising their functions in relation to looked after children and young people, as follows:

1. to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and young people
2. to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
3. to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people
4. 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
5. to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people
6. for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and
7. to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

The corporate parenting principles do not exist in a vacuum. They should shape the mind-set and culture of every part of a local authority in how it carries out all of its functions in relation to looked-after children and care leavers.

The corporate parenting principles are not about applying a formulaic approach to how services are delivered in relation to looked-after children and care leavers. Rather they describe the behaviours and attitudes expected of councils when they are acting as any good parent would do by supporting, encouraging and guiding their children to lead healthy, rounded and fulfilled lives. The principles intend to ensure that all councils have high ambitions for the children in their care. In doing so, the application of the principles must respond to the individual needs, vulnerabilities or disadvantages of looked after children and care leavers. This will assist in securing that such children and young people are not placed at significant disadvantage when compared with the support a nonlooked after child or young person may receive from their family.

## Appendix 4: The Pledge







# YOUR LIFE



We will involve you in the decisions that affect you;

- Where you live
- Who you live with
- Any plans we have for you

We will work hard to give you a choice of the best and safest places for you to live.

We will make sure that if you have to move, other things in your life do not too;

- Seeing the people who are important you
- Your school
- Your hobbies

We will celebrate with you,


- Birthday
- Successes
- Achievements
- Any other dates that are important to you, including your school prom

# SUPPORT

We will give you the support you need to be the best you can be.

We will support during your time in care to develop your skills so that you are prepared for your adult life.

We will help you to understand your story, through life story work. We won't leave bits out but will tell you about them at an age when you can understand and are ready.





## ?US?

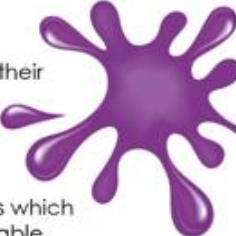

We will make sure you know who your workers are and give you their contact card.

- Your social worker and their manager
- Your Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) and their manager

We will make sure that any meetings do not interrupt other things which are important to you and are in a place where you feel comfortable

We will provide you with all the information that you might need:

- Your rights
- Being in care
- Leaving Care
- How to complain
- How you can get involved



## NETWORK

We will support you to see the people who are important to you, if it is safe to do so.

We will support you to make new friends.

We will support and encourage you to take part in activities that interest you



## **Appendix D – Corporate Parenting Board Terms of Reference 2019 - 2022**

### **Overall aim**

To improve the life chances of Somerset's children looked after through the development of a joint approach to the delivery of services. Somerset County Council (SCC) and its partner agencies together aim to continuously improve the outcomes of children looked after to bring them in line with their peers.

### **Objectives**

- 1.** To listen to the voices of children and young people in our care, and those leaving care, either directly from them as individuals or through their respective councils, Somerset Care Councils (SiCC) and Somerset Leaving Care Council (SLCC), or indirectly (through national/local inspection and surveys, parents/carers, independent reviewing officers, advocates and others) and to use what we learn to improve services and outcomes.
- 2.** To take the lead for the children and young people in our care and leaving care, raising awareness and priorities across all agencies, making sure all agencies' responsibilities toward children looked after are being met.
- 3.** To promote the role of all elected members as "corporate parents" and to ensure that appropriate mechanisms are put in place by SCC to enable all members to fulfil their statutory responsibilities in this area.
- 4.** To review the Corporate Parenting Strategy every three years to ensure that it is current and effective and to recommend any changes to the Cabinet for decision and to Full Council to be endorsed.
- 5.** The Corporate Parenting Board members will offer leadership and, via its work plan for children looked after and care leavers, will keep the focus on strategic priorities, that include:
  - a.** Health care needs, including physical and emotional health and wellbeing
  - b.** Safeguarding, including placement stability, quality of care placements and appropriate supported accommodation
  - c.** Educational attendance, attainment, and aspirations
  - d.** Positive activities, including leisure, volunteering, sporting and social activities, and prevention of offending
  - e.** Employment and training (including work experience and employment opportunities provided through SCC and partner agencies and contractors), housing and support
  - f.** Successful transitions to adult life
- 6.** To ensure that SCC and its partners support SiCC and SLCC and deliver against the commitments made in the Pledge to children looked after and the Care Leaver Covenant.

7. To ensure progress is regularly and actively monitored and reviewed.

### **How will these objectives be delivered?**

The Board will work to an agreed plan, which will be based on the key priorities to be delivered, as set out in the Children and Young People's Plan 2019–2022, the Sufficiency Statement 2016–2020 the Corporate Parenting Pledge, and Care Leaver Covenant.

Board members will also regularly meet and hear from children looked after and care leavers, including those in foster care, residential care and independent accommodation, by undertaking visits to schools, attending celebratory events for the achievements of children looked after, and by attending events organised by the young people of SiCC and SLCC. Individual members will feed back on opportunities they have identified for support for employment, apprenticeships, traineeships and work experience.

### **The Board will:**

- receive regular reports from Independent Reviewing Officers to provide an insight into life for children looked after in Somerset;
- consider regular reports that set out performance against key agreed outcome indicators to monitor progress over time, and compare Somerset's performance with top quartile authorities and recommend actions for improvement;
- regularly monitor and receive reports in respect of SCC and partners' progress against external regulator recommendations; and
- establish links with other key groups responsible for representing children looked after (e.g. Foster Carers Consultative Group).

### **Status**

The Board is a leadership and advisory body with no formal decision-making powers but will seek to influence decision makers to drive improvement across the Council and its partners. Consequently, it will make recommendations where necessary to Cabinet to impact and influence SCC decisions and policies.

Formal Board meetings will not be open to the public or press because of the sensitive nature of the business and will not be subject to the Access to Information Rules set out in the Council's constitution. When reporting to the Full Council, Cabinet, or elsewhere, the expectation is that those reports will be public unless there are good reasons to recommend the exclusion of the public and press to consider confidential information.

All members of the Board shall respect and maintain the confidentiality of the Board's business.

The Corporate Parenting Board will maintain a close working relationship with the Council's Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee to ensure they do not duplicate each other's work.



## **Accountability**

The Board will be accountable to **Full Council**, via an annual report, in recognition of Council's budget setting responsibilities, the role of all elected members as corporate parents, and to enable Council to maintain an overview of the Strategy and the delivery of the Board's Annual Plan.

## **Reporting**

The Board will report on its activities to:

- **Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership (SSCP)**, which brings together all the relevant agencies to agree how to identify and meet the needs of children and young people in Somerset. The Partnership is responsible for coordinating agencies so that together they fulfill their statutory duties and more effectively meet the needs of children.
- **Somerset in Care Council** via their representative who is a full Board member
- **Somerset Leaving Care Council** via their representative who is a full Board member
- **Cabinet**, reporting as and when necessary, as the key decision-making body for County Council services
- **Scrutiny** Committees, as and when requested, in relation to reviewing the effectiveness of the Board and the Strategies the Board is responsible for.

## **Voting Arrangements**

Formal meetings of the Board will operate by consensus of those present rather than through any formal voting mechanism in recognition of the wide membership and the roles of the Board to advise and challenge.

## **Membership**

The emphasis for Board members is leadership, and so the Board's core appointed elected membership will include any member who, as one way of exercising their role as corporate parent, has the passion and commitment to volunteer as a core Board member. Members will be nominated by their political group leader and notified to the Deputy Director Children's Services, as the Lead Officer. There will be no limit on numbers of Members although the Chair's discretion will ensure the Board operates effectively.

## **Core Board Members**

- County Council Elected Members
- "Voice of the Child" Officer
- Lead Cabinet Member for Children & Families
- Director of Children's Services
- Foster Carer Association
- District Council Elected Member – representative/s – nominee(s)
- Clinical Commissioning Group executive member

- Representation from Somerset in Care Council (SiCC) and Somerset Leaving Care Council (SLCC)
- Independent Lay person

### **Lead Contributors**

- Deputy Director Children and Families
- Virtual School Head
- Deputy Director Education
- Assistant Director Commissioning & Performance
- Assistant Director Quality and Safeguarding
- Strategic Manager Commissioning and Performance
- Police representatives
- All other County Councilors
- Providers of Council or NHS commissioned services.

### **Co-opted Members**

Co-opted members to be invited as and when the agenda requires i.e. Housing, specific voluntary groups etc.

### **Chairing Arrangements**

The Chair and Vice Chair will be members on the Board and will be chosen by the Core Board on an annual basis at the first formal meeting of the Board following the Full Council annual meeting in May.

### **Officer Lead**

Assistant Director Commissioning & Performance

### **Frequency of meetings**

The Board meets every quarter with additional subgroups or work stream meetings held as required to fulfil the Board's annual plan. The Board and its subgroup meetings may take a range of different formats, including visits to different locations and informal meetings with children and young people, and those who support them.

Subgroups will report formally to the Board every quarter.

### **Corporate Parenting Board Plan**

Will be reviewed at every Board meeting, for updates and progress on the sub-groups.

### **Preparation for the Board**

Chair to meet with the Lead Officer a minimum of two weeks before each formal meeting to agree the agenda and papers. Agendas and papers for formal Board meetings will be sent to the members of the Board at least six working days prior to the meeting.

## **Support to formal meetings of the Board**

This will be provided by the Partnership & Participation Team, Children's Services and the Corporate & Children's Management Support Team.

## Glossary of Terms

<b>BBO</b>	Building Better Opportunities
<b>CAMHS</b>	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
<b>CCG</b>	Clinical Commissioning Group
<b>CIN</b>	Children in Need
<b>CL</b>	Care leavers
<b>CLA</b>	Children Looked After
<b>CSC</b>	Children's Social Care
<b>CV</b>	Curriculum Vitae
<b>CYPP</b>	Children and Young People's Plan
<b>DCS</b>	Director of Children Services
<b>DfE</b>	Department for Education
<b>DT</b>	Designated Teachers
<b>IRO</b>	Independent Reporting officer
<b>MOMO</b>	Mind of My Own
<b>NEET</b>	Not in Education, Employment or Training
<b>NHS</b>	National Health Service
<b>P2i</b>	Pathway to Independence
<b>PEP</b>	Personal Education Plan
<b>RAG rated</b>	Red, Amber, Green, Blue (Business As Usual - BAU) rated
<b>SCC</b>	Somerset County Council
<b>SCPB / CPB</b>	Somerset Corporate Parenting Board
<b>SSCP</b>	Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership
<b>SDQs</b>	Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire
<b>SEND</b>	Special Educational Needs /Disability
<b>SiCC</b>	Somerset in Care Council
<b>SLCC</b>	Somerset Leaving Care Council
<b>Sompar</b>	Somerset Partnership
<b>SW</b>	Social Worker
<b>TOR</b>	Terms of Reference
<b>UASC</b>	Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children
<b>VS</b>	Virtual School
<b>VSH</b>	Virtual School Head