



To: Health and Wellbeing Board

Date: 5th February 2025

Title: Corporate Parenting

1 Purpose of the Note

1.1 The purpose of this note is to:

- 1) Share information with the Health & Wellbeing Board in relation to the role of Corporate Parents and Corporate Parenting Board.
- 2) Provide feedback from children and young people in relation to services and areas they identify as gaps.
- 3) Update on the work undertaken linked to meeting the needs of children and young people in care and those who have left care (care leavers).

2 Recommendations

2.1 **Health and Wellbeing Board are recommended to**

- 1) **Request all Partners consider care experienced (care leaver) as a protected characteristic**
- 2) **Provide support to progress a joint review of all services that work with children in care and care leavers in meeting their mental health and emotional wellbeing and to address any inequalities in accessing services**
- 3) **Consider free prescriptions for Care Leavers**

3 Information/Background

3.1 As off the 23 January 2025, there are 708 children in care, 77 of whom are identified as an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child (UASC). In addition, there are 666 care leavers open to social care.

3.2 Just over 70% of our children in care live with foster carers (including kinship), under 9% live in a children's home, the remaining children live with either parents (some through reunification), in supported accommodation, custody or are placed for adoption.

3.3 The Children Act (2004) placed a duty on the local authority to promote co-operation with partners and other agencies in order to improve the wellbeing of children in their area. It also placed duties on a range of organisations and individuals to ensure they too give sufficient regard to children in need of help and safeguarding. Amendments made by the Children and Social Work Act (2017) to the Children Act (2004) strengthened this already important relationship by placing new duties on the police, integrated care boards (ICBs) and the local authority, as statutory safeguarding

partners. Safeguarding partners are under a duty to make arrangements to work together, and with other partners locally including education providers and childcare settings, to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area.

- 3.4 In addition, the Children and Social Work Act (2017) also states that when a child or young person comes into the care of the local authority or is under 25 and was looked after by the authority for at least 13 weeks after their 14th birthday, the authority becomes their corporate parent.
- 3.5 Additional statutory guidance for local authorities was published in February (2018). on applying corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers ¹.
- 3.6 There are 7 Corporate Parenting principles applying to children in care and care leavers:
 1. To act in their best interests, and promote their physical and mental health and well-being
 2. To encourage them to express their views, wishes and feelings
 3. To take into account their views, wishes and feelings
 4. To help them gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners
 5. To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes for them
 6. For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work
 7. To prepare them for adulthood and independent living
- 3.7 It is not one person who is the corporate parent but the whole of the local authority, which includes relevant partners who have a collective responsibility for children in care and care leavers in a corporate parenting role.²
- 3.8 In their response to the Care Review, the Government confirmed that it will extend corporate parenting duties. As the change will require new legislation, the Government is now refining which public bodies corporate parenting will be extended to and how this will be implemented, as well as considering adding a new corporate parenting principle for organisations to reduce the stigma and discrimination that children in care and care leavers face.
- 3.9 Our role as Corporate Parents is to ensure that we strive for our children in care and care leavers to experience the care, love and support that we would hope all children would receive and that we take steps to ensure that we advocate for them and continue to challenge the disadvantage that these children and young people experience.

¹https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a93eb3ae5274a5b87c2fde4/Applying_corporate_parenting_principles_to_looked-after_children_and_care_leavers.pdf

²<https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/corporate-parenting-resource-pack-councillors#working-with-partners>

- 3.10 It is of note that the Childrens Services ILACS Ofsted inspection report from June 2022 identified as an area for improvement' *The mental health and emotional well-being provision for care leavers*'.
- 3.11 Further to this our Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) which focused on serious youth violence in March 2024 identified an area for improvement as '*Children wait too long to receive mental health assessments from the child and adolescent mental health services crisis teams, and children who become looked after wait too long for their initial health assessment*'.

4 Corporate Parenting Board

- 4.1 Our Corporate Parenting Strategy (appendix 1) and Pledge to our children in care (appendix 2), focuses on the importance of hearing and acting upon the direction they give us to continuously improve, be inclusive and asks all professionals to commit to work with them as requested through the Pledge.
- 4.2 Our Corporate Parenting Board is one of the ways in which we ensure we listen to children in care and care leavers to make improvements, based upon what they tell us. Board is chaired by Cllr Seaman, with a young person as vice chair and attended by foster carers, health, education and social care professionals. Children and young people attend board to share their views and experiences and an action tracker 'you said, we did' evidence's what we have done in response to any issues raised.
- 4.3 A common theme that has been raised by young people relates to access to services in relation to mental health and emotional wellbeing.
- 4.4 Some actions have been taken by the Board to address these, including the development of the 'It's Ok, Not to be OK' with a QR code flyer, providing a link to resources in multiple languages. A young person had raised the issue with the board of the stigma attached to mental health within certain cultures and stated that their experience was that they weren't allowed to talk about it. As English had not been her first language, she felt it was important that all children and young people knew they could get help and support.
- 4.5 A presentation was shared with the board to reflect commissioned services that meet the needs of children and young people in relation to mental health and emotional wellbeing.
- 4.6 This included Coventry's Children and Young People's Emotional Health and Wellbeing Service jointly commissioned with the ICB, 'Compass Shine', which supports children and young people from 5 to 18 years, and up to 25, if they have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) or are a care leaver, contract runs until October 2025. ³ Recent data suggests that there is an average 18 week waiting list for access to direct support for children and young people.
- 4.7 We have a jointly funded service for children in care the through CAMHS Children in Care team (formerly CAMHS LAC), which can be referred into by professionals.

³ <https://www.compass-uk.org/services/compass-coventry-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-service/>

There are some challenges with data collection, however analysis of access to the service current data for this year from April to September is below:

- Accepted referrals:
 - 2023/2024 – 124
 - 2024/2025 – 40 (Q1 and Q2)
- Referral to consultation:
 - 2023/2024 – 0 to 4 weeks – 92% average
 - 2024/2025 – 0 to 4 weeks – 85% average
- Gender
 - 2023/2024 – 56% males, 44% females
 - 2024/2025 – 48% males, 53% females (Q1 and Q2)
- Training / consultations
 - 2023/2024 – 78 sessions
 - 2024/2025 – 40 sessions (Q1 and Q2)

- 4.8 The service also offers drop-in session to foster carers and professionals for consultations and our children's homes have a dedicated CAMHS worker assigned to work with each of them.
- 4.9 However, despite there being a jointly funded dedicated CAMHS service for children in care, alongside Kooth⁴, (an online service offering 1-1 support and signposting) and Compass Shine, our young people continue to tell us that access to services is difficult, and parents/ carers and children continue to raise this as an issue that they need more timely support.
- 4.10 Recent Information received regarding a drop in service that has been established with the Children's Society (though health inequalities funding) will be shared at the next board, that does offer some support to young people up to the age of 25 ' *Time for young people* ', however information relating to this has only recently been shared and it is unclear if children in care and care leavers have accessed it.
- 4.11 Coventry's Children's Commissioning & Partnership service are undertaking a mapping exercise to fully understand the scope of services currently being offered to all children and young people in Coventry in relation to mental health and emotional wellbeing. There are ongoing discussions with the ICB in terms of reviewing current services, existing contracts and needs analysis. This is a complex area and it is recognised that the ICB also work with Warwickshire, with services being offered jointly to or individually with each local authorities.
- 4.12 Care leavers have access to mental health and wellbeing support via 'Ask Jan'. 'Ask Jan' provides 24/7 access to mental health and wellbeing support and guidance as well as access to counselling support, wellbeing online content, life coaching and legal advice.
- 4.13** Coventry has benefited from being host to one of the NHS England and NHS Improvement (West Midlands) Vanguard for the Framework of Integrated Care. Coventry Children's Services has worked in partnership with the ICB, as one of its 'test and learn' sites, to support the progression of the Trauma Informed Recovery Support framework that has been designed by young people who have experienced

⁴ <https://www.kooth.com/parent-faqs>

trauma and adversity, telling us to not label them as bad, or diagnose them as mad, but instead to connect them back to their community and ensure professionals working with them are trauma informed, are kind and know their story. The Trauma Informed Recovery Support framework has been renamed 'Positive Directions' by our young people, and the team of youth workers and occupational therapists are based in our Edge of Care team and a speech and language therapist in our Youth Justice Service, adopting a strengths and relationship based social approach to trauma, using a suite of universal and bespoke social prescribing offers, all underpinned by psychologically informed case formulation.

- 4.14 The Health of children in care (HeCIC- formerly HeLAC) operational group feeds into the HeCIC strategic group which has a number of priorities. These priorities include several key points: identifying essential health data for collection and exploring the use of ICR for input and gathering health data to inform commissioning and strategic planning; exploring funding options for Health Navigator for Care Leavers and reviewing the scoping exercise for health transition pathways to ascertain benefits and risks; completing data collection to identify the impact of FAS on Coventry Children in Care; strategic members reviewing identified barriers to accessing services or gaps in services escalated by Operational HeCIC; and reviewing statutory data and providing feedback to operational teams, as well as meeting with YP to discuss implementation and gather insights from other areas already implementing similar initiatives.
- 4.15 Our duty to meet the holistic health needs of children in care is reported to the DfE on an annual basis, reviewed regularly by HECIC and includes the following:

Description (timeliness)	Dec-24	Statistical Neighbors Av. 2023/24	All England Av. 2023/24
% Children in Care Review Health Assessments Completed (OC2)	93.5%	90.1%	89.0%
% Children in Care (Under 5) Review Health Assessments	92.3%		
% Children in Care (5 and Over) Review Health Assessments	96.0%		
% Children in Care Review Health Assessment Completed (Total Children in Care RHA)	95.3%		
% Children in Care Dental Checks Completed (OC2)	86.0%	83.8%	79.0%
% Children in Care SDQs Completed (OC2)	89.3%	73.4%	77.0%
% Care Leaver Health Summaries completed [^]	95.1%		

% Children in Care Immunisations Completed (OC2)	85.3%		

4.15 There are some challenges with the initial health assessment timeliness, as noted in the JTAI, when children enter care, which are being addressed by HECIC, which are linked to the process of referral to request the health assessment.

5 Support to Care Leavers

5.1 A West Midlands ADCS letter from January 2025, states: *Care Experienced Young People in our region have been consistent throughout this programme that their top 3 priorities are: **accessible and cheap travel and transport, easy access to emotional and mental health provision and discounts on utilities.***

5.2 Based upon feedback, 'ask me what matters' our Care leavers tell us that they struggle with loneliness and emotional well-being and mental health. They also report that it is positive that they have access to gym membership across the city.



5.3 There is duty on local authorities to consult on and then publish their 'local offer' for care leavers, which sets out both care leavers' legal entitlements and the additional discretionary support that the local authority provides. ⁵

5.4 Our commitment to our children in care and Care Leavers was amplified in September 2024 when Coventry City Council unanimously approved new

⁵ <https://www.coventry.gov.uk/childrens-social-care/care-leavers>

protections for young people who have spent time in care, with Care Experienced (care leavers) being ratified as a locally recognised protected characteristic.

- 5.5 In addition to writing to the Secretary of State and to the city's three MPs to call for care experience to be treated as a national Protected Characteristic, CCC committed to writing to all public bodies represented in the city and the Chamber of Commerce to make them aware of this motion and issues facing care experienced to understand what corporate parenting means for them.
- 5.6 It was noted in the motion presented by Cllr Seaman to full council, that care leavers experience discrimination and can be disadvantaged as a result of being in care. Many will have experienced trauma and challenges with establishing strong networks of support, as they transition into adulthood at the 'early age' of 18.

6 How does this work contribute to the delivery of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy?

- 6.1 *Provide a brief description of how this work contributes to the delivery of the [Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2023-26](#)*
- 6.2 ***Improving mental health for all.*** As captured within the report there is a need to collaboratively map and review service offered to children and young people in care and care leavers, with regards to their mental health and wellbeing. Despite there being a range of services, as referenced within the report, our children and young people tell us they need more or perhaps need alternatives to those currently being offered.
- 6.3 ***Focus on employment and homelessness as a prevention opportunity.*** Our Care leavers have identified that these factors are fundamental to their well-being. The Health and Social Care Employability Academy (H&SCEA), led by CWPT and UHCW Talent for Care Leads, provides ringfenced and focused training and employment opportunities for children in care, care leavers, asylum seekers and those with a disability. Working in partnership with our virtual schools, more flexible opportunities are created, with additional support to enable these vulnerable groups to access employment and training within the NHS.
- 6.4 ***Strengthen work with communities & the need for co-production to achieve the priorities.*** Working collaboratively with partners, we continue to review the broad range of services offered to our communities to support our children and young people and their families. We know that getting the 'right help at the right time', by the right services is imperative.

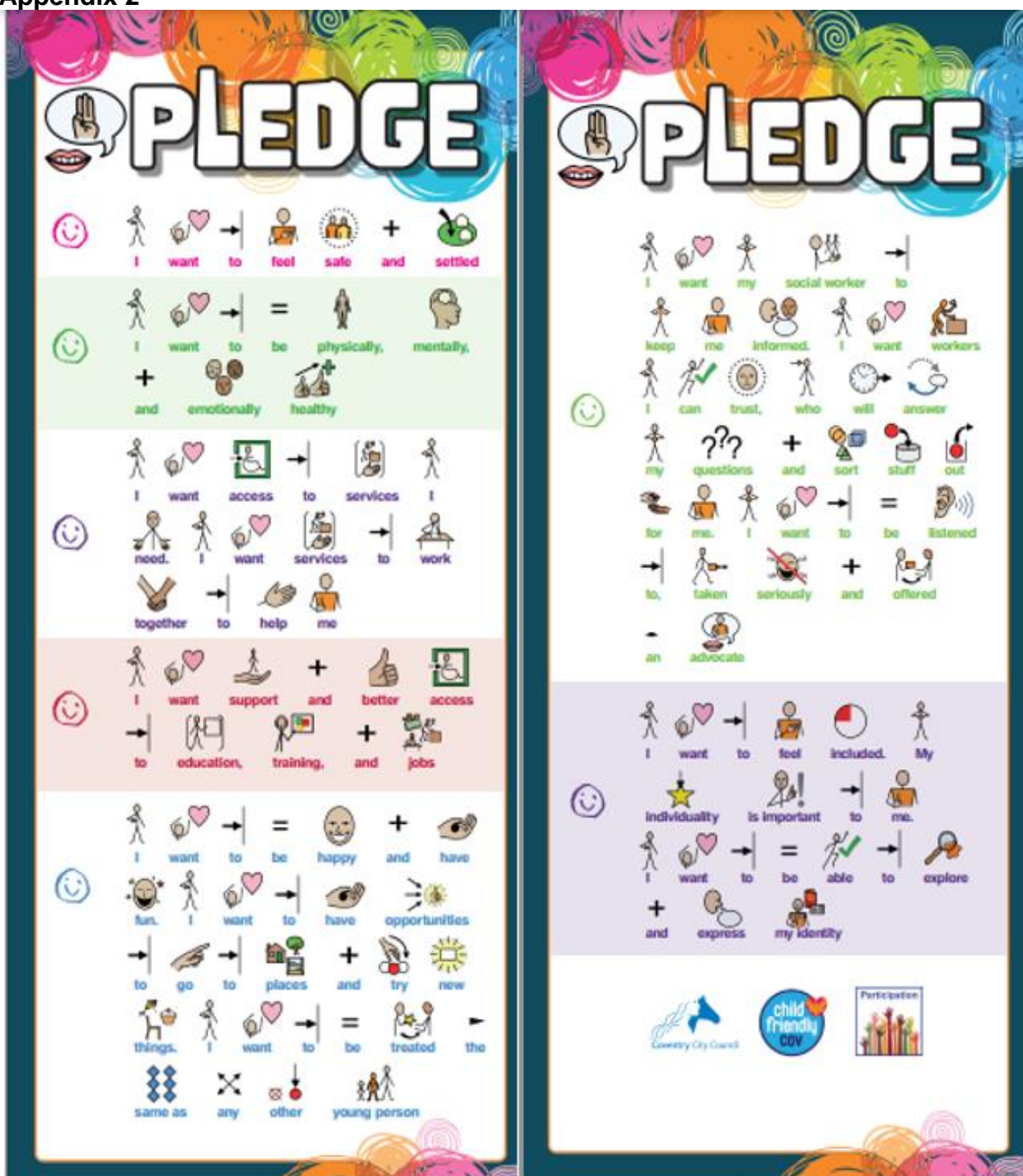
Appendices

Appendix 1



Corporate Parenting
Strategy 2023-26 fina

Appendix 2



Angela Whitrick- Strategic Lead for Corporate Parenting & Sufficiency

Matt Clayton- Strategic lead for Children in Care, Care Leavers and Children with disabilities services

Childrens Services