



CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY BRIGHTER FUTURES FOR OUR CHILDREN IN CARE AND CARE EXPERIENCED YOUNG PEOPLE



Date agreed: Agreed at Corporate Parenting Board 14 October 2019
Will be presented at BCP Cabinet on 13 November 2019

Renewal date: November 2021

Replaces for BCP: Bournemouth Council Care Leavers Strategy 2016-20; Dorset Country Council
World at their feet strategy; Poole Corporate Parenting Strategy

Our Mission

We will be the best corporate parents and grandparents so that our children in care and care experienced young people have bright futures: we care about you, we have high aspirations for you, we never give up and are determined to achieve the best for you.

1. For many children and young people, living within their own family achieves the best outcomes for them, and we will do everything that we can to keep families together. Where this isn't possible children and young people can live with foster carers, in residential care homes and other carers. When this happens, we are then their corporate parents or grandparents, supporting care experienced young people as young parents, and we are passionate about our responsibility to be better than the best to help them thrive. We will never give up and are committed to ensuring our children in care and care experienced young people are happy, healthy and feel secure, and we have high aspirations for them to be the best that they can be.
2. Each child and young person is unique, with their own personal aspirations and talents that we will nurture, champion and celebrate. All children and young people need and deserve stable and permanent forever families, education and care, to give them security, stability, love and a strong sense of identity and belonging throughout their childhood and beyond into adulthood. It provides the building blocks for bright futures and for children to achieve fulfilled lives as adults. Securing this is at the core of all our work with children, young people and their families; ensuring that everything we do is a step towards enabling young people to achieve their full potential.
3. Being a corporate parent is one of the most important responsibilities that the Council has. We believe that this responsibility falls on everyone who has an impact on the lives of our children and young people, whether you work in a school or college, the council, for the police, health, voluntary and community sector and our wider partners in the business community. We are excited about what we can achieve together, working together through the Corporate Parenting Board, alongside children and young people, we will be the best corporate parents and grandparents for every single child and young person in our care.
4. This strategy is driven by what is important to children in care and care experienced young people, and they are empowered to hold us to account on how well we are doing. We will ensure that we deliver this strategy through our detailed delivery plan and by championing this work across the whole Council and with the wider community of partners across BCP who can make a difference to the lives of our children and young people.

What is important to children in care and care experienced young people

5. Our children and young people have told us the issues that are important for them are:

That their views and wishes are listened to and they are involved in the decisions being made about them

Staying connected with their families and having stable relationships with those supporting them

Having a choice over where will be their home, so they feel safe, settled and a sense of belonging where they live

Suitable housing that meet their needed and the best support to develop independence

Their emotional health and wellbeing, as well as their physical health is looked after

That we create a shared language which respects and values their care journeys and views

Below are some quotes from our children and young people, parents and carers.

Need to focus on emotional development for young people not just practical independence.....Feels we ask a lot of young people and need to be more nurturing.

Need consistency of social workers

Love and hugs and having someone you can trust are really important to me.

It is important for us to know who we are, where we come from and to understand why we are being looked after away from home

My foster carer has been a big part of my life. She has made me the person I am today...thanks to her and all the support around me, I left school with 7 GCSES. She is like my respectful pushy parent!

From the point where I was told that this would be my permanent place I felt settled, I felt wanted, and I felt part of the family.

Being healthy means having a good social life and spending time with people who make me happy.



My supported lodgings carer helped me to develop my skills - without this placement I wouldn't be where I am today with my independence skills

We often feel it is our fault when we come into care and we feel rejected. This can make it more difficult for us fit in which can affect how stable we feel. We need to know that it's not our fault

We want to be involved in meetings and decisions to do with changes in our lives, especially around permanency

The support offered [for young people] is good, but they often need more around getting in to work or extra education

A good corporate parent needs to be flexible, nurturing and willing to do anything a normal parent would do

I can't think of anyone else that I would rather have my daughter be cared for (parent of a child in foster care)

Our Care Pledges

6. It is important that all our children in care and care experienced young people know what they can expect from us. Our Pledge for children in our care, and our Pledge and Local Offer for our care experienced young people, will make this clear. The pledges will be our promises to our children and young people, and will be co-produced with Unite our Children in Care Council and Insight our Care Leavers Forum.
7. As the new BCP area has been formed, children in care and care experienced young people from across BCP have come together and have formed single forums to represent both children in care and care experienced young people. Over the Autumn they worked to create pledges for both groups which will be added to this strategy, their work has shaped this strategy. We will use the pledges to judge how successful we are in delivering this strategy. Appendix 1 sets out the pledges made by Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Councils to all our children in care (these are the councils that were in place before Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole 'BCP' Council was created).

How we will achieve our ambitions

8. We have nine corporate parenting principles, which our children and young people helped to shape. We know that these principles underpin our ability to be the best corporate parents and grandparents, so that our children in care and care experienced young people are happy, healthy, feel secure, and are best that they can be. They drive everything that we do. Our principles are also informed by the relevant legislation and best practice (for more information please see the end of this document).
9. This strategy will drive our work and other key strategies/plans across the whole Council and key partner agencies, including:
 - BCP's Placements Sufficiency Strategy
 - BCP's Virtual School Plan
 - BCP's Health & Wellbeing Strategy
 - BCP's Housing Strategy
 - Pan Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership Plan
10. The Corporate Parenting Board will have a Corporate Parenting and Sufficiency Strategy Delivery Plan which will focus BCP Council's and partner's collective efforts to enable us to deliver on the principles and pledges set out in this strategy and for our children and young people.
11. We will judge our success in delivering this strategy against the pledges and qualitative evaluation of improved outcomes for children and young people, through formal reporting to the Corporate Parenting Board and being held to account by our Children in Care Council and Care Experienced young people.

Our corporate parenting principles

1. The views, needs and priorities of children, young people and their carers inform everything that we do

We will share decision making with children in care, care experienced young people and those close to them, whenever we can.

We will help children and young people to understand what is happening to them and why.

Individual children and young people will have access to independent advocates; support to be able to challenge service providers; and volunteer mentors and independent visitors.

We will actively support the forums for children care and care experienced young people to work with us to shape services and drive improvements, as part of this they sit on the Corporate Parenting Board. We want to improve and will learn from the experiences of children, young people and those close to them.

Every child and young person is unique, with different views, needs and priorities. The route to achieving a forever family and a sense of belonging for each child will be different and we will tailor our services and support to meet their different needs and priorities, ensuring they are inclusive.

2. Children and young people are best cared for wherever possible within their birth or extended family

For many children and young people living within their own family achieves the best outcomes for them.

We will focus on strengths, abilities & potential to support families to create safe solutions to challenges and recover quickly from difficulties, with long term support networks, to keep families together. We know that some teenagers face additional and complex challenges and we will develop services and new approaches to support them.

Wherever possible we are committed to getting children and young people back into their families, securing a safe return home or to a family member with the right preparation and support.

There will always be times when children are unable to be cared for at home and that is when we step in, making every effort to find extended family and friends carers at the earliest opportunity, where this is what the child wants and is their best interests.

We will explore and establish options at the earliest opportunity so that children and young people get the stable and permanent homes, education and care that they need without delays.

3. Where children and young people cannot live with parents or extended family and require local authority care, we strive to provide the best carers to provide a safe, stable and loving home

If children cannot live with their birth parents or extended family, we will secure a permanent safe, stable and loving home for them, with stability of education; to ensure all their needs are met through their childhood and beyond. We will do this within the timescales that are best for the child.

We will ensure that we have sufficient local carers with the skills and experience to care for children and young people; to build secure relationships, provide consistent and predictable emotional warmth and nurture that children need, creating a healing connection and sense of belonging.

We will provide high quality support to all our foster carers, special guardians, family and friends carers, supported lodgings providers and adoptive parents, as they become carers and once they are looking after a child or young person.

We believe family settings are best for most children and young people, in exceptional circumstances where this is not possible residential settings will be used.

4. Our children and young people will stay in touch with their family, friends and local community, and have a strong sense of their own identity

For our children and young people to thrive, it is important that they have a strong sense of identity and self-esteem; many different things make up who we are.

We strive to keep children together with their brothers and sisters unless this is not right for them and we will keep children and young people in touch with their family, friends and community, including if they are placed away from home. We will ensure our children and young people have quality family time.

We will support children and young people to develop their own identity and have positive self-esteem by helping them to understand their background and life experiences; explore their ethnicity and heritage, culture, religion, disability and sexuality. We will encourage new experiences, hobbies and interests; and create opportunities to meet other children and young people in similar circumstances so they know they are not on their own.

We will collect and value information about the lives of our children and young people so that they can access it in the future to help them understand who they are and their lived experiences, to support their sense of resilience, courage and sense of family.

5. Our children and young people will have positive and stable relationships with those who care for them and support them

It is important that our children and young people have lasting relationships with those close to them, and we know this helps them to do better.

We will work with children and young people to identify adults who can provide essential support and lifelong trusting relationship which provides continued support as our young people leave care and throughout their lives

We will work with partners to ensure we are all planning for and creating positive and stable relationships for children in care, including through changes of support, home and education.

6. Our children and young people will have good physical and emotional health and wellbeing

Our children in care and care experienced young people deserve access to the best support and health services, at an early stage at the time when they need them, for good emotional and physical health.

We will ensure that care and pathway planning will always consider, monitor and track physical and mental health issues and needs. All children and young people will be registered with a GP, dentist and optician; have access to appropriate sexual health services; be supported to understand the importance and entitlement to timely and responsive health assessments; and they will be up to date with all their recommended immunisations.

We will work across partners to ensure our children and young people including those with a disability, who need specialist support and health care, receive them and at the time that they need it. Young people will be at the heart of planning for their transition to adult services, to support them in independence.

We will promote access to children and adolescent mental health services, advocate that care experienced young people can access suitable adult mental health services and that there is early support to prevent things and feelings getting worse.

We will ensure that all staff that support our children and young people, and those in the wider BCP community, better understand their emotional health and wellbeing needs, and how to support them. Through enabling our children and young people will stay in touch with their family, friends and local community, and have a strong sense of their own identity, we will support their good emotional health and wellbeing.

7. We all have high expectations and aspirations for our children in care and care experienced young people

We are highly aspirational for our children and care experienced young people. We will encourage them to think big, and we champion their potential and celebrate their successes.

We will work hard to get the balance right between inspiring and challenging our children and young people to be the best that they can be and working at their pace, around their individual aspirations and targets.

As corporate parents we will stand with our children and young people through thick and thin, and keep them safe.

We will support our children and young people through significant milestones such as the move from primary to secondary school, so it is as positive an experience as it can be. We will ensure that as 2, 3 and 4 year olds our children achieve the best possible start to their education.

Our children in care and care experienced young people will receive the best support, education and health services (for good emotional and physical health) and positive opportunities, such as school trips and hobbies, so they can achieve and 'think big' for their futures.

It is especially important that our children and young people have stability in their local school, receive the right support and attend regularly. We will work towards a more inclusive culture, with the ultimate aim of no permanent exclusions for our children in care or care experienced young people.

All of our children in care and care experienced young people will have opportunities for work experience, training, college, university and employment; and we will encourage them to have big aspirations and ensure they have the specialist equipment they need to make the most of those opportunities, including being IT enabled and empowered.

We will identify the specific needs of children and young people to tailor support and services, including bespoke, holistic packages of support that enable children and young people to take healthy risks and ensure they are safe.

8. Our parenting responsibility extends beyond when a young person leaves care, including being corporate grandparents when they are young parents

Like any good parent we want to still be there to support our care experienced young people, keeping them as close as we can.

We will ensure young people have a stable and secure home; and will support a return to family if that's the right thing for them.

If our young people leave care we will keep in touch with them, continue to support them living independently, navigate new challenges ahead, and celebrate their successes.

We will ensure young people are prepared to thrive as independent adults, with the skills and support network that they need, and opening doors for them and encouraging them to be ambitious and think big.

Young people will have a choice over the right accommodation that meets their needs. We will work to prevent homelessness and for young people to have security of tenure.

We are determined and persistent in encouraging care experienced young people to access all our services up to age 25; and ensure that young people know what services are on offer. We will ensure that information on services and support is easily accessible and that entitlements are transparent.

We will work with and support our young people to make the best decisions about becoming parents, when the time is right for them. If they choose to become young parents we will ensure our support is extended to our 'grandchildren'.

9. We will further develop how we work with children, young people, their families and carers

We will develop robust and relationship based models of working with children, young people and their families. These ways of working will extend across services which support families to stay together and across our social care services.

Central to how we work is understanding the lived experience of the child or young person.

Our way of working will value individuality and diversity, and be based on best practice. We will be thoughtful and humble, and be open to learning.

Each family has its own strengths, and we will work together with families to build on these. We believe that through building resilience, individuals and families can change.

Good communication based on language that is clear to all will be central to providing effective support, intervention and protection to and for children.

12. We will make sure we deliver this strategy by:

- Listening to and working with Unite (the forum for children in care), Insight (the forum for care experienced young people) and children and young people on the edge of care
- Working together through the Corporate Parenting Board, recorded through its delivery plan
- Effective scrutiny from Members in Overview and Scrutiny

13. Our Corporate Parenting Board has clear oversight of all our work for children in care and care experienced young people. The Board has representatives Unite (the forum for children in care) and Insight (the forum for care experienced young people), foster carers, Councillors, BCP Children's Services and Housing officers, the Clinical Commissioning Group, and the BCP Learning Partnership.

14. The Boards purpose is to:

- Listen to, learn from and act on what our children in care and care experienced young people tell us
- Drive high aspirations and expectations for our children in care and care experienced young people, championing their individual needs and aspirations, and celebrating their successes
- Focus on the importance of every single child and young person
- Provide a regular forum for elected members, children in care and care experienced young people, key officers and partners to work together to improve outcomes, realising the potential of what we can achieve together
- Take collective responsibility and hold each other to account where outcomes are not good enough
- Develop, deliver, monitor and review the corporate parenting strategy

The Board is driven by the priorities of our children in care and care experienced young people, reporting back to Unite and Insight on the impact of the Board's work. The Board will receive and scrutinises regular performance data and reports on: issues raised directly by the children and young people, the best practice elsewhere, key indicators and outcomes for children in care and care experienced young people. Through partners, actions are agreed to improve outcomes and escalate issues where required.









We will judge our success in delivering this strategy against the pledges and being held to account by our Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum.

15. The Local Government Association (LGA) has published a resource pack <https://www.local.gov.uk/corporate-parenting-resource-pack>, or search 'corporate parenting resource pack' on the LGA website, which is useful guide for councillors and officers new to Corporate Parenting, or find out more.
 16. The Government has produced statutory guidance is for local partners (as defined in section 10 of the Children Act 2004) and others who contribute to services provided to looked-after children and care leavers <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/applying-corporate-parenting-principles-to-looked-after-children-and-care-leavers> or search for 'Applying corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers'. It provides more information about corporate parenting and explains the 7 principles which set out our responsibility as corporate parents to facilitate, as far as possible, secure, nurturing, and positive experiences for children in care and care experienced young people, enabling positive outcomes for them.
-

Appendix 1



Bournemouth Borough Council
Pledge to CiC and Care Leavers

<p>WE PROMISE</p> <p>to help you keep in touch with your family and friends, if it is safe to do so</p> 	<p>WE PROMISE</p> <p>to help you get the best education possible</p> 	<p>WE PROMISE</p> <p>to listen to you and involve you in making decisions about your care</p> 	<p>WE PROMISE</p> <p>to help you feel safe, settled and feel a sense of belonging where you live</p> 
<p>WE PROMISE</p> <p>to support you to develop and keep a healthy lifestyle, and help you manage your feelings</p> 	<p>WE PROMISE</p> <p>to help you learn how to save and spend your money wisely</p> 	<p>WE PROMISE</p> <p>to help you develop the skills you need to build your future beyond care</p> 	<p>WE PROMISE</p> <p>that your social worker will be on your side and never give up on you</p> 

Dorset County Council Pledges to CiC Care Leavers



Living your life

We promise to do our best to ensure that:

- You have a secure and stable home;
- You are given lots of warning about changes;
- You get an amount of pocket money that is right for your age and is discussed at your Review to make sure it increases as you get older;
- You can meet other children and young people in care if You want to and you will receive an invitation to Dorset Kidz at least once a year when you are aged 8 or older;
- You are not made to feel different from your friends and peers;

Staying safe

We promise to do our best to ensure that:

- You can keep in regular contact with family members if you want to and if it is safe;
- If you are living outside of Dorset we will help you live your life as normally as possible and work with you to help you keep in contact with the people who are important to you;
- You can return to live with a member of your birth family if you want to and if it is safe;
- If you have a particular need because, for example, you are disabled or living away from your home area, we will provide extra things so you can have the same opportunities as everyone else.
- You are kept safe from those who might bully or try to exploit you.

Listening to you

We promise to do our best to ensure that:

- Your views and wishes are listened to and respected;
- Your views and wishes make a difference;
- You can talk to someone who will give you independent advice.

Being healthy

We promise to do our best to ensure that:

- You are physically and emotionally healthy and we will check this by inviting you to have a health assessment once a year and making sure your carer looks after you well.

Enjoying and achieving

We promise to do our best to ensure that:

- You are able to get involved in sport, art, and culture in your spare time if you want to;
- You have a settled education, moving school only when absolutely necessary;
- You are able to continue in training or education or get work when you leave care.

Looking to the future

We promise to do our best to ensure that:

- You are treated as an individual and encouraged to become the person you want to be;
- You are properly supported to help you to achieve whatever you want to achieve in life.

Moving on

We promise to do our best to ensure that:

- If you leave care after the age of 16 you will be well prepared for it;
- You can stay with your carers after the age of 18 if you want to;
- You will be helped to move to more independent housing only when you want to.

Working together

We promise to do our best to ensure that:

- The professionals and carers that you have contact with work well together to look after you as well as possible and treat you equally as individuals;
- Professionals and carers are doing everything they are supposed to do and doing it as well as possible;
- Professionals and carers take time to get to know you in person as well as reading information about you;

Keeping our word

We promise to do our best to ensure that:

- Professionals and carers actually do what they say they will do;
- Professionals and carers only make promises that they can keep;
- Professionals and carers explain what they are doing and why and how;
- You know what you are entitled to, what is available for you and how you can access it;
- You will have an Independent Reviewing Officer who will check that people are keeping their word to you.

**Borough of Poole
Pledge for CiC and Care Leavers**



You are healthy

- We will make sure that you are supported and helped to manage the changes that affect your lives
- You will be given support, advice and information so that you can lead a healthy lifestyle
- You will have access to medical care and confidential care when you need it

You stay safe

- We will make sure that placements are as near to your community supports as possible, and try to make sure that brothers and sisters are placed together
- Unless it is an urgent situation, we will introduce you to new people gradually and support you while you are getting to know them
- Where you live will be safe and stable and wherever possible, you will not move placements
- You will be kept safe from crime, danger, bullying and discrimination

You enjoy and achieve

- We will make sure that you get the most from your education and are supported in school or college

- We will listen to your views and make sure that you have the opportunity to develop and enjoy your own interests and activities
- Your achievements will be recognised, acknowledged and valued

You can make a positive contribution

- You will be fully involved in decisions and will be given clear information and explanations
- Your comments or complaints will be dealt with openly, honestly and quickly
- Your social worker will meet regularly with you, your parents and carers
- We will make sure that you are able to keep in touch with the people that are important to you

You can achieve economic well-being

- You will be prepared as you move on from care and you will have access to advice and support into adulthood
- You will be supported if you want to continue your education
- You will be offered guidance with training, education and employment
- You will have a choice of suitable accommodation as you leave care

