

## **CORPORATE PARENTING REPORT**

### **1. Corporate Parenting Overview**

1.1 The Children & 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 There are seven corporate parenting principles, including:

- a) To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and young people
- b) To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
- c) To take account of the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people
- d) 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
- e) To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people
- f) For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and
- g) To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

1.3 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 that other children have. This routinely includes being concerned about their care, health, education and preparation for adulthood.

1.4 Under the 2017 Act, a Corporate Parent should ensure, as far as possible, secure, nurturing and positive experiences for children in care and care leavers. Many children who come into Gloucestershire's care will face more challenges before they reach adulthood than other children. It is a duty and a privilege as a Corporate Parent to champion care experienced children and young people to ensure they have a remarkable life and achieve their full potential.

### **2. Corporate Parenting Group Membership**

2.1 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. An invitation to join the group has recently been issued to all Councillors.

2.2 Cllr Stephen Davies, (Cabinet Member for Children's Safeguarding and Early Years), is the chair person 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.

2.3 Under the Children Act 2004, the Local Authority has a duty to promote cooperation with 'relevant partners', which includes Health, Police and Schools.

2.4 Elected members who are members of the Corporate Parenting Group will work together with officers, partners and Young Ambassadors to meet the needs of children in care and care leavers by asking questions as well as providing support and challenge by focusing on key themes and issues.

2.5 There are four Corporate Parenting Group Meetings each year.

In 2021/22 these are scheduled on the following dates:

- 14 July 2021
- 30 September 2021
- 9 December 2021
- 24 March 2022

### **3. Corporate Parenting Group Activity**

3.1 The Corporate Parenting Group works together and focuses on key themes and issues to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in care and care leavers.

3.2 Corporate Parenting Group activity will naturally cover a broad range of safeguarding and welfare issues. Corporate Parents will be aware of the local care profile of the needs, risks and circumstances of Gloucestershire's children in care and young people leaving care and will need to: -

- a) Understand the views, wishes and feelings of Gloucestershire's children in care and care leavers and take these into consideration in Council planning and decision-making processes
- b) Make sure that children in care and care leavers are safeguarded, including those that go missing, are at risk of exploitation, trafficking and modern-day slavery
- c) Focus on the physical health, development and emotional and psychological well-being of children in care and care leavers
- d) Focus on the education, training and employment needs of children in care and care leavers

- e) Understand information about the quality of care, support and placement sufficiency provided to Gloucestershire's children in care and care leavers
- f) Ensure that the system of support around children in care and care leavers is of good quality, has a positive impact and improves outcomes
- g) Champion the needs of children in care and care leavers in Gloucestershire

3.3 Identified senior officers, lead multi-agency partners and Gloucestershire's Young Ambassadors, who are care experienced young people, will work with the Corporate Parenting Group to identify, address and report on agreed priorities which will be progressed throughout the year.

3.4 The Corporate Parenting Group will receive relevant performance and quality reports, in addition to annual reports focusing on key issues impacting on the care of care experienced children and young people. These will include annual reports from the Independent Reviewing Service, Fostering Service, Regional Adoption Agency, Health and the Virtual School as well as any refreshes of key strategies, for example, the Placement Sufficiency Strategy.

3.5 The recently refreshed 'Care Leaver's Offer', which is a requirement of Section 2 of the 2017 Act, is attached as an example of the aspiration Gloucestershire has to support care experienced young people reach independence.

3.6 Corporate Parenting is a key line of enquiry in the Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services. Ofsted inspectors will want to evidence the impact of the Corporate Parenting Group to improve outcomes for children in care and care leavers.

#### **4 Children in Care Data**

4.1 During 2020, with the development of the COVID-19 global pandemic, referrals for statutory children's social work services initially dropped. The much anticipated and predicted latent demand has however recently started to reveal itself in the system.

4.2 During the past month, statutory social work referrals have seen a 120% increase when making comparisons with pre-COVID-19 rates and numbers have peaked in the last week.

4.3 As at 21 June 2021, there are 826 children in care and 460 care leavers. A break down of children in care numbers by electoral division was previously circulated to elected members on 1 June 2021, at which point there was 816 children in care.

**Report presented to Full Council by Cllr Stephen Davies  
Cabinet Member – Children's Safeguarding & Early Years  
June 2021**