

Corporate Parenting Board

28 May 2025

Youth Voice Strategy for Care Experienced Children and Young People

For Decision

Cabinet Member and Portfolio:

Cllr C Sutton, Children's Services, Education & Skills

Local Councillor(s):

N/A

Executive Director:

P Dempsey, Executive Director of People - Children

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Report Status: Public

Brief Summary:

This paper provides an update on our responsibility as a corporate parent to listen, respond and act upon the voices of our care experienced children and young people. The paper also reflects on how we feedback to young people about the progress we are making on the things that are important to them. This report covers the period from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.

The Youth Voice Team host The Network for care experienced children and young people who generously guide our work with their lived experience. The work of the team is carried out within the framework of the Lundy Model which focuses on four areas:

- space
- voice
- audience
- influence

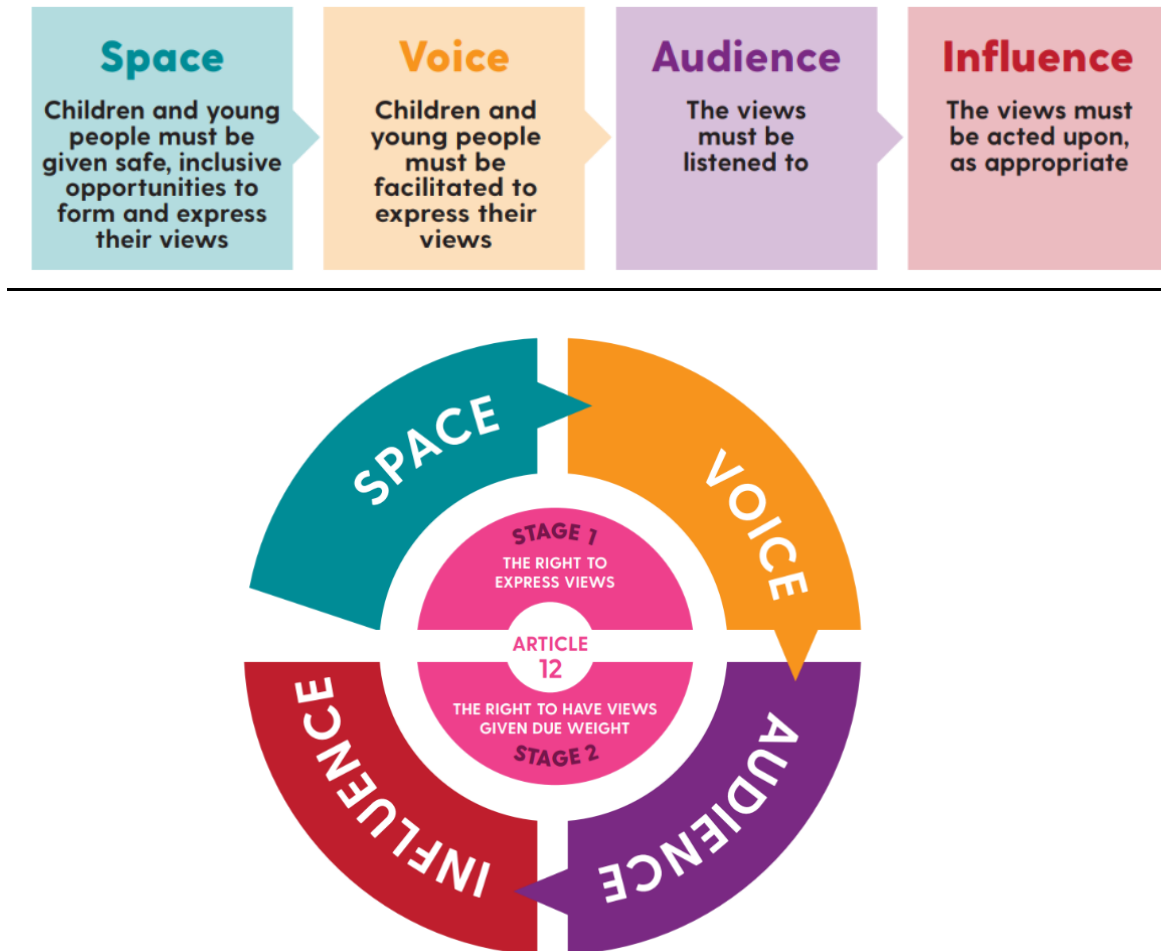
These are illustrated in the image overpage. At the heart of the model is article 12 of the UNCRC. Corporate parents are the duty bearers in upholding all the rights of the child.

Article 12 – Respect for Childrens Views

Children have the right to give their opinions freely on issues that affect them. Adults should listen and take children seriously.

Article 12 does not sit in isolation and needs other articles to be effectively implemented, as it relies on the support and integration of various rights to ensure that children's voices are heard and respected in all matters affecting them.

Lundy Model



Recommendation:

This report is to provide a service update.

Reason for Recommendation:

Corporate Parenting Board are invited to note and discuss the contents of this report.

1. Update on The Network

This section updates on how we and young people have developed The Network.

1.1 Network postcard

This is the new Network postcard for young people:



*Young people's voices are shown in purple, highlighting what The Network means to them.

1.2 Space

"a space we can talk, laugh and help being in care/post care to be better"

- Once young people join The Network, their membership is normally sustained and

**TEAM
LIME**

flexes according to their life circumstances. This is achieved by investing in those relationships and holding young people in mind when they are not with us.

- There can be high personal cost to young people when they are involved, and the youth voice team work hard to create a psychologically safe environment. This means young people know what the session will be about, where it will be and who will be there. They must know this in advance to exercise their choice about taking part.

"like genuinely you've made a space that's safe for us to do this and it's great that we can actually have a positive impact and outcome"

- The culture of the group has been developed so that they look after each other by keeping their stories safe.

**TEAM
LIME**

- Youth Voice Officers use various engagement activities and tools so that all children and young people taking part can share their views.
- Youth Voice Officers plan in time to check in on the wellbeing of young people after activities.

“hearing the truth and voices of young people in a supported space”

1.3 Voice

“i love doing it all; it just makes me so happy knowing that we’re actually making a difference now”



- The Youth Voice Team continue to offer young people spaces that are adaptable in meeting everyone’s unique needs. Young people take part in ways that suit them.
- Some voices are heard digitally e.g. text, email and voice notes. Others through group sessions and some in 1:1 conversations.

“our voices matter and we can make changes.”

- There are young people who require more support to be heard and may need the help of their important adult to do this or reasonable adjustments to be made.
- We create information using Widgets, Easy Read and have more resources available in other languages. We have also provided adaptive equipment.

“we are so active and involved and I really do love that about our group!”

1.4 Audience

“it’s always encouraging to see our hard work being recognized. I’m proud to be part of this team and contribute to the positive changes we’re making.”

- The Network Board is a subgroup of The Network and these young people act as ambassadors by amplifying the voices of their peers at Corporate Parenting Board. They have been creating presentations and workshops over the last year at Informal Corporate Parenting Board and they include all the voices that have been heard across The Network.
- Decision makers attend workshop sessions with young people throughout the year.



1.5 Influence

“i’m glad to see that we are making change. It’s also nice to see that people are taking our side, meaning we have made a pretty big impact through our words and now can actually have a positive impact and outcome”

- The Corporate Parenting Board action plan tracks the actions that come from the informal board meetings and there is a clear section on the plan to show which actions are influenced by young people. These are monitored at delivery group meetings and young people receive feedback and updates at their Network meetings.

- The Youth Voice Team have a separate tracker for young people so they can easily see the progress of other projects or asks.

2. **Key engagement activities:**

- 2.1 Children's Services continue to work with Coram Voice on hearing the voices of care experienced children and young people. The My Life Beyond Care survey for care leavers was undertaken in 2024 and the My Life My Care survey in early 2025. The Youth Voice Team work with the relevant Heads of Service and children and young people to identify the priorities and plan further engagement activities. Young people have been supported to create and present their solutions at workshops in Informal Corporate Parenting Board over the last year.
- 2.2 Young people who form the Network Board, have told us how difficult it can be to talk about the data set which is shared at Informal Corporate Parenting Board. The data tells a story about them and their lives. How we talk about and present the data matters. We have been working to resolve this with colleagues and Coram Voice, on the Ask Me What Matters (AMWM) project. Young people are considering what the most important questions are to them, which will help shape new questions and make the data set richer and more meaningful.
- 2.3 During National Care Leavers Week, young people curated and installed an art exhibition called 'We All Bloom Differently', at the Dorset Museum. Due to the success of the exhibition, the museum hosted it for a further week. Some of those who exhibited art, had not been involved with Youth Voice before and this exhibition gave young people a different opportunity to express their voices. This exhibition has been replicated and is now able to move around Dorset to have more impact.
- 2.4 The Youth Voice Team have worked closely with colleagues across the council to make a significant step in helping young people to stay in touch with their important adults. Funding was secured to bring specialist training to Dorset and to develop our policy and guidance around 'Staying in Touch'.
- 2.5 Young people have been involved in the recruitment of two Corporate Director positions and for the Executive Director of Childrens Services.
- 2.6 In My Shoes half day training is now mandatory for all new front-line staff as part of their induction. This has been co-designed with young people and is a training resource that is updated throughout the year based on what is being heard by children and young people. The training has also been adapted so that it can be delivered in modules. This has seen further bespoke delivery to internal teams in Organisational Development and externally to designated teachers.
- 2.7 Young people have co-designed an information booklet that children and young people will receive when they come into our care. This is now at the final design stages of design and young people have given feedback on the first draft.

3. **What success looks like in Youth Voice**

3.1 Young people's involvement

Hours volunteered by The Network	Number of young people involved in The Network in their own way	Number of young people actively involved
517	61	35 Age breakdown: 9 under 18 years 26 18 years+

- 3.2 There is an increased number of unaccompanied young people involved in Youth Voice due to the Ukraine Response Scheme funding a temporary part-time Youth Voice Officer from August 2024 until August 2026.
- 3.3 Increasingly, young people are using their strengths and talents to lead spaces.
- 3.4 Young people's actions from Informal Corporate Parenting Board are clear on the CPB action plan.
- 3.5 Decision makers are present in all Network workshops
- 3.6 There is increased equity at Corporate Parenting Board with reports having a youth friendly summary sheet and the data set being available in advance so that young people can ask questions to officers. This was a request from children and young people and the board made a swift response.
- 3.7 Young people suggested that to reduce stigma, schools should talk more about all types of families and the Virtual School created a recommended book list and shared this with schools.
- 3.9 Young people worked with the Quality Assurance Reviewing Service Manager to develop a 'top tips' list about their reviews.

4. Forward Plan

- 4.1 In May 2025, young people are attending a media bootcamp to make a film about stigma to share in schools on Care Day, during National Care Leaver Week and to support the recruitment of foster carers. This is an outcome from the solutions they have presented to Corporate Parenting Board.
- 4.2 The Youth Voice Manager will now attend the Workforce Development Board and an amendment to the terms of reference will be made. This will give young people the reassurance that their voices influence the workforce development offer, including training to foster carers. The board will provide the governance needed to monitor, track and feedback to young people the changes they have influenced and the impact this has had. This will include considering opportunities to embed The Dorset Promiseⁱⁱ, which was co-produced with children and young people.

- 4.3 The use of participatory budgeting will be introduced between The Network Board and Corporate Parenting Board. This will enable young people to work with decision makers on the action plan and Corporate Parenting Board space.
- 4.4 The Youth Voice Manager will work alongside officers and Councillors to support the council in ensuring that it upholds the United Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is hoped that this will be supported by a motion to full council in May 2025.
- 4.5 The Youth Voice Team will strengthen their training offer for the children and young people participating in The Network, so that they develop a wide range of skills whilst participating in youth voice work.

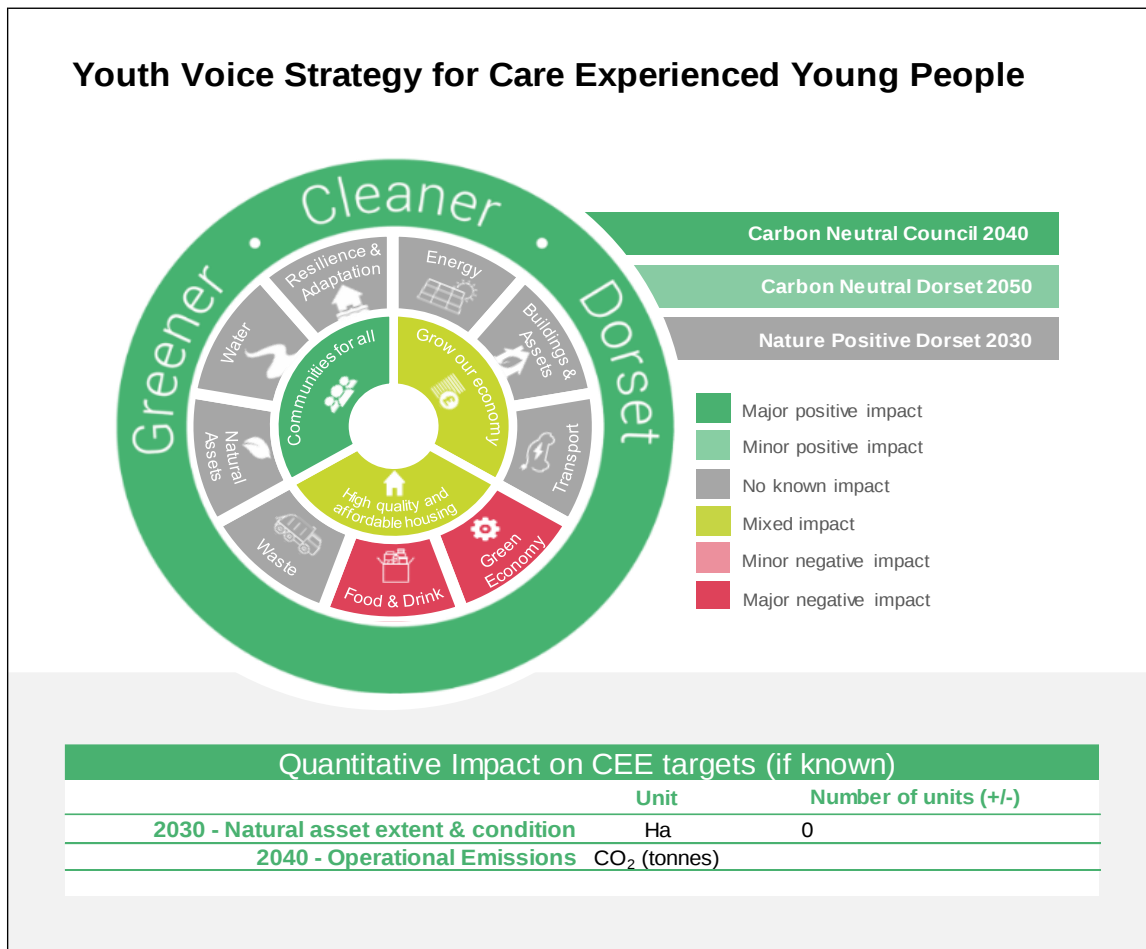
5. Identified areas for continued improvement

- 5.1 The presentation of the data set at Informal Corporate Parenting Board remains difficult for young people. We are working with the business intelligence colleagues to make the language trauma informed and officers are encouraged to talk about the data through a trauma lens. There will be changes to Mosaic and data reporting over the next year. The outcomes from the Ask Me What Matters project will also be visible in the data set.
- 5.2 The Youth Voice Team are strengthening and tightening their feedback loops to young people and there will be an expectation on all decision makers to do the same. The use of our Citizen Space siteⁱⁱⁱ will also be strengthened in the next 12 months with an officer in the team taking on the responsibility for regularly updating it. This site will provide public transparency around the impact children and young people have.
- 5.3 The Youth Voice Team will continue to work with officers and Councillors to develop the Informal Corporate Parenting Board meeting so that young people have the space to hold us to account on our action plan.
- 5.4 Corporate Parenting Partnership Delivery Group will be supported by the Youth Voice Manager to consider the shared responsibility needed in supporting the council in its adoption of care experience, as a locally adopted protected characteristic.
- 5.5 The Youth Voice Team are committed to regularly reflecting on the diversity of The Network and will continue working with colleagues across Childrens Services to identify opportunities to hear a range of voices. The Network is diverse with representation from different genders, ethnicities, backgrounds and disabilities. A focus for the year ahead will be to seek the support of colleagues to hear more from children under the age of 10 and those living in children's homes.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 Ideas and recommendations are mostly achieved within the Youth Voice budget. Some activities share financial resources with other teams e.g Virtual School, Fostering Team and Learning and Development.

- 6.2 A corporate parenting budget has been introduced for 2025/26. This will be for young people to get involved in participatory budgeting. They will have equity in decision making for this budget, helping to bring innovative solutions to life in line with the CPB action plan.
7. **Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Implications**



Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Strategy Commitments	Impact
Energy	No known impact
Buildings & Assets	No known impact
Transport	No known impact
Green Economy	major negative impact
Food & Drink	major negative 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
Grow our economy	neutral

High-quality and affordable housing	neutral
Communities for all	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	
Use the opportunity to increase local, low-carbon, ecologically friendly food production in Dorset?	Food is an important part of the spaces we work in with young people. We will consider the impact of food mileage when sourcing food for our workshops and will ensure there is minimum food waste. These decisions will be made in balance with the needs of children and young people and our financial resources.
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	

8. Well-being and Health Implications

- 8.1 There is improved health and wellbeing for children and young people when they are given a safe space to be listened to and their views taken seriously. The Network is

also a place where new friendships are made and those involved in the group have told us about the sense of belonging this brings them.

8.2 There is a trauma informed approach and young people are not expected to share their stories. Without question, we must do no harm in our engagement and participation work, always measuring and mitigating the risks in projects.

8.3 Being trauma informed also means that children and young people are fully informed about an engagement space before taking part and then there is also time for 'checking in' with after their participation. The language we use and how we act around children and young people are equally important in making sure 'we do no harm'.

9. **Other Implications**

9.1 Children and young people may make disclosures to the Youth Voice Team, as safe and trusting relationships are built. Officers are also at risk of vicarious trauma as lived experience is explored through Youth Voice work. Children and young people will be supported by their key worker, who would be informed of any disclosures. Officers have the space in their 1:1's to reflect on the impact the work has on them. They also have access to the wellbeing team for further support.

10. **Risk Assessment**

10.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: LOW

Residual Risk: LOW

11. **Equalities Impact Assessment**

N/A

12. **Appendices**

None.

13. **Background Papers**

None

14 **Report Sign Off**

This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)

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- i [We All Bloom Differently 2024 - Exhibition Recap](#)
 - ii [The Dorset Promise - Dorset Council](#)
 - iii [Youth voice - Dorset Council - Citizen Space](#)