




Sefton Corporate Parenting Board.

Annual Report 2022

Report to: Sefton Children's Services. Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Report author: Cllr Mhairi Doyle

Date of report:



Purpose of the Sefton Corporate Parenting Board

The term 'corporate parenting' describes the collective responsibility of the council to prioritise the needs of cared for and care experienced children and young people and seek for them the same outcomes any good parent would want for their own children.

The Corporate Parenting Board is designed to provide the necessary leadership that drives an ambitious and multi-agency approach to improving outcomes for children and young people that we care for.

To undertake these functions well it must work in a way that ensures the voice of children and young people is influential in decision making.


Roles and Responsibilities of the Board.

It is the role of the Corporate Parenting Board to monitor the key priorities and outcomes for Cared For and Care Experienced children and young people in Sefton. The Board is chaired by the Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care, Councillor Mhairi Doyle, who will champion and monitor the Corporate Parenting strategy and help drive its implementation. The Board consists of cross-party members and senior managers who meet bi-monthly, receive reports, including performance reports, undertake strategic and thematic enquiries into specific elements of the strategy and seek ways of resolving barriers to its success.

Review and Restructure 2021.

As a result of a major review and restructure at the end of 2021 a new Corporate Parenting Strategy was developed. The strategy outlines 5 key priority areas of focus for the board.

The development of the new strategy was done in collaboration with members of the Making A Difference group. The group are all Sefton Care Experienced young people



aged 16yrs plus. The group were responsible for assisting board members in choosing the 5 key priority areas for the board's attention.

Sefton Corporate Parenting Strategy

The Corporate Parenting Strategy outlines our vision for our cared for and care experienced children and young people and is underpinned by the seven corporate parenting principles as outlined in the Children and Social Work Act 2017. The strategy can be viewed at: <https://intranet.smbc.loc/media/615280/corporate-parenting-strategy-2021-2023.pdf>

5 Key Priority Areas

Each of the 5 Key Priority Areas contained in the strategy are underpinned by multi-agency working groups who report directly to the board on the progress of the action plans driving forward improvements in their key area.

The 5 Key Priority Areas detailed in the strategy are:

Being Heard – Working Group Chair – Karen Gray

The young person's voice must be at the centre of our approach to corporate parenting. We want mutually respectful and collaborative relationships with our children and young people. This means embedding a culture of fully involving young people in all matters affecting them, welcoming and encouraging their participation, actively listening to and genuinely taking account of their views.

Safe and Stable homes – Working Group Chair – Simon Fisher

We will ensure all children and young people have a safe and stable home environment. Our children have a very diverse range of needs and having a wide range of placements is essential to meet those different needs – the lack of placement choice can be an issue for social workers and young people alike. As young people move towards independence, we also need a wide variety of supported, semi-independent placements and permanent housing options for our young people.

Raising Aspirations – Working Group Chair – Mary Palin

We will ensure our children receive the best possible education and reach their potential, recognising children have different and varying needs. We want all our young people to enjoy and achieve in their schools, be able to access further and higher education if they wish or high-quality apprenticeships and training with increasingly good prospects for employment as adults.



Health and Wellbeing – Working Group Chair – Helen Case

We must provide all our children with good routine healthcare, making sure that they access more specialist treatment when necessary. Many cared for children will have experienced trauma through neglect or abuse in their earlier lives and some will experience trauma whilst in our care.

Transition and preparation for Adulthood – Working Group Chair – Julie Bucknall

Moving on from care is a critical time for our young people and supporting them through this transition into adulthood is a responsibility for us as all.

We need to understand that young people develop at different paces and that some young people will struggle to gain independence and struggle in independence. We need to be there for them and support them through this journey.

Ofsted Inspection of Sefton Children’s Services 21st Feb 2022 to 4th March 2022.

Following the review and restructure of the board at the end of 2021 Ofsted reported the following in their inspection report published on 9th May 2022:

P9: ‘The very recent restructuring of the Corporate Parenting Board with dedicated multi-agency workstreams is appropriately focussed on improving outcomes for children in care and care leavers, and is beginning to support more effective change’

Children and Young People’s Participation

At the heart of everything the board are working to achieve are the views, thoughts, wishes and feelings of our cared for and care experienced children and young people. With this in mind a full-time dedicated Participation Officer for Children’s Social Care was appointed in January 2022.

The board receive two reports at every meeting from our children and young people’s groups – Youth Ambassadors (11yrs to 15yrs) and Making A Difference (16yrs plus). Young people from both groups meet regularly with board members while four members of the Making A Difference group are board members and attend every meeting.

In addition, the board hold an annual survey to gather the views of the wider cared for population. The survey is split into two age groups (5-9yrs and 10yrs plus). The results of the survey are used to inform the action planning of the 5 Key Priority working groups and are integral to the continued development of our services for children and young people.



Achievements

Free Prescriptions: In collaboration with colleagues from NHS Merseyside & Cheshire (Sefton Borough) a 'Free Prescription Pathway' was introduced in 2022 for our care experienced young people. Board members recognise that restricted finance is a real concern for our care experienced young people aged 18yrs plus, in particular, those who are living independently. Members are also aware that some of our young people do not visit their GP if they are unwell as they cannot afford any medication prescribed. This initiative is aimed at ensuring our young people are confident in and able to seek medical assistance to support their emotional, mental and physical health and wellbeing.

Council Tax Liability – In collaboration with colleagues from the Finance and Revenues department the council tax liability for all of our care experienced young people age 18yrs plus has been reduced to zero. Again, this is in recognition of the financial limitations that our young people find themselves in when moving into independent living. The exemption is in place until their 25th birthday.

Caring Business Charter – In July 2022 Sefton Council launched the 'Caring Business Charter'. The simple charter asks businesses operating in Sefton to consider becoming signatories and commit to offer at least one 'experience' a year to a care experienced young person. Offers can include: providing a work experience opportunity or a work placement / apprenticeships / traineeships / job offers / coaching and mentoring. To date over 50 businesses have signed up to the charter and the framework is now in development.


Band 'A' Housing Status – In 2022 Sefton Council supported the proposal to award band 'A' housing status to care experienced young people. The proposal originated with our young people who felt that, due to their unique circumstances, band 'A' status would be more appropriate to them.

Sefton Corporate Parenting Board - Terms of Reference

Objectives:

To provide holistic, member driven engagement with the key areas of the corporate parenting function. These include:

- The views of children in care, and care leavers, about the services they receive from the Council.
- Methods to raise the aspiration, ambitions and life chances of children in care and care leavers, narrowing the gap of achievement and outcomes between children in care (CIC) and their peers.

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- Ensuring that all elected members are fully aware of their corporate parenting duties and responsibilities by providing relevant information and encouraging access to training opportunities.
 - Ensuring that all Council services are mindful of the needs of children in care and care leavers and respond accordingly within their remit.
 - Development and support of strong partnerships with the public, private, voluntary and faith sectors to promote and enhance opportunities for children in care and care leavers.
 - The outcomes of Ofsted inspections as they may arise and any actions that are required to improve services to children in care and care leavers.
 - The promotion of excellent and innovative practice in relation to the Corporate Parent role from which others can learn. To pro-actively engage with forums that include and represent children in care and care leavers, in particular the Sefton Children's Services Ambassadors and the Making A Difference Care Leavers Forum, and with other relevant partners and stakeholders in pursuance of achieving positive outcomes for children in care and care leavers.
 - The Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board may also extend an invitation to relevant partners and stakeholders, to attend meetings of the Board to seek their view on appropriate agenda items.

Frequency of meetings: Every 2 months

Work Programme: Yearly


Senior Advisor to the Board: Executive Director for Children's Social Care and Education. Sefton Council.

Support to the Board: will be provided by the Corporate Parenting Officer. Sefton Council.

Accountability: Chair to report to the Leader of the Council

Membership:

Cllr Mhairi Doyle – Chair. Lead Member for Children's Social Care
Cllr Paul Cummins – Vice Chair
Cllr Paulette Lappin – Elected Member
Cllr Diane Roscoe – Lead Member for Education
Cllr Ian Maher – Elected Member
Cllr Lynne Thompson – Elected Member



Cllr John Pugh – Elected Member
Cllr Mike Prendergast – Elected Member

Sasha Thompson – Sefton Care Experienced Young Person
Ania Wojcik - Sefton Care Experienced Young Person
Amy Lahiff - Sefton Care Experienced Young Person
Kelli Lahiff - Sefton Care Experienced Young Person

Helen Case – Designated Nurse. Cared for Children. Merseyside and Cheshire NHS (Sefton Borough)

Dr Jamuna Acharya – Designated Doctor. Merseyside and Cheshire NHS (Sefton Borough)

Kerrie France – Assistant Director of Quality & Safety Improvement. Merseyside and Cheshire NHS (Sefton Borough)

Martin Birch – Executive Director. Children’s Social Care & Education. Sefton Council
Laura Knights – Assistant Director. Corporate Parenting & Care Experienced Services. Sefton Council

Joe Banham – Assistant Director. Safeguarding & Quality Assurance. Sefton Council

Risthardh Hare – Assistant Director. Help and Protection. Sefton Council

Julie Bucknall – Service Manager. Corporate Parenting Services. Sefton Council

Simon Fisher – Service Manager. Fostering and Adoption Services. Sefton Council

Laura Doyle – Service Manager. Adolescent and Care Experienced Services. Sefton Council

Mary Palin – Head Teacher. Sefton Virtual School

Cheryl Yates – Participation Officer. Sefton Council

Nigel Bellamy – Deputy CEO. Sefton CVS

Sarah Vaughan – Service Manager. Sefton Career Connect.

Kathryn Johnson – Foster Carer. Sefton Council

Reporting Officers: Attendance as requested

- Children’s Complaints Officer. Sefton Council.
- Independent Visiting and Advocacy Service. NYAS
- Service Manager. Safeguarding. Sefton Council.
- Clinical Lead. Sefton CAMHS. Alder Hey Children’s NHS Foundation Trust.
- Service Manager. Sefton Youth Offending Team.
- Departmental Leads. Sefton Council.
- AiMs (Adoption in Merseyside). Chief Executive Officer