

Corporate Parenting Board

28 May 2025

Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report 2024 - 2025

Choose an item.

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Clare Sutton – Cabinet Member for Children’s Services, Education and Skills

Local Councillor(s):

Executive Director: Paul Dempsey, Executive Director

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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 2024- 2027.

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 maturing 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, and 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 2024- 2025.

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

- Continued careful and safe reduction in our children in care population.
- Developed Corporate Parenting Partnership Delivery Group action plan against priorities identified by children and young people through the 'Bright Spots' programme and Corporate Parenting Strategy 2024 -2027.
- Established a dedicated Kinship Service in the Fostering Service
- Increased the number of Mockingbird Constellations to 5 and invited by The Mockingbird Society to visit them in Seattle to share our implementation journey, our achievements and our learning.
- Celebrated our Foster Carers and Supported Lodgings Carers at the annual awards event.
- £1m pot established to fund extensions and adaptations to foster carer and adopter homes to expand capacity and promote stability and permanence.
- Building on the success of The Harbour model, launched Harbour East with an application submitted to register an additional short-term home.
- All our children's homes inspected and graded 'Good'.
- Increased our living options for our care leavers.
- Continued to work with children and young people through Dorset Youth Voice and created better and safer spaces to engage in.
- Alongside our health colleagues worked together to improve health outcomes for our children.
- Embarked on an ambitious children's mental health transformation programme with Health.
- Dorset Virtual School are part of University College of London (UCL) advisory Board for another Local Authority to share best practice around measuring and recording the progress and outcomes of care-experienced young people as they move into adult life.

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 first year of the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2024 – 2027 and the contribution of Corporate Parenting Board in achieving this. As we move to a new financial year, 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. We launched the refreshed Corporate Parenting Strategy 2024- 2027 in June 2024. Since this time, we have published Annual Reports and met at least 6 times 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. This includes benchmarking against good+ statistical neighbours and national average, and direction of travel for the year 2024/25.

2.3.

Indicator	Mar-24	Mar-25	Good +Stat Neighbours	National Average	Direction of travel 24/25
No. children in care	449	435			↓
No. unaccompanied children	54	41			↓
Rate of children in care per 10,000 children	68	66	71	70	↓
% children seen in 6 weeks	71%	78%			↑
% children living in foster care	69%	70%	67%	67%	↑
% children living with Dorset carers	44%	47%	41%	43%	↑
% children living outside Dorset	43%	43%	33%	45%	↔
% children settled for 2.5yrs	71%	78%	68%	68%	↑
% permanence achieved through adoption	11%	10%	13%	9%	↓
Dental	64%	81%	77%	79%	↑
Immunisations	88%	91%	86%	82%	↑
Annual health assessment	88%	90%	89%	84%	↑
Initial health assessments*	79%	33%			↓
% children who have completed a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)*	56%	53%	68%	77%	↓
Average SDQ score*	15	15	15	15	↔
% children with a missing episode	14%	15%	10%	11%	↑
No. children entering criminal justice system for the first time in respective year*	56	49			↓
% children who have been permanently excluded from school*	0	0			↔
% children missing education*	2%	3%			↑
No. young people eligible to receive leaving care services	592	586			↓
In touch with young people (19-21yrs)	96%	94%	95%	92%	↑
% young people in suitable accommodation (19-21yrs)	90%	93%	91%	88.00%	↑
No. young people in bed and breakfast	3	3			↔
% young people in education employment and training (19-21 yrs)	51%	59%	57%	54%	↑

Data is taken from the Children's services Analysis Tool (ChAT) for the relevant year. Where data is not provided in ChAT, this has been sourced from monthly Performance Board Report and indicated by *. Note all indicators are benchmarked against Good+ Stat Neighbours and National Average.

Fig 1.

We have worked collaboratively to:

- Create safe spaces for children and young people with youth voice to come together with Corporate Parenting Board members to hear, listen to and act upon feedback from children and young people.
- Create a Corporate Parenting Partnership Delivery Group to operationalise the Corporate Parenting Strategy and Dorset Promise and co-ordinate the delivery of The Corporate Parenting Partnership Delivery Plan (CPPDP).
- Increase the number of homes for our children and young people by developing new children's homes across Dorset and increase the number of fostering households.
- Increase the number of 'Mockingbird' Constellations to support and nurture fostering families.
- Develop a dedicated Kinship Service that recognises the unique needs of Kinship Carers
- Expand the Harbour – multi-agency service for children on edge of care, in care and leaving care to the East of the county and strengthen support for children on the edge of care and edge of exclusion from school.
- Ensure all Dorset children's homes are 'Good.'
- Develop a further 21 living options for care leavers.
- Partner with 'Coram' to participate in their 'Bright Spots' programme, increasing the reach and depth of hearing feedback from children and young people.
- Embed Mind of My Own to hear young people's voices

2.4. Throughout 2024-2025, the Corporate Parenting Board has considered progress against the priorities of The Corporate Parenting Strategy 2024 – 2027. 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 end of March 2024 – end of March 2025 our total child in care population has decreased from 449 to 435. Our local child in care population has also decreased from 395 to 394. As of end of March 2025, we were actively working with 300 care leavers compared to 302 last year. We have a total of 586 care leavers a decrease of 6 from 592 end of March 2024.

4. The Network and Youth Participation - *supporting children and young people to be themselves, to listen to them, include them, and work with them*

- 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 have strengthened the feedback system within our audit process to evolve and learn from our practice. This was tested in our most recent Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) in March 2025.
- 4.3. 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. Results were presented to young people and the wider partnership at an event on 6 February 2025. Our children in care have taken part in a second 'Your Life Your Care' Coram Voice Survey. 48% children took part this year compared to 38% in the previous survey.
- 4.4. We continue to work with young people through The Network and partners to ensure that the CPPDG Plan is agile and informed by views which are captured through these surveys. The delivery of the CPPDG plan themes has the scrutiny of young people and board members at our informal Corporate Parenting Board meetings.
- 4.5. 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
- 4.6. Dorset Council have committed to run the Bright Spots Programme every 2 years. The next survey will be a third 'Your Life Beyond Care' survey in 2027.
- 4.7. 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.
- 4.8. The governance arrangements of Corporate Parenting Board having 4 informal Boards and 2 formal Boards continues to enable increased participation from young people. Feedback from young people attending informal boards which are arranged thematically in relation to The Dorset Promise and Corporate Parenting Strategy are increasingly positive and evidence impact of our children's voices.
- 4.9. This year we have held workshops which have focused on the following:
- Safe and Settled – Language that cares and friendships – 25th July 2024
 - Education and Employment – Belonging in school and education - 19th September 2024

- Physical and Mental Health – Appearance - 25th January 2025
- Identity – Ask me what matters – 20th March 2025

5. Physical and Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing – *supporting our children and young people's physical and mental health*

- 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 2024 to that in April 2025 we have seen improvement in most areas other than initial health assessments and % children with a completed Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ).
- 5.4. Performance regarding initial health assessments continues to be variable 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.
- 5.5. At the thematic workshop on Physical and Mental Health on 25th January 2025 members of the Corporate Parenting Board heard that the average SDQ score for our Children in Care aged 4-16 is on par with that of our good + comparator local authorities and national average. The Board has been interested in the % completed which at 60%, lower than the same time last year 63%, indicates that there are a number of children whose strengths and difficulties have not been assessed, and therefore the average score remains an unreliable reflection of our children in care population.
- 5.6. Young people spoke about the SDQ and the blocks to completion which are experienced by them. Young people described the questionnaire as more of a tick box exercise and had significant uncertainty about what happened next and how their responses were being used. An outcome of this discussion has led to Dorset Council Principal Education Psychologist arranging to meet with The Network in August 2025 to work together to develop a better way that is engaging for young people so we have a better understanding of their emotional and mental health needs.
- 5.7. 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. An operational monthly meeting tracks children in care open to CAMHS and the Emotional Wellbeing services, both within and beyond Dorset.
- 5.8. The children and young people Mental Health strategy is being revised as part of the children and young people mental health transformation. This will give us an

opportunity to identify better ways of working together for our children in care to ensure emotional wellbeing and mental health needs are better understood and services are better organised to respond to their needs.

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

6. Education and Employment - *supporting children and young people to have goals for the future and celebrating with them*

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:

- Outstanding PEP Quality Assurance (93% good or outstanding)
- Providing support and guidance on support for children without a school place with bespoke SEN transition packs
- Weekly celebrations of 160 children and young people who have excelled in education or overcome significant barriers
- Development of termly targets to EHCP outcomes and to Early Years goals Organisation and delivery of two residential opportunities for children from year 5-11, working in partnership with Jamie's Farm
- Development of our support for children Previously Looked After
- Reduction in the use of suspensions in Dorset secondary schools
- Reduction in the use of reduced timetables
- Organisation and delivery of a range of extra-curricular activities in response to our children's voices
- Knowledge Exchange Programme in the UK in collaboration with University College London - working in partnership with a cross-phase group of specialist and mainstream providers to develop practice with the aim of improving outcomes for Children in Care and Care Leavers
- 75% of post-16 young people in Education, Employment or Training
- Production of the Dorset Virtual School recipe book for belonging
- Good outcomes for phonics, multiplication check and Key Stage 1 SATs

6.4. Board members noted that the Virtual School have built upon its support for our increasing numbers of unaccompanied young people. The specific handbook has been translated into 4 different languages based upon the cohort of children within our school and this has been shared at initial PEPs as an opportunity for language learning and support to settle into new communities. The additional 'Welcome Pack',

providing language learning resources and games that can be used within the family settings to encourage immersion in the English language has been offered to all of our unaccompanied young people this year. Each young person is also provided with a laptop and language tuition as part of their welcome package.

6.5. The Virtual School have plans to develop their work and support for our children previously in care during 2024/25 including;

- The handbook to be updated during summer holidays to reflect change of Pupil Premium plus and other policies.
- Kinship Care and Belonging to be incorporated within the handbook.
- Decision to instigate a one page summary (template with aide memoir to be developed) for every child who becomes Previously Looked After in addition to any other 'final' writing.

6.6. From this year's Virtual School Annual Report 2024, Board members noted that Dorset Virtual School continues to develop creative approaches to supporting children both educationally and in wider enrichment opportunities to raise aspiration and ambition. 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.

6.7. Strong links have been developed between the Virtual School and wider services such as the Youth Justice Service, Aspire Adoption and local further and higher education providers as well as the Care Leavers and Early Year's Team to focus on embedding robust and consistent processes and expectations to ensure children and young people are successful.

6.8. 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.

6.9. The areas of focus for the Virtual School going forward include:

- Improving attendance for those children with persistent or severe absence
- Enhancing our offer for our children living in Kinship Care arrangements
- Reduce the use of suspensions and the number of children missing education, particularly children with Special Educational Needs (SEN)
- Develop targeted mentoring programmes for young people in Key Stage 4 and 5 to support education, employment and training.
- Developing awareness of the wider statutory role in supporting children with a Social Worker.
- PEP quality assurance for our Post 16 young people

6.10. We continue to support our young people to be in education, employment, and training, with 77% 17-18yr olds and 68% of 19-21yr olds being in Education, Employment or Training at the end of March 2025.

6.11. This is an improvement from 65% of 17-18yr olds and 51% 19-21yr olds being in Education, Employment or Training at the end of March 2024.

7. Safeguarding and Permanence - *supporting children and young people to be and feel safe and for us all to be people they can trust*

7.1. The Harbour multi-disciplinary team has grown steadily under consistent and committed leadership. The Harbour offers a combination of outreach, fostering and residential children's homes. All homes have been inspected and are graded as Good. The duration and intensity of support varies according to the needs of children. The impact of the Harbour Model includes:

- Supporting young people on the edge of care to safely remain at home
- Reducing the number of children age 13+ subject to a new child protection plan
- Improved family relationships
- Improved stability at home

7.2. Following the impact of The Harbour in Weymouth, we launched Harbour East in September 2024 with application to register an additional short- term home submitted with registration anticipated in May 2025.

7.3. The % children living outside Dorset, has remained the same compared between March 2024 and March 2025 and is lower than national average, although above good+ stat neighbours. The % of children, excluding unaccompanied children, living more than 20 miles away from home has reduced from 44.3% in March 2024 to 41.12% in March 2025. However, we know there are still too many children who live too far away from their home and 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 their local community more easily.

7.4. It is positive to note the increase in the % of children living in foster care. This is reflected in an increase in both the number of children living in mainstream and kinship foster care. More children are settled with over 78% who have been in care over 2.5 years being with the same carer for 2 years or more, 10% better than Good + statistical neighbours and national average.

7.5. The dedicated Kinship Service is now live with kinship carers being able to have one assessment for both a fostering and special guardianship assessment to reduce duplication and retelling of information. The design of the Kinship service has been supported by Dorset Kinship Reference Group who have helped us to recognise the unique needs of kinship carers in our service design and delivery.

7.6. We are now beginning to see an increase in the number of enquiries through the South West regional Fostering Recruitment and Retention Hub. This has been a slower start than we would have wished for and close working between Fostering

Service Manager and the Hub has ensured good oversight on performance and escalation where required.

7.7. 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 a further 2 constellations, making us the largest in the South West and equal to Leeds nationally with 5 constellations now in total.

7.8. Achieving a settled home 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.

7.9. Settled homes can be achieved in a number of ways:

- Return Home to Parents – A similar % of children left care to live with their parents. At the end of March 2024, 15.5% children who left care returned to live with their parents' following reunification compared to 15.3% in March 2025. This is higher than Good+ statistical neighbours but lower than national average.
- Adoption – The % of children who have been adopted has slightly decreased. At the end of March 2024 13% of children who left care in the previous 6 months, did so following adoption, compared to 10% in March 2025. Fewer children have lived with Early Permanence carers in 24/25 with 7 children compared to 12 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 living with friends of family subject to a Special Guardianship Order. 5% of children who left care in the six months prior to March 2025 were placed subject to Special Guardianship Order compared to 6% in the previous year. This work has moved from Aspire to the dedicated Kinship Service in house with the aim of providing a range of support to build trust and confidence so that children can be brought up within their family networks.

7.10. 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 March 2025, 17% of the children who ceased to be in care were as a result of turning 18.

7.11. Through the Coram Voice survey 'Your Life Beyond Care' undertaken in 2024, members of the board heard that:

- 99% found it was easy to contact their PA (personal advisor)
- 91% felt involved with pathway planning

- 95% had access to the internet with 97% having a smartphone.

7.12 The area's we need to strengthen include:

- Increasing housing options for care leavers
- Ensuring that all care experienced young people know the reasons why they were in care and have details of their own care histories.
- Support all our young people with staying in touch with the people who are important to them and help them to build their support networks.
- Support care experienced young people to feel positive about their future- to have employment and training opportunities, be financially independent and to be happy with themselves.

8. Next steps towards adult life – *supporting our young people to be safe and happy as adults*

- 8.1. 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 March 2025 92% of young people had a current Pathway Plan compared to 90% in March 2024.
- 8.2. More young people are remaining in Staying Put arrangements with 39 young people remaining with their foster carer after turning 18 yrs old compared to 34 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 continue to actively recruit supported lodging hosts for our care experienced young people.
- 8.3. Young people are encouraged to develop their own networks and keep in touch with significant people in their lives. This is supported through our staying close and mentoring programmes, both of which are funded through the DfE. We have secured funding for the programmes to continue throughout 2025/26. We employ 2 care experienced young people as co-ordinators which has been impactful in increasing the number of young people engaging with both programmes.
- 8.4. We have expanded our number and range of Dorset Council properties to provide affordable and local accommodation for up to 21 young people.
- 8.5. Relationships have been strengthened with private landlords which has yielded local and affordable accommodation for 9 young people. We continue to provide rent deposit, rent in advance, act as a guarantor and in some situations “top up” rent so young people are able to maintain employment or further education.

8.6. A new regulatory framework has been implemented for supported accommodation with providers registering with Ofsted as required in the new regulations.

8.7. Dorset Council has underlined its commitment to our young people with 11 young people in Council apprenticeship positions with recent agreement and commitment for a further 10 apprenticeship posts over the next 12 months for care experienced young people, who are not in education, employment or training currently and who have successfully engaged on the pre-employment programmes.

8.8. Our vision for the next 12 months is to:

- Ensure that care leavers have access to the right support whether they live in or outside of Dorset. This includes financial support and exemptions such as Council tax up to the age of 25.
- We want to increase the number of care leavers engaging with a council apprenticeship- up to 10 with the PA mentoring support in place to enable them to maintain and be successful in employment.
- We want at least 60% of our care leavers (18-25 active) to be engaged with meaningful education, employment or training.
- We want to increase the provision of high-quality accommodation that feels safe and is affordable in Dorset.
- We need to work with colleagues and partners to support our care leavers with their mental health and emotional wellbeing and to develop the “Ask me What Matters” programme through our care and pathway planning.

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 Bridget Bolwell (Chair)
- Cllr Duncan Sowry-House (Vice Chair)
- Cllr Andrew Parry
- Cllr Jane Somper
- Cllr Matt Bell
- Cllr Byron Quayle

- Cllr Andy Todd

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 June 2024 and December 2024 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 are 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- 2027.

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 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 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.

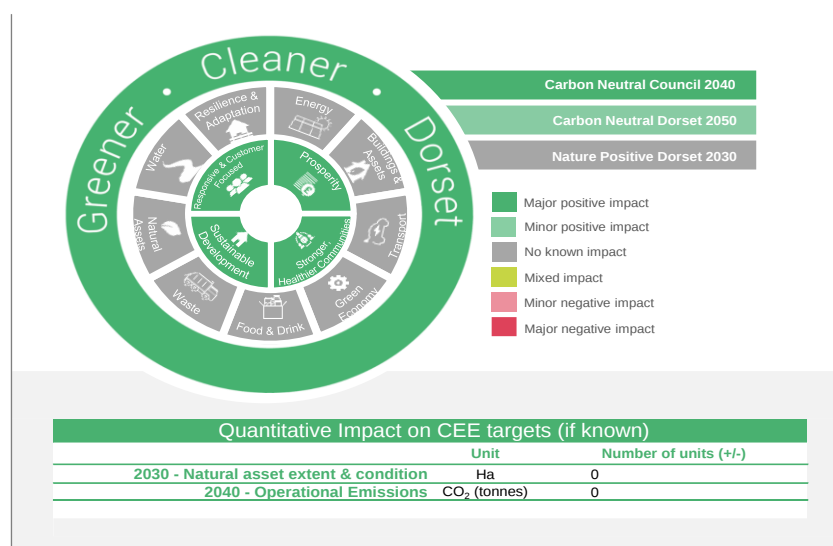
12. Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Implications

- 12.1. As Corporate Parents we strive to ensure that our children are settled and experience love and care with 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 189 children living in care outside Dorset. While the majority of children live in neighbouring authorities, there are some children living as far afield as Birmingham, Newcastle, 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 populationⁱ. Children in Care have double the rates of urgent dental treatment and are half as likely to attend dental services as the general populationⁱⁱ. 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 belongingⁱⁱⁱ.

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)^{iv}, 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

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

ⁱⁱ https://www.gla.ac.uk/news/archiveofnews/2017/august/headline_546507_en.html

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

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