

REPORT TITLE: Corporate Parenting Report

County Council meeting:	13 September 2023
Member/Officer	Cllr Stephen Davies Cabinet Member – Children’s Safeguarding & Early Years
Purpose of Report	To update the Council on Corporate Parenting activity.
Recommendations/ Action sought	None
Resource Implications	N/A
Background Documents	Corporate Parenting Report – June 2023
Equality Impact Assessment	N/A
Contact Information	Ann.james@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Corporate Parenting Report

Council Meeting

September 2023

1. Corporate Parenting Overview

- 1.1. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 states when a child comes into the care of the Local Authority or is under 25 and was previously looked after by the Local Authority, the Local Authority becomes their 'Corporate Parent'.
- 1.2. The responsibility of a Corporate Parent is to make sure the decision making, planning and provision for care experienced children and young people affords them the opportunities and outcomes that other children have. This routinely includes being concerned about their care, health, education, and preparation for adulthood. Under the Children Act 2004, the Local Authority also has a duty to promote cooperation with 'relevant partners', which includes Health, Police and Schools.
- 1.3. All County Councillors are Corporate Parents. The Gloucestershire Corporate Parenting Group is made up of a number of key representatives, including elected members with targeted responsibilities. Cllr Stephen Davies, (Cabinet Member for Children's Safeguarding and Early Years), is the chairperson for the group and accountable politically for Children's Services. This includes a specialist responsibility to communicate and engage partners and communities to meet the needs of children, particularly in respect of safeguarding and promoting their welfare.
- 1.4. There are four Corporate Parenting Group Meetings that take place each year. The Group last met on 29th June 2023 for the first meeting of the 2023-24 year. This was an in-person meeting with an expanded invitation list to include partners and stakeholders in a workshop aimed at developing the priorities for a new corporate parenting strategy and revised corporate parenting governance arrangements following the visit in May of Mark Riddell, National Adviser for Care Leavers.

2. Corporate Parenting Group Activity

- 2.1. The last meeting of the Corporate Parenting Group took place on 29th June 2023 when it hosted a workshop at the Social Work Academy with carers, partners, and young people. Co-chaired by our Ambassadors and the Director for Children's Services it was a dynamic meeting, capturing a set of ambitious priorities for our new corporate parenting strategy and proposing a refreshed approach to the corporate parenting group.
- 2.2. The priorities for our new strategy will be set out under the following themed areas:
 - Your voice counts
 - Staying connected
 - Staying healthy and well

- Stable homes built on love
- Staying safe
- Achieving your potential

2.3. The draft new strategy and proposed governance will be presented to the Corporate Parenting Group at its September meeting and once finalised, will be presented to full council.

3. Voice and participation

3.1. The Participation Team and Ambassadors have produced this year's annual report. It is an important document setting out all that has been achieved over the past year from participation in the selection, training and development of social work, social care, and other colleagues to the development of policy, practice improvements and contributions at a national level via the Leaving Care Benchmarking forum.

3.2. Our five new ambassadors have completed their induction and have taken part in a range of duties including supporting us with interviews, planning for our forums and an Instagram account as well as delivering training to practitioners. We are also celebrating ambassadors who are progressing in their education. Three will be starting their first degrees in September and a fourth, has completed their master's degree.

3.3. Forum activities have also taken place over the summer, and a drop-in for young people has started on a Wednesday at the Hideaway. This is open to any age care leaver as part of our developing commitment to providing a lifelong corporate family link should someone need it.

4. Education, training, and employment outcomes

4.1. The virtual school collates the academic achievements of all our children in care. To date, we have heard the outcome for approximately 50% of our children undertaking exams and assessments this summer. Whilst it is too early to provide an overview to council, we do know of some significant successes amongst those we have heard about. This includes twelve young people with a confirmed place at their chosen university as well as six that have graduated this summer. All have done exceptionally well in their chosen field, including one young person gaining a First Class Honours in their degree and another achieving a master's degree in forensic psychology. These higher education results are some of the best the county has seen. Plans are being developed to ensure young people are well supported as they embark on their next steps.

5. Holiday Activity and Food Programme

5.1. Another successful summer programme has concluded with a play day and award ceremony in Gloucester. Early indications are that the programme reached 14,523 children, with 22,655 sessions booked. Of those children that took part, 76% were of primary age

and 24% were of secondary age. 67% of children were free school meals eligible and 16% reported as having Special Educational Needs. These are strong early numbers, evidencing an improvement on last year despite some activities having to cancel due to the inclement weather. We know that these numbers will grow as we have yet to hear about walk-in bookings or the outcome of the piloted Youth Pass.

5.2. DfE visited our scheme again this summer and have asked Gloucestershire to work alongside them in the forthcoming financial year to help produce the following:

- Proposals for the next comprehensive spending review.
- Thematic case studies to support future HAF developments.
- Support offer to other LAs seeking to develop their HAF programme that will include Gloucestershire sharing its practice and commissioning model with other LAs.

6. Corporate parenting training for councillors

6.1. Corporate parenting training for councillors was delivered by the LGA in April with a further session delivered to 12 councillors, including district councillors in July. Slides from the session have been made available to all councillors.

7. Next Corporate Parenting Group

7.1. The next Corporate Parenting Group will take place on 28th September 2023 and will be a hybrid meeting. The agenda will include:

- Ambassadors Annual Report
- Child in Care Annual Report
- IRO (Independent Reviewing Officer) Annual Report
- Bright Spots Survey

8. Inspection

8.1. At the end of May, Gloucestershire received notification of a **Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI)**, the focus of this inspection was the multi-agency response to the identification of initial need and risk, often referred to as 'the front door.' The inspection took place over three weeks and comprised a team of seven inspectors from Ofsted, CQC and HMICFRS. Inspectors received and reviewed a significant number of strategic and policy documents, together with self-evaluative and child level evidence. The inspection heard from a range of partners, including schools, and required multiagency audits of children's experiences of our services. During the final 'on-site' week, inspectors sat alongside officers in each of the three statutory safeguarding agencies. Whilst with us, inspectors reviewed the records of over eighty children and conducted multiagency practice discussions for the five subject to audit. Findings were shared at the end of the inspection with the letter setting these out, published on 3rd August¹.

¹ Full report: [50225172 \(ofsted.gov.uk\)](https://www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports/publications/50225172)

8.2. The inspection feedback was positive, with a small number of recommendations to which the Partnership must respond. It was particularly helpful feedback in that it provided validation for the work of the Partnership and progress made regarding the relevant findings and recommendations of the Children's Services full inspection in 2022. The report reflects improvements in a number of key areas and finds that 'the majority of children receive an appropriate and swift multiagency response from the front door.'

9. Children in Care and Care Leavers' Data: July 2023

9.1. Overview for all children

- At the end of July, 4,157 children were open to social care. This is in line with the monthly average prior to the pandemic.
- 59% of all children's performance measures evidenced Fair or Good performance (better than 80% and 90% respectively). This is the highest performance in more than 12 months.
- 44% of measures performed better than or within tolerance of target.
- However, 31% of measures evidenced performance that was 10% points or more below target.
- Variability remains evident across areas, teams, and key indicators on a month-to-month basis, Areas of poorer performance are the subject of focused improvement activity following locality performance clinics and a monthly strategic performance meeting.
- 86% of children's records had social work supervision recorded within timescales, within tolerance of target for the first time since November and the lowest level of overdue supervision since July 2021.
- 77% of social workers had an allocated workload of 18 or fewer children (our target level), and 94% had 23 or fewer children allocated.
- 88% of children had two or fewer Social Workers in the last 6 months and, for children in our care 72% had two or fewer workers within the previous 12 months. This is within tolerance of Local Authorities rated as Good or Outstanding (75%).

9.2. Specific to Children in Care

- 853 children in care at the end of July 2023. This is the lowest level in more than 12 months. It equates to a rate of 67 per 10,000 of the under 18 population and is towards the top of the comparator group average (59.8, Mar-22).
- 18.9% are accommodated under a voluntary Section 20 agreement (161 children). This is the lowest number of children for at least 4 years and closes the gap with national of 17%, Mar-22.
- 6% are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, making up 32% of children accommodated under Section 20 (52 children).
- 28.7% live out of area (245 children) and 25.3% (216 children) live more than 20 miles from home. This is below target of 22%, and the peer group average (22.4% Mar-22).
- 25 children became cared for in July. Over the rolling year was 6.1% of children entering care had been in care within the previous twelve months compared with national (11.4%, Mar-20).

- 97% had a timely statutory visit.
- In the past six months the independent reviewing service has provided:
 - 100% had a timely review in which their views were represented.
 - 89% of children's records evidence the independent reviewing officer's (IRO) involvement (target 95%)
 - 73.5% of children have been in touch with their IRO (target 80%)
 - 62% of those in touch, had been seen in person by their IRO. This is an improvement for the third month in a row (up from 52% in April) and the highest performance achieved since reporting of this measure began in March 2021.
- 75% of children in care aged over 16 years and 3 months have an up-to-date pathway plan. Performance is persistently worse than target of 90%.
- 87% have an up-to-date health check which is within tolerance of target and is better than the peer group average of 83.2% (Mar-22).
- 79% of children aged 2 and older have an up-to-date dental assessment. Performance is below our target but well above our comparator LA group average of 59.6% (Mar-22).
- 87% of children in care aged 4-17 had an up-to-date Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ). Performance was above target.
- 15.7% of children in care have lived in three or more places over the past 12 months (134 children). This has followed an increasing trend over the previous 3 months and is worse than target (12%) and the peer group average (9.7%, Mar-22).
- 63% of children who have been in care for two and a half years or more have had a settled home for the past two years or more which is below our target of 68% and the peer group average of 71.1% (Mar-22).
- 17% of school-aged children in care have had a school move in the 2022-23 academic year. This is 4.4% better than at the same time in 2022.
- 14.8% of children had been suspended one or more times since the start of the academic year, below target.
- Average school attendance is 91.3%, with slightly higher attendance in primary settings compared with secondary settings (94.4% and 88.4% respectively).
- 27.9% of children are considered persistently absent (attending less than 90% of school days). This is higher than at the same time last year (20.1%).
- 11.4% of children in care were reported missing in the last 12 months, slightly below the peer comparator average (10.1% Mar-22).

9.3. Gloucestershire's Fostering Service

- 89% of foster carers had a timely annual review and medical check.
- 87% had a timely unannounced visit, reducing from 95% to a worse than target position.
- 88% had a timely supervision, reducing from 93% to a worse than target position.

9.4. Care Experienced Adults

- 548 care experienced adults are in receipt of support, an increasing number. The average growth has been 7.3% in each of the past three financial years.
- 95% of those aged over 21 years had been seen in the past 6 months.

- 79% of those aged 16-20 have been seen within required timescale, below target of 90%.
- 80% of young people had a pathway plan (target of 90%).
- 88% of care experienced young people live in homes categorised as 'suitable', a slight reduction on the 92% recorded last month.
- 51% of young people were in education, training, or employment at the end of the academic year, well below our target of 75%.
- 5% of care experienced adults were in higher education at the end of April (27). Six have graduated since and twelve have accepted their choice of university for September.

Cllr Stephen Davies

Cabinet Member – Children's Safeguarding & Early Years

This page is intentionally left blank