

Report title	Corporate Parenting Strategy 2022-2025	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Beverley Momenabadi Children and Young People	
Wards affected	All Wards	
Accountable director	Emma Bennett, Executive Director for Families	
Originating service	Children's Services	
Accountable employee	Alice Vickers	Co-Production and Youth Engagement Manager
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Report has been considered by	Children Social Care Leadership Team	7 October 2021
Report to be considered by	Strategic Executive Board	16 December 2021

Recommendation for decision:

The Corporate Parenting Board is recommended to:

1. Approve and endorse the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2022-2025.

1.0 Purpose

1.1 This strategy sets out Wolverhampton City Council's vision and commitment and explains how we, as the Council, will be an effective and trustworthy corporate parent. Our children and young people in and leaving care are some of the most vulnerable in society. It is crucial we as Corporate Parents work collaboratively with a range of partners to ensure they are supported for them to be safe, happy and thrive

2.0 Background

2.1 Corporate Parenting is the term used in law to describe our collective responsibility to care for, love and champion our children in care and our care leavers and ensure they have every opportunity to reach their full potential as they grow up.

2.2 The concept of Corporate Parenting was introduced by the Government in 1998 as part of a drive to improve the lives of children who are cared for by the local authority. The Corporate Parenting responsibility was reiterated and reinforced in 2007 with the release of the White Paper Care Matters-Time for Change and the underpinning legislation, Children and Young People Act 2008. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 which now requires all local authorities to evidence how they meet the seven Corporate Parenting Principles as they are statutory in relation to children and young people in and leaving care.

2.3 The Corporate Parenting Principles for children in care and care leavers, are:

- To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people
- To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
- To take into account of the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people
- 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
- To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people
- For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work
- To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

3.0 Progress and discussions

3.1 This strategy has been developed and co-produced with the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Independent Collective, with the Corporate Parenting Partnership

Board. Each principle has been evaluated analysing the strengths, challenges and what needs to happen. This feedback will form the basis of the Corporate Parenting Action plan and will be reviewed annually.

3.2 The City's Corporate Parenting Strengths:

- We are dedicated and passionate
- The voice of our young people is strong and valued by all including senior leaders
- There is good emotional and wellbeing support
- Co-production on service and policy development
- We have high aspirations and everyone wanting the best
- There is strong partnership working with equal offers of support, information, forward thinking and joined up working
- Integrated approach, celebration events, awareness of achievements, stakeholder engagement
- Young people's voice respected, support with mental health, training flat, house project, ASDAN award and peer support
- Support and options for accommodation for young people leaving care
- Support for Education, Employment and Training.

3.3 The City's Corporate Parenting Challenges:

- Communication support for young people and keeping young people up to date with support on offer
- Digital inclusion
- Transport
- Equality of opportunity and support for those young people living out of City, sustainability, stability and consistency for young people
- Preparing for adulthood support to foster carer.

3.4 What needs to happen to ensure we are confidently meeting the principles of Corporate Parenting?

1. To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people:
 - Share good practice across the partnership
 - Demonstrate clearly the ways we are listening to young people
 - Communicate effectively with our children and young people what support is there.
2. To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings:
 - Provide different tools for engagement
 - Endorse and share with young people that there are constant feedback opportunities

3. To take into account of the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people:
 - Celebrate the views of young people
 - Share good practice
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:
 - Access to affordable transport
 - Inclusive and clear use of language
 - Ensure services and provisions are accessible and financially viable for young people
5. To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people
 - Sharing the success of young people across the partnership
 - Commitment from all stakeholders to showcase and secure opportunities and consistent support
6. For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work
 - Varied offer from education providers
 - ambitious expectations for young people
 - Support in for care leavers in employment to be practical and flexible
7. To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.
 - To start independent skills earlier with Children in Care,
 - All young people to complete the ASDAN award

3.5 In addition, the draft strategy has gone out for eight weeks consultation. This consultation asked for feedback and the following findings were shared and the following actions taken as a result.

4.0 Evaluation of alternative options

- 4.1 Option one would be to make no change to the existing strategy. This would result in the City of Wolverhampton Council remaining with a strategy that is over three years old.
- 4.2 Option two would be to not have a Corporate Parenting Strategy leaving the Council at risk of not meeting its statutory requirements.
- 4.3 Option three would be to update the existing strategy with the proposed strategy. This strategy evidences the Council's commitment to co-production with children and young people in care and care leavers as part of the Co-Production Charter.

5.0 Reasons for decision

- 5.1 Option three is the preferred option. The reason for the decision to approve and endorse this strategy is not only to meet the Council's statutory duties as part of the Children and Social Work Act 2017, but also to ensure our children and young people in care and care leavers are clear that the Council takes its corporate parenting responsibility serious and are ambitious for them and their future.
- 5.2 Following analysis and benchmarking with statistical neighbours Corporate Parenting Strategies, it is clear that this strategy is ambitious, clear and co-produced.

6.0 Financial implications

- 6.1 There are no financial implications attached to the Corporate Parenting Strategy, as the provision is covered within existing budgets.
[JG/15112021/E]

7.0 Legal implications

- 7.1 This Strategy is to ensure that the Council is clear in its commitment to meet the requirements as laid out in the Children and Social Work Act 2017.
[SB/13112021/P]

8.0 Equalities implications

- 8.1 The Corporate Parenting Strategy's purpose is to mitigate the inequalities that children and young people who are in or leaving care face. A full Equality Analysis is underway.

9.0 All other implications

- 9.1 This report and strategy do not impact on Human Resources (HR), Assessment Management Team (Corporate Landlord), Health and Wellbeing, Health and Safety, Environmental Services and Transport and Information Governance.

10.0 Schedule of background papers

- 10.1 None

11.0 Appendices

- 12.1 Appendix 1: Corporate Parenting Strategy 2022-2025