

Corporate Parenting Panel – Terms of Reference

Position statement

Any child in the care of the County Council is the legal responsibility of the whole Council. Members and staff are Corporate Parents. We must ensure that the voice and experience of the child are paramount, that every child's experience is good and that their health and education needs are met, giving them the same life chances as any other child. The Panel works to the principles set out below.

Constitution

A multi-agency advisory panel to the Council with seven members of the County Council appointed from those best qualified to serve but including at least one minority group member and one from either the foster or adoption panels. At least two County Council members of the Panel will also be members of the Children and Young People's Services Select Committee.

Representatives of service partners in West Sussex including the designated nurse (NHS), a representative of Independent Reviewing Officers, a foster carer, chairman or vice-chairman of the West Sussex Foster Carer Association, a member of the Children in Care Council and a care leaver. The quorum is three.

The Chairman of the Panel is the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, the Vice-Chairman to be appointed by the Leader. The Panel can decide to invite representatives from across the Council and partner agencies as required depending upon the business of the Panel.

Meetings will be held in private. Reports and minutes for the Panel will be reported in a confidential manner so as not to identify individuals. A summary of the work of the Panel will be made available to all members and any other person with an interest in the Panel's business.

Purpose

1. To ensure the County Council acts as a good corporate parent towards children, young people and care leavers and fulfils its duties in partnership with other statutory agencies in accordance with the principles.
2. To make sure the voice of the child influences policy and that young people are engaged with in all work to develop and improve services.
3. To be proactive in securing better outcomes for looked after children through challenge and engagement with officers, partners and members.

Responsibilities of the Corporate Parenting Panel

1. To examine how the Council and its partners can improve the life chances of all children/young people in care and care leavers.
2. To maintain an overview of developments, policies, strategies and plans across the Council and to ensure that the needs of children looked after

and care leavers are considered in all areas of the Council's business.

3. To provide scrutiny and challenge to the performance of Children's Services and relevant partner agencies relating to children in care and care leavers.
4. To ensure there is effective partnership working between directorates and with partner agencies, holding services to account where required.
5. To consider the outcomes of regulatory visits and inspection reports on provision for children and young people in care.
6. To receive reports from the Fostering and Adoption services, the Independent Reviewing Service, the Virtual School and others as identified to consider and propose actions
7. To acknowledge and celebrate the achievements of children and young people in care and their carers and to attend celebration events as organised.
8. To ensure that the views of foster carers, adopters and birth parents are gathered and used to develop and improve service delivery,
9. To prepare and monitor a Corporate Parenting Panel Action Plan setting out priorities, targets and monitoring systems, and to approve an annual Corporate Parenting Panel report to the County Council to be sent also to the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership and to report further to the County Council as the Panel decides.
10. To support the promotion of Children's Services initiatives, including the recruitment of adopters and foster carers and supported lodgings carers.
11. To maintain an oversight of complaints received by or on behalf of children and young people in care and care leavers, ensuring that complaints are properly addressed and lessons learned.

Sub-Groups

12. The Corporate Parenting Board will establish, as required, sub-groups, to carry out work on specific areas in relation to outcomes for looked after children including participation; education; transitions; housing, employment and training; health and well-being and performance.
13. Sub-groups may be chaired by an officer from the Council or partner agency as agreed by the Panel. The remit and reporting timescale for each sub-group will be decided by the Panel.

Children and Young People's Services Select Committee

The Panel will liaise with the Children and Young People's Services Select Committee to seek to avoid duplication of work. Members of the Panel who are also on the Select Committee will be responsible for sharing knowledge and

issues of concern so that the Committee and the Panel can each fulfil their roles in the knowledge of the work undertaken by the other body.

Corporate Parenting Principles

A strong corporate parenting ethos means that the care system is not just about keeping children safe, but about promoting recovery, resilience and wellbeing. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 introduced corporate parenting principles to which councils must have regard when they exercise a function for children looked after or care leavers so as to facilitate secure, nurturing, and positive experiences for children and enable positive outcomes for them. The experiences of children looked after and whether they feel cared for and listened to will be a measure of how successfully we embed the principles.

The principles

- To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people;
- To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
- To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;
- To help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;
- To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;
- For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and
- To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.