

# Corporate Parenting Report

## Council Meeting

### March 2023

#### 1.0 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 13<sup>th</sup> December 2022. This was the fourth meeting of the year and took place as a virtual meeting.

#### 2.0 Corporate Parenting Group Activity

2.1 The last meeting of the Corporate Parenting Group took place on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2022 and was reported to full council in February. The next meeting will take place on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2023 and will be an in-person meeting.

2.12 Since the last report, we have celebrated our foster carers with an awards evening on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2023 and encourage anyone who is considering fostering to contact us to find out more: telephone **01242 532654** or get in touch via [Fostering - Fostering \(gloucestershire.gov.uk\)](https://www.fostering-gloucestershire.gov.uk).

2.13 Ambassadors and officers have also been busy preparing for the **Care Leaver's Celebration of Achievement** evening that will take place on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2023 when they will be joined by inspirational speakers, corporate parents, and officers to celebrate a range of achievements. Should any councillors who have not already volunteered, wish to contribute their help (magicians, waiters, dressmakers, hairdressers for example) or wish to contribute a prize gift for the prize draw, please let us know as we want the evening to be a special one for our young people.

### **3.0 Next Corporate Parenting Group**

3.1 The next Corporate Parenting Group will take place on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2023 and will be in person. It will discuss the following:

- Revised Care Leaver's Offer
- Review of Virtual School Annual Report
- National Review – children with disabilities
- Gloucestershire's response to the Government's Implementation Strategy in response to the Care Review: [Children's social care stable homes built on love consultation \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

### **4.0 Children in Care and Care Leavers' Data: January 2023**

4.1 During January one-third of measures performed better than or within tolerance of target, with just over half performing in the Fair or Good categories (better than 80% and 90% respectively). Whilst variability remains a key challenge, the data evidences some positive signs of improvement.

4.2 New starters helped reduce the average allocated workload, with 72.7% of workers achieving the target of 18 or fewer children, the highest level since May 2021. Allocated workloads of 23 or fewer also improved to 95.8%.

4.3 Positive signs are also evident in relation to the quality of practice, with more than half of case audits rated as Good or Outstanding (55%) and half of case audits achieving this level of performance in relation to quality of assessment and SMART planning (50% each). A low rate of Inadequate audits was seen for the third month in succession at 5%.

4.4 86% of children had two or fewer Social Workers in the last 6 months, within tolerance of the 90% target and more than three-fifths of children in care had two or fewer workers in the past 12 months (68%)., narrowing the gap between Gloucestershire and Local Authorities rated Good or better.

4.5 Pressure on placement availability (growth in national and local care population) means that more (25%) of our children in care now live outside of the county and more than 20 miles from home. This pressure has also adversely impacted short stability whilst long-term stability is worse than statistical neighbours and is broadly static at 63.8 %. Other performance indicators are well performing, with high rates of timely visiting and review, and health and dental checks performing above the peer group average. The proportion of children in care who have gone missing in the last 12 months is also at a 12-month best.

4.6 For care experienced adults aged 16-20 there has also been an improvement in visiting at 81.5%, the highest level since before the pandemic and achieved with a growing cohort in this age group. Unfortunately, there has been a downturn in performance across a number of measures in the over 21 age group, again, a growing cohort and one that requires sustained attention.

### **4.7 Specific to Children in Care**

- 875 children in care at the end of January
- 19.8% (173 children) accommodated by voluntary agreement under Section 20 Children Act. This is within tolerance of target (19%) and is slightly higher than national (17%).
- 27% of children accommodated under Section 20 are unaccompanied asylum seekers.
- 29.9% (262 children) live out of county compared to 24.9% (209 children) at the end of 2021/22

- 25.6% (224 children) live out of county and more than 20 miles from home compared to 20.3%, (171 children at the end of 2021/22). This is worse than our target (20%), and the peer group average (22.4%).
- 27 children started to be looked after in January. Two of this group had been in care within the previous 12 months (7.4%). This is within tolerance of the stretch target that was set based on the readmissions over the 12-month period of 2021/22 (7%) and, over rolling year readmissions were at 8.1%, better than the last time a national figure was published (11.4% March 2020).
- 97% had a timely statutory visit and a review in which their views were represented and 92% of children had evidence of the independent reviewing officer (IRO) on their record in the preceding six months.
- IROS have been in touch with 65% of children in care aged five or over in the last 6 months. This has followed a declining trend since August 2022 and is worse than target.
- Pathway planning remains below target, with 67% of children in care aged 16 and 3 months or over having an up-to-date pathway plan (against a target of 90%).
- 88.5% of children have an up-to-date health check which is better than the peer group average (83.2%).
- 75% of children aged two or older have an up-to-date dental assessment. Performance remains below pre-pandemic levels but better than the peer average of 59.6%.
- 87% of children in care aged 4-17 had an up-to-date Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ). Performance returned to a better than target position following two months at within tolerance of target.
- The proportion of children in care living in three or more homes in 12 months increased from 13.8% (121 children) to 15.2% (133 children), against a target of 12%. Performance is significantly worse than the peer group average of 9% and is the subject of focused attention.
- 64% of children who have been in care for two and a half years or more have had a settled home for more than two years, against a target of 68%. Performance here too is significantly below the peer average of 71.1% and the subject of focused attention.
- 9.1% of school-aged children in care have had a school move this academic year; this is better than at the same time last year (48 children compared with 70 children (14.2%)).
- 8.3% (45 children) have been suspended one or more times compared with 8.6% (44 children) between September 2021 and January 2022.
- School-aged children in care (educated both in and outside of Gloucestershire) have an average attendance of 90.5%, with slightly higher attendance in primary settings compared with secondary schools (94.4% compared with 87.9%). However, 24.5% (129 children) are classed as persistently absent (attendance below 90%).

#### **4.8 Specific to Care Experienced Adults**

- 513 care leavers aged 18-25 in receipt of a service.
- 92% of those aged over 21 years have been seen in the past six months.
- 81.5% of 16–20-year-olds were seen in a timely way (every two months). This performance has followed an improving trend since August 2022 and is the highest performance achieved since prior to the pandemic (86%, March 2020).
- 81.7% of care experienced young people have an up-to-date pathway plan. This is a slight reduction for the second month, from 84.3% in November and is below target (90%). Overall performance is impacted by lower performance for the 16–18-year-old group (73.7%). Performance for the over 21's group has also declined over the last two months (90.9% to 80.3%).
- 91% of care experienced young people live in homes categorised as 'suitable' which is within tolerance of target overall. Performance for people aged 21 and over reduced for the sixth month to 83.6% and is a concern that centres around limited access to suitable move-on accommodation for young people.
- 57% of care experienced adults are in employment or training (EET).

- In the growing group of over 21-year-olds in receipt of support, performance has dipped.
- There were 27 care experienced adults in higher education at the end of January, down from 30 the previous month (5.3%). Performance is worse than target (6%) but is similar to the peer group average (5%).

#### **4.9 Specific to foster carers.**

- 94% of our Foster Carers had an up-to-date DBS and unannounced visit.
- 87.5% of foster carers had a timely supervision, down slightly from 92.6% in November.
- Timeliness of annual reviews also declined from 89.8% to 83.6%
- Timeliness of medical checks for Foster Carers has been static and worse than target for the majority of 6 months at 86.3%. This is adversely impacted by pressures in the health service and the time it takes to receive information from GPs. The Hadwen Centre are working with us to try to improve on this position.

**Cllr Stephen Davies**

**Cabinet Member – Children’s Safeguarding & Early Years**