

Devon's Corporate Parenting and Sufficiency Strategies 2022-2024

Report of the Head of Children's Health and Wellbeing and the Senior Manager for Corporate Parenting

Background

For children and young people in care, and care leavers (relevant and former relevant), every local authority has unique responsibilities to support them to be feel safe, well and cared for. In carrying out their roles, the whole Council, including all its staff and elected Members, should consider those children and young people as their own. This is our duty to be effective and responsible corporate parents. We outline our vision, principles, and commitments for corporate parenting in Devon in our new Strategy.

We also have a legal duty to publish our plans for how we will support children to remain safely with their families at home wherever possible, as well as how, for those children and young people who do come into care, we will provide sufficient, suitable, and stable accommodation and support. This is known as the 'Sufficiency Duty'. Our Sufficiency Strategy sets out these plans.

Summary

Our vision is for all children and young people in Devon to have the best start in life and the opportunity to thrive. This means they receive the right support, at the right time, and in the right place.

The Sufficiency Strategy describes how we will do this by working restoratively with children and families to build on their strengths and resilience and help them remain safely at home together. We know that children who are safe and well with their families, and who do not come into our care, achieve better outcomes in life. Not only does this improve the lives and experiences of those children and young people, but it also ensures social care services are more sustainable to meet the needs of present and future populations.

For children and young people who need to come into our care, and care-experienced young adults after leaving care¹, we want to be the best possible corporate parents. This means securing their immediate protection from harm and supporting good health and wellbeing, including promoting recovery and resilience after trauma and neglect. However, it is also about being aspirational and ambitious for care-experienced young people to get the most out of life and be independent and thrive as young adults.

Our vision for corporate parenting and our commitments to ensuring sufficiency should be considered together. Both support each other's aims for children and young people to be safe, well and achieving in life. Safety and stability at home, especially while living in care, underpins good outcomes in all aspects of children and young people's lives. As such, sufficiency is a fundamental part of being the best possible corporate parents.

The strategies cover the three-year period of 2022-2024.

The voice of children and young people

Putting the views and interests of children and young people at the heart of all that we do in Devon underpins our approach to corporate parenting and sufficiency. Our vision and strategic plans for corporate parenting and sufficiency in Devon have been developed out of what care-experienced children and young people have told us about their lives and experiences of care.

We have heard from young people over the last 18 months, both through our regular participation groups and in engagement events with strategic leaders, about their experiences living in care. These events have included 'Building Back Better for Devon's Care leavers in October 2020 and the DCFP Executive's 'Our Lives with COVID-19 and What Next' in June 2020. In addition, the Brightspots survey 2020/21, despite a lower than anticipated return, has provided valuable insight into the lives, wellbeing and experiences of children and young people in our care.

Young people have also produced '[The Promise](#)', which is a set of commitments, under five principles, which we promise to do for all children in care. If a child or young person feels that we are not following a promise,

¹ young people, aged 18-25, who are eligible for leaving care services (relevant and former relevant care leavers)

they are able to discuss this with their foster carer, social worker or IRO. The Promise forms the basis of how we want to be and act as corporate parents in Devon.

Shared ambitions

Corporate parenting is a shared endeavour, across public sector agencies, and with our providers. Our Corporate Parenting Strategy has been co-developed alongside partner agencies who are signed up to our vision and commitments. We will work together with them to ensure we are doing all we can to support care-experienced children and young people, appreciating the particular role we have as corporate parents and the unique position in law and society that children and young people in care and care leavers occupy. Given the important role they play in the lives of the majority of children and young people in care, foster carers are also committed to our vision and values of corporate parenting. We will continue to support them to do this.

Governance and delivery

Corporate parenting

Strategic governance for the Corporate Parenting Strategy will be to the Corporate Parenting Strategic Partnership Board. The Board will provide strategic oversight of the delivery of the vision and commitments of the Corporate Parenting Strategy and will monitor outcomes for care-experienced children and young people. To do this effectively, representatives of care-experienced young people will be members of the Board to make sure their lived experience is continually informing and shaping the strategic delivery of our responsibilities as corporate parents.

Reporting to the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board, four operational sub-groups will work to agreed delivery plans: These groups are as follows:

- A place called home
- Health, wellbeing and identity
- Education, employment and training, and independence
- Participation, engagement and co-production

Safety and protection from harm will be a cross-cutting theme across all operational groups.

Each sub-group will report annually to the Partnership Board, which will focus on a theme every quarter. This will include tracking progress against the delivery plan, hearing the views and experiences of children and young people, and understanding the difference the strategy is making in their lives. The operational groups will be multi-agency and remain sufficiently close to practice.

The governance structure can be found on page 41 of the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

Sufficiency

The Place Called Home Programme Board will provide the governance for the Sufficiency Strategy. The workstreams of the Programme cover each of the four areas of the Strategy, including the delivery and tracking of relevant actions and outcomes.

Scrutiny and the role of Members

As and when required, the Head of Service for Children's Social Care, on behalf of the Strategic Partnership Board, will report to the Children's Scrutiny Committee on the delivery of the Corporate Parenting Strategy and outcomes for care-experienced children and young people in Devon. The Head of Children's Health and Wellbeing will report to the Children's Scrutiny Committee on the delivery of the Sufficiency Strategy and outcomes for care-experienced children and young people in Devon.

Members will play both a role as scrutineers, as well as fellow corporate parents. In this context, Members will provide support and challenge as part of the Corporate Parenting governance structure. This is key in ensuring our corporate parenting duties are truly Council-wide.

In addition, we are currently arranging opportunities for Members to meet our children and young people, in early 2022, to talk with them about what it is like to grow up in Devon today and their experiences of living in care. We hope this will bring the voice of children and young people through scrutiny.