



Haringey Council

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Title:	Corporate Parenting Strategy
Lead Officer:	Debbie Haith
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Haringey Council

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Corporate Parenting Strategy

Lead Directorate: Children and Young People's Services

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Directorate

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Contents

	Page
1. Introduction	6
2. Definition.....	7
3. Scope	7
4 Roles and responsibilities	8
4.1 The role of Councillors.....	8
4.2 The role of council officers and partners	9
5. What our looked after children and young people have to say 9	
5.1 Involving children and young people	9
5.2 What looked after children and young people want	10
6 Our Vision and Aims	10
7 Principles	11
8. Objectives	12
9 Implementation.....	13
9.1 Governance arrangements.....	13
9.2 Officer arrangements.....	13
9.3 Monitor.....	13
9.4 Training.....	14
9.5 Review.....	14
10 Equalities and diversity	14
11 Appendices	16
Appendix 1: Definitions of eligible, relevant and qualifying young people ..	16
Appendix 2: The legal context.....	17
Appendix 2: Guidance and resources	18

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 will be accompanied by an action plan to guide implementation, which requires the active engagement of all staff and of elected members.

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 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 2009-2020](#) 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 were 600 children and young people in care at the end of 2010. This strategy 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. Definitions of these terms is given in *appendix 1*. The definitions can also be found in the [Children's Social Care Procedures Manual](#).

We recognise that many agencies in the borough have a role in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and therefore contribute to the well being of children in care or young people who have been in care.

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

4 Roles and responsibilities

4.1 The role of Councillors

Under the 2004 Children Act and accompanying statutory guidance² the Cabinet Member for Children's Services has the lead political role in ensuring that children looked after by the local authority have:

- their interests protected,
- their opportunities maximised,
- their educational achievement enhanced,
- their voices heard, and
- care services shaped to meet their needs.

However the guidance also states that all members of the local authority have a shared responsibility for corporate parenting.. Councillors do not have to be social care experts to help children who are in care or looked after. 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. The role of the Corporate Parent is to ensure for children in public care the outcomes that every good parent would want for their own children. Councillors have a right and a duty to question practice. Councillors who do not have a direct role with children can still exercise this responsibility and promote the interests of children in care through their involvement with other council services, their ward work or external roles such as being a school governor.

In 2003 the DfES (DCSF as was) published *'If this were my child: A councillor's guide to being a good corporate parent'*. This guide emphasised the role of councillors as:

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.

Haringey has a Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee (CPAC), which brings together members from across the political spectrum to focus on the corporate parenting role. It is supported by officers from the Housing Service, Health service and Children and Young People Service. The CPAC is responsible for the Council's corporate parenting role and for those children and young people who are in care. It will oversee the implementation of this strategy and the action plan. Further information on the CPAC is given in the section on implementation and governance arrangements below.

² [The Roles and Responsibilities of the Lead Member for Children's Services and the Director of Children's Services](#)

4.2 The role of council officers and partners

Under the Children Act 2004 the Director of Children's Services (DCS) has a statutory role. Guidance stipulates that one of their key roles is supporting looked after children, in particular by promoting strong corporate parenting and focusing on improving their outcomes.

All officers in the Council and Children's Trust are corporate parents and have the following specific roles:

- promoting the needs of children in care and care leavers;
- considering the impact on the lives of children in care and care leavers when setting priorities and establishing policies;
- contributing to the development of services which aim to improve the life chances of children in care and care leavers and which reflect the priorities of the corporate parenting strategy.

5. What our looked after children and young people have to say

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 themselves³ 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 evaluation⁴ 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.

The Council has set up a children in care council, called Aspire: Giving Haringey Young People in Care a Voice. A report on the proposals was submitted to the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee in November

³ [Celebrating success: what helps looked after children succeed](#) SWIA Jun 2006

⁴ [Children in Care Stocktake](#) June 12th 2010 report to Corporate Parenting Group July 2010

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 aged 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.

6 Our Vision and Aims

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 strategy works to put this 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 across the council and their relevant partners know who to talk to, feel comfortable working together, share information and are jointly accountable for their work with young people in care.

7 Principles

All partners in Haringey's Children's Trust have 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.

The Council and its partners are fully committed to delivering on the principles within the London Pledge. The next section sets out our specific objectives that we are committed to achieving for our looked after children.

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.

8. Objectives

To meet the vision, key outcomes and the principles set out above as well as acting on what our looked after children have told us we have developed the following key objectives:

A. We will improve the care (including quality and stability of placements) for all of our looked after children through:

- ensuring children are well matched to the best placement for them and supported in those placements based on care plans that are regularly reviewed and 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

B. We will seek to maintain and improve the health of our looked after children through regular health assessments and ensuring their health needs are responded to quickly and effectively

C. We will improve the emotional well-being of our looked after children and 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

D. We will improve the educational outcomes of our looked after children to ensure that they reach their potential, with support and additional help when needed

E. We will increase opportunities for our looked after children to enjoy themselves through ensuring they have access to the same range of social activities, places to go and things to do, that are available to all young people

F. We will ensure that our looked after children are supported in planning for their future through seeking their engagement in education, employment and training opportunities that will support them in achieving future economic well being and success

9 Implementation

9.1 Governance arrangements

The responsibility for overseeing the implementation of this strategy lies with Haringey's Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee which was established in April 2009. The Committee reports to the Cabinet and full Council. It 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

Twice a year the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee meets with the Children in Care Council to ensure members are aware of the views of young people on the progress of corporate parenting in Haringey.

9.2 Officer arrangements

There is an interagency officer corporate steering group which is responsible for the development of services to secure the best outcomes for children and young people looked after. This group will take forward the corporate parenting strategy through the development of an action plan to be agreed annually by the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee. They can also be commissioned to undertake particular pieces of work.

9.3 Monitor

The [Children and Young People's Plan](#) and [Safeguarding and Children Looked After Children 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.

We will monitor that all looked after children 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)⁵
- 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

We will monitor that all children leaving care 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

We will consider:

- the looked after children service plan
- the annual reviews of the statement of purpose and overview report of Haringey children's homes, the fostering service and the adoption service
- the annual report of the looked after children review service
- the overview of complaints relating to looked after children and young people and care leavers

9.4 Training

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

9.5 Review

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

10 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:

⁵ And up to 18 for children who remain in education. This will apply to all children in 2015 when the school leaving age rises to 18. It will rise to 17 in 2013.

- All equalities strands should be considered throughout assessments and when services are being provided (disability, HIV/AIDS, gender, race, nationality, belief and 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.

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11 Appendices

Appendix 1: Definitions of eligible, relevant and qualifying young people

Child protection procedures manual (extract): leaving care

Eligible Young People

They are aged 16 or 17, have been Looked After for a period or periods totalling at least 13 weeks starting after their 14th birthday and are still Looked After. There is a duty to support these young people up to the age of 18, wherever they are living. This does include young people remanded into local authority care if the period of remand is for 13 weeks or more and asylum-seeking young people, if they were looked after for the required 13 weeks. It does not include children who have been in receipt of a number of planned short-term breaks, and return to their parents / someone with parental responsibility after each one or young people who return home whilst still looked after for a period of 6 months or more.

Relevant Young People

They are aged 16 or 17 and are no longer Looked After, having previously been in the category of Eligible Young Person when Looked After. There is a duty to support relevant young people up to the age of 18, wherever they are living. This does include young people detained by the Court or in hospital who would otherwise be eligible. However, if after leaving the Looked After service, a young person returns home for a period of 6 months or more to be cared for by a parent or adult relative and the return home has been formally agreed as successful, he or she will no longer be a "Relevant Young Person".

Former Relevant Young People

They are aged 18 to 21 (or up to 24 if attending an agreed course in further or higher education), and have left the Looked After service having been previously either "eligible", "relevant" or both. There is a duty to consider the need to support these young people wherever they are living. If at the age of 21 the young person is still being helped by the local authority with full-time education or training, s/he remains a former relevant child to the end of the agreed programme.

Qualifying Young People

In order to be a qualifying young person s/he should have been Looked After for at least 24 hours post his/her 16th birthday, apart from those young people covered by the fact they were being Privately Fostered or subject to a Special Guardianship Order.

Any young person aged under 21 (under 24 if in full-time education or training) who cease to be Looked After or Accommodated in a variety of other settings, or ceases to be Privately Fostered.

Appendix 2: 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 Roles and Responsibilities of the Lead Member for Children's Services and the Director of Children's Services.](#) DCSF 2009 (statutory guidance issued under sections 18[7] and 19[2] of Children Act 2004)

[The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement Case Review](#) March 2010 DCSF/DfE [came into force on 1st April 2011]

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.

[The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review \(England\) Regulations 2010](#) Statutory Instrument 2010 No. 959 made 24th March 2010 [came into force - - 1st April 2011]

[The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 3: Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers](#) DfE [came into force on 1st April 2011]

[Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering services \(HTML format\)](#) published by Department for Education 11 March 2011

The guidance sets out the functions and responsibilities of local authorities and their partner agencies in relation to fostering services under Parts 3, 7 and 8 of the Children Act 1989. It also covers responsibilities arising from the Children Act 2004 and the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 in relation to fostering services.

[Statutory Guidance on Promoting the Health and Well-being of Looked After Children](#) Department of Health 16 November 2009

[Promoting the Educational Achievement of Looked After Children Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities](#) DCSF/DfE March 2010

Appendix 2: 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.

[Having Corporate Parents:](#) A report of children's views by the Children's Rights Director for England. Ofsted 2011

[Young person's guide to care planning](#) DfE worked with the Office of the Children's Rights Director to produce this young person's guide to the Care Planning regulations. Available on Welcome to Rights4me! the website of the Children's Rights Director for England. March 2011

[If This Were My Child:](#) a Councillor's Guide to Being a Good Corporate Parent DCSF 2003 (this has been archived by DfE but is still available for reference use)

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