

Corporate Parenting Forum Annual Report 2023/24

Children's Social Care



North
Tyneside
Council

Background and Context

Every local authority has responsibility for the children and young people in its care and those who have been in its care (care experienced). These responsibilities are set out in the 2018 Statutory Guidance 'Applying Corporate Parenting Principles to Looked After Children and Care Leavers'.

This guidance states that:

'A strong corporate parenting ethos means that everyone from the Chief Executive down to front line staff, as well as elected council members, are concerned about those children and care leavers as if they were their own. This is evidenced by an embedded culture where council officers do all that is reasonably possible to ensure the council is the best 'parent' it can be to the child or young person.'

Within North Tyneside the Senior Leadership Team, the elected mayor and the lead members for children and young people take their corporate parenting responsibilities extremely seriously. They are committed to ensuring that all parts of the council, not just those officers working in children's services, understand the role of a corporate parent.



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Corporate Parenting Forum

One of the ways in which elected members assure themselves that the council's corporate parenting responsibilities are being fulfilled is through Corporate Parenting Forum. Corporate Parenting Forum meets quarterly and is chaired by the Lead Member for children's social care, Councillor Peter Earley. Other elected members who are part of the forum are:

- Cllr Steven Phillips
- Cllr Pat Oliver
- Cllr John Harrison
- Cllr John O'Shea
- Cllr Steven Cox
- Cllr Tommy Mulvenna

Norma Redfearn is also a member of the forum along with a number of council officers from children's social care including the head of the Virtual School and the Head of Service for Participation and engagement. Colleagues from health with lead responsibility for cared for children are members as well.

The following are key functions of the Corporate Parenting Forum: -

- I. To receive statutory reports in relation to the adoption, fostering, commissioning, cared for children services, children's homes, and the virtual school with a view to recommending any changes.
- II. Ensure that the profile of the corporate parenting agenda is incorporated into key plans, policies and strategies throughout the Council overseeing interagency working arrangements.
- III. Review reports relating to complaints from children in our care to ensure officers have dealt with these appropriately and made any recommendations for change.
- IV. Raise awareness in North Tyneside Council and the wider community by promoting the role of members as corporate parents and the Council as a large corporate family with key responsibilities.
- V. Raise the profile of the needs of children in our care and care leavers through a range of actions including through the organising of celebratory events for the recognition of achievement.
- VI. Ensure that leisure, cultural, further education and employment opportunities are offered and taken up by children in our care and care leavers.
- VII. Promote the development of participation and ensure that the view of children and young people are regularly heard through the Corporate Parenting Panel to improve educational, health and social outcomes to raise aspiration and attainments.
- VIII. Undertake meetings with children and young people in care, frontline staff and foster carers to inform the panel of the standards of care and improvement outcomes for children in our care.

- IX. Monitor the on-going commitment to providing support, training and clarity of expectations to foster carers to achieve excellent and high quality care.
- X. To appoint elected members to undertake visits to residential children's homes alongside the appointed regulation 44 visitor where appropriate.

Progression against current Corporate Parenting Forum Priorities

1. **Review of the Fostering Strategy** This was completed in October 2022 and launched with revised fostering allowances to keep North Tyneside in line with minimum government recommended levels. It was further agreed that we would tie the allowances to the recommended levels which have inflationary, and cost of living rises, to future proof in order that North Tyneside maintains appropriate financial commitment to foster carers and children in care.
2. **Implementation of the Mockingbird Fostering model with the first constellation live in September 2022.** The first Mockingbird constellation went live in October 2022. This has been a successful constellation, although not without its difficulties and some learning for us along the way. The hub carer has changed but the feedback from members of the constellation is that they feel well supported with the care of the children. We launched our second constellation in November 2023, and we are planning our third constellation in March 2024.
3. **Review of the staffing and work force within our children's residential service to future proof and ensure we provide outstanding care for our most vulnerable children.** We have evaluated the current staffing structures throughout the Children's homes and are expanding the establishment to reduce spend on overtime costs and ensure we are able to meet working time directives. We have benchmarked our costs and salaries regionally to ensure we remain competitive in the market. We have seven children's homes and four houses offering supported accommodation to young people aged 16+ years. Our supported accommodation, Starting Point, is now registered with Ofsted, with

inspections due to start nationally in September 2024. We have 6 homes inspected as Good and one home which Requires Improvement to be good.

4. **Progression of the MALAP action plan priorities with our Children in Care Council.** We completed a You Said, We Did event in February 2024 to showcase the actions we have taken in response to the Malap (Multi-Agency Looked After Partnership) action plan and the priorities identified by the Children in Care Council. This included a full revision of our Local Offer to our Care leavers, the creation of a new Life Story coordinator post and revised Life Story model, promotion of Family Seeing Bootcamps, expansion of Mockingbird and the registration of Maple and Oak, two new Children's homes to keep our children in borough wherever possible.
5. **Evaluation of the New Belongings Coram survey.** This was evaluated and incorporated into the Malap action plan. In response, the Local offer was fully revised and launched online.

Key Performance Information (23/24 up to the end of December 2023 - Quarter 3)

- **Children in Care** The rate Children in Care has decreased to 89 per 10k in quarter 3. Lower than the North East rate of 117.1, but above the England rate at 71. The number of Children in Care stands 371 at the end of quarter 3, down from 385 at the end of the previous quarter. Over the first three quarters there have been **490** children in our care accounting for admissions and discharges during that period
- **Placement Stability** –Improvements have been seen in our short-term stability rates this year. **9%** of children in care have been subject to three or more placements. There has been a slight downturn in performance in Long Term stability. **54%** children have been in the same placement for 2 years or more. This has now recovered back up to **71%** as of the start of March 2024
- **Care Leavers in Education, Employment or Training** –At the end of Quarter 3, 47% 17–18 year olds and 51.2% 19–21 year olds were in EET. The virtual school now has a post looking at post 16 EET who is

spending time with the leaving care service to reinforce and support the importance of EET opportunities for young people. We would expect this will support performance to improve over the coming year.

- **Missing Episodes** – overall missing episodes decreased in 2023/24. 837 episodes for all children with Social Work involvement, compared to 873 during the same period last year. 276 episodes related to children in our care, with 170 of these being less than 24 hours.
- **Life Story** – Ofsted recommendation in March 2020, and work has continued to improve this across the Service. We have recently introduced ways to measure the activity around this and will be able to report more fully in future papers.
- **Demographics** – a snapshot of the Children in our Care in December 2023 shows that **58%** are **male**, and **42%** are **female**.
- **10% (35 children)** of the group are recorded as having a disability,
- **92%** are recorded as being of white British ethnicity.
- The majority, **(38%)** are aged between **10** and **16** years old, and **15** children **(5%)** are aged under 1 year.
- **22** of the Children in our Care and **20** Care Leavers were UASC at the end of Quarter 3.

Health Assessments and Dental Checks:

- **91%** of CiC who have been looked after for at least 12 months have an up to date review Health Assessment, carried out within the last 6 month for those aged under 5, and in the last 12 months for those 5 years old and over.
- **63%** of CiC who have been looked after for at least 12 months have had a dental check in the last 12 months. We have already identified that some of the missed checks are for older young people and we are doing further work to investigate what else we can do to support their carers to help them to engage in the checks.

Future Development Plans

The corporate parenting forum has discussed how it can be more meaningfully engaged with children and young people in our care or have experienced being in our care. An event was held for children and young people in February half term where young people were asked to feedback on the priorities, they had identified last year. Some elected members who are part of the forum came along to that. Unfortunately, there was limited attendance especially by children in foster care so further consideration needs to be given to how we capture their views. A more structured approach to council officers and elected members meeting with our children in care council is now in place to support a more robust 'You said we did' approach. As part of this we need to review the Terms of Reference for the Corporate Parenting Forum to ensure they reflect this approach.

Following the elections in May further training on the corporate parenting responsibilities for elected members as delivered by the Head of the Virtual School will be offered to new councillors which will include an ask for new members for the forum.

As we have completed the priorities set previously Corporate Parenting Forum needs to set new priorities which should be informed by the Children in Care and Careleavers Strategy which is currently being reviewed and refreshed.