



**Somerset Corporate  
Parenting Board**  
**ANNUAL REPORT**  
2020-2021



# ANNUAL REPORT 2020 – 2021

## 1. Summary

- 1.1. The Somerset Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) meets quarterly 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 the aims of the Somerset's Corporate Parenting Strategy are met.
- 1.2. In 2020-2021 children looked after, care leavers, their carers and the services that support them in Somerset have had their lives disrupted in almost every aspect. The CPB has strived for assurance that those experiences and needs have been understood and met during lockdown and the COVID pandemic. We also want to ensure those needs shape our local conversation and actions about what happens next for our young people and the people who care for them.
- 1.3. During this momentous period the 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, currently under very difficult conditions; and the Board's ability to influence this delivery through its direct contact with operational leads in its subgroups.
- 1.4. The Board has needed to adapt to new ways of communicating and reporting progress this year with officers, sub-groups and members developing their use of technology and applying flexibility and understanding around changed priorities. Nevertheless, this report highlights clear signs of progress and success as well as acknowledging areas that still need to improve in order to support our children looked after and care leavers to be safe, well and prepared for adult life.

## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1. The Corporate Parenting Board requests;
  - That Council recommends a focus on the inconsistency of Council Tax exemption across the county and the impact of this on Care Leavers
  - 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 supports and promotes a Care Leavers Guaranteed Interview Scheme for all care leavers of any age, where the essential criteria of the job are met
  - 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. Currently, nine elected members are committed to the Board.

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. 2020 – 2021 Achievements**

- 4.1.** Achievements 2020 - 2021 (see *Appendix A*): this information evaluates the progress against the annual priorities set for 2020/21
- 4.2.** The format/governance of the Corporate Parenting Board:  
The Board has met virtually during the year long pandemic in line with national and local COVID guidelines. Attendance has been strong and use of technology and virtual meeting etiquette was quickly grasped.

The chair of the Corporate Parenting Board commenced membership of the Partnership Business Group of the Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership. The group reports to and aligns to the Safeguarding priorities and those of the Children & Young People's Plan 2019 – 2022.

- 4.3.** The chair especially wishes to highlight the many positive outcomes from the work of the Board and sub-groups especially:
  - Better awareness of performance through new Health dashboard
  - Improved communications around quality and timeliness of Initial Health Assessments (IHAs)
  - Increased area provision for IHAs and Adoption Medical Reviews
  - Stronger voice of the looked after child through the Mind of my Own consultation and re-licensing. Care experienced young people have a voice on the Somerset Youth Forum
  - Significant increase in the use of advocacy within children protection conferences to represent the voice of the child – now at over 90% of young people are represented.



- The launch of on-line Corporate Parenting training to all SCC staff has resulted in 317 completed modules
- A strong multi-agency approach to sufficiency and stability of homes through the new Sufficiency Statement and the co-design of the new P2i contract
- Stronger education processes in place with improved communication between agencies and services, including greater support at exam years
- Improved oversight of Children Looked After and Care Leavers with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and good alignment with the inclusion priorities of the Written Statement of Action
- Increased support to care leavers who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) through an improved NEET Personal Education Plan (PEP) and robust links with the Somerset Transitions College and the Somerset Works project
- Successful recruitment and development of 4 Leaving Care Apprentices
- Extended emotional health and wellbeing (EHWB) support from EHWB team to Leaving Care workers supporting care leavers.

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

The young members of Somerset In Care and Leaving Care Councils were challenged by COVID restrictions which meant that they haven't met in person for this whole period. They have risen to this challenge and met fortnightly on Zoom calls using the Mentimeter app to undertake a large volume of work including making films, sitting on virtual panels, investigating complaints and training student social workers.

The young people were disappointed that the Annual Achievements Awards ceremony didn't go ahead this year but were clear that it would be difficult to replicate the event digitally.

The group are now looking forward to meeting up again and deciding their priorities for 2021/22.

## 5. Areas for Development

- ### 5.1. Areas for Development (see *Appendix A*) this information sets out the development areas for 2021/22.

## 6. Appendices

- **Page 7: Appendix A** – Corporate Parenting Board Achievements and Areas for Development 2019 – 2021
- **Page 15: Appendix B** – SiCC and SLCC Annual Report 2020 - 2021
- **Page 26: Appendix C** – Corporate Parenting Board Strategy 2019 - 2022
- **Page 52: Appendix D** – Corporate Parenting Board Terms of Reference 2019 – 2022
- **Page 57:** 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 2020-21	AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT 2021-22	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>A comprehensive Health dashboard has been developed and Health Assessment performance is now regularly monitored</p> <p>Request and review rates of pregnancies in Children Looked After (CLA) and Care Leavers (CL) was reviewed and found to very low – 4 – and much lower than statistical neighbours</p> <p>CLA Nurses now have access to the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Portal to enable information from Health Assessments to be used in Education, Health &amp; Care Plans (EHCPs)</p> <p>Monthly CLA Initial Health Assessment (IHA) Assurance meetings in place to review each newly looked after child to ensure quality and timeliness of their planned IHA</p> <p>Local Authority is working to ensure Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQs) are sent out to all carers even in circumstances where there has been a recent change of Social Worker or Carer; SDQ performance is subject to six weekly scrutiny at the CLA Operations Managers meetings chaired by the Designated Nurse</p>	<p>Work for the health dash board to be aligned to local authority data and digital inputting developed</p> <p>Embed use of SEND portal to improve information on EHCPs</p> <p>Continue to advocate for a consistent Adoption Medical offer</p> <p>Ensure health of CLA and CL is included as COVID recovery</p> <p>A greater focus to ensure health needs of CLs</p>	<p><b>Health and Wellbeing Sub-Group</b></p>



Increased provision for IHAs and Adoption Medical Reviews – a working group has been formed led by the Local Authority Joint Commissioner for Health and Social Care to agree the best model to utilise the additional Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) investment to improve the emotional and mental health of CLA and Care Leavers and consistent provision of Adoption Medical Reviews

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

Mind of My Own relicensed until March 2024 following consultation with users and non-users

Promotion of Mind of my Own as a tool to hear to the voice of children in Child Protection (CP) Conferences

Young people have contributed to reviewing the CLA preview process, including the way in which meetings run and the format of review write ups

Refresh of the participation strategy  
Members of Somerset In Care and Somerset Leaving Care Councils (SiCC and SLCC) part of newly formed Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership (SSCP) Youth Forum

Transfer responsibility of Mind of My Own app to Route One and monitor statements of concern

SiCC and SLCC website to be refreshed

Review of The Pledge

Embed greater access to Advocacy especially for CP Conferences and CLA reviews, and increasing access to Independent Visitors (IVs)

Increase membership of SiCC and SLCC

**Voice of the Child Sub-Group**



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

Significant increase in the use of advocacy within children protection conferences to represent the voice of the child – now at over 90% of young people are represented

Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) training launched internally through The Learning System (TLS) in June 2020; 317 staff have undertaken the module

SiCC and SLCC worked with Route One advocacy to promote their services to young people and made [a film about advocates](#)

Due to COVID-19 the Annual Achievements Awards 2020 ceremony did not take place

Launch CPB training externally through The Learning System (TLS- guest access) 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 with a film about IVs

Secure funding for Annual Achievements Awards 2021

Learning from the Voice of Exploited Children

Learning from complaints from children about the care they receive

**Voice of the Child Sub-Group**  
**Corporate Parenting Board – Partnership Team**

**4:**  
**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**

SiCC and SLCC consulted on Children’s Social Care (CSC) Practice Standards

Members of SiCC and SLCC supported the work on recommissioning the Pathways to Independence (P2i ) Contract.

Members of SiCC and SLCC continue to support the work on recommissioning the P2i Contract

SiCC and SLCC to continue to engage with CSC on Practice Standards

**Corporate Parenting Board – Partnership Team**  
**Voice of the Child Sub-Group**



**5:  
To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for children and young people**

All Virtual School (VS) staff are now confident with using Capita to record their work. We have a live dashboard pulling information from LCS and Capita systems

The Governance Board is in place and meets regularly to reports. The governors are linked with a member of the Advisory Teacher team to support development areas

Exclusions have been reduced – ongoing focus for area ‘Pod’ meetings. Difficult to confirm what the impact of Covid has been

PEP support has been virtual due to Covid. Training has been delivered to the schools and settings re electronic Personal Education Plans (ePEPs). Quality assurance process introduced to support the continued improvement of the quality of PEPs

Advisory Teacher with responsibility for extra-curricular activities now in place. Links established with Brewhouse, SASP, SORLs, and Reading programme providers

Ongoing work to ensure that all CLA have an education placement; currently there are 3 CLA Children Missing Education (CME) - this has reduced from 6 in 2019-2020 and they are closely monitored and tracked. Bespoke packages are in place for them and closer working relationships with SEND and CSC

Embedding and monitoring the use and impact of the ePEP

Improve the quality of PEPs so that an increased % of PEPs are found to be ‘good’ or better according to our QA process

Increase compliance of schools and settings in completion of the attendance app, including those working with Post-16 CLA

Ensure we are listening to our young people and their careers, and learning from their views and feedback

Develop and clarify our Post-16 offer, following the appointment of a Lead Advisory Teacher to oversee and champion this work

Continue to strengthen our partnership working, with SEND, CSC and YOS, to ensure holistic support to young people with multiple vulnerabilities

Continue to see a positive impact on our KPIs, to include reduced exclusions, fewer CME, improved attendance and engagement

**Education Sub-Group –  
Virtual School**





Routinely targeting Yr 5 and 6, and 10 and 11, to ensure adequate support in exam years. Attainment is showing an improving trend over the previous 3 years. New ePEP will enable more accurate and timely data collection re progress and attainment so we will be able to analyse termly rather than Year end

The processes for Not in Education, Employment or training (NEET) PEPs are established, there is a PEP for NEET young people, links established with Somerset Transition College to ensure holistic support of NEET CLA. Mentoring programme in development specifically for NEET CLA

Joint working between CSC, VS and SEND is now well developed and embedded. The VS has a team of advisory staff who work across CLA and SEND. We hold annual joint service days with CSC CLA team. Training is delivered jointly where needed. Youth Offending Service (YOS) links are in place. SEND operations managers link with VS Deputies for case escalation where needed.

---

**6:**  
**For children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their**

Quality of information given to children and young people coming into care reviewed and refreshed by SiCC and SLCC with children's social care business support

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.

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



**home lives,  
relationships and  
education or work**

Focus on evidence of impact of lack of consistency in council tax exemption.

Co-design of the [new Sufficiency Statement](#) and Action Plan 2020 -2021, approved by Board

Mendip District Council to raise attendance of District Council representation at CPB at next Leaders and Chief Executive Officers meeting

The Board received the annual Fostering Report in Feb 21. The shortage of fostering families and places for children and young people continues to impact upon the Fostering Services ability to match all our children well. However, during the latter part of the 2019-20 period, the Fostering Service has seen some improvements, with net sufficiency within the service increasing

The CPB is now a sub group of the SSCP and sits on the Partnership Business Group Engagement & Participation team worked with the YOS on better hearing the voices of young people they are working with

SiCC and SLCC to review the quality of information given to children and young people coming into care

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

Support roll-out of cultural changes in the Fostering service following Partners In Practice review with North Yorkshire

Continue to gain broader representation on Board especially district councils, police and foster carers

Obtain more ore intelligence to CPB about missing children and their vulnerabilities

Obtain more information to CPB about CLA and CL in the youth justice system; initial enquiries have revealed 11 young people CLA/CL in the YOs and a further 11 known to CSC (Feb 21)

**7:  
To prepare children  
and young people for**

Following forensic review we now have a clearer picture of the NEET cohort and have commenced NEET tracking to understand individual circumstances and also themes that can be addressed strategically

Develop the participation of CLs, and inclusion of the voice of CLA and CLs in service delivery and developments, aligning the work of SiCC & SLCC with LC apprentices

**Care Leavers Sub-Group**



---

## **adulthood and independent living**

Worked closely with SomersetWorks, European Social Fund (ESF) NEETs prevention and re-engagement project which commenced on 1st September 2020 and can work with young people who are at risk of NEET or NEET age 15 – 18 (up to 19th Birthday). SomersetWorks is a service designed to support young people in the transition from education to employment, for more information please click [on the link](#)

The Local offer for Care Leavers is now regularly updated along with the leaving Care website, seeking feedback from young people Successfully recruited and developed 4 apprentices into the Leaving Care team and supported 9 Young People through salary funding as apprentices within SCC

Ran a successful Trade Taster Week where 12 Young People experienced and tried their hand at various different careers including hospitality, mechanics and care

Supported 11 Young People onto college courses, work related courses or covered their equipment costs to enable them to secure work

Supported internal and county wide initiatives including SEND services, Job Coaches for Young People and Somerset Education Business Partnership (EBP) totalling £45,000

Improve outcomes for children who are looked after (CLA) and care leavers (CLs) in respect of Education, Training and Employment

Ensure that the range of accommodation available is safe and meets the needs of all CLA and CLs

Making full use of the Leaving Care Covenant within the Corporate Parenting community

Continue to improve and publicise the Local Offer for CLs, ensuring that the voice of CLA and CLs is central to service delivery of SCC and partners

Ensure that CLA and CLs are offered appropriate support in transition and beyond in respect of their health and wellbeing needs



---

Quality assurance officers are now in post to support with reviewing provision and quality control of care leavers accommodation

A 16+ minimum standards document has been jointly written with housing providers, Leaving Care Apprentices and Children's Social Care colleagues to standardise the offer for young people accessing semi-independent accommodation.

P2i re-commissioning work will identify the needs of our young people and help to identify any gaps in the current offer of accommodation. Work is underway with Adult Social Care colleagues and public health to map the whole support offer for young people around their accommodation and support needs.

Transformation work underway in the fostering service including a focus on CLs remaining in foster placements.

Staying Put Policy and guidance updated and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) sessions undertaken with staff

Terms of reference have been updated for the 16+ panel following feedback from SiCC and SLCC to include a section on child / young person's wishes and feelings

---



---

Framework for accommodation and support for UnAccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASCs) embedded

A focus on improvement of Transition Plans led to a revised Pathway Plan well embedded into service planning, ensuring young people have an up-to-date PP commencing from the age of 16, replacing the Care Plan.

Ongoing contract monitoring is taking place for the current P2i service which includes Education, Training and Employment (ETE) outcomes and wider skills development for young people preparing for independence

Emotional Health & WellBeing team extended its offer to provide consultation to Leaving Care staff to support CLs

Funding secured to deliver counselling places for CLs

---





# WHAT WE DID IN 2020/21...



- We held our first **Zoom** meeting
- Explored how each member was coping with **Lockdown**
- Discussed Council Tax and other issues around **living independently**
- Planned what members wanted to work on in the coming weeks
- **P2i survey** with Jemma Lang
- S&S on **interview panel** for 2 senior roles in Children's Services: Assistant Director Commissioning and Assistant Director Education



“IF YOU HAVE  
SOMETHING YOU  
ENJOY LIKE READING  
OR WRITING  
USE YOUR  
**MAY**  
IMAGINATION  
TO KEEP  
YOURSELF BUSY”

S&S  
CC

- Held 2 S&S **Zoom** meetings
- **Interviewed** candidates for a top role in Children’s services
- Laptops and **digital access** – checking who has/needs support
- **Annual Achievement Awards** – contingency planning
- Gave feedback on a new **NHS survey** for young people about mental health
- Did a survey on how to improve **Homefinder**, a service that helps care leavers find a home
- Contributed **views** to the Police and Crime Commissioner’s office about missing school and college
- Helped Children’s Social Care to design a **survey** to send to Children Looked After
- Lockdown Lowdown – Created **Lockdown survival hacks**
- Had a meeting with the new **Leaving Care apprentices** about Leaving Care issues
- Filled in a **survey** about levels of support during Covid 19



- Attended 2 S&S **virtual meetings**
- Held a Q&A session with our visitor, Councillor **Leigh Redman**
- Gave feedback on changes to **school transport**
- Held a vote on the **Annual Achievement Awards**
- Had a **representative** at the new Youth Forum and the One Somerset Unitary Proposal Consultation
- Involved in the launch of **the Corporate Parenting Board film**





- Attended 2 S&S virtual meetings
- Worked on a **mission statement for a housing project** for Children's Commissioning
- Did a survey on **Route 1** – whether members have experience of having an advocate or independent visitor
- Had a representative doing a presentation to health and education professionals on behalf of the **SSCB Youth Forum**



- S&S on **interview panel** (with 4 other young people from other forums) that interviewed candidates for an Operations Manager role in the Prevention Service
- We had an informal socially-distanced **picnic** in Vivary park
- A S&S member represented the group at the **Corporate Parenting Board meeting**







- **ETE Opportunities and Support for Young People** with Children's Commissioning - a member represented S&S
- **Preventing Youth Homelessness P2i Event** with Children's Commissioning - a member represented S&S
- **Interview Panels** – 2 members were on panels interviewing for 3 important roles in CSC
- **Care Plans** – wrote some questions for a survey  
...and we had a socially- distanced walk with dogs by the River Tone



- **Interviews for IRO/ CP Chair** - a member joined the main panel
- **Care plans** - survey done and results sent to SW working party
- CLA nurse Kristi held a discussion with S&S on how to improve **Health Assessments**
- **Feedback**- discussion with Liz Pearson about how CSC can get better at listening to young people
- **Somerset SSCB Youth Forum** – a member of S&S attending forum meetings
- 2 virtual **SiCC/SLCC meetings** on Zoom
- Members decided on **Priorities** for 2020/21
- **Mind of my Own** - 2 members of S&S attended a co-production workshop







- Attended 2 **Zoom** meetings
- 2 members of S&S on the **young person's interview panel** for 2 Operations Managers in Children's Social Care
- Did a **presentation** at Corporate Parent Board
- Met the **Leaving Care Apprentices** for some joint working on improving awareness amongst the public about what a care leaver is and a Leaving Care Worker
- **Voted** on whether to change the title 'Leaving Care Worker'
- Discussed members' experiences of the **16+ accommodation panel**
- **Make Your Mark** – voted on what UK Youth Parliament will campaign on next year both locally and nationally
- Planned our **Xmas Zoom Party**





- We had **2 Meetings on Zoom**
- **16+Accommodation Panel** – we continued reviewing the process
- **Priorities** –We are planning ahead for this year
- We finished editing a **Route 1 promotion film**
- We looked at some materials **Route 1** take on visits and gave our opinions
- We thought about some potential new names for the **Placements Team**
- Launched our **Promotion Film** to find new members



- Did a **presentation** at Corporate Parent Board
- Met twice on **Zoom**
- Helped **Commissioners** plan the HAF (Holiday Activities and Food) project
- Provided an interactive session with **Level 4 social work students** at Yeovil College with the **Leaving Care Apprentices** including making a film
- Started to talk about what the **AAAs** might be like this year and how S&S could be involved
- Made a **group agreement** for Zoom
- Continued to **discuss priorities**



# WHAT IS AN INDEPENDENT MARCH VISITOR?

- Had 2 virtual **meetings**
- **Continued to talk about experiences of moving to and living in different homes** – creating case studies to take to the P2i board ...and met with Children's Commissioning to discuss how better to hear residents' voices
- **Priorities** – continued our discussions
- Wrote a group poem for **World Poetry Day**
- Continued to plan the second **Route 1 film**
- Discussed an issue raised by an anonymous young person- whether young people are always given the opportunity to talk to their social worker in private away from their carers? Raised with managers in CSC



**IN 2020/21 WE  
VOLUNTEERED FOR  
THESE ROLES...**

**Sitting on the Corporate Parenting Board**

**Representing SiCC & SLCC on the SSCB Youth Forum**

**Representing SiCC & SLCC on interview panels**

**Planning new children's homes**

**Yeovil College Social Work Training**

**Creating Case Studies to inform policies and procedures**

**Doing surveys**

**Attending MOMO co-production workshop**

**Attending meetings: P2i Preventing Homelessness and ETE**




**YOU SAID WE DID...**

Child - adults have  
We need gender stereotypes  
Sex awareness - Needs to be inclusive  
Body awareness - reducing stigma  
+ taboo  
exciting!  
Social skills  
Make own decisions

- ✓ New children's home project named by S&S and the mission statement influenced
- ✓ CSC working on improving care plans
- ✓ The Placements Team re-named
- ✓ CLA nurse team acting on advice from S&S to work on improving uptake for Health Assessments
- ✓ Homefinder app adapted so easier to use and with new features
- ✓ Voice of the young person strengthened in the 16+ accommodation panel process and other panels
- ✓ Cleanliness and maintenance of P2i accommodation improved and case studies taken to the board to influence practice and procedure
- ✓ Young people recruited as members of the P2i board





2021 /22 SiCC & SLCC

# WHAT NEXT?

***Covid-19: now and in the future – how does it affect us?***

***Recruit new members to the group***

***Annual Achievement Awards 2021***

***Young people on the P2i Board and forming a focus group for residents***

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

***Promoting Mind of my Own***

***Get to know a new worker***

***Develop our skills***

***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)**

***Information on Mind of my Own:***

**[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)



# CONTENTS

- 3** Foreword
- 4** Introduction
- 6** Aims and Objectives of the Strategy
- 8** Drivers from Somerset Key Strategic Plans
- 10** The Somerset context – Children Looked After and Care Leavers
- 12** The role and responsibilities of county and district councillors, council departments, and other partners
- 16** Leadership and the Corporate Parenting Board
- 17** Measures of success – How do we know if our services to Children Looked After are
- 18** Monitoring and evaluation
- 19** Appendix 1: Corporate Parenting Board Terms of Reference
- 23** Appendix 2: The Statutory and Legislative Framework
- 27** Appendix 3: The Seven Principles of Corporate Parenting
- 28** Appendix 4: The Pledge

## 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*

**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.

---

<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

---

<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



Page 9 of 31

## 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.

**5/5**

District Councils have commenced or are commencing Council Tax Exemption (2018)

### 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

<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



Page 18 of 31



## 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>AT</b>	Advisory Teacher
<b>BBO</b>	Building Better Opportunities
<b>CAMHS</b>	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
<b>CCG</b>	Clinical Commissioning Group
<b>CIN</b>	Child in Need
<b>CL</b>	Care leavers
<b>CLA</b>	Children Looked After
<b>CME</b>	Child Missing Education
<b>CPB</b>	Corporate Parenting Board
<b>CP (C) (P)</b>	Child Protection (Conference) (Plan)
<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 Teacher
<b>EET</b>	Education, Employment or Training
<b>EHCP</b>	Education, Health and Care Plan
<b>EHE</b>	Elective Home Education
<b>ESF</b>	European Social Fund
<b>IHA</b>	Initial Health Assessment
<b>IRO</b>	Independent Reviewing Officer
<b>IV</b>	Independent Visitor
<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>(e) PEP</b>	(electronic) 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>SDQ</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>TLC</b>	The Learning Centre
<b>TOR</b>	Terms of Reference
<b>UASC</b>	Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children
<b>VS</b>	Virtual School
<b>VSH</b>	Virtual School Head
<b>YOS</b>	Youth Offending Service