

Corporate Parenting Update

Corporate Parenting is the collective responsibility of the Council, Elected Members, employees and partner agencies for providing the best possible care and safeguarding for the children and young people looked after by Medway.

It is imperative there is a joined up approach from elected councillors and teams dealing with placements and care leavers service to those responsible for special educational needs provision, housing and council tax to work collaboratively. The goal is to facilitate as far as possible a secure, nurturing positive experience for looked after children and young people to achieve positive outcomes.

Representatives from the children in care council form part of the Corporate Parenting Board to ensure the voice of looked after children and young people is influential in decision-making.

The Corporate Parenting Board acts 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 the outcomes and life chances of looked after children 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 track performance against outcomes and delivery of the Pledge commitments.

Legislation & Priorities

Corporate Parenting is a high priority for Medway Council, which is regulated and enshrined in legislation and guidance to ensure Local Authorities fulfil their corporate parenting responsibilities.

The Children's Act 1989, Children's Act 2004, The Children & Young People Act 2008, The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010, Care Leavers Regulations 2010 and The Children & Social Work Act 2017.

The Children & Social Work Act 2017 introduces Corporate Parenting principles that Local Authorities must adhere to in relation to Looked After Children and care leavers. For Medway as corporate parents we promise to:

- Act in their best interests, promoting the physical, mental health and wellbeing of our looked after children and care leavers
- Encourage and take account of our looked after children and young people's views, wishes and feelings
- Supporting looked after children and care leavers gain access to services provided by Medway Council and relevant partner agencies
- Promote high aspirations and seek to secure the best outcomes for looked after children and young people

- Support our children and young people to be safe and enable stability in their home lives, relationships, education and work
- Prepare our children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

CORPORATE PARENTING UPDATE

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 says that when a child or young person comes into the care of the local authority, or is under 25 and was looked-after by the authority for at least 13 weeks after their 14th birthday, the authority becomes their corporate parent.

This means that they should:

- act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and young people
- encourage them to express their views, wishes and feelings, and take them into account, while promoting high aspirations and trying to secure the best outcomes for them
- make sure they have access to services
- make sure that they are safe, with stable home lives, relationships and education or work
- prepare them for adulthood and independent living.

As corporate parents, it is every Councillor's responsibility to make sure that the Council is meeting these duties towards children in care and care leavers. Children can be in care in a range of different settings, with the authority acting as corporate parent to all of them. This includes foster care, children's homes, secure children's homes and kinship care.

Every Councillor and officer within a Council has a responsibility to act for those children and young people as a parent would for their own child. Lead members, those on corporate parenting boards, and overview and scrutiny committees will have particular responsibilities, but for all councillors, this is where their role as the eyes and ears of the community is particularly important.

The Lead Member for Children's Services and those on the corporate parenting board should receive regular progress reports with regard to looked-after children and care leavers, while data will be available to all members through reports presented to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

Data will be able to provide an overview of medium-to-long-term trends, but statistics on their own are not enough. Data needs to be presented with the necessary context and explanations.

The corporate parenting board should keep in close contact with the children in care council, independent reviewing officers (IROs) and the director of children's services (DCS) to make sure they are receiving up-to-date information and can respond quickly if needed.