



Haringey Council

Haringey Council

Corporate Parenting Strategy

Lead Directorate: Children and Young People's Services

Updated December 2010

Directorate

Document control

Needs completing

Version 0.1	Status 21 December 2010	Author <i>Officer's Name, Job Title, Business Unit, Directorate</i>
Document Objectives:		
Intended Recipients: Any staff working with children in care		
Monitoring Arrangements: <i>The arrangements put in place to ensure that the policy outcomes will be achieved</i>		
Training/Resource Implications:		
Approving Body and Date Approved Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee		<i>Authority to Vary Month 20XX</i>
Date of Issue		<i>Month 20XX</i>
Scheduled Review Date One year after date approved? Or following and major legislative changes		<i>Month 20XX</i>
Lead Officer: Deputy Director Children and Families <i>(a contact person who can assist with inquiries about the policy and any other tools or supporting materials that will help the policy to be understood and successfully implemented)</i>		
Path and file name \\boh\boh-shared-data\st\st\pp&c\svr\fallf\corporate policy\corporate parenting\policy document\101221 corporate parenting policy.doc		

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1. Introduction

The concept of "corporate parenting" was introduced with the launch of the *Quality Protects* programme in 1998. The principle is that the local authority is the parent of any child in their care, and thus has a legal and moral duty to provide the kind of support that any good parents would provide for their own children. This includes enhancing children's quality of life as well as simply keeping them safe (House of Commons Children, Schools and Family Committee March 2009).

This Corporate Parenting Strategy shows Haringey Council's commitment to ensuring that every child and young person in our care has a right to achieve the outcomes we want for every child. We want the children and young people in our care to grow up as happy and successful as possible.

The strategy is accompanied by an implementation plan (to follow) which requires the active engagement of all staff and of elected members.

1.1 Why corporate parenting is important

The circumstances and experiences of children and young people who are in care mean that they can be subject to many disadvantages. Since the 1980s research has shown that these young people have significantly different outcomes from their peers. The most recently published national statistics show that, despite recent improvement, at September 2009:

- on average 58 per cent of looked after children in the appropriate age group achieved level 2 at Key Stage 1 and 51 per cent achieved level 4 at Key Stage 2. The comparable percentages for all children were 85 per cent and 82 per cent respectively;
- 15 per cent of children looked after continuously for at least twelve months obtained at least 5 GCSEs or GNVQs at grades A*- C compared with 70 per cent of all children;
- 9 per cent of looked after children aged 10 or over, were cautioned or convicted for an offence during the year, two and a half times the rate for all children of this age.

Poor outcomes can be due to circumstances before the young person came in to care, such as irregular school attendance, or circumstances while in care such as placement instability. In addition more recent research is showing evidence that exposure to high levels of parental stress, neglect or abuse can have a severe effect on brain development. There are clear gaps between the development of children who face such stresses and those being brought up in less stressful households, gaps which continue through life. Many children in care will have experienced such circumstances.

So children and young people in care or looked after need champions to ensure they are given opportunities to help them overcome such disadvantages and to achieve to their maximum potential. They have a right to expect the outcomes we want for every child in Haringey, that they will:

- be healthy

- be safe
- enjoy and achieve
- make a positive contribution
- achieve economic wellbeing

They need people to promote and encourage these outcomes on their behalf in the way that all good parents would.

2. Definition

The responsibility of local authorities in improving outcomes and actively promoting the life chances of children they look after has become known as 'corporate parenting' in recognition that the task must be shared by the whole local authority and partner agencies. The role of the corporate parent is to act as the best possible parent for each child they look after and to advocate on his/her behalf to secure the best possible outcomes.¹

In our [Children and Young People's Plan](#) the Council and its partners in the Haringey Children's Trust state that we have a special responsibility for our children in care:

We have to act as parents. Together we need to ensure that our looked after children attend school and are supported to do well; that they get regular health checks; that they make friends and have a social life and that they are helped to prepare for living independently. Above all our responsibility is to listen to them.

3. Scope

There are just under 600 children and young people in care in Haringey in 2009/10. This policy applies to all the children and young people in the care of Haringey Council.

It also applies to young people aged 16-21 (or 24 in certain circumstances) who have been in care and meet the criteria to be an eligible, relevant or qualifying young person for support or assistance after leaving care. Current definitions of these terms are in the [Children's Social Care Procedures Manual](#).

Whilst this is a Haringey Council policy the Children's Trust is keen to emphasise the role that all the services delivered by the partner organisations have in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. It is everybody's business.

¹ The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Mach 2010

4. Aim

Haringey's Children and Young People's Plan 2009 –2020, developed by the Children's Trust, has adopted the following vision for all children and young people locally:

We want every child and young person to be happy, healthy, safe and confident about the future.

This policy works to put that vision in place for the children and young people for whom we are the corporate parents. It aims to ensure that:

- Young people in care can access the local services when they need them, and their experience is of the highest quality.
- Officers in different organisations know who to talk to, feel comfortable working together, share information and are jointly accountable for their work with young people in care.

5. Defining our outcomes

5.1 Involving children and young people

In Haringey we take seriously what looked after children and young people themselves expect from us. We will work to ensure that the issues identified as crucial by young people themselves² are met. All young people must be consulted about plans made for them and their reviews in ways appropriate for the individual young person.

We use a variety of measures to consult with our young people in care overall about their experiences of, and views on, being in care. This includes:

- The Director of the Children and Young People's Service meets young people in care every six weeks;
- Quarterly meetings for young people in the leaving care and asylum service;
- Stocktake – an annual evaluation³ of services by young people in care;
- The Boys Group, for primary school age boys;
- Young Advisors – young people who provide a consultancy service for professionals;
- Youth Mark Assessors who will assess and evaluate how well organisations provide services;
- Involving them in staff recruitment, the commissioning process for services and tendering for semi-independent housing;
- Training young people for regulation 33 inspections;
- Involvement in Total Respect training.

² [Celebrating success: what helps looked after children succeed](#) SWIA Jun 2006

³ [Children in Care Stocktake](#) June 12th 2010 report to Corporate Parenting Group July 2010

The Council is also setting up a Children in Care Council. A report on the proposals was submitted to the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee in November 2010. The report noted that initial meetings had taken place with young people in care who were suggesting that the forum should be called the Young and in Care Council (YCC). They have also proposed that YCC should have two sub groups, one for children under 12 and another for older children 13 and above, and a representative for the national forum.

5.2 What looked after children and young people want

We know from national studies that children in care want:

- to have more people that genuinely care about them;
- increased stability and consistency;
- more encouragement, support and opportunity for greater participation;
- social workers to spend time with them and act in their interests;
- social workers and others to take decisive action where their needs are not being met;
- increased support for them in their education;
- good support for those leaving care and becoming independent;
- more positive attitudes towards them.

From the stock take activity in July 2010 we know that locally:

- the majority of younger children felt safe in care but the opposite was the case for older children;
- 25% of younger children thought that help with their education was poor and 40% that help in finding good jobs in the future was poor;
- 78% of the teenagers thought that help with education and getting good jobs was poor or very poor;
- 60% of younger children said they enjoyed good activities and leisure time, but 22% had very negative responses and 64% of older children rated these experiences as poor;
- Both groups said they would prefer their social worker to visit monthly;
- Both groups had little confidence in their views being listened to.

A full summary of the results is included in the ¹ [Children in Care Stocktake](#) report to the Corporate Parenting Group in July 2010.

5.3 Outcomes

Effective corporate parenting results in the following outcomes for looked after children and young people

1. Improved care (including quality and stability of placements)

- when children are well matched to the best placement for them and supported in those placements based on care plans that are regularly reviewed are positively assessed externally by Ofsted
- Children and young people are cared for by staff or carers who are safely recruited, trained, supervised and managed to deliver the highest quality of care

2. Improved health - because children and young people have regular health assessments and their health needs are responded to quickly and

effectively

- 3. Improved emotional well-being** - Children and young people are supported to improve their emotional well being, increase self esteem and confidence so that they can contribute and make positive contributions that mean they influence the development of services and policies / plans that impact on them now and in the future
- 4. Improved educational outcomes** – in that when children and young people reach their potential with support and additional help when needed
- 5. Increased opportunities to enjoy themselves** - Looked after children have access to the same range of social activities, places to go and things to do, that are available to all young people
- 6. Children and young people are supported in planning for their future** - they are engaged in education, employment and training opportunities that will support them in achieving future economic well being and success

6. Principles

Haringey Children's Trust has adopted the [London Pledge](#). The Pledge aims to ensure that children and young people in care across London have equal access to the same range of key services and support wherever they live, go to school or access employment or training opportunities in London. The London Pledge is a commitment from all Children's Trusts and their partners to all children and young people in care and leaving care. This pledge has been developed in partnership with young people, Lead Members for Children's Services and partners from the Community and Voluntary Sector.

Principles

1. We will only promise you things that we know we can do.
2. We will care for you as an individual person with your own specific needs which we will plan to meet.
3. You will have the opportunity to talk to your social worker alone every time he/she visits you.
4. We will always involve you in the decisions we take for you and we will respect your right to make choices about your life.
5. We aim to be the best as parents and to make your experience of being looked after a positive one.
6. We want you to be healthy, safe, have fun and gain achievements for yourself. We want you have stability in your life, to make a positive contribution to your community and to leave care able to make your way successfully in life. We will support you to achieve all this.

7. We will have expectations of you as well and we will make these clear to you.
8. We will listen to you as individuals and as a group and we want you to tell us when you meet us whether we are keeping our promises.
9. We will take account of your particular needs, especially those relating to disability, race, culture, religion and sexuality. We will take account of anything that is leading to you being treated unfairly and will give you support to overcome it, including anyone treating you unfairly because you are in care.
10. We will ensure you receive your full set of rights, as set out in relevant legislation, regulations and guidance and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
11. We will also ensure you receive your London Pledge entitlements, wherever you live. Any failure on the part of councils and their Children's Trust partners to deliver this will be promptly resolved.

7. Roles and responsibilities

7.1 The role of Councillors

Elected Members have a 'special responsibility'.

'When you became a councillor, you also became responsible for ensuring that the Council acts as 'Corporate Parent' for all the children in its care. The role of the Corporate Parent is to seek for the children in public care the outcomes that every good parent would want for their children'. Frank Dobson

- Councillors do not have to be social care experts to help looked after children. They need to make it their business to find out who and where these children are and to make sure the council is doing its very best to help them.
- Councillors who take on roles that relate to Children Services such as the Cabinet Members for Children Services who have responsibilities defined in statutory guidance, take particular responsibility.
- Councillors who do not have a direct role with children should still exercise this responsibility in their ward work, and will often do so in their role as School Governor.
- Councillors have a right and a duty to question practice.

In 2003 the DfES published *'If this were my child... A councillor's guide to being a good corporate parent'*:

If this were your child... you would want to know they were well looked after, making progress at school, getting good health care and being given the chance to pursue hobbies and interests.

If this were your child... as they grew older, you would want to know that they were being encouraged to become independent, with support if they needed it, that they were well linked in to the community and that opportunities for further education, training and jobs were opening up to them.

7.2 The role of council officers

All officers in the Council (and Children's Trust) are corporate parents.

a) Children and Young People's services (CYPS)

- The Director of Children's Services has a statutory role defined in government guidance.
- CYPS officers have additional responsibilities as they directly manage the case work and support for looked after children and young people, and care leavers.
- The Deputy Director for Children and Families has direct responsibility for corporate parenting and making sure that it does happen.
- Other officers who have regular interaction with the children and young people who are likely to hear their views on the care and services they are receiving have a responsibility to ensure that these are reported to the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee so any concerns, issues or trends can be identified and acted on.
- Schools need to ensure that they know exactly which children and young people are looked after and be aware that they have particular responsibilities to all looked after children and young people, including those looked after at home.

b) Housing services

Officers working in housing services have additional responsibilities to looked after young people and care leavers. They must ensure:

- effective joint working arrangements with clear procedures and resolution mechanisms
- that support for independent living includes awareness amongst young people of their responsibilities to the community within which they live, and the potential consequences of their actions.

This will be demonstrated when looked after children and young people or care leavers find somewhere suitable to live and manage to sustain it.

c) Leisure and recreation services

As corporate parents, councils should encourage Looked After children and young people and care leavers to take up hobbies and interests and to make sure that culture and leisure services are accessible to them, including those children with disabilities. Services must ensure that looked after young people and care leavers have access to and are integrated into local youth activities

and achieve the same or similar goals and achievements as other children and young people.

8. The legal context

[United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)

Built on varied legal systems and cultural traditions, the Convention is a universally agreed set of non-negotiable standards and obligations. These basic standards—also called human rights—set minimum entitlements and freedoms that should be respected by governments.

[The Children Act 1989](#) is the key piece of legislation with respect to corporate parenting and sets out the duties of local authorities in relation to children looked after by them. Section 27 of the Act places a duty on Housing, Education and Health Authorities to assist Social Services to fulfil their functions under the Act, and this includes assisting with the corporate parenting function.

[The Children \(Leaving Care\) Act 2000](#) set the agenda and duties of local authorities towards young people who have been looked after in bridging the gap between these young people and their peers.

[The Children Act 2004](#) provides a legislative spine for the wider strategy for improving children's lives. The Children Act 2004 places a new duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of looked after children.

[Children and Young Persons Act 2008](#) reforms the statutory framework for the care system to ensure that children and young people receive high-quality care and support and to drive improvements in the delivery of services focused on the needs of the child.

[The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement Case Review](#) March 2010

This guidance sets out the functions and responsibilities of local authorities and partner agencies under Part 3 of the Children Act 1989. In particular it describes how local authorities should carry out their responsibilities in relation to care planning, placement and case review for looked after children. These responsibilities are designed to support the local authority in its primary duty set out in section 22(3) of the 1989 Act to safeguard and promote the welfare of looked after children and act as good corporate parents.

9. Equalities and diversity

In order to evidence that the needs of **all** local looked after children and young people are met the following should be recorded:

- All equalities strands should be considered throughout assessments and when services are being provided (disability, HIV/AIDS, gender, race, nationality, religion, sexuality)
- The communication and language needs of looked after children and young people and their carers should always be considered e.g. there may

be need for an interpreter or written material in an alternate format or a language other than English.

- Arrangements should be made for advocates, interpreters, relatives or friends, to assist a looked after child or young person where necessary.

10. Implementation

10.1 Governance arrangements

The responsibility for overseeing the implementation of this strategy lies with the Haringey's Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee which was established in April 2009. The Committee reports to the Cabinet and full Council and is chaired by the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and has three other Members of the Majority Group and three Members of the Minority Group.

The terms of reference originally agreed by Cabinet and then reconfirmed by the Council's Cabinet in June 2010 are as follows:

- To be responsible for the Council's role as Corporate parent for those children and young people who are in care
- To ensure the views of children in care are heard
- To seek to ensure that the life chances of children in care are maximised in terms of health, educational attainment and access to training and employment to aid the transition to a secure and fulfilling adulthood
- To ensure that the voice and needs of disabled children are identified and provided for
- To provide an advocacy function within the Children's Trust and the Council on behalf of children in care
- To monitor the quality of care provided by the council to Children in Care
- To ensure that children leaving care have sustainable arrangements for their future wellbeing

10.2 Monitor

The [Children and Young People's Plan](#) and [Safeguarding Action Plan](#) include the key activities to ensure that this policy is implemented. We will audit and monitor performance of our activities to ensure that we are fulfilling our role as corporate parents and achieving the outcomes set out in section 5.

Specifically we will monitor that:

All Looked After Children will have:

- An allocated social worker
- Statutory reviews at least as often as specified in the Children Act 1989 regulations, or more often if needed
- A care plan
- A placement plan
- A personal educational plan (for all 5 -16 year olds)
- Specific educational monitoring and support via the virtual school for looked after children
- Regular health assessments and reviews
- Free accommodation whilst they are in full time higher education
- Free access to leisure facilities
- The right to an independent advocacy service
- The right to know how to make complaints and to have their complaints investigated, with feedback
- Their views taken into account

All children leaving care will have:

- a pathway plan and personal advisor if they are aged 16 or over and meet the eligible, relevant or qualifying criteria, see section 3 above
- if they are not eligible they should be assessed as a child in need and a plan drawn up to identify the support and services which will be needed by them and their family to ensure that the return home is successful

10.3 Training

All relevant officers will be made aware of their corporate parenting responsibilities through generic and specific training.

10.4 Review

This strategy will be reviewed **annually** (or sooner if new legislation, codes of practice or national standards are introduced).

11. Appendices

Appendix 1: Guidance and resources

[The Who Cares trust website](#). Gives an insight into what life in care is like and what the issues are for children in care.

[Guidance on the Education of Children and Young People in Public Care](#).

[Guidance on health of looked-after children](#) – on the Department of Health website.

[The Ofsted Inspection framework](#) – on the Ofsted website.

Haringey Children and Young People's Participation Strategy 2011-2014
(currently in draft)