

Corporate Parenting Board

20 June 2024

Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report 2023 - 2024

Choose an item.

Portfolio Holder: Cllr C Sutton, Children's Services, Education and Skills

Local Councillor(s):

Executive Director: T Leavy, Executive Director of People - Children

Report Author: Louise Drury Head of Service Children in Care

Tel: 01305 228382

Email: louise.drury@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Report Status: Public

Recommendation:

Members of Corporate Parenting Board are requested to note the content of this report which captures the work of the Board over the last financial year and progress made against our priorities in the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2020-2023. The report also identifies where there is more to do and the identified priorities for the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2024- 2029.

Reason for Recommendation:

As Corporate Parents, all members of the board seek to stay informed about children in care of Dorset Council and care experienced young people, to offer challenge and support. As a new board, the Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report provides members with an opportunity to review the work of the previous year, to consider what has worked well and where there is still more to do, to plan next steps to be ever better.

1. Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report.

1.1. I am pleased to introduce the Annual Report for 2023- 2024.

1.2. This has been a very busy year, and we can see a number of positive developments:

- Corporate Parenting Data Set has been strengthened to inform conversations of high challenge and high support.
- Opening Chestnut House – a home for children who are disabled and Hayeswood – a short break home for children who are disabled.
- Increased the number of fostering households from 168 to 187 (April 2023 – April 2024).
- Celebrated our Foster Carers and Supported Lodgings Carers at the annual awards event.
- Launched a further 3 Mockingbird Constellations.
- Established a dedicated service for Care Leavers and Unaccompanied Children.
- Secured successful outcomes for the Ofsted focused visit on the arrangements for 16- and 17-year-old care leavers and inspections of The Cherries and College House.
- Continued to work with children and young people through Dorset Youth Voice.
- Developed action plans against priorities identified by children and young people through the 'Bright Spots' programme to inform the 2024-2029 Corporate Parenting Strategy.

1.3. The Corporate Parenting Board includes Members of the Council who come together with officers and relevant partner agencies to offer challenge and support to services for children in our care and for our care leavers. There is arguably no greater responsibility for Members than as corporate parents: to ensure that the care and support given to children and young people in the care of the authority and to those leaving our care, is as we would expect to be given to our own children.

1.4. I would like to recognise the progress that has been made over the duration of the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2020 – 2023 and the contribution of Corporate Parenting Board in achieving this. As we move to establish a new board, I look forward to continuing the ambition to do ever better for our children in care and care experienced young people.

2. Corporate Parenting Strategy.

2.1. Over the course of the 2020-23 Corporate Parenting Strategy, we have published Annual Reports and met at least 6 times a year to ensure we're making the best impact against our priorities.

2.2. We have tracked progress against key indicators, a summary of which is presented in Fig 1 including direction of travel for the year 2023/24 and 2020/204.

Indicator	Apr-20	Apr-23	Apr-24	Direction of travel 23/24	Direction of travel 20/24
No. Children in Care (incl. UASC)	480	433	442	↑	↓
No. Children in Care (excl. UASC)	471	400	387	↓	↓
% Placement Stability 2.5yrs	64%	70%	71%	↑	↑
% Permanence achieved through adoption	4%	12%	11%	↓	↑
% Children seen in 6 weeks	75%	68%	82%	↑	↑
% Children participating in reviews	85%	83%	82%	↓	↓
% Children living in foster care (excl UASC)	70%	70%	71%	↑	↑
% Children living outside Dorset (excl UASC)	37%	39%	37%	↓	↔
% Children with more than 1 episode of missing	10%	10%	9%	↓	↓
No. Children entering criminal justice system	0 (April 21)	2	1	↓	↑
Dental	75%	57%	75%	↑	↔
Immunisations	80%	88%	91%	↑	↑
Annual Health Assessment	79%	76%	92%	↑	↑
Initial Health Assessments	40%	0%	79%	↑	↑
SDQ Completed	54%	63%	63%	↔	↑
Average SDQ	19	16	15	↓	↓
No. Permanent Exclusion	0 (April 21)	0%	0%	↔	↔
% Child Missing Education	8.5% (Apr 21)	2%	3%	↑	↓
% Pathway Plan 16/17 yrs	67% (Oct 22)	84%	85%	↑	↑
No. Care Leavers (total)	510 (Aug 22)	515	536	↑	↑
No. Care Leavers in bed and breakfast	1	6	3	↓	↑
% Care Leavers in unsuitable accommodation (Active 17-25)	5.26%	3.72%	3.04%	↓	↓
% Care Leavers in education employment and training (19-21)	50%	57%	56%	↓	↑

Fig 1

We have worked collaboratively to:

- Create a 'Care Leavers' Delivery Group' to develop and deliver the 'New Belongings' delivery plan.
- Refresh our Joint Housing Protocol to ensure young people have access to suitable accommodation where required.
- Develop and launch our 'Mockingbird' programme to support and nurture fostering families.
- Develop and launch The Harbour – multi-agency service for children on edge of care, in care and leaving care.
- Increase the number of homes for our children and young people by building new children's homes across Dorset and increase the number of fostering households.
- Open care leavers' accommodation in Weymouth.

- Work with children and young people through 'Dorset Youth Voice' to hear, listen to and act upon feedback from children and young people.
 - Partner with 'Coram' to participate in their 'Bright Spots' programme, increasing the reach and depth of hearing feedback from children and young people.
 - Successfully bid for additional funding to support new initiatives such as the South West Fostering Hub.
- 2.3. The Dorset Promise which is designed with young people has been refreshed and underpins the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2024 – 2029.
- 2.4. The development of The Corporate Parenting Strategy 2024-2029 has been undertaken collaboratively with young people and board members and has taken account of the government strategy 'Stable Lives Built on Love' and the work Dorset Council is undertaking with partners to implement the Families First for Children Pathfinder.
- 2.5. Throughout 2023-2024, the Corporate Parenting Board has considered progress against the priorities of The Corporate Parenting Strategy 2020 – 2023. The following provides an update on some of the key areas of discussion by the board in this reporting period and highlights positive areas of development.

3. Our children and young people.

- 3.1. Between April 2023 – April 2024 our total child in care population has increased from 433 to 442 as we have welcome unaccompanied children through the National Transfer Scheme. Our local child in care population has decreased from 400 to 387. As of April 2024, we were actively working with 296 care leavers compared to 290 last year. We have a total of 536 care leavers, an increase of 21 from April 2023.

4. Youth Voice and Youth Participation

Increase opportunities to hear the voice of our children and young people and to take their views, wishes and feelings into account.

- 4.1. The involvement of children and families in learning from their experiences through consultation and commissioning, complaints and serious incidents is fully embedded in the development of services.
- 4.2. We are continuing to strengthen the feedback system within our audit process to evolve and learn from our practice. Our care leavers have taken part in a second 'Your Life Beyond Care' Coram Voice survey which closed on 8th March 2024. 78% young people took part in the survey this year compared to 60% in the 2021 – 22 survey and results will be available in July 2024. Following the 2023 Bright Spots survey, 'Your Life Your Care' for children in care, we have worked with young people and members of Corporate Parenting Board to develop an action plan, the delivery of which will be through the scrutiny of young people and board members at our informal meetings.

- 4.3. These comprehensive surveys have given us insights across several areas:
- Use of evidenced based 'Bright Spots' – Partnership between Coram Voice and the University of Oxford supported by The Hadley Trust
 - Perceptions of social workers, IRO's, advocates and other professionals
 - Perceptions of plans, including care, education and pathway
 - Perceptions of processes such as reviews and complaints
 - Feelings of wellbeing and support
- 4.4. Dorset Council have committed to run the Bright Spots Programme every 2 years. The next survey will be a second 'Your Life, Your Care' survey in 2025.
- 4.5. Dorset Youth's Voice have a program of Fostering Family Fun Days which members are actively encouraged to attend to be alongside our children and their families while joining in with different activities. These have been a great way for us to hear the voice of children in our care, children who foster and foster carers.
- 4.6. The governance arrangements of Corporate Parenting Board having 4 informal Board meetings and 2 formal Board meetings continues to enable increased participation from young people. Feedback from young people attending informal board meetings which centre around a workshop has been very positive and has prompted us to develop this further with future informal board meetings being arranged thematically in relation to The Dorset Promise.
- 4.7. This year we have held workshops which have focused on the following:
- Dental Health – 27th July 2023
 - Your Life Your Care Action Plan – 28th September 2023
 - The Dorset Promise – 25th January 2024
 - Corporate Parenting Strategy 2024-2029 – 21st March 2024

5. The Health of Children in Care

Promote better physical and mental health and wellbeing through improved access to health information and services.

- 5.1. Corporate Parenting Board receives an annual report in addition to regular input to its meetings from designated professionals who work to provide services to children in care.
- 5.2. There are good working relationships between children's social care managers, the Children in Care Health Service and NHS Dorset, with all partners committed to improving health outcomes for children in care.
- 5.3. When comparing data in April 2023 to that in April 2024 we have seen improvement in all areas. Performance regarding initial health assessments continues to be volatile throughout the year with the most significant impact on

completion timeliness being associated with children placed outside of Dorset. NHS England is aware of this and has commissioned a dataset to address some of the variations in placements.

- 5.4. The focused workshop on Dental Health in July 2023 included a survey of our foster carers to understand the support that they provide to children in maintaining good oral care and identified where there are gaps in availability of NHS dentists.
- 5.5. As an outcome from this workshop a thematic audit has been completed. This identified that there are a number of young people (mostly older teenagers) who have a dentist but are declining to attend. We have now strengthened our reporting system so we can understand the detail of which overdue checks are due to delays by social workers/carers and which are the child/young person declining with focus being strengthened on how we support those young people to attend.
- 5.6. The audit also identified 25 children who do not have a dentist, have been unable to find an NHS space and are overdue their dental check. 7 children were identified as being registered with a private practice due to difficulties accessing NHS dentists. This has been escalated through NHS Dorset.
- 5.7. While there have been improvements in performance, the board has continued to seek assurance that we are working with our foster carers, carers and health colleagues to ensure that timely dental appointments are made for our children. Capacity of NHS dentists is an issue although children in care remain a priority for dentistry in the South West.
- 5.8. Members of the Corporate Parenting Board have heard that the average SDQ score for our Children in Care aged 4-16 is higher than our comparator local authorities and has continued to be above our local target. The Board has been interested in the % completed which at 63% indicates that there are a number of children whose strengths and difficulties have not been assessed, and therefore the average score is an unreliable reflection of our children in care population.
- 5.9. This year has seen the start of the development of a Psychology Hub located at The Harbour under the oversight of the Service Manager for Residential Services, with clinical line management being provided by Clinical Lead - Specialist CAMHS for Care, Adoption and Permanence. The Hub enables the co-location of clinical psychologists who deliver services to Adoption, Fostering and Kinship Service, alongside the embedded Harbour psychologist, creating flexibility across the system and the potential to develop extended roles of assistant psychologist and mental health practitioners.
- 5.10. Core CAMHS prioritises access for Children in Care, offering a 24-hour response for urgent referrals and an 8-week response for all other referrals. Digital platforms for the service were developed quickly during the initial phases of the pandemic and the website has been updated with signposting and podcasts. The service now uses a hybrid approach to support. We have established an operational monthly meeting to track children in care open to CAMHS and the Emotional Wellbeing services, both within and beyond Dorset.

5.11 The challenges experienced in being able to access Tier 4 provision for our children remains an area of concern.

6. Ambition for Children

Have high aspirations for children in care and care leavers in their education, training and employment.

6.1. The purpose of the Virtual School is to raise the educational achievement of children in care, promote their emotional wellbeing and improve their life chances as a more vulnerable group. The Corporate Parenting Board receives an annual report from the Head of The Virtual School each year.

6.2. Dorset Virtual School is a proud advocate of our children. The vision is that they are thriving in the right educational setting, attending, feel included and listened to so that our children become independent and resilient young people. There is a mutual commitment between educational settings and Dorset Virtual School to support our children and young people to fulfil their potential and live their best lives.

6.3. Some of the key strengths this year have been:

- A reduction in the number of children on reduced timetables
- Outstanding PEP Quality Assurance (93% good or outstanding)
- Delivery of our first Designated Teachers Conference focusing on high ambition
- Providing support and guidance on support for our unaccompanied young people with bespoke welcome packs and handbooks in multiple languages
- Weekly celebrations of 170 children and young people who have excelled in education or overcome significant barriers
- Improved partnership working with the Care Leaver Service to ensure outstanding support in place for our young people as they transition from care.
- Production of our Early Years handbook and Welfare Call PEP to ensure outstanding outcomes for our youngest children
- Organisation and delivery of three residential opportunities for children from year 5-10, working in partnership with Jamie's Farm
- Organisation and delivery of creative arts workshops entitled 'What is my superpower?' in collaboration with Arts University Bournemouth
- The Virtual School partnered for the third year running with University College London (UCL) to deliver their Promoting the Achievement of Looked After Children (PALAC) Project and Promoting the Achievement of Care Leavers Project (PACL)– the first combined PALAC/PACL project in the UK.
- 77% of post-16 young people in Education, Employment or Training
- 100% of our year 13 young people who applied for university have been offered places.
- The Virtual School has extended its role to include the strategic responsibility for children with a social worker and for children in kinship care.

- 6.4. From this year's Virtual School Annual Report 2023, Board members noted that Dorset Virtual School have developed creative approaches to supporting children both educationally and in wider enrichment opportunities to raise aspiration and ambition. Children and young people have often missed the opportunity to establish and maintain participation in extra-curricular activities. The Virtual School extends its reach beyond education settings to support the wider development of children and young people through arts participation, sport, cultural and leisure activities that enable them to develop skills and interests beyond formal education.
- 6.5. The Virtual School have developed greater links between wider services such as the Youth Justice Service, Aspire Adoption and local further and higher education providers as well as the Care Leaver and Early Year's Team to focus on embedding robust and consistent processes and expectations to ensure children and young people are successful.
- 6.6. The Virtual School has a strong focus on celebrating child successes and sharing these widely to ensure that our children's lived experience is in everyone's minds in a positive, strengths-based way and also to celebrate good practice from teams working with our children.
- 6.7. The areas of focus for the Virtual School going forward include:
- Improving attendance and understanding the barriers to education for Key Stage 4 children
 - Enhancing our offer for our children who were previously looked after
 - Developing child-led PEPs to enhance the child's voice
 - Developing wider learning opportunities and positive experiences
 - Improving school transitions, particularly for those children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities.
 - Eradicating the use of suspensions and the number of children missing education.
 - Support educational settings to identify ways to support our children to belong and achieve.
 - Developing awareness of the wider statutory role in supporting children with a social worker.
- 6.8. We continue to support our young people to be in education, employment, and training, with 65% of 17-18yr olds and 56% of 19-21yr olds being in Education, Employment or Training at the end of April 2024.
- 6.9. This is an improvement from 63% of 17-18yr olds and a slight decline at 57% 19-21yr olds being in Education, Employment or Training at the end of April 2023.

7. Safeguarding and Permanence

Ensure safe and stable accommodation within the family home or with close relatives and friends. If not possible, children are moved to a permanent placement without delay.

- 7.1. On 11th October 2023, members attended the opening of Hayeswood – 3 bed home offering short breaks for children who are disabled. Members also attended the opening of Chestnut House on 7th February 2024. These homes are part of The Lighthouse model of delivery which is being developed to support children who are disabled and their families, through the offer of outreach, short breaks and specialised foster care and local residential care.
- 7.2. The Harbour approach continues to provide an effective approach for supporting young people to remain in the care of their families. As at the end of September 2023 a total of 166 young people have been supported by The Harbour since December 2020. Of these 108 young people who were on the edge of care were supported by outreach. Only 8 young people entered care meaning that 94% of the children were supported to safely remain at home.
- 7.3. While there has been a decrease in the % children placed outside Dorset, too many children continue to live over 20 miles away from home – 44.96%, an increase from 42.75% in April 2023. We know that there is more work to do to increase the number of local foster carers so that our children are able to maintain their links with friends, education and the local community more easily.
- 7.4. Dorset Council launched its Family Network's Strategy 2024-2026 in March 2024 which sets out how we will implement the family network and kinship care reforms detailed in each of Stable Homes Built on Love, the Families First for Children Pathfinder, and the National Kinship Care Strategyⁱⁱ. The vision of this strategy is that:
- Families we work with feel informed, engaged, involved, listened to, respected, and empowered.
 - More children will be enabled to stay at home through a 'families first' approach to our work with the wider family network.
 - More children who cannot remain safely with their birth parents will instead grow up within the wider family network, as opposed to care arrangements outside of the family, and children in those arrangements will be supported to thrive.
- 7.5. The challenges for fostering recruitment have been noted nationally within both local authority and Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) services. This year we have developed the Dorset Council Foster Carer Recruitment and Retention Strategy 2023 – 2025 which aims:
- To increase the number of Dorset Council foster carers through improved recruitment and carer retention outcomes.
 - To increase the range of in-house foster carer provision to provide a wider range of homes and especially more for disabled children, teenagers, and children and young people from different ethnic backgrounds.
 - To increase the proportion of our children in care who are placed in Dorset with Dorset Council foster carers.

- 7.6. It is positive to note the increase in the number of fostering households in 23/24 and through the development of our Kinship Service and delivery of Dorset Council Family Network Strategy it is intended that more households will be from within the family network. However, we need to continue a determined focus on the recruitment of local foster carers to ensure that children are able to remain close to the people and places that are important to them where it is not possible to be cared for within the family network.
- 7.7. Following a successful bid to the Department for Education, we have partnered with local authorities in the South West to develop a new regional Fostering Recruitment and Retention Hub which is a centrally run front door and acts as the first point of contact for prospective carers making an enquiry. The aim of the hub is to increase the conversion rate between initial enquiry and application and provide support through the assessment process.
- 7.8. Mockingbird continues to support the resilience and retention of our existing carers and we continue to see the impact for the foster carers and the children they are caring for. This year has seen the launch of 3 further constellations, making us the largest in the South West and equal to Leeds nationally with 5 constellations now in total.
- 7.9. Achieving a permanent placement ensures children have a secure, stable, and loving family to support through childhood and beyond, to create a sense of security, continuity, commitment, identity, and belonging. We have continued to support our children to achieve permanence and have invested in a dedicated Service Manager role who will start in June 2024, to give even greater focus to this area of work.
- 7.10. Permanence can be achieved in a number of ways:
- Return Home to Parents – Fewer children have achieved permanence following re-unification to birth family. At the end of April 2024 this has decreased to 17.28% from 33.33% in April 2023. While there has been a decrease this remains higher than the national average and Good+ statistical neighbours.
 - Adoption – The % of children who have achieved permanence through adoption has slightly decreased. At the end of April 2024 11% of children who left care in the previous 6 months, achieved permanence through adoption compared to 12% in April 2023. More children have been placed in Early Permanence placements in 23/24 with 19 children compared to 2 in the previous year. This approach reduces the likelihood of children experiencing more than one move and supports children to build secure attachments at the earliest point, where there is a high probability that their plan is permanency outside of the family network.
 - SGO – We have seen fewer children achieving permanence through the making of a Special Guardianship Order. 9% of young people who ceased being in care in the six months prior to April 2024 were placed subject to Special Guardianship Order compared to 11% in the previous year. This work is currently undertaken by Aspire and we are working to bring this in house. The development of a

dedicated Kinship Service will provide a range of support to build trust and confidence so that children can be brought up within their family networks.

- While decreases are noted and are not the direction of travel that we want to go in, it is worth noting that younger children are more likely to be placed for Adoption, Special Guardianship or Return Home to Parents and the % is taken of the whole cohort of children who cease to be in care. In the 6 months prior to end of April 2023 21% of the children who ceased to be in care were as a result of turning 18 compared to 27% in April 2024.

7.11. Through the 'Your Life You Care' Coram Voice survey undertaken in 2023, members of the Board have heard that children feel safe where they live and trust their carers, and their social worker, and have a say in decisions. However, fewer children said they liked school and more reported feeling bullied. Older children were more likely to report that they did not have a really good friend and more children said that they did not spend enough time with their siblings or parents.

7.12. We recognise the importance of friendships and being in touch with family, in particular siblings. We continue to find different ways to bring young people together, to create opportunities to develop friendships and keep in touch. We are working to ensure that we have a mechanism in place through care planning and child in care reviews to understand where we need to do more for children and working with carers to support this.

8. Transitions

For our children to have a good and enriching experience of care provision and to prepare for adulthood and an independent and successful life.

8.1. In September 2023, Dorset Council agreed to make care experience a protected characteristic. It is recognition that young people's experience of being in the care system can be a potential source of discrimination similar to other protected characteristics such as race or disability.

8.2. All young people are allocated a personal adviser at the age of 16 to provide a smooth transition and support young people with the skills they need as they move into adulthood. We have continued our focus to ensure that all young people have a current Pathway Plan which is ambitious and supports our young people to move towards increased independence. At the end of April 2024 95.27% of young people had a current Pathway Plan compared to 89.86% in April 2023.

8.3. The Transition Panel which meets monthly, tracks the planning for young people to ensure that plans are known, understood and in place and that there is no cliff edge at the age of 18yrs.

8.4. On 17th and 18th May 2023, HMI Ofsted inspectors undertook a focussed visit to Dorset children's services, considering the arrangements for care leavers. The visit was carried out in line with the inspection of local authority children's services (ILACS) framework. The headline finding from the visit was that "*Leaders have*

significantly strengthened support and services for care leavers and have made notable improvements in the quality and standard of their accommodation.”

- 8.5. More young people are remaining in Staying Put arrangements with 34 young people remaining with their foster carer after turning 18 years old compared to 23 in the previous year. We continue to look at how we are supporting foster carers to continue to provide a safe and stable home for our young people after they turn 18 and are actively recruiting supported lodging hosts as we know this is an area of growing need for our care experienced young people.
- 8.6. Our Staying Close project has seen young people retain links through formalised support arrangements. We are actively supporting 12 young people under Staying Close arrangements and anticipate an additional 12 care leavers accessing staying close over the next 12 months.
- 8.7. We have expanded our range of Dorset Council properties available for our young people. In addition to the 12 flats at Kirtleton Avenue in Weymouth, we have converted 2 properties which will offer accommodation for a further 9 young people in the Portland and Weymouth areas.
- 8.8. We reviewed our financial support available to care leavers when they are needing to privately rent. We will provide rent deposit, rent in advance, act as a guarantor and in some situations “top up” rent so they are able to maintain employment or further education.
- 8.9. A new framework contract for supported accommodation has been established and work has been undertaken to support providers to register with Ofsted as required in the new regulations.
- 8.10. The Care Leaver service has progressed approaches to support young people to develop lifelong links to tackle loneliness and isolation through staying close, staying in touch and more recently the mentoring programme which started in January 2024.
- 8.11. Dorset Council has underlined its commitment to our young people through its HR procedures so that all who apply for Dorset Council apprenticeships are guaranteed an interview leading to an increase in the number of young people with an apprenticeship. We currently have 9 care leavers engaged in a Council apprenticeship.
- 8.12. Through Corporate Parenting Board and the Care Leavers Delivery Group we continue to make use of relationships that have been developed within the business community. Hall and Woodhouse, Wessex Water and Sky have proved to be excellent partners in providing access to IT, training, employment, and accommodation for our young people.

9. Membership and Governance

Effective governance and planning arrangements are in place to mean the Corporate Parent can be the best they can be.

9.1. Corporate Parenting Board membership includes elected members, officers of the Council and all employees, with support from stakeholders and our partners.

9.2. The membership of the Board during this reporting period was as follows:

- Cllr Kate Wheller (Chair)
- Cllr Richard Bigg (Vice Chair)
- Cllr Andrew Parry
- Cllr Ryan Holloway
- Cllr Carole Jones
- Cllr Stella Jones
- Cllr Andrew Kerby
- Cllr Cathy Lugg

9.3. Corporate Parenting Board met 6 times this year and going forward it is planned that the Board will meet 6 times on alternating months.

9.4. There have been 2 formal meetings of the Corporate Parenting Board held in public in May and November 2023 that:

- Received annual statutory reports with regard to Children in Care and Care Leavers including annual reports from IRO, Fostering, Adoption, Youth Justice, Fostering Panel Chair, Corporate Parenting, Leaving Care, Virtual School, Advocacy and Independent Visitors, Health and Wellbeing. There were also updates with regards to performance and other areas of interest in relation to Children in Care and Care Leavers.
- Agreed an annual report summarising the Board's activities.

9.5. All other Corporate Parenting Board meetings were held informally, engaging stakeholders and children and young people to ensure that the Board is accessible and able to encourage the very best input from everyone taking part in the meetings.

9.6. With these arrangements established, Corporate Parenting Board Members have been better able to understand the issues, challenges and concerns and celebrate successes as they are experienced by young people, and also enables greater challenge of the Board Members in respect of the Council's Corporate Parenting role.

9.7. Embracing the idea of community parenting, membership has been extended to partners and colleagues in the community to widen engagement and opportunities for Children in Care and Care Leavers.

9.8. The data set has been presented to each Board meeting. In addition to the anticipated performance indicators, the data set provides commentary on some of the softer information such as extra-curricular activities which is equally impactful on children's outcomes.

10. Priorities for the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2024- 2029.

10.1. The following priorities are linked to our Children, Young People and Families Plan 2023 – 33 and are as follows:

- Children and young people are best cared for wherever possible with their birth family or extended family.
- We will prioritise loving relationships for all children and young people, recognising the important foundation that stability and consistency of relationships with care providers gives.
- We will reduce inequalities for children and young people ensuring we improve their health and wellbeing.
- We are ambitious for children and young people to reach their potential through education, opportunities and activities and we will celebrate their achievements.
- We will ensure that our children are safe at home and in their community and live locally and close to the people who are important to them.
- We recognise our parenting responsibility extends beyond when a young person leaves care.
- All partner agency planning, service delivery and evaluation will start with the needs of children and young people.
- The views, opinions, needs and priorities of children in care, care experienced young people and carers inform everything we do.
- We deliver high quality, innovative services and will work in a transformational way to ensure they become even better.

11. Financial Implications

11.1. Dorset Council have adopted a policy of committing to reduce the number of Children in Care, taking a rights-based approach, and developing services which support children to be able to grow up in a family setting.

11.2. Keeping a stable child in care population in terms of numbers has helped us to avoid the increase in placement spend that most other local authorities have experienced.

11.3. The National Transfer Scheme has had immediate effects on Dorset Council with a sharp rise in the number of unaccompanied children in our care and supported by us as care leavers.

11.4. The challenges for fostering recruitment have been noted nationally within both local authority and IFA services. The Board recognises that it is all the more

important for Dorset to be the fostering agency of choice for foster carers and supported lodgings carers and are committed to being ambassadors for the recruitment of Dorset carers.

11.5. The Board has supported investment in the residential estate for Dorset Children in Care and Care Leavers and members have actively participated at opening events and maintained oversight by visiting throughout the year.

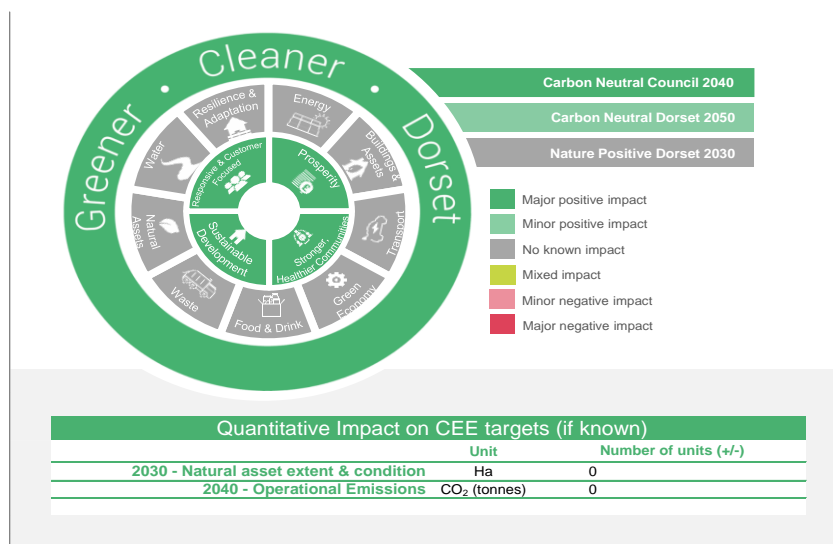
11.6. In all that we do today we aim to equip children and young people ‘for life’, and wherever possible reduce the likelihood of needing to support Care Leavers in vulnerable adult populations. Investment in the Care Leavers Service has ensured we are in a strong position to deliver ever better services.

12. Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Implications

12.1. As Corporate Parents we strive to ensure that our children experience love and care with permanent carers, close to the people and places that are important to them, recognising the link to improved mental health and educational attainment¹.

12.2 Having sufficient placements in Dorset also reduces the amount of travel undertaken by families, social workers, and other children’s services staff. There are currently 187 children living in care outside Dorset. 44.96% of children (excl unaccompanied children) live over 20 miles away from home, with 27.91% living over 20miles away and out of county. While the majority of children live in neighbouring authorities, there are some children living as far afield as Blackpool, Sheffield, Leeds and Manchester.

12.3 Reduced travel should result in a reduction in the associated emissions from travel which is in line with the council’s priority of protecting the natural environment, climate and ecology.



13. Well-being and Health Implications

13.1 It is reported that Children in Care are four times more likely to have a mental health difficulty than children in the general populationⁱⁱⁱ. Children in Care have double the rates of urgent dental treatment and are half as likely to attend dental services as the general population^{iv}. This is significant as poor oral health is also associated with other chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart disease. We also recognise the importance of extra-curricular activities such as sports, creative arts and music lessons which contribute to a child's wellbeing and sense of belonging^v.

13.2 The number of unaccompanied children in care and leaving care has increased. Unaccompanied children and young people are more likely to live outside Dorset which can impact on the timeliness of services such as initial health assessments. There is also a need to raise awareness of the specific trauma experienced by unaccompanied children and young people due to their experiences in their home countries, their journey to the UK and anxiety caused by Right to Remain claims.

13.3 Supported by South London Refugee Association (SLRA)^{vi}, Dorset Council have pledged to:

- identify all children in care and care leavers with immigration and nationality issues.
- connect children in care and care leavers with good quality legal support as soon as possible.
- take a proactive and informed role in supporting children in care and care leavers through any immigration applications and appeals.
- enable those who are eligible to apply for permanent status and British citizenship.

13.4 One of the roles of corporate parents is to ensure that with partners we are working to reduce health inequalities and support the needs of Children in Care and Care Leavers.

14. Other Implications

14.1 These are considered in the Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report.

15. Risk Assessment

15.1 Having considered the risks associated with this decision, the level of risk has been identified as: Low
Current Risk: Low
Residual Risk: Low

16. Equalities Impact Assessment

N/A

17. Appendices

ACCESSIBLE TABLE SHOWING IMPACTS

Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Strategy Commitments	Impact
Energy	No known impact
Buildings & Assets	No known impact
Transport	No known impact
Green Economy	No known impact
Food & Drink	No known impact
Waste	No known impact
Natural Assets & Ecology	No known impact
Water	No known impact
Resilience and Adaptation	No known impact

Corporate Plan Aims	Impact
Prosperity	strongly supports it
Stronger healthier communities	strongly supports it
Sustainable Development & Housing	strongly supports it
Responsive & Customer Focused	strongly supports it

TABLE OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations	Responses -will this be incorporated into your proposal? How? And if not, why not?
Energy	
No recommendations found for this category	
Buildings & Assets	
No recommendations found for this category	
Transport	
No recommendations found for this category	
Green Economy	
No recommendations found for this category	
Food & Drink	
No recommendations found for this category	
Waste	

No recommendations found for this category	
Natural Assets & Ecology	
No recommendations found for this category	
Water	
No recommendations found for this category	
Resilience & Adaptation	
No recommendations found for this category	

18. Background Papers

ⁱ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/childrens-social-care-stable-homes-built-on-love>

ⁱⁱ [Championing kinship care: national kinship care strategy - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

ⁱⁱⁱ NSPCC (2017) 'Children in Care: Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health'

^{iv} https://www.gla.ac.uk/news/archiveofnews/2017/august/headline_546507_en.html

^v Children's Commissioner (2017) 'Stability Index for Children in Care: Technical Report'

^{vi} [taking_care-14.4.22.pdf \(slr-a.org.uk\)](#)