




Sefton Corporate Parenting Board.

Annual Report 2023

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

Report author: Cllr Mhairi Doyle

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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.

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/905696/FINAL-CP-Strategy-2023-2025.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 – Cheryl Yates.

Priority Aims:

Involve all children and young people in care and Care Leavers, subject to their age and understanding, in any assessment, plan or review in respect of their own lives and upbringing.

Support young people to express their views in meetings such as child protection conferences, Children in Care statutory reviews, pathway planning meetings and in their care placements.

Provide advocates and supporters to help young people's views to be heard in these settings.

Regularly ask the views of children and young people on their experience of our care.

Ensure that messages from the Children in Care Councils are widely disseminated to officers and elected members and that responses are provided consistently.

Members of the Corporate Parenting Board and senior managers will routinely offer to attend meetings of the Children in Care Councils and to take opportunities to meet, talk to and be with young people at events such as awaydays, celebration events and parties.

Offer training on young people's participation to council officers, carers and elected members.

Safe and Stable homes – Working Group Chair – Simon Fisher.

Priority Aims:

Always seek to enable Children in Care to live with extended family or kinship members when possible. Where this is not possible fostering should be a first option.

Recognise that residential care may be a positive choice for some young people.

Maintain our strong focus on recruiting more in-house foster carers investing strongly in their support and training and validating the contribution they make to our corporate parenting.

Strive to place our children with providers rated as 'outstanding' or 'good'.


All children to be placed in regulated or registered provision.

Seek to minimise the number of placement moves children may experience, especially those which are unplanned.

To ensure all children and young people, where possible, are placed in Sefton.

Develop and gather key data in relation to internal and external placement provision.

To ensure all placements have robust care plans and Individual placement agreements in place.



Seek to provide the offer of 'staying put', to young people 18-21yrs old living with foster carers subject to their wishes.

Work with social housing and third sector organisations to commission and provide a range of supported semi-independent accommodation and permanent housing options for our care leavers.

Raising Aspirations – Working Group Chair – Mary Palin.

Priority Aims:

Work with our carers and social workers to increase their ambition and support for the educational outcomes of all our children and Care Leavers.

Work with the Virtual School to be the strongest advocates for children's education in their dealings with individual schools and local authorities.

Ensure that all children of or approaching school age are 'School Ready'.

Ensure that any Cared For Child or young person with special educational needs or disabilities has a comprehensive education, health and care or SEN plan.

Work with schools to make best use of the Pupil Premium Plus entitlement to promote the educational outcomes of individual Cared For Children.

Always seek to enable children to remain in the schools they were attending when they come into our care.

Strive to reduce the number of changes of school experienced by children in our care.

Always look to place our Cared For Children in schools rated by Ofsted as 'good' or better.

Work closely with schools and carers to plan and support a child's transition to a new school setting.

Ensure a constant focus on school attendance, suspensions and exclusions of children, keeping to a minimum the time our children are out of school.

Work with further education providers, employers, and other public sector partners to expand the post 16 education, training and employment offer which can be accessed by older young people in and leaving our care.

Health and Wellbeing – Working Group Chair – Helen Case


Priority Aims:

Ensure that every child has a timely, initial health assessment on becoming looked after which is reviewed at least annually.

Ensure that our carers promote healthy lifestyles and understand both the physical and the emotional or mental health needs of our children, as well as health needs arising from 'risky' behaviours such as substance misuse.

Provide support and consultation to carers and residential staff in respect of caring for children and young people with challenging health needs.

Improve completion of SDQ's for new to care and for those children and young people placed out of borough.



Work with our partners to provide access to emotional and mental health support and services.

Transition and preparation for Adulthood – Working Group Chair – Laura Doyle.

Priority Aims:

Ensure that all young people in our care over the age of 16yrs have a pathway plan specific to their needs and aspirations and an allocated personal advisor.

Ensure that all pathway plans have a specific focus on care experienced young people being able to access suitable accommodation and education, employment, or training.


Expect our foster carers and residential homes to provide opportunities for young people to develop independent living skills appropriate to their age and stage.

Provide leaving care financial support, grants (e.g., setting up home) and other forms of financial relief to care experienced young people in line with our financial assistance policies.

Fully support any young person who wishes to pursue higher education to obtain places and apply for student loans. We will look at funding accommodation for young people who wish to seek higher education as necessary.

Continue our work with further education colleges, employment training providers to help young people access high quality training and apprenticeships.


As a council provide internship, apprenticeship and employment opportunities for our looked after young people and care leavers.



Ofsted Monitoring Visit. Letter published: 23rd August 2023.


‘The Corporate Parenting Board has been refreshed with clear and appropriate priorities and workstreams and this is starting to improve the oversight of children in care.’

‘The Corporate Parenting Board has been strengthened since the last inspection. There is now a clear strategy with five priority areas that have been co-produced with children, and dedicated workstreams appropriately focused on improving children and young people’s outcomes. While routine performance information and supplementary reporting is helping the board to better scrutinise, challenge and hold senior managers to account.’



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 in 2023.

- Protected Characteristics Status for Care Experienced. Incorporating guaranteed interviews across Sefton Council for care experienced who meet basic criteria.
- Partnership Agreement between Sefton Virtual School and Liverpool City Region Further Education Providers.
- Access to Sefton Council on-line learning for cared for and care experienced young people age 16yrs plus.
- Review and update of 'Foster Family Friendly' policy for Sefton employees.
- Review and update of Sefton Corporate Parenting Strategy.
- Development and implementation of bespoke 'ring-fenced' apprenticeship with Mersey Care.
- Introduction of Care Experienced annual survey.
- Inclusion of Care Experienced young people as vulnerable group within Housing Strategy 5-year plan.
- Launch of 'Sefton Foster Carers Association'
- Introduction of 'Sefton Charter for Foster Carers'



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:

- Hearing the views of cared for and care experienced children and young people, 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 cared for children (CfC) and their peers.
- 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 cared for and care experienced children and young people 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 cared for and care experienced children and young people.
- The outcomes of Ofsted inspections as they may arise and any actions that are required to improve services to.
- 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 cared for and care experienced children and young people, in particular the Sefton Children's Services Youth Ambassadors and the Making A Difference Care Experienced 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. Annual Report to Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Membership:

Cllr Mhairi Doyle – Chair. Lead Member for Children's Social Care

Cllr Paul Cummins – Vice Chair

Cllr Ian Maher – Leader of Sefton Council.

Cllr Paulette Lappin – Elected Member

Cllr Diane Roscoe – Lead Member for Education

Cllr Lynne Thompson – Elected Member

Cllr John Pugh – Elected Member

Cllr Mike Prendergast – Elected Member

Phil Porter – Chief Executive. Sefton Council.

Sasha Thompson – Sefton Care Experienced Young Person

Ania Wojcik - Sefton Care Experienced Young Person

Kathryn Johnson – Foster Carer. Sefton Council

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

Dr Natalie Daniels – Designated Doctor Children in Care. Merseyside and Cheshire NHS (Sefton Borough)

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

Risthardh Hare – Executive Director. Children's Social Care & Education. Sefton Council

Nicky Hale – (Interim) Assistant Director. Corporate Parenting & Care Experienced Services. Sefton Council

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

Mandy Williams – 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 / Sharon Cotterall. Strategic Lead. Children and Families. Sefton CVS



Sarah Vaughan – Service Manager. Sefton Career Connect.

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