



**REPORT TITLE: Corporate Parenting Report**

<b>County Council meeting:</b>	8 November 2023
<b>Member/Officer</b>	Cllr Stephen Davies Cabinet Member – Children’s Safeguarding & Early Years
<b>Purpose of Report</b>	To update the Council on Corporate Parenting activity.
<b>Recommendations/ Action sought</b>	None
<b>Resource Implications</b>	N/A
<b>Background Documents</b>	Corporate Parenting Report – 13 September 2023
<b>Equality Impact Assessment</b>	N/A
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# Corporate Parenting Report

## October 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 27th September 2023 for the second meeting of the 2023-24 year. This was an in-person meeting.

### 2. Corporate Parenting Group Activity

- 2.1 The last meeting of the Corporate Parenting Group took place on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2023 and included a presentation of the Ambassadors Annual Report and an overview of the Draft Corporate Parenting Strategy 2023-26 and proposals relating to revised Corporate Parenting Group (CPG) Governance arrangements and roles.
- 2.2 The draft Terms of Reference set out the role of the Corporate Parenting Group and sub-groups as active and problem-solving groups, overseeing the delivery of the corporate parenting strategy. This model was agreed following a visit to Gloucestershire by Mark Ridell - national implementation advisor for care leavers at the Department for Education. Mark provided feedback and advice on the corporate parenting arrangements in Gloucestershire which we were happy to endorse. His 'Champion Model' sees the corporate parenting group supported by six sub-groups, each aligned to one of our six corporate parenting priorities. Each sub-group will be

chaired by a councillor champion with support from young people, carers, key agency representatives and decision makers.

2.3 The work to develop those groups has been completed and they will now be shared by democratic services with councillors for responses as to which of the key priorities they wish to lead on. The subgroups will meet at least once between Corporate Parenting Group meeting to review progress and identify and further action required to achieve the specified outcomes before providing a one page updating report to the CPG for scrutiny and support. We are excited to be moving to a point where there is joined up thinking and planning for our young people, utilising the unique perspectives of members, office and partners.

2.4 The remodelling of children's social care services continues to gather momentum and in specific relation to the Children in Care service, the move to offering an inclusive service from 0-18 for children in care and separate teams for care leavers gathers pace. In October we held an initial workshop bringing together staff from all the teams to discuss how the future service will be delivered with another event planned for December which will include the Ambassadors. We will create six dedicated Leaving Care 16+ teams to support care leavers as they reach adulthood and receive support from Person Advisers. We are currently advertising for a service manager for care leavers and will have the six teams in operation before the end of the financial year.

2.5 The fostering service are proud to be launching its version of the Mockingbird support model for foster carers in Gloucestershire at the Oxstalls University campus, 4-6pm on 23<sup>rd</sup> November. Mockingbird is an extended family model that provides sleepovers and short breaks, peer support, regular joint planning and training, and social activities. It is an evidence-based model structured around the support and relationships an extended family provides. The model nurtures the relationships between children, young people and foster families supporting them to build a resilient and caring community or constellation of between six and ten foster carers offering peer support to each other to help ensure placement stability for children.

2.6 Recruiting and retaining foster carers continues to be a national challenge with The Fostering Network having reported that on average 12% of foster carers are retiring or leaving each year and along with the national shortage of new foster carers. In the last year Gloucestershire saw a number of foster carers leaving, many for personal reasons but positively achieved a net increase in 22 fostering households in the year. The service is focussed on approving more foster carers locally for our children but also on support and the development of current foster carers, enabling them to care for and provide stability to more children. Feedback from foster carers is gathered regularly and the general message is that they are happy with the service and would recommend fostering for Gloucestershire to friends and family.

2.7 The 11-25 permanency service has received additional funding from Levelling Up Our Communities. The additional funding of £50,000 will be used to help offset cost of living rises and will focus on expanding the support we offer young people with Digital Inclusivity and removing barriers to employment. We expect the majority of this funding to support access to Broadband and driving lessons.

2.8 Delivering on our successful bid to DfE to pilot Staying Close we are currently in the process of recruiting to key posts. The pilot will run until July 2025 and will provide additional support for young people moving on from residential care or supported living at or around the age of 18 years.

### **3. Voice and participation**

3.1 Highlights of Ambassadors Work between September to October included.

- The Ambassadors continue to contribute to training for Gloucestershire staff and this month delivered Mind of My Own 'Train the Trainer' training to social workers and provided contributions to the Frontline Social Worker Induction program. Mind Of My Own is an online app which allows young people to share how they feel with the professionals who support them. It gives another option to hear the voice of the child using technology which young people find helpful.
- Ambassadors co-chaired the Integrated Care Board Development Day sharing their experiences of what it means to be a young person growing up in Gloucestershire and helping to identify the barriers faced and opportunities needed to thrive.
- Voice Gloucestershire Forums took place in October these included Activity Based Forums. There was a Halloween themed event for 11-16's who went to Laser Tag and the 16+/care leavers forum tried golf at the Golf Range. Feedback from both events have been collated and are being used to develop the themes of the upcoming Voice Gloucestershire event on 1<sup>st</sup> November.

### **4. Education, training, and employment outcomes**

4.1. 51% of young people were in education, training, or employment at the end of the academic year, well below our target of 75%. The CiC service will be looking at this area of performance in coming months to try and better understand what has led to a reduction in outcomes, and target improved support to our young people to engage in education and employment.

4.2. 4.9% of care experienced adults were in higher education at the end of the academic year (27). Eight have graduated since and twelve have accepted their choice of university for September. This level of success in accessing higher education is excellent – as corporate parents we are hugely proud of the achievements of our

children and we will now focus on ensuring that they are supported through their university experience.

- 4.3. The Virtual School is taking part in a national pilot cookery school during the autumn term. 30 Children who have been cooking at home have completed the programme following the Leith Academy Kitchen tutorials, with support from their carer(s). There will be a celebration event at the University on November 7<sup>th</sup> for the young people who completed the Leith Programme. There are another 25 children in care currently following the Leith Academy Kitchen programme this autumn due to the interest in this subject area.

## **5. National Care Leavers Week**

- 5.1. To celebrate National Care Leavers week, which this year runs between 25th October and 1st November, Ambassadors will be hosting the Voice Gloucestershire meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2023. This event will see care experienced young people, who attend Voice Gloucestershire Forums (GCCs name for the Children in Care Council), deliver an interactive session for members of the Corporate Parenting Group to share their experiences of what life is like in care in Gloucestershire, how to build strong relations and what stable homes built on love means to them. During the event care leavers who have been part of the Peer Mentoring Project will be celebrating their achievements and successes. Peer mentors are care experienced young people who can provide support and help to care leavers when they are setting up home for the first time.
- 5.2. On the 8th November 2023 care leavers from Gloucestershire will attend the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum (NLCBF) "CELEBRATING US" Event in Birmingham. The event connects care teams and care experienced young people from across the UK to improve outcomes for care leavers by sharing good practice and views from care experienced young people. One of the young people attending for Gloucestershire has been nominated for a Local Hero Award and staff will be in attendance to cheer them on. The winner will be announced at the event and the award will be presented by HRH Princess Anne.
- 5.3. On the 9th November the NLCBF are also hosting a Personal Advisers Celebration Event. The event aims to recognise and celebrate the valuable contribution made by Personal Advisers in supporting care experienced young people. Once again Gloucestershire are represented at this event with Dave Short, a Personal Adviser in one of our 11-25 Permanency Teams shortlisted for the 2023 Personal Adviser Lifetime Achievement Award. The event is to be held in Birmingham on 9th November and will be attended by staff from GCC to cheer Dave on.

5.4. Across the country, local authorities are celebrating Care Leavers Week by lighting up prominent local landmarks. We have requested Gloucester Cathedral is part of this celebration to mark the end of National Care Leavers' Week.

## **6. Corporate parenting training for councillors**

6.1. The Ambassadors contributed to a Corporate Parenting Masterclass' for Members from across the South West In recent months.

6.2. Working with the Local Government Association, two Ambassadors presented on 27 October on the subject of 'How We Do Participation in Gloucestershire' and, 'what we need from officer and members to ensure we are good corporate parents'.

## **7. Next Corporate Parenting Group**

7.1. The next Corporate Parenting Group will take place on 6th December 2023 and will be a hybrid meeting.

## **8. Children in Care and Care Leavers' Data: September 2023**

### **8.1. Children in Care**

- 881 children in care at the end of September 2023. This is the highest level recorded at the end of a reporting period. It equates to a rate of 69.2 per 10,000 of the under 18 population and is towards the top of the comparator group average (59.8, Mar-22). The number is elevated in part as we have accepted more unaccompanied migrant children into our care in recent months.
- 20.7% are accommodated under a voluntary Section 20 agreement (182 children).
- 8.1% are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, making up 39% of children accommodated under Section 20 (71 children). This is increasing but remains below the national target of 0.1% of our total child population.
- 28.5% live out of area (251 children) and 24.0% (211 children) live more than 20 miles from home. This is worse than the target of 22%, and the peer group average (22.4% Mar-22). Our fostering transformation and sufficiency strategy are aiming to increase the resource we have in county to look after our children.
- 34 children became cared for in September. Over the rolling year was 5.9% of children entering care had been in care within the previous twelve months compared with national (11.4%, Mar-20).
- 96% had a timely statutory visit.
- At the end of September, the independent reviewing service had provided:
  - 93% of children in care with a timely review in 96% of which the child's views were represented.
  - 87% of children's records evidence the independent reviewing officer's (IRO) involvement in the last 6 months (target 95%)
  - 74% of children have been in touch with their IRO (target 80%)

- 68% of children aged 5 and over had been in touch with their IRO in the last 6 months and 61% of 5–11-year-olds had been seen over the same period. There has been an improvement in seeing children, with performance within tolerance of or better than target for five of the last six months.
- 76% of children in care aged over 16 years and 3 months have an up-to-date pathway plan.
- 87% have an up-to-date health check – better than the peer group average of 83.2% (Mar-22).
- 79.5% of children aged 2 and older have an up-to-date dental assessment. Performance is well above our comparator LA group average of 59.6% (Mar-22).
- 84% of children in care aged 4-17 had an up-to-date Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ).
- 13.7% of children in care have lived in three or more places over the past 12 months (121 children). This reflects the current sufficiency challenge which sometimes results in children needing to use short term placements when they come in to our care.
- 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.
- 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%).
- 10% of children in care were reported missing in the last 12 months, this is better than target and the peer comparator average (10.1% Mar-22).

## 8.2. Gloucestershire's Fostering Service

- 94% had an up-to-date medical check and had had a timely unannounced visit.
- 88% of foster carers had a timely annual review.
- 84% had a timely supervision.

## 8.3. Care Experienced Adults

- 558 care experienced adults are in receipt of support, an increasing number. The average growth has increased year on year for the last 3 financial years from 6% to 9%.
- 94% of those aged over 21 years had been seen in the past 6 months.
- 76% of those aged 16-20 have been seen within required timescale, below target of 90%.
- 82% of young people had a pathway plan (target of 90%).
- 89% 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%.
- 4.9% of care experienced adults were in higher education at the end of the academic year (27). Six have graduated since and twelve have accepted their choice of university for September.

## **9.0 And finally..**

9.1 We are delighted to share that Ellie Taylor, a social worker in one of our 11-25 Child In Care Teams has been shortlisted for the 2023 Newly Qualified Childrens Social Work of The Year award In November. The event is to be held in London on 3rd November and will be attended by staff from GCC to cheer Ellie on.

**Cllr Stephen Davies**  
**Cabinet Member – Children’s Safeguarding & Early Years**