



Scottish Borders
Corporate Parenting Strategy
2018 - 2021

Foreword

Welcome to Scottish Borders Corporate Parenting Strategy and Action Plan 2018 – 2021

Children and young people who are looked after and care experienced young people are some of the most vulnerable in our society. These children and young people, whose needs we are responsible for, have become looked after for a range of reasons. They have often experienced some form of abuse, neglect and trauma prior to their becoming looked after.

In Scottish Borders, the effective assurance of the wellbeing and protection and, upholding the rights of looked after children, young people and care leavers is one of our most important responsibilities. We will strive to intervene early to prevent children from becoming looked after. Where children are looked after, we will provide high quality services for each child and young person. In doing so, we strive to reduce the inequalities experienced by them.

Successful corporate parenting requires passion, commitment, partnership working and engagement across all agencies. It requires everyone, from the head of organisations to front line practitioners, to take a proactive approach to better understand their corporate parenting responsibilities and improve their practice accordingly. We need to work together to enable looked after children, young people and care leavers to be, and feel, nurtured, listened to and supported to achieve their individual potential.

As Corporate Parents, it is our job to ensure that care experienced young people are offered nothing less than we would offer our own children. As responsible parents, we hold many strands of our children's lives, we care about their safety, their health, their education and their leisure interests, their friendships and their futures. We have continuous knowledge of our children's development, and what their particular talents and achievements and problems are. We listen and talk to our children so that we are aware of their needs and concerns and we can advocate with and for them. We must be committed to supporting young people whilst they are in our care and to prepare them as they leave home to ensure they have the right support, skills and knowledge to live full and independent lives.

Corporate parenting is now firmly established across the Scottish Borders as the multi-agency approach to improving services and outcomes for looked after children and care experienced young people. Although corporate parenting across a range of agencies has already brought about significant positive change and outcomes for looked after children, we need to do more at both a strategic and operational level, with a clear interface between the two.

This strategy and action plan sets out our key aspirations for these children and young people and how we intend to achieve them. The new legislation in terms of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 provides us with a clear statutory direction of travel and we will ensure that the care experience and outcomes of our children and young people are as positive as we can make them. Included in this is ensuring that the rights of children and young people are respected, protected and fulfilled under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Introduction

1.1 Definition of corporate parenting

The Scottish Government's Corporate Parenting Guidance (2015) defines corporate parenting as: An organisation's performance of actions necessary to uphold the rights and safeguard the wellbeing of a looked after child or care leaver, and through which physical, emotional, spiritual, social and educational development is promoted.

1.2 Duties and responsibilities

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 outlines a range of duties and responsibilities for corporate parents across Scotland. These duties aim to ensure the attention and resources of corporate parents are focused on the task of safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of Scotland's looked after children and care leavers.

The duties signifying that corporate parents should listen to the needs, fears and wishes of children and young people, and be proactive and determined in their collective efforts to address these.

Every corporate parent is expected to fulfil these duties in their own way, consistent with their purpose and functions. These duties, outlined in Part 9 (Section 58) of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, include:

- 1. Being alert to matters which, or which might, adversely affect the wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers;**
- 2. Assessing the needs of those children and young people for services and support they provide;**
- 3. Promoting the interests of those children and young people;**
- 4. Seeking to provide looked after children and care leavers with opportunities to participate in activities designed to promote their wellbeing;**
- 5. Taking action to help looked after children and care leavers:**
 - Access opportunities to improve wellbeing and**
 - Make use of services, and access the support, which they provide; and**
- 6. Taking any other action to improve the way in which it exercises the Corporate Parenting functions.**

These duties are supplemented by a wide range of legislation, regulation and guidance, covering a variety of agencies and disciplines, which provide the framework to support looked after children and young people.

1.3 What does it mean to be a corporate parent in Scottish Borders?

Responsible parents fulfil all those activities associated with bringing up children. These include providing for their basic needs, planning for the future, being a resource to turn to, providing positive experiences, hopes and dreams and acting as advocate and mentor. Their legal responsibilities include taking decisions on where children live, what education they receive and when medical treatment is required. As a corporate parent we need to know that we are making the same decisions for looked after children as we would make for our own children. A corporate parent needs to do at least what it would expect a good parent to do.

Scottish Borders corporate parents value all children and young people and recognise the contribution they make to their communities. They are our future and looked after children, like all children and young people, must be given every opportunity to fulfil their potential.

When a child or young person becomes looked after, the responsibility for their parenting becomes the duty of everyone defined as corporate parents, and not just those working directly within Children's Services. The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 lists all organisations that are corporate parents and provides direction to make sure they are clear about their duties.

Corporate parents will want the same outcomes for their looked after children as any parent would want for their own children. They will take responsibility for securing the wellbeing of all looked after children. They will recognise the poorer outcomes of looked after children and work together more effectively to remove the inequality which many looked after children experience throughout their care journey and beyond.

We must take a strategic, child-centred approach to service delivery and shift the emphasis from **corporate** to **parenting**, taking all actions necessary to promote and support the health and wellbeing of a child from infancy to adulthood.

The specific intention of the Corporate Parenting Strategy is to widen the ownership of responsibility for looked after children to key partners within the statutory and voluntary sectors to directly improve outcomes for looked after and care experienced children and young people.



1.4 Who are looked after children and care leavers?

Corporate Parenting responsibilities extend to all looked after children from birth to when they cease to be looked after. This includes children in foster care, residential care, secure care, looked after at home on compulsory supervision orders and those in formal kinship care. It also includes children with a disability who are looked after during short break provision.

Part 9 (Corporate Parenting) of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 applies to all looked after children and care leavers. A child or young person is considered to be 'looked after' if they fall into one of the categories set out in Section 17(6) of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, as amended by Schedule 2 of the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007. These categories are:

- **Subject to a Compulsory Supervision Order set by a Children's Hearing (including those on Home Supervision Requirements ('looked after at home')).**
- **Accommodated by a local authority under Section 25 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 (otherwise known as a 'voluntary agreement').**
- **Subject to a Permanence Order granted by a court.**
- **Subject to an order, authorisation or warrant made by the relevant authorities under chapters 2, 3 or 4 of Part II of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.**

A corporate parent's duties apply equally to all looked after children, regardless of the legal route by which they came into care or their placement type when in care.

A corporate parent's duties also extend to 'care leavers'. From April 2015 young people will be become 'care leavers' if they:

- (i) ceased to be looked after on their 16th birthday or at any subsequent time, and
- (ii) are under the age of 26.

1.5 Who are our looked after children in the Scottish Borders?

Scottish Borders is committed to ensuring that, where appropriate children are cared for within a family setting either within their own families or within a foster care setting. We are also committed to placing children and young people, where possible, within their own communities in the Borders. Some children with more complex needs are unable to live within a family and require a residential care setting.

On 31st March 2018 there were 224 looked after children.

The breakdown was as follows:

- **54 (24%)** were at home with parents
- **47 (21%)** were with friends/relatives
- **90 (40%)** were with foster carers
- **5 (2%)** were with prospective adopters
- **28 (13%)** were looked after in residential houses, schools and secure
- **41** young people receive aftercare services
- **25** young people were in Continuing Care



2 Current Position

2.1 Where are we now?

In response to “Looked After Children and Young People: We Can and Must Do Better” the first Corporate Parenting Strategy was agreed in 2007. This was underpinned by the Corporate Parenting Policy (February 2006), the Health Needs of Looked After Children Policy in partnership with Scottish Borders Health Board in January 2007 and a Joint Policy for the Education of Looked After Children in autumn 2007. This version of the Scottish Borders Corporate Parenting Strategy 2018-2021 is the fourth iteration of the multi-agency strategy.

Corporate Parenting is now firmly established across the Scottish Borders as the multi-agency approach to improving services and outcomes for looked after children and young people, young people in Continuing Care and care experienced young people.

In order to identify the key improvement priorities to be achieved over the next three years, evidence has been drawn from:

- **A self-evaluation and review of the 2014 – 2018 of corporate parenting and the Scottish Borders Corporate Parenting Action Plan**
- **Views of the children, young people and care leavers**
- **Consultation events with all partners**
- **Feedback from the Children’s Services Inspection Report of 2016**
- **Children and Young People Act (Scotland) Act 2014**

We have made progress in our support of our looked after children, but we need to improve across a range of our corporate parenting responsibilities. Areas for improvement include:

- **Greater awareness raising across all corporate parents and relevant agencies of corporate parenting and its importance**
- **Better and consistent participation of children and young people in service delivery and development across corporate parent organisations**
- **Improvements in support and outcomes for children looked after at home**
- **Multi-agency, partnership practice developments (both strategic and operational) for looked after children**
- **Improvement in employability and accommodation options and support for care experienced young people**

The Scottish Borders Corporate Parenting Strategy and Headline Action Plan provides a framework for the next phase of planning and service development which will help us to work more strategically and evidence how we plan to and improve the lifelong outcomes for looked after children and care experienced young people.



2.2 What do we want to achieve?

Using all the evidence from above and taking account of the new duties under Part 9 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, corporate parents and stakeholders have identified and prioritised the way forward for our looked after children. In order to achieve this, we have agreed the following six Core Commitments for the next three years to give clear strategic direction to all corporate parents and partners:

Core Commitments

Core Commitment 1	<p>In order to meet their responsibilities, corporate parents will listen and to the voices of children and families/carers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure our services are as effective as they can be they must be shaped by the voices and participation of the children, young people and care leavers • We will ensure that all corporate parents understand their responsibilities and action these through strategy, planning, practice and resource allocation
Core Commitment 2	<p>All looked after children and care experienced young people will be treated fairly, have equality of opportunity and have a sense of belonging in their communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are committed to reducing inequality for all our children and young people • We are committed to improving educational outcomes and reducing the inequality gap • We will promote children and young people’s rights and advocate on their behalf
Core Commitment 3	<p>Corporate parents will ensure children and young people who are looked after at home have the same opportunities and outcomes as other children and young people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are committed to ensuring that those who are looked after at home have the same social, emotional and educational and health support and outcomes as all other children and young people • We will reduce inequalities for this group of children and young people
Core Commitment 4	<p>Children and young people will be supported to improve their physical, emotional and mental health and wellbeing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are committed to improving health outcomes and reducing and inequality gap • Emotional and mental health services will meet the needs of looked after and care experienced young people
Core Commitment 5	<p>Young people making the transition to adulthood will be supported to achieve their full potential</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are committed to ensuring that young people are supported in terms of education, training, employment, health, housing and relationships • We are committed to providing care leavers with sustained positive destinations in all areas of their lives
Core Commitment 6	<p>Corporate parents will raise awareness of corporate parenting responsibilities across organisations and agencies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are committed to ensuring that all corporate parents are fully aware of their responsibilities to facilitate change, reduce the effects of stigma, reduce risk, promote equality and improve outcomes for looked after children and care experienced young people

2.3 How will we achieve this?

The six Core Commitments provide a clear framework to make the planned changes necessary to improve outcomes. The attached Headline Action Plan for 2018 – 2021 shows clear action areas for specific service developments and improvements. These are complimented by more detailed service and organisation plans.

The Action Plan will be reviewed on an on-going basis by the Corporate Parenting Operations Group who will in turn report to the multi-agency Children and Young People's Leadership Group.

Consultation and participation will take place with looked after children and their families and carers in order to inform policy, service development and delivery for looked after children in the Scottish Borders. This will help all corporate parents to understand the needs of children and young people and provide services accordingly.

3 Governance

Governance of Corporate Parenting in the Scottish Borders is managed through the multi-agency Children and Young People's Leadership Group (chaired and co-ordinated by Scottish Borders Council) which in turn reports to the Community Planning Partnership.

The strategy has four main purposes:

- **to ensure a consistent and collaborative approach to planning and implementing service developments and initiatives aimed at improving life experiences, opportunities and outcomes for looked after children and care experienced young people.**
- **to ensure that corporate parenting responsibilities are clear and resources are maximised to achieve the above.**
- **to provide a reference point for monitoring progress in meeting our objectives and targets.**
- **to pay particular attention to improving outcomes for those children looked after at home, who experience the least positive outcomes of all looked after children.**

This Strategy and Action Plan has a duration of three years and aligns with the broader framework of the Scottish Borders Community Plan (published by the Scottish Borders Community Planning Partnership). Corporate parenting can influence the achievement of a number of the outcomes within the plan (but in particular one of outcomes that the Community Planning Partnership wishes to work towards over the longer term is "More looked after children and young people in positive and sustained destinations"). Sitting within the Community Planning Partnership is the Children and Young People's Planning Partnership which is guided by its Integrated Children and Young People's Plan 2017 -2021.

Although the plan is currently being refreshed (May 2018), at the heart of it now and in the future is improving the well-being and life changes for our most vulnerable children and young people and this Corporate Parenting Strategy is a key part of addressing this priority. The Corporate Parenting Operations Group is responsible for evidencing improved outcomes for our looked after children and care experienced young people in the Scottish Borders. The action plan will be evaluated and updated every six months, reporting directly to the Children and Young People's Leadership Group.

Appendix 1

Core Commitment – Headline Action Plan

Core Commitment 1	<p>In order to meet their responsibilities, corporate parents will listen and respond to the voices of children and families/carers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure our services are as effective as they can be they must be shaped by the voices and participation of the children, young people and care leavers • We will ensure that all corporate parents understand their responsibilities and action these through strategy, planning, practice and resource allocation
1.	Corporate Parents will be encouraged to include the participation of looked after children, care experienced young people and their families in their service delivery and developments and monitor developments in this area.
2.	Develop formal involvement of looked after and care experienced young people in the governance of Corporate Parenting in the Scottish Borders.
3.	Actively seek and promote the participation of children and young people who are looked after at home in service design and delivery.
Core Commitment 2	<p>All looked after children and care experienced young people will be treated fairly, have equity of opportunity and have a sense of belonging in their communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are committed to reducing inequality for all our children and young people • We are committed to improving educational outcomes and reducing the inequality gap • We will promote children and young people’s rights and advocate on their behalf
4.	Scottish Borders Council will develop a ‘Virtual School’ to better track educational progress and improve achievement and attainment for all looked after children.
5.	Accessibility to health services for all looked after and care experienced young people will be improved, meet their individual need and not differ to accessibility for any other child or young person.
6.	Advocacy services will be developed for all looked after children and young people across the Scottish Borders.
Core Commitment 3	<p>Corporate parents will ensure children and young people who are looked after at home have the same opportunities and outcomes as other children and young people</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are committed to ensuring that those who are looked after at home have the same social, emotional and educational and health support and outcomes as all other children and young people • We will reduce inequalities for this group of children and young people
7.	The educational achievements and attainment of children and young people who are looked after at home will be an area of focus.
8.	Young people who are looked after at home and those who were formerly looked after at home will have the same accessibility to throughcare, aftercare, employability and housing services as all looked after and care experienced young people.
9.	The particular needs and outcomes of children and young people who are looked after at home will be raised by Corporate Parents across organisations and agencies.

Core Commitment – Headline Action Plan (cont'd)

Core Commitment 4	<p>Children and young people will be supported to improve their physical, emotional and mental health and wellbeing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are committed to improving health outcomes and reducing and inequality gap • Emotional and mental health services will meet the needs of looked after and care experienced young people
10.	Early intervention services for children experiencing emotional wellbeing and mental health issues will meet the needs of looked after children and young people.
11.	Health assessments for looked after children and young people will be delivered in line with national guidance and include 'harder to reach' groups – children and young people looked after at home and those in kinship care.
Core Commitment 5	<p>Young people making the transition to adulthood will be supported to achieve their full potential</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are committed to ensuring that young people are supported in terms of education, training, employment, health, housing and relationships • We are committed to providing care leavers with sustained positive destinations in all areas of their lives
12.	Accommodation and housing options for looked after and previously looked after young people will be improved and expanded, and homelessness amongst looked after or previously looked after young people will be prevented.
13.	Employability services for care leavers will provide greater opportunities for all looked after young people and care leavers.
14.	Access and signposting to health services will improve for care experienced young people.
Core Commitment 6	<p>Corporate parents will raise awareness of corporate parenting responsibilities across organisations and agencies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are committed to ensuring that all corporate parents are fully aware of their responsibilities to facilitate change, reduce the effects of stigma, reduce risk, promote equality and improve outcomes for looked after children and care experienced young people
15.	The full range of Corporate Parenting organisations will be actively involved in the Scottish Borders approach to Corporate Parenting.
16.	Awareness raising events and training regarding Corporate Parenting will be provided to improve outcomes for looked after children and care experienced young people.
17.	Social media and other forms of awareness raising relating to Corporate Parenting will be developed across organisations.

Appendix 2

Schedule 4 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 defines who Corporate Parents are:

1. The Scottish Ministers
2. A local authority
3. The National Convener of Children’s Hearings Scotland
4. Children’s Hearings Scotland
5. The Principal Reporter
6. The Scottish Children’s Reporter Administration
7. A health board
8. A board constituted under section 2(1)(b) of the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978
9. Healthcare Improvement Scotland
10. The Scottish Qualifications Authority
11. Skills Development Scotland Co. Ltd (registered number SC 202659)
12. Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland
13. The Scottish Social Services Council
14. The Scottish Sports Council
15. The chief constable of the Police Service of Scotland
16. The Scottish Police Authority
17. The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
18. The Scottish Legal Aid Board
19. The Commissioner for Children and Young People in Scotland
20. The Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland
21. The Scottish Housing Regulator
22. Bòrd na Gàidhlig
23. Creative Scotland
24. A body which is a “post-16 education body” for the purposes of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2005



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