

Derby City Council Corporate Parenting Policy

Context

‘Corporate Parenting’ is the term used to describe the responsibility of local authorities, as corporate bodies, to provide the best possible services and support to Looked After Children and Young People in their care.

The role of the corporate parent is to seek, for the children they look after, the outcomes that every good parent would want for their own child. While the core statutory responsibility in respect of looked after children is a Peoples Services Directorate, Childrens Services function of the authority, all members and officers of the local authority share the responsibilities of the corporate parent.

The Children Act 1989 provides the basic framework for services for children, and gives local authorities the legal responsibility for children "in care". The Children Act means that all local councillors, when elected, take on this duty of being "corporate parents" towards such children, the key responsibilities of which are:

- children in public care must be the primary focus for the resources and accountability of the local authority that has accepted a parenting responsibility for them.
- children who have spent a significant time being looked after by the local authority should afterwards be given the kind of support that decent and responsible parents would give to their own children.
- children in public care should be provided with a fully rounded set of support and care services, in partnership with health, education and housing and adults services particularly.

The Council as a whole is the ‘corporate parent’, therefore all councillors have a level of responsibility for the children looked after by the authority. Elected Members, managers and staff have different tasks and levels of responsibility, but all must take an active part in ensuring the best possible care and opportunities are available for children.

Effective Corporate Parenting by Derby City Council

The Derby City Council Corporate Parenting Strategy sets out our aspirations for children in care and care leavers and how we will work together as officers and elected Members with outside partners to ensure the services they access and the support they receive is the best it can be. In some circumstances the Council’s legal responsibility for former Looked After Children can last up to the age of 24 to ensure that their educational and training needs are met.

Corporate parenting emphasises the collective responsibility of all parts of the Council to achieve good parenting and everyone is expected to do what any good parent would do to promote their children’s safety, educational aspirations, good health and support their achievements in life.

Every elected Member of the Council has the specific responsibility of acting as a corporate parent. The Children Act 2004 reinforces the role of Councillors in supporting and driving action to improve services at a local level. The critical question that Members should ask about the way we look after children and young people in our care is: 'Would this be good enough for my child?'

Lead responsibility for implementing the Children Act 2004 rests with the Peoples Services Directorate and with all Councillors of the City Council. However, the Children's Services Department is not solely responsible and other Council departments, such as housing, leisure services and external partner agencies, such as Health, Schools and the Police, have an important role to play.

Council services must be co-ordinated and focused on providing excellent care and services that support and encourage our Looked After Children and Young People. Councillors will hold senior staff accountable for the implementation of The Corporate Parenting Strategy and engage directly with children and young people and their carers. The Corporate Parenting Committee will be the main means by which this scrutiny is ensured.

The Role of Elected Members as Corporate Parents

Elected Members have a clear responsibility to ensure that the services being provided to children in their care are of the highest quality and their role is crucial in drawing up policies, and ensuring the standards that they set are met.

Elected Members can make sure that the interests of children come first and that decisions, developments and practice in relation to any area that may present an opportunity or obstacle to Looked After Children, is scrutinised to ensure that the Council's corporate parenting responsibilities are being promoted.

Councillors set the strategic direction of the Council's services and determine the policy and priorities for local communities within the overall objectives set by the Government. Councillors can ensure that the right information is tabled or requested so that the right questions can be asked.

Members can ensure that the views of children and young people looked after are taken into account by:

- The attendance of members of the Children in Care Council at Corporate Parenting Committee meetings
- Consultation carried out in an active way in small groups of young people
- Members visiting services and meeting with staff and young people
- Members attending events organised for and by Looked After Children
- Members visiting the councils children's residential homes
- Members attending foster carer events
- Members sitting on Fostering and/ or Adoption panels

The Role of Staff as Corporate Parents

The responsibility for Corporate Parenting extends to all staff employed across the Council. Depending on the individual role there are different ways in which effective Corporate Parenting can be exercised to ensure that the Council is meeting its Corporate Parenting obligations and continually improving outcomes for the children and young people in its care.

In particular Strategic and Service Directors in each department at Derby City Council will:

- Promote the Corporate Parenting Strategy to staff across the council from induction onwards;
- Ensure, in developing services, they consider the needs of Looked After Children e.g. in developing education, employment, accommodation, training and leisure opportunities for children and young people in Derby;
- Encourage partners such as the Police, schools, voluntary sector, and health to consider the needs of Looked After Children when developing their own services, policies and practice;
- Scrutinise and challenge the Council and partners to ensure the needs of Looked After Children are satisfied;
- Encourage staff within their departments to always ensure the needs of Looked After Children are promoted.
- Promote the 'Pledge' made to children in care across their services

Staff across the council in various departments can ensure that they exercise their responsibility as corporate parents in the way that they practice and implement policies in relation to children in care. All departments have a responsibility and important role to play. Examples of how departments have actively promoted corporate parenting has included provision of leisure cards to foster carers and independent visitors to use with children in care, the targeting of apprenticeships and work experience for children in care, the provision of specific incentives and support to improve the educational attainment of children in care.

The Peoples Directorate - Childrens Services have a particular role to play in the lives of children in care. Every child who is looked after by Derby City Council must have a care plan which details the long term plan for the child's upbringing and the arrangements made by children's services to meet the child's day to day needs. All local authorities have a statutory duty to regularly review that care plan within legislative timescales. The social worker has the important responsibility of writing up and updating the care plan on regular basis. Ensuring the care plan is implemented and children in care are seen regularly, doing well in their placements, are healthy and are being supported to do the best they can in relation to their educational attainment.

There is statutory requirement for all children in care to have an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). The primary task of the IRO is ensure that the care plan for the child fully reflects the child's current needs and that the actions set out in the plan are consistent with

the local authorities legal responsibilities towards the child. The IRO carries out this function by regularly chairing the child's review; and monitoring the child's case on an on-going basis

The Pledge

The Pledge is a promise made by Derby City Council to all children in their care. The Pledge is part of Derby's commitment to give children in their care the best opportunities they can have in life. The Pledge is a commitment about the support and services children in care can expect to receive.

All adults who work for and with the Council are required to make a commitment to work to the Pledge at all times. The current pledge was updated by the Children in Care Council and launched on 26th January 2016. The Pledge has ten points and covers a number of key and important areas as identified by children in care.

The Pledge



Derby City Council

VOLUNTEERING MATTERS

- 1** We will show you how to contact your Social Worker. We will tell you who to contact if things go wrong and what to do if you need urgent help.
 - 2** We will provide a safe place for you to live. We want you to know that you are safe, protected and valued and can trust those caring for you.
 - 3** We will encourage and support you to participate in wider opportunities to build your confidence so that you are able to make safe decisions for yourself.
 - 4** If you need someone to talk to, this includes at evenings and weekends, we will make sure you know who to call.
 - 5** We will respect you for who you are. We will help you to develop a strong sense of personal identity and maintain your cultural and religious beliefs.
 - 6** We will help you to access all the services you need to keep you healthy and safe.
 - 7** We will support you to get the most from your education and encourage you to reach all your goals and achieve your potential.
 - 8** We will help you to understand all of your rights and help you to join with other young people to share your views, concerns and aspirations.
 - 9** We will ensure your voice is at the heart of all decisions made about you and that you understand why and when meetings are held.
 - 10** We will join with you to celebrate your 18th birthday and ensure you are prepared for and supported into adulthood.
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