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# A Review of Corporate Parenting Panel

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<b>Committee considering report:</b>	Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission
<b>Date of Committee:</b>	6 <sup>th</sup> September 2022
<b>Portfolio Member:</b>	Councillor Dominic Boeck
<b>Report Author:</b>	Pete Campbell
<b>Forward Plan Ref:</b>	OSMC

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## 1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an overview and update on the functioning of the West Berkshire Corporate Parenting Panel.
- 1.2 As part of this report there is also reference to models and approaches used in other parts of the country to promote 'Corporate Parenting'. Opportunities for West Berkshire are presented in this report.

## 2 Recommendation(s)

This report is primarily for information only. However, there is opportunity to consider changes to our current approach in order to raise both the profile and ambitions we have for Corporate Parenting and enable greater co-production with children in care and care leavers.

## 3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
<b>Financial:</b>	None (at this stage)
<b>Human Resource:</b>	None (at this stage)
<b>Legal:</b>	There is a legal duty of Corporate Parenting, which West Berkshire meets. This paper considers increasing the current ambitions.
<b>Risk Management:</b>	None

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<b>Property:</b>	None			
<b>Policy:</b>	None			
	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
<b>Equalities Impact:</b>				
<b>A</b> Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		x		
<b>B</b> Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		x		
<b>Environmental Impact:</b>				
<b>Health Impact:</b>				
<b>ICT Impact:</b>				
<b>Digital Services Impact:</b>				
<b>Council Strategy Priorities:</b>				
<b>Core Business:</b>				

<b>Data Impact:</b>				
<b>Consultation and Engagement:</b>				

## 4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 Local authorities have a unique responsibility to the children they look after and their care leavers. In this context local authorities are often referred to as being the ‘corporate parent’ of these children and young people, and the critical question that local authorities should ask in adopting such an approach is: ‘would this be good enough for my child?’.
- 4.2 A strong corporate parenting ethos means that everyone from the Chief Executive down to front line staff, as well as elected council members, are concerned about those children and care leavers as if they were their own. This will be evidenced by a culture where council officers do all that is reasonably possible to ensure the council is the best ‘parent’ it can be to the child or young person.
- 4.3 The Children and Social Work Act 2017 introduced corporate parenting principles (Appendix C) which local authorities in England must have regard to whenever they exercise a function in relation to looked-after children or care leavers. The corporate parenting principles are about embedding a positive culture in the local authority towards looked-after children and care leavers and their success will depend on the extent to which directors, councillors, heads of service and front line managers champion and promote understanding of them.
- 4.4 In West Berkshire at the start of each new Council, all elected members are introduced to Corporate Parenting. There is also a training and development session provided to councillors. The Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP) meets four times per year and is chaired by the portfolio holder for children, young people and education. There is deliberate representation from members of all political parties in West Berkshire.
- 4.5 The corporate parenting panel has been relatively unchanged in recent years. It is fair to state that the focus has been on scrutiny where children’s services and partner agencies such as Health and the Virtual School services report on key measures. Periodically, young people in care (the ‘in care council’) attend and provide input, and more recently care leavers have been supported to attend as panel members.
- 4.6 West Berkshire is ambitious to more visibly promote the corporate parenting principles, and in particular the participation and engagement of young people. Whilst it is felt that the frequency of CPP is sufficient to provide oversight of scrutiny, challenge and support, it would struggle to provide a platform for greater promotion of corporate parenting and participation as well.
- 4.7 There are many good examples across the country where participation is enabled and shapes service delivery. Furthermore, there is currently consultation at a national level on recent recommendations from the national review of children’s social care and also

with Ofsted on developing the inspection framework for care leavers. These provide a timely opportunity for West Berkshire to develop and embrace some new approaches.

## 5 Supporting Information

### Background

- 5.1 Local authorities provide around 700 services to their local communities (source: Dept of Education), but have a unique responsibility to the children they look after and their care leavers. Whilst many services are universally delivered to all (refuse collection, trading standards and environmental health), some services are differentiated for certain groups, such as children in care and care leavers. It is generally agreed that the corporate parenting role is most relevant in the service areas of education, social care, housing, libraries, leisure and recreation, strategic policies (such as health and well-being plans) and local tax collection.
- 5.2 West Berkshire Children's Services are rated as GOOD by Ofsted (March 2022) and this includes the services to children in care and care leavers. Education services, including the virtual school for children in care, were recognised in this GOOD rating.
- 5.3 Even though West Berkshire is a small unitary authority with fewer than 150 school aged children in care, there is a healthy 'In Care Council' called R:Vue. This group meets regularly to discuss issues important to children in care, plan events, engage children who have recently entered care and challenge the council to be good corporate parents. The group regularly invite senior officers and also the lead member to meet them. There is also a specialist 'community club' providing a similar role to R:Vue for care leavers.

### The Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP)

- 5.4 The CPP is a carefully selected group of members, officers and partner agency representatives who meet 4 times per year and provide scrutiny, challenge and support to the services delivering corporate parenting. The terms of reference in Appendix A provides comprehensive detail of the purposes and expectations of the panel.
- 5.5 The panel has good and regular representation from attendees and focuses on core reports and activity as well as projects and service developments. The panel was not disrupted by Covid although the online arrangements made it harder for the in care council to attend and participate (as they are used to being part of a group together). In June 2022 the CPP moved to hybrid option. The membership is presented in Appendix B.
- 5.6 The Ofsted inspection in March 2022 commented *"As a committed corporate parent, the local authority has a well-developed understanding of its role and responsibilities for children in its care and steps are being taken to extend this further. An example of recent progress is the ring-fencing of 5% of social housing accommodation for care leavers. Leaders have recognised that the corporate parenting board has been overly focused on the scrutiny of performance reports and needs to do more to promote and increase the active engagement of children in care and care leavers on the board. Work has begun to progress this"*.

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- 5.7 Children's services and the virtual school for children in care have hosted a very popular 'Award & Achievements' evening annually for all young people in care and their carers. Many officers, members and volunteers attend to celebrate achievement of every child. Sadly, the pandemic prevented the hosting of this event in 2020 and 2021 but plans are in place for a celebration event in 2022.
- 5.8 As mentioned in the Ofsted report, there are tangible examples of care leavers being supported with social housing, and we have also been pleased to support a number of care leavers into apprenticeships (including roles in the West Berkshire Council) and work experience locally.
- 5.9 There are good examples of children in care engaging in helping shape the services that matter to them, and this is primarily through the in care council and the care leavers community group. Senior leaders and the portfolio holder receive invitations to attend the in care council. The Independent Reviewing Service receives a continuous stream of feedback from young people about the service and will frequently champion their needs. The Independent Reviewing Service attend the CPP.
- 5.10 The existing expertise of the in care council and care leavers community group are helping to shape the early stages of wider participation projects and activities for young people in West Berkshire. An example is the implementation of a Youth Council.

## Proposals

- 5.11 The proposals below are all within the gift of the Council and could be implemented relatively easily.
- 5.12 In the **implication and impact assessment** section of corporate papers (section 3 above) there is the question "*Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?*". Whilst being care experienced is not (yet) a protected characteristic, care experienced young people are very much 'service users'. Indeed, it might be that they justify much greater focus and deliberate consideration on potential impact to them of any council proposals. The corporate template could be adjusted accordingly.
- 5.13 The terms of reference for CPP are in appendix A. The CPP mostly achieves its objectives and there is a genuine sense of collaboration and shared ambition for young people. The activities which are not achieved are at 6.4 and 6.5 of the reporting mechanisms. We currently do not publish a quarterly newsletter that keeps all Corporate Parent's updated on key issues, trends and support needs for our children. Nor does the panel submit an Annual Report to Full Council on its work for the year. Going forward an Annual Report would be able to capture a wide range of achievements and impact of corporate parenting delivery and therefore raise the profile of this important area. A 6 monthly report to compliment the annual report would also be purposeful, and could be themed on particular areas such as Education or Health or Foster Care.
- 5.14 At the start of each new Council, all councillors are introduced to the principles of Corporate Parenting. There is also a training and development session provided to councillors. Whilst these arrangements have had good support, there is opportunity to achieve greater awareness and ownership of corporate parenting to all members. The newsletters and annual report mentioned above would go some way to achieve this.

Parallel to this is the requirement that corporate parenting must be promoted as a 'whole council' duty, requiring more than just children and families to consider and deliver on this duty. The social housing offer and access to local leisure services are examples of good corporate parenting. Some local authorities host an annual 'Corporate Parenting Conference'. This would significantly increase the profile of corporate parenting, with opportunity to agree collective goals, hear achievements and generate greater ambitions. This could be in the spring each year to compliment the 'Awards & Achievements' evening which is typically held in the Autumn.

- 5.15 There is a Pledge to children in care and Care Leavers charter (Appendix E) made by the council as corporate parents. However, these are not well known across the council or by children in care. These could have deliberate promotion at a council meeting and there could be a corporate parenting section of the West Berkshire Council website which captures this information and makes it accessible. The commitment to children in care and care leavers will also be more widely promoted to officers across all services of the Council. The annual celebration event and other activities can be given a higher profile across the council.
- 5.16 There is a desire to greatly increase the visibility, opportunity and engagement of young people in care on the matters important to them. The current style of CPP does not lend itself to this, so consideration has been given to introduce engagement events during the year to meet with young people in care and enable participation. These events will be less formal than a board meeting and food can be arranged. Particular themes can be identified on matters important to them – such as emotional wellbeing, being healthy, opportunities to learn, staying safe etc. The Council and partner agencies can hear young people's views on these subjects, make suggestions for service delivery and hear about services that exist to support them.
- 5.17 A desktop exploration of approaches to Corporate Parenting across the country is included in Appendix D. some of the options are well established in certain areas, indeed, some are only achievable when the service is a certain size. However, West Berkshire have the same ambitions and will be able to reflect these in an updated Strategy and Delivery plan.

### Future proposals

- 5.18 The national review of children's social care (by Josh MacAllister) has particular recommendations for children in care and care leavers. The government has committed to respond to the recommendations by the end of the year. MacAllister describes how good corporate parenting can be demonstrated by care leavers being exempt from council tax and a policy of no housing evictions for care leavers. Furthermore he argues that being care experienced should be a protected characteristic akin to the Equality Act 2010.
- 5.19 From '**corporate parenting**' to '**community parenting**'. The MacAllister review also highlighted that '*Whilst local authorities play a crucial role in delivering services to care leavers as their corporate parent, they are not the only organisations that should play a role. The Scottish Government changed the law in 2015 to name 24 bodies and organisations as corporate parents, alongside local authorities. These organisations, like the police, schools, and primary care, now have a legal duty to promote the*

*wellbeing of care experienced people in Scotland. This has led to tangible and meaningful changes which could be replicated in England.*

- 5.20 *Local authorities cannot promote the wellbeing of children in care and care leavers when they do not possess all the levers to affect change. Making a similar change to the law in England would more accurately reflect the role that schools, colleges, universities, health agencies and other parts of the public realm play in the lives of children in care and those with a care experience. The organisations in scope should align with, or go further than, similar changes made to the law in Scotland. Implementing this will require training for new corporate parents, and the government should consider changing the language from ‘corporate parenting’ to ‘community parenting’.*
- 5.21 There is a real possibility that this ‘wider’ responsibility for corporate parenting will become law in England. Meanwhile, West Berkshire Council can already progress some of these ambitions with key partners as we seek to change the culture.
- 5.22 In the autumn, we have arranged for a visit from National Advisor for care leavers Mark Riddell MBE. Mark will visit the Council for 2 days, meeting with key leaders and ‘testing’ our corporate parenting. We expect there to be a number of recommendations where we can embrace current best practice

## 6 Other options considered

- 6.1 The current model of CPP works effectively and no concerns were raised by Ofsted. Indeed the support and ambition for young people in care and care leavers in West Berkshire is viewed as strong. Therefore there is the option to ‘do nothing’ and keep things as they are.
- 6.2 However, we have high ambitions for corporate parenting in West Berkshire and would wish to raise the profile and achieve outstanding outcomes for our children. Increasing the visibility and participation of the children will require introducing a new style of meeting. Increasing the understanding and commitment of corporate parenting to a wider audience requires us to consider regular newsletters and web presence.

## 7 Conclusion

As stated, the corporate parenting offer in West Berkshire is strong and there remain ambitions to improve and build on current strengths. There is a degree of expertise across the council and examples of good opportunities afforded children and young people to be involved and participate in services. That said, there remains the potential to further expand on the awareness and knowledge of the corporate parenting agenda within all areas of the council.

## 8 Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix A – Corporate Parenting Panel Terms of Reference
- 8.2 Appendix B – Membership
- 8.3 Appendix C – The Corporate Parenting Principles

8.4 Appendix D – Corporate Parenting Review

8.5 Appendix E – The Pledge and Leaving Care Charter

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**Background Papers:**

\*(add text)

**Subject to Call-In:**

Yes: ☐ No: ☒

- The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval ☐
- Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council ☐
- Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position ☐
- Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or associated Task Groups within preceding six months ☐
- Item is Urgent Key Decision ☐
- Report is to note only ☐

**Wards affected:** \*(add text)

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## Appendix A

### WEST BERKSHIRE CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL TERMS OF REFERENCE

#### 1. AIM

- 1.1 The aim of the Corporate Parenting Panel is to ensure that the Council and its partners are carrying out their responsibilities towards the children and young people in the care including care leavers.
- 1.2 To uphold the statutory responsibilities as defined by law and our moral responsibilities as defined in their West Berkshire Pledge to Looked After Children.

#### 2. OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 The key objectives of the Corporate Parenting Panel are to:

- Ensure West Berkshire has a Looked After Children's strategy which links its priorities to The Pledge made to our Children in Care and aligns with the Council's overall primary Aims.
- Scrutinise key performance indicators to help inform the Council's effectiveness as a corporate parent and when necessary give effective challenge to ensure positive outcomes for our children.
- Improve the life chances of children and young people in care in line with their peers.
- Ensure the voice and views of our children and young people in care are heard either through attendance at Corporate Parenting Panel or in Children in Care Council meetings by the Panel Chair or other Panel Members.
- Ensure children have the opportunity to attend the Corporate Parenting Panel to present key topics in order to seek the support of members.
- Review the Council's Pledge to children and young people in care and leaving care on an annual basis to ensure its focus is retained on the needs of our children.
- Ensure the effective communication between Panel Members, the wider group of corporate parents, the Children in Care Council, our Looked After Children population alongside their parents/carers.
- Consider arrangements for Panel Member information and training.
- Make recommendations to the Council's Executive Committee as and when appropriate regarding matters to do with children and young people in Care.

### **3. SCRUTINY MECHANISMS**

- 3.1** The Corporate Parenting Panel will make use of the following scrutiny mechanisms to assist with maintaining and improving the standards of services for children and young people who are in the care of West Berkshire Council.

Including the examination of the following key statutory performance measures:

- LAC health assessments
- LAC dental checks
- LAC access to CAMHS
- LAC reviews held on time
- LAC educational attainment
- Numbers of SGOs and adoptions
- Adoption timescales
- LAC placement stability
- LAC placements out of area/>20 miles
- LAC in non-family based settings
- Complete of Pathway Plans
- Completed SDQs
- Average SDQ score
- Analyse and understand data relating to our looked after children and compare these findings to National Averages to ensure we are as a minimum comparable but aspire to be better
- Use of anonymised case studies to highlight key national or local policy and practice issues
- Approve on an annual basis the Statement of Purpose for Castle Gate.
- Service User attendance at Panel.

### **4. PERFORMANCE MONITORING**

- 4.1** It is proposed that the Panel take a broad approach to monitoring the Council's performance. This will help to build knowledge and understanding of the wide range of issues involved. The panel is in place to satisfy themselves that the Service:

- Provides Looked After Children and their parents with opportunities to express their views and feed these into service developments and improvements.
- Has taken steps to secure a range of care placements which deliver care and support and develop children and young people's cultural, religious and linguistic heritage.
- Provides feedback from statutory inspections and that they are acknowledged and acted upon.
- Ensures looked after children's health needs are addressed.

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- Makes sure looked after children are supported to achieve their full potential educationally.
- Ensures looked after children have access a range of cultural and leisure activities.
- Ensures looked after children are prepared for leaving care and are supported thereafter.
- Uses the National Care Standards as a basis for scrutiny of services through Panel Members involvement in a sample of reviews and working groups.

Monitoring should also pick up on any areas of concern identified through discussions at Panel with children and young people, carers and staff as part of the research work of the Panel.

## **5. MEMBERSHIP**

**5.1** The Panel shall comprise of 9 Members, which should include the following:

- Lead Member for Children and Family Services
- Shadow Lead Member for Children and Family Services
- Foster Carer representative
- Health representative
- Educational partner
- 3 additional Members
- 2 substitutes

Members of the Panel will be required to attend appropriate training and be subject to a check by the Disclosure and Barring Service.

Arrangements will be made by the Panel for the direct and indirect involvement of looked after children and young people.

### **Officer Attendance at Panel**

Attendance will be by appropriate senior Council Officers and statutory partners and will include the:-

- Director of Children & Family Services
- Head of Children & Family Services
- Children & Family Services Manager for Looked After Children
- Virtual Head Teacher
- Other officers and partners as necessary.

## **6. REPORTING MECHANISMS**

**6.1** The Corporate Parenting Panel will meet, as a minimum, every three months.

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- 6.2** The Corporate Parenting Panel, along with the Life Chances Team, will hold an annual event to celebrate our children and young people in care successes.
- 6.3** The Panel will have no direct decision-making powers but will make recommendations to the service and the Executive where appropriate.
- 6.4** The Chair will publish a quarterly newsletter to keep all Corporate Parent's updated on key issues, trends and support needs for our children.
- 6.5** The Panel will submit an Annual Report to Full Council on it's work for the year.

## Appendix B

## CPP Membership

	2021/22 Membership	2022/23 Proposed
Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Education	Dominic Boeck	Dominic Boeck
Shadow Portfolio Holder for Children and Family Services	Erik Pattenden	Erik Pattenden
Conservative Group (two Members)	Graham Pask, Lynne Doherty	Graham Pask, Lynne Doherty
Liberal Democrat Group (one Member)	Martha Vickers	Martha Vickers
Green Party Group (one Member)	David Marsh	David Marsh
Conservative Group Substitutes (two Members)	Graham Pask, Jo Stewart	Dennis Benneyworth, Jo Stewart
WBC Executive Director, People (DCS)	Andy Sharp	Andy Sharp
WBC Head of Service, Children & Family Services	Pete Campbell	Pete Campbell
WBC Head of Service, Education	Ian Pearson	Ian Pearson
WBC Service Manager, Early Years, Vulnerable Learners & Families	Avril Allenby	Avril Allenby
WBC Service Manager, Looked After Children	Karl Davis	Karl Davis
WBC Service Manager, Quality Assurance & Safeguarding Service	Nicky Robertson	Nicky Robertson
WBC Virtual School Headteacher	Robin Douglas	Robin Douglas
Chair, Foster Carer Association	Ian Graham	Ian Graham
NHS Berkshire West CCG	Jane bell	Jane Bell
Chair, WB Primary Head Teacher Association	Andy Higgs	Andy Higgs
Principal Social Worker	-	Sonia Harris

# The Corporate Parenting Principles

## The principles

- 2.1 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:
- 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 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; and
  - to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

Taken from the Department of Education “*Applying corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers statutory guidance for local authorities*”. February 2018

## Appendix D

### Corporate Parenting Review

Although there are clearly lots of good things happening with corporate parenting in West Berkshire, as evidenced by the recent Ofsted review, it seems to have a relatively low profile with elected members and the public.

The NCB has developed a [toolkit for evaluating local corporate parenting arrangements](#). Although this dates back to 2013, it still provides a useful framework. A quick evaluation from an external perspective has highlighted a number of possible areas for further work / investigation:

- West Berkshire Council does not appear to have a Corporate Parenting Strategy and associated Delivery Plan that sets out the objectives for looked after children and how these will be achieved;
- Meetings of the Corporate Parenting Panel are held in private and there is little information on the website about the Panel and its governance arrangements – for example, links with relevant bodies such as Full Council, Health and Wellbeing Board and Scrutiny Committees are not always clear;
- Members do not appear to have many opportunities to engage with Corporate Parenting issues outside of the Corporate Parenting Panel or discussions with the Executive Portfolio Holder for Children's Services;
- There appears to be little in the way of ongoing training for members on Corporate Parenting issues;
- There is little information about how the Council engages with children in care and care leavers to ensure that: their voices are heard; they are contributing to the development of services; and their achievements are celebrated.

#### Corporate Parenting Strategy

Many local authorities have Corporate Parenting Strategies / Delivery Plans, which set out a long-term vision and priorities for improvement over the short to medium term (generally three years). For example, [Leeds](#) has six priorities in their strategy, with a champion identified for each priority.

As part of their Corporate Parenting Strategies, many local authorities make a promise or pledge to looked-after children, using straightforward and direct language – this helps to make the commitment more personal and meaningful. For example, [Hackney](#) has done this using a comic book format.

#### Corporate Parenting Panel / Board

Most local authorities have a Corporate Parenting Board that meets in public. Some have themed meetings with relevant officers and partner agencies invited to attend based on the agenda for each meeting.

Some have also a Steering Group, which sits below the Board and is responsible for driving the Delivery Plan, with Task Groups set up to progress particular priorities / actions.

### Governance / Links with Other Bodies

Many local authorities provide annual reports on the work of their Corporate Parenting Boards to other bodies such as Full Council and Health and Wellbeing Board (e.g. [Lambeth](#)). This provides a great opportunity to celebrate achievements, highlight emerging issues and show how these are being addressed. It is also a good way to engage with elected members and partners and let them have oversight of what is happening and how they can contribute.

In addition to a Corporate Parenting Board, many councils also have a dedicated Children's Services Scrutiny Committee. Although West Berkshire Council does not currently have a dedicated committee, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission has Children's Services as part of its remit. OSMC should have a role in monitoring the services provided to looked-after children and in providing challenge to decision-makers and providers by holding them to account. They can also be used to undertake in-depth reviews of particular issues or to gather evidence from other local authorities on best practice and the Corporate Parenting Panel may wish to refer matters to them. Again, this allows for a wider range of members to engage with corporate parenting activities.

### Member Training

Most local authorities undertake induction and regular refresher training with elected members, running sessions on different aspects of corporate parenting each year. Some have published a corporate parenting handbook for elected members (e.g. [Leeds](#)).

Leeds also undertakes a two-day training course called Total Respect, which is delivered by young people who have direct experience of the care system. It is designed to give foster carers, practitioners, officers and members a better understanding of what it is like for a young person to be in care.

### Engagement of Young People in Care / Care Leavers

The recent Ofsted inspection of West Berkshire's children's services suggested that the Corporate Parenting Board has been overly focused on the scrutiny of performance reports and needed to do more to promote and increase the active engagement of children in care and care leavers on the board.

Every local authority is expected to have a Children in Care Council and a Care Leavers Council to advise officers and members about their experiences and how services can be improved. Some also have a separate Youth Council. A few local authorities, such as Cheshire West and Chester, have a dedicated website for their [Children in Care Council](#), which helps to give it greater prominence and ownership by its users.

Some councils invite their Children in Care Council to participate in their Corporate Parenting Board, while others receive reports mediated by their participation service. It is essential that a local mechanism is established that works for both parties, otherwise there is a risk that they will operate in parallel rather than collaboratively.

The NCB has created a [guide to good practice in the structure and running of a children in care council](#), which includes lots of advice and practical examples of how to make these more effective. Examples include:

- Ensuring the CICC has a clearly defined role



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- Making all children in care aware of its existence
- Encouraging all children in setting agendas and work plans
- Having good support and facilitation of meetings
- Having virtual meetings
- Involvement of children in care in service reviews
- Rewarding participation

A number of local authorities use the [Mind of My Own app](#) to help young people express their views to their care team. They can use it to prepare for meetings, request a change in their care, or to ask for a problem to be sorted out. It works by prompting them to enter their views, structuring what they say into a statement, and then delivering the statement to their care team or another trusted adult.

Lambeth holds an annual Corporate Parenting Conference, which aims to:

- Better understand the roles and responsibilities as corporate parents
- Explore how members, staff and partner organisations as corporate parents can work together to improve the lives of looked after children and care experienced young people
- Provide an opportunity to listen to young people and understand their journey and what they expect of their corporate parents
- Consult and use the feedback obtained to influence their corporate parenting priorities for the coming year

Kent has previously organised a [Corporate Parenting Takeover Day](#) where looked after children / care leavers have the opportunity to shadow directors and members to learn how the Council is run and how decisions are made. It is also another opportunity for elected members to engage with looked after children and care leavers.

Celebrating success is another great way to engage with children in care and care leavers. Swindon Borough Council organises [annual awards events](#) to celebrate the achievements of children and young people in their care, with awards to recognise achievement in education, sports, arts, and community spirit.

The above is not intended to provide a definitive list of best practice, but may help to identify some areas where improvements could be made, or areas where further research could be undertaken. It may be that West Berkshire is already implementing many of the above activities, but that this has not been picked up from the initial desktop research.

## The Pledge

# THE PLEDGE 2021

Now you are in care of West Berkshire, the Council are your Corporate Parent and we pledge:

- Where possible we will try to keep you and your brothers and/or sisters living together. If this is not possible your social worker will explain why.
- We will make sure you get to see people in your family who are important to you. If this is not possible your social worker will explain why.
- We want to know if you are unhappy about anything and your social worker will give you opportunities to express this when you meet with them.
- We promise to find you the best available home where you will be safe and supported. If we can we will try and give you a choice of where you might live and we will try to find a place to live that is near your family and friends.
- If time allows, you will have a proper introduction to your new home, and we will show you a picture of the people you might live with before you move into the home. If this isn't possible, your social worker will explain the reasons why.
- We pledge that your bedroom will be your personal space and you will have a say with how it's decorated.
- We promise to provide a social worker who will get to know you well and who will keep in contact with you and listen to what you say. We can't promise that this worker will not change but if there is a change you will be given the reasons why.
- You may not have a say in who your social worker is but if you don't get on with them, we will look at the reasons for this and possible options for change. We will give you information on how to contact your social worker by phone or email and who to call in an emergency.



- We will talk to you about how often your social worker will see you and will have the opportunity to speak alone with your social worker when they visit you.
- Social workers will be on time for meetings and, if not, explain why.
- We will ask you what your dreams are and will help you pursue them.
- Your carer will talk to you about your interests and hobbies and will support you in accessing them. If this isn't possible, you will be told the reasons why.
- Those caring for you will recognise your birthday, other important events and religious festivals in a way that is special to you.
- Those looking after you will give you pocket money and help you save for your future.
- You will have free access to West Berkshire leisure centres for some activities and your social worker will provide you with information about these facilities and local activities.
- Your views will be important and contribute to your review meetings. You will be invited to be part of our Children in Care Council called R:Vue.
- If you are unhappy and feel no one is listening you can talk to your social worker, social workers manager or Debbie Mitchell, Senior Youth Worker
- We will draw up an education plan to encourage you to have high ambitions and help you get the best results you can.
- Your social worker will arrange to see you outside of school hours unless something important makes this necessary.
- We will help you if you fall behind with your studies, providing extra support to you if you need it.
- We will encourage and support you to go to university.
- We will work with you to explore all possible options for work when you leave education. This could include apprenticeships.

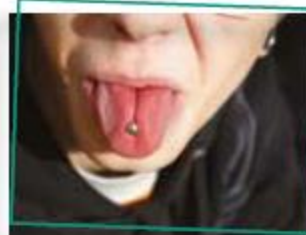
Your Corporate Parents want to see you thrive and do well. If there are other ways we can do this please let us know you can ring or text **Debbie Mitchell** Senior Youth Worker on **07554 114577**



## Charter for Care Leavers

### 1. Respecting your Identity

This means helping you develop your own personal beliefs and values and accept your culture and heritage. We will also respect you as an individual and a valued member of the community, so you can speak positively about your identity to others. We'll also support you in relationships and help you come to terms with any loss or trauma.



### 2. Believe in you

We will value your gifts and talents and encourage you to use them to achieve any goals you have. We will also help you overcome barriers and develop a vision for your future, even if you have lost sight yourself of where you want to be.



### 3. Listen to you

It is important we take time to listen to you and understand your point of view. This means we will then be able to place your needs and feelings at the heart of and decisions we make about you. If you don't agree with us, then we will discuss this with you and give you the opportunity to appeal elsewhere about any decisions we proposed.



### 4. Provide you with all the information you need

This includes information on what you are entitled to legally, all information about your time in care, and information about the service you can expect from us. Details will be accurate and up to date and in the format you want. We'll also tell you where to get information once you are no longer in regular touch with us. We'll also help you manage your feelings regarding anything you find out, and make a note of anything you disagree with.



Young people who have lived in care are likely to need support as they move into adulthood and start becoming more independent.

Your upbringing could have been in foster care, in a children's home run by:-

- Local authority
- Charity
- In another arrangement

Whatever the circumstances, the local council that has had responsibility to oversee your upbringing and will often want to continue to offer support.

### The Charter

The Charter is based around what you as young people leaving care would want local councils and government organisations to do, when making any further decisions about your future.

This way, you can be confident the authority is acting in your best interests and has your wellbeing at heart.

This charter will consist of 7 principles and promises that West Berkshire Council will keep supporting you as care leavers.

West Berkshire Council wants to make a commitment to support you in your individual futures.



## 5. Continue to support you

As well as providing information, we will offer you emotional support and can provide ongoing advice. You won't need to struggle to get support, and we'll make sure that is the case with any other organisations you deal with. We'll respect your right to change your mind about what you want to do. We will continue to support you even when we are no longer directly caring for you. And we'll help you learn from any mistakes you make, understand your needs and help you find where your needs can be met.



## 6. Help find you a home

We will help you to develop skills you need to live independently, work alongside you as you discover how to live independently, and help find accommodation that is right for you. Then we'll do all we can to make sure you can manage and are happy and safe in your new home. If you want to start over at any time, that's fine. Our aim is to see you settled in your new independent life.



## 7. Be a lifelong companion

This means we can help break down barriers you may meet when dealing with housing, benefits, colleges or universities, employers, or health services. We want to help you become a confident individual and be the driver of your life, not the passenger. We will remain your supporter in whatever way we can, even when our formal relationship with you has ended.

