



## ***FULL COUNCIL REPORT***

Date Written	5 <sup>th</sup> March 2024
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Service Area	Children's Services
Exempt/Non Exempt	Non Exempt
Committee Date	17 <sup>th</sup> April 2024

## **Corporate Parenting Strategy**

### **1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 This report provides Council with background information about Corporate Parenting.
- 1.2 To advise the Council on the Corporate Parenting Charter - A Promise to Wales.
- 1.3 To appraise the Council of the new Terms of Reference for Corporate Parenting Board.
- 1.4 To appraise Council on the new Corporate Parenting Strategy.
- 1.5 To agree the Corporate Parenting action plan for 2024-27.

### **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS that**

- 2.1 Agreement to commit to being Corporate Parents for Children Looked After and Care Leavers in Merthyr Tydfil be approved.
- 2.2 The Portfolio Member attendance at Corporate Parenting Board be approved.
- 2.3 The Terms of Reference for Corporate Parenting Board be approved.
- 2.4 The Corporate Parenting Strategy be approved.
- 2.5 The Corporate Parenting Action Plan be approved.

### **3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 When a child or young person becomes "looked after", the local authority has a responsibility to ensure that looked after children and young people experience the highest quality of care and opportunity and achieve outcomes that reflect each individual's greatest potential. This is known as "Corporate Parenting" and it is the collective responsibility of the Council to understand this. The legislative framework is through a Code of Practice for looked after children and an accommodated child has been published under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and this has defined the corporate parenting duty under s.400-401.
- 3.2 In Merthyr Tydfil we take our corporate parenting responsibilities seriously. We are all collectively responsible for looked after young people and support continuous improvement of outcomes for our looked after young people. It is not just social services that impact upon these young people. Once a child is in care all elected members and officers of the local authority, as corporate parents, need to be concerned about that child and must take the following principles into account when engaging with them and making any decision concerning them:
- is this good enough for my own child?
  - does this provide a second chance if things don't go as expected?
  - is this tailored to the child's individual needs, particularly if they are more vulnerable than other children?
- 3.3 This concern should encompass the child's education, health and well-being; what they do in their leisure time and holidays; how they celebrate their culture; and how they receive praise and encouragement for their achievements. This concern continues as the child becomes a young person and begins to prepare for the time when they leave care.
- 3.4 Corporate parenting promotes the collective responsibility of local authorities to safeguard and promote the rights and life chances of care-experienced children and young people. Supporting care-experienced children and young people through their childhoods and as they leave care should be the responsibility of all public sector bodies. Welsh Government want public bodies to understand and develop their responsibilities towards care-experienced children and young people, and to ensure they have the same life chances as all children living in Wales.
- 3.5 Our Promises as Corporate Parents set out below are the promises all Corporate Parents should fulfil when working with care-experienced children and young people:
- We will take time to listen to all care-experienced children and young people and ensure their views, wishes and feelings are heard and actively considered in all decisions made about them.
  - We will treat all care-experienced children and young people with respect.
  - We will involve all experienced children and young people in decisions that are made about them.
  - We will keep all care experienced children and young people informed about our involvement with them and explain our actions to them.

- We will use straightforward language when we communicate with all care-experienced children and young people.
- We will show compassion when considering the needs of all care-experienced children and young people.
- We will work with all care-experienced children and young people to help them achieve their goals.
- We will advise all care-experienced children and young people of the process to make a complaint should they feel we are not adhering to this charter.
- We will advise all care-experienced children and young people that they have a right to access independent advocacy to make sure their views, wishes and feelings are heard during decisions being made or when they are unhappy and want something stopped, started or changed.

## 4.0 CORPORATE PARENTING CHARTER (CPC)

- 4.1 A Charter is a set of principles and promises. The CPC has been developed in collaboration with care-experienced young people and is a set of promises that can be adopted by any public sector body when engaging with care-experienced children and young people. It also sets out shared principles that all bodies and their leaders should follow when providing services to care-experienced children and young people. The Charter is available via the background papers link.
- 4.2 Welsh Government want all public sector bodies and senior leaders to sign up to this Charter as a good Corporate Parent. This Charter is not exclusive to local authorities and public bodies, and Welsh Government welcome any members of the third sector and private sector to sign up and become a Corporate Parent.
- 4.3 The development of this Charter takes into account the overarching duties laid out in Part 2, General Functions of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. Specifically, that a person exercising functions in relation to an individual for example a looked after child must have regard to the characteristics, culture and beliefs of the individual (including, for example, language) [Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act 2014 – further legislation, codes and guidance made under the Act | Law Wales \(gov.wales\)](#). The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, Part 6 Code of Practice (Looked After and Accommodated Children) will be revised to include additional guidance on the Charter. The updated Code of Practice will be published in 2024 (date unknown) and the Charter was reviewed as part of this process.

## 5.0 Shared Principles for Corporate Parents

- 5.1 The shared principles for Corporate Parents are as follows:

**Equality** - We will support care-experienced children and young people to have the same life chances as every other young person in Wales. This is because all children have rights, no matter who they are (Article 1. UNCRC).

**Eradicate Stigma** - We will recognise care-experienced children and young people for who they are, not just by their experience of being in care. This is because all children have a right not to be discriminated against (Article 2).

**Togetherness** - We will work alongside care-experienced children and young people to ensure their views, feelings and ideas are integral to, influence and inform the services they receive and the way they receive those services. This is because all children have a right to be listened to and taken seriously (Article 12).

**Support** - We will ensure professionals working with care-experienced young people understand their care experiences, children and young people's needs and/or have access to information and training.

**Ambition** - We will ensure every care-experienced child and young person reaches their potential and can enjoy a wide experience of leisure, cultural, sport and social activities. This is because all children have a right to be the best they can be (Article 3 and 29) and have the right to relax and play (Article 31).

**Nurture** - We will make all care-experienced children and young people feel valued, respected, cared for and loved. This is because all children have a right to be safe and protected from harm (Article 19) and because all children who are not living with their families should be checked on regularly to make sure they are okay (Article 25).

**Good Health** - We will provide support to access the right health care and advice needed to support the best physical, mental health and general well-being for all care-experienced children and young people. This is because all children have the right to the best possible health and support (Article 24 and 39).

**A Stable Home** - We will seek out and provide stable places to live that are right for all care-experienced children and young people. This is because all children have a right to special protection if they don't live with their family (Article 20). This is because any adoption must be overseen by Government to make it support the young person in their growth and development, is lawful and that it prioritises children's best interests (Article 21).

**Good Education** - We will provide opportunities and support for all care-experienced children and young people to learn/develop and help them become who they want to be. This is because all children have a right to an education (Article 28 and 29).

**Thrive** - We will ensure all care-experienced children and young people are prepared for the future and are able to make positive choices for independent living and adulthood. This is because all children have a right to reach their potential (Article 3 and 29).

**Lifelong** - We will work to provide access to and raise awareness of the support and information available after leaving care. This is because adults have a duty to act in children's best interests (Article 3).

## **6.0 TERMS OF REFERENCE - CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**

- 6.1 A new Terms of reference have been developed and agreed at Corporate Management Team for Corporate Parenting Board. It is important that relevant Portfolio Members are in attendance and develop the action plans and monitor MTCBC's corporate parenting role. Attendance at Corporate Parenting Board meetings by other public bodies such as health are important in ensuring Corporate Parenting encompasses more than children's services. Corporate Parenting Board will now to be chaired by the Chief Executive. The Terms of Reference are available via the background papers link.
- 6.2 Our Corporate Parenting Board are determined the right results can only be achieved by listening to children and young people to find out what really matters to them, and by all professionals working together. The voice of our children and young people shall drive the boards agenda and priorities.
- 6.3 The Corporate Parenting Board shall issue an annual report highlighting the progress being made, which will be available each April, commencing April 2025.

## **7.0 CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY**

- 7.1 A new corporate parenting strategy has been developed by officers in children's services. This strategy has been developed in consultation with care experienced children, foster carers and staff.
- 7.2 Corporate parenting refers to the shared responsibility across the Council to ensure that children and young people in our care or leaving care are supported to thrive; they are 'our children'.
- 7.3 The role the Council plays in looking after children & young people is one of the most important things we do. The Local Authority has a unique responsibility to the children & young people we care for, as well as those leaving our care.
- 7.4 A good corporate parent should have the same aspirations for a child/young person in care, as a good parent would have for their own child. It means providing them with the stability and support they need to make progress; and helping them to set ambitious goals for themselves. It means celebrating their successes, but also recognising they will sometimes make mistakes and need help to get back on track. It also means supporting them to gain the skills and confidence to live independently, whilst letting them know they have someone to call on for help if the 'going gets tough'.
- 7.5 Our strategy is produced to set out how we intend to challenge ourselves as corporate parents over the next three years. It provides the legal and local context in which we operate, our vision for children & young people in care, as well as those leaving our care and how we intend to deliver on the priorities which are set out in legislation. The Strategy is available via the background papers link.

## 8.0 CORPORATE PARENTING ACTION PLAN

8.1 To ensure that MTCBC provide high quality support to our children and young people we have developed an action plan. The action plan sets out what needs to be achieved going forward. This action plan has been agreed by those named on the plan. As the Corporate Parenting agenda develops the corporate parenting action plan will develop and change. This will be an iterative process reviewed every year as part of the annual report. The action plan is available via the background papers link.

## 9.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no financial implications for being Corporate Parents in addition to core budgets as this falls within the statutory duties of the local authority.

## 10.0 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

10.1

	Positive Impacts	Negative Impacts	Neutral
1. Merthyr Tydfil Well-being Objectives	3 of 4	0 of 4	1 of 4
2. Sustainable Development Principles	5 of 5	0 of 5	0 of 5
3. Protected Characteristics (including Welsh Language)	3 of 10	0 of 10	7 of 10
4. Socio-economic Disadvantage	3 of 6	0 of 6	3 of 6
5. Decarbonisation	0 of 6	0 of 6	6 of 6
6. Biodiversity and the resilience of Ecosystems	<b>Maintained</b>	<b>Enhanced</b>	<b>Reduced</b>
	1 of 1	0 of 1	0 of 1
7. Consultation and Engagement	<b>Undertaken</b>	<b>Due to be Undertaken</b>	<b>Not Required</b>
	1 of 1	0 of 1	0 of 1
8. Data and Evidence	<b>Yes</b>		<b>No</b>
	1 of 1		0 of 1
<b>Summary</b>			
<b>The main positive impacts are:</b>	The main positive impacts are Care experienced young people are supported to meet their potential; this meets Well-being Objectives for health.		
<b>The main negative impacts are:</b>	No negative impacts have been identified.		

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**COUNCILLOR JULIA JENKINS**  
**CABINET MEMBER FOR**  
**SOCIAL SERVICES**

<b>BACKGROUND PAPERS</b>		
<b>Title of Document(s)</b>	<b>Document(s) Date</b>	<b>Document Location</b>
Corporate Parenting Charter	Various	All documents are available via the background papers link
Corporate Parenting Terms of Reference		
Corporate Parenting Strategy		
Corporate Parenting Action Plan		
<b>Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?</b>		No

***Consultation has been undertaken with the Corporate Management Team in respect of each proposal(s) and recommendation(s) set out in this report.***