

Health and Wellbeing Board

16 April 2026

Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report

Report from: Dr. Lee-Anne Farach, Director of People and Deputy Chief Executive

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Summary

The Corporate Parenting Board Annual report summarises the work on the Board over the last year, outlines progress against the strategy and sets out the priorities for the coming year 2025-26.

1. Recommendation

1.1. The Board is asked to note the progress made against the Corporate Parenting Strategy as set out at Appendix 1, with particular attention to the health outcomes for children and young people.

2. Budget and policy framework

2.1. The Annual Report is a way of demonstrating engagement and commitment to the Council's corporate parenting responsibilities, as set out in the Children and Social Work Act 2017 which defined for the first time in law the responsibility of corporate parents to ensure, as far as possible, secure, nurturing and positive experiences for children in our care and care leavers. This requires the Council to have regard to a set of corporate parenting principles when exercising its functions in relation to children in our care and care leavers.

2.2. In 2025, the UK government expanded corporate parenting responsibilities through amendments to the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill. These changes place a new legal duty on all government departments and public bodies including NHS bodies, Ofsted, schools, and the Youth Justice Board, to actively promote the wellbeing and life opportunities of children in care and care leavers up to age 25.

2.3. The Plan is aligned with the Council Strategic priorities (2024-2028), "delivering quality social care and community services; benefitting from good

education, quality jobs, and a growing economy; improving health and wellbeing for all and living in good quality and affordable homes”.

- 2.4. This aligns with Medway’s People Strategy, which centres on “Supporting Medway’s people to realise their potential,” as well as the Children and Young People’s plan and provides a golden thread of shared priorities for all people in Medway.

3. Background

- 3.1. The Inspection Local Authorities Children’s Services (ILACS) of Medway Children’s Services took place in July 2023. The report was published in September 2023, sharing an overall judgement of ‘Good’ for Children in care and care experienced young people. Ofsted graded the experiences and progress of care leavers as Good.
- 3.2. The new administration, elected in May 2023, has continued to prioritise corporate parenting. The Lead Member for Children Services chairs the Corporate Parenting Board and elected members take responsibility to champion the priorities outlined in the Corporate parenting strategy. They do so by actively participating in designated subgroups and working closely with young people, who are represented on the Board through the Medway Children and Young People’s Council (MCYPC).
- 3.3. The Corporate Parenting Board strategy is consistent with the People’s Strategy which is underpinned by a strengths-based approach, which champions resilience and independence; focus on strengths within individuals, families, and wider community.
- 3.4. The Corporate Parenting Board Annual report provides detailed information on progress against following priorities that were set out in the Corporate Parenting strategy in 2024. The priorities were set in order to ensure the children, young people and care leavers are listened to, supported and enable to achieve the best possible outcomes.
 1. Strengthen your voice and influence. By listening and engaging with you, we will use your experience to help us shape future services.
 2. Provide you and your family with support which will help you to return to live or remain with your families safely at home.
 3. Support you to live somewhere where you feel safe, and have a secure, long-term relationship with your carers, can get the most out of life, and have a sense of your identity and your history.
 4. Provide enough caring family homes in Medway for you so you can stay close to places which are important to you, as long as it is safe to do so.
 5. Improve your health and well-being by making sure you can access high quality health services.
 6. Be aspirational to help you to achieve your potential and have the same opportunities to achieve at school, university, or college as

your peers. Support you when you leave care to be in employment, education, or training.

7. Support you to develop your independence skills to enable you to thrive into adulthood.
 8. Provide you with opportunities to pursue your interests and hobbies.
- 3.5. Under Priority 5, the Corporate Parenting Service continued to focus on improving the physical and mental health outcomes for children in care and care leavers. The Designated Consultant Nurse for Looked After Children provided ongoing insight into progress and challenges, though concerns remained about the timeliness of Initial Health Assessments. Review Health Assessments performed strongly at 95%, and dental checks improved to 88%. Work was ongoing with health partners to address delays, particularly for children placed out of area, and to strengthen access and engagement with dental services. Regular monitoring, performance meetings, and targeted health initiatives supported continued improvements in these areas.
- 3.6. Mental and emotional wellbeing was also a key focus, with children having timely access to specialist mental health support through NELFT's Single Point of Access. SDQ completion rates remained high at 97.8%, with nearly half of children scoring within the "cause for concern" range, which informed appropriate referrals and interventions. For care leavers, a dedicated health pathway had been developed with Medway Community Healthcare, enabling continued nursing support until age 19 and increasing joint working between Personal Advisors and health professionals. This integrated approach aimed to ensure continuity, reduce duplication, and strengthen the health and wellbeing offer for young people transitioning to adulthood.
- 3.7. The Corporate Parenting Strategy has recently been refreshed, with updated objectives developed in consultation with children and young people. These objectives will set the priorities for the period 2025–2027.
- 3.8. The refreshed strategy will underpin the work of the Corporate Parenting Board over the coming year, with practice focused on five key priorities for 2025–2026 to ensure the delivery of an agile and responsive service that reflects our promises to Medway's children and young people. One of these priorities recognises the importance of achieving positive health outcomes for children in care and care leavers by supporting and encouraging healthy and happy lifestyles. This will be achieved through effective multi-agency working to ensure services are needs-led and children and young people's health needs are fully met.
4. Options
- 4.1. No options have been provided, the report is submitted for information and noting only.

5. Advice and analysis

5.1. No advice or analysis has been provided; the report is submitted for information and for noting only.

6. Risk management

6.1. The risks associated with the Corporate Parenting Board Annual report are outlined in the table below:

| Risk | Description | Action to avoid or mitigate risk | Risk rating |
|---|--|---|-------------|
| Corporate Parenting Strategy is not aligned with other council or partner priorities. | Plan is not aligned which results in opportunities lost to sustain joined-up, efficient and effective prioritisation of corporate parenting responsibilities in collaboration with all our partners. | Consultation with all key stakeholders including corporate and external partners. | CII |

| Likelihood | Impact: |
|-------------------|----------------|
| A Very likely | I Catastrophic |
| B Likely | II Major |
| C Unlikely | III Moderate |
| D Rare | IV Minor |

7. Consultation

7.1. There has been consultation on progress against the strategy and in developing refreshed objectives for the revised strategy with children and young people in care and care experienced young people, supported by MCYPC.

8. Climate change implications

8.1. There are no implications as a direct result of the recommendation of this report.

9. Financial implications

9.1. There are no implications as a direct result of the recommendation of this report.

10. Legal implications

10.1. There are no implications as a direct result of the recommendation of this report.

Lead officer

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Corporate Parenting Strategy 2025-27

Appendix 2 – Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report 2024-25

Background papers

None