



CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY

FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Corporate Parenting Strategy Aims

South Gloucestershire Council's Corporate Parenting Strategy for Looked After Children demonstrates the Council's commitment to ensuring that the life chances of every child and young person in its care are improved in line with their peers through the provision of effective support that addresses disadvantage and enables them to reach their full potential. The overall aim of the strategy is to reinforce the corporate responsibility of the whole council, and of its partner agencies, through commitment to a range of initiatives which reflect National and local policies and best practice. The strategy is a Council Policy Framework, requiring the active engagement of all service departments of South Gloucestershire Council, and of elected members.

Corporate Parenting

Corporate Parenting is the term used to refer to the collective responsibility of the Council to provide the best possible care and protection for children and young people who are 'looked after', that is, those who are in the public care. Effective corporate parenting will need a commitment from all council employees and elected members and an authority wide approach. This responsibility for Local Authorities was first laid out in the Children Act 1989 and recent Government guidance for Councillors "*If this were my child*" reiterated the leading role of Councillors in ensuring that their Council acts as an effective corporate parent for every child in care, actively supporting standards of care and seeking high quality outcomes that every good parent would want for their child.

Looked After Children and Young People

The term 'looked after' refers to any child or young person for whom the authority has, or shares, parental responsibility, or for whom the authority provides care and accommodation to the child or young person on behalf of their parent. South Gloucestershire has approximately 150 looked after children in their care at any one time.

The majority of the children and young people need alternative care and accommodation due to the inability of their parent, for a range of reasons, to offer safe and effective caring within the family home and many, but not all, of our children and young people have suffered abuse or neglect of some form prior to coming into our care.

The term "child" can refer to any child or young person between 0-18 years. The Authority also has a duty and responsibility to those young people who leave their long term care after the age of 16 years until they reach the age of 21 years, or 24 if they are in higher education.

The Objectives of the Corporate Parenting Strategy

The duties of the Council towards its looked after children is highly regulated by the Government. South Gloucestershire has a good record in achieving successful outcomes for the majority of the children in its care in comparison with other local authorities. However, in comparison with all children and young people, those who are looked after do not achieve as highly as their peers. The Council has expressed a shared commitment to improve outcomes for all the children and young people in South Gloucestershire, whilst narrowing the gaps for specific individuals or groups of children. The outcomes are detailed in the South Gloucestershire Charter for Children and Young

People 2004. This commitment to improvements and the children to whom they relate are central to this strategy.

The specific objective of this strategy is to ensure that the corporate parenting responsibilities for all councillors and council employees are clearly outlined, in order that:

- Councillors have a clear understanding and awareness of the issues for looked after children in their authority so that they can ensure that their responsibilities as corporate parents are reflected in all aspects of the work of the Council;
- All service departments have their services audited to improve their ability to deliver to the corporate parenting agenda, and have mechanisms in place to continually monitor and review the means by which their services contribute to positive outcomes for looked after children; specifically, each department will develop and promote:
 - Employee awareness and commitment to the Corporate Parenting Strategy;
 - Personnel policies that support the needs of employees who provide care to our looked after children;
 - Recruitment and employment practices that offer supportive work experience and employment opportunities for young people who are in or have left the Council's care;
 - Policies and practices that promote access to services for looked after children and their carers.
- The corporate parenting commitment is realised through a quality of care and range of opportunities that lead to measurable improvement in the life chances of looked after children - enabling them to succeed in line with their peers;
- Communication between Councillors and looked after children is facilitated to achieve participation and inclusion, so that children and young people have a say in how decisions are made about the services that affect them, and that they have an opportunity to influence those decisions;
- Executive members are supported by officers to promote partnership working as a pre-requisite of delivering effective services to looked after children, and to ensure that the joint planning and commissioning framework continues to deliver to this agenda;
- The Council provides effective scrutiny of corporate parenting duties.

Framework for Action

A detailed Action Plan is outlined in this strategy, and this forms the basis of the Council's Framework for Action, which will be steered by a Corporate Parenting Steering Group.

The Steering Group will be Chaired by the Executive member and will include representatives from the key stakeholders, including carers, young people and Elected Members. The Group will receive information on the Council's performance in respect of looked after children, and will provide a forum for looked after children and young people to express their views for consideration in developing policy and in realising this strategy.

This will be further facilitated through consultation events, newsletters and some direct consultation events between Councillors and looked after children.

The Steering Group will also fulfil the functions of the 'Healthy Care Partnership' and as such will invite key stakeholders from Partner Agencies to join the group in order to further this agenda.

Finally, whilst this document lays out clear goals and aspirations for our looked after children, it should be seen as a developing policy – a live document that must continually adapt to meet the changing needs of our children and young people, and to reflect the Council's belief that all of our children and young people deserve the best possible start in life, and access to services that will enable them to overcome disadvantage and to achieve their fullest potential. It is the design of the document that once initiatives are embedded in practice within departments, the details will be transferred to the "Present Activities". New initiatives will be recorded on the Action Plan. In this manner, access to information can be maintained and continuous improvement achieved.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Corporate Parenting

1.1.1 The concept of corporate parenting relates to the collective duties and responsibilities of the Local Authority to safeguard and promote the life chances of looked after children.

1.1.2 The central principle of Corporate Parenting is that all councillors and staff employed by the Council should parent the Looked After children and young people in their care as they would their own child or children.

1.2 Looked After Children

1.2.1 Looked after children are some of the most vulnerable children in society; living away from their families because their parents faced difficulties and pressures in providing for their care, or the children have suffered abuse or neglect whilst in the care of their families. It is rare that children and young people are offered care purely due to their poor behaviour. The children are provided with care and accommodation which meet their needs. Most often this will be in the family home of foster carers but young people may also be placed in residential schools or units. Children may spend a short time in the council's care, either returning to their families or moving to permanent arrangements such as adoption; but for others, their stay is for many years lasting through to adulthood.

1.2.2 The Children Act 1989 provides the statutory framework through which the Local Authority's responsibilities towards the care of children are defined. The Act states that a child may be 'looked after by a Local Authority' through either being:

i) In their Care (subject to a Court Order, Section 31 of the Children Act 1989) where the Local authority shares "parental responsibility" with the parent for the child to ensure planning for their care meets the child's needs

or

ii) Provided with Accommodation (Section 20) where the Local Authority supports the parent in the care of the child through offering accommodation because the parent or person with parental responsibility recognises such support is required to achieve the best outcomes for the child. The Local Authority does not share parental responsibility for these children, which remains with the parent.

1.2.3 This strategy refers to all children and young people in the care of the Council, regardless of the route taken and legal status, as this reflects the Council's overarching duty and commitment to safeguard and promote the welfare of all such children and young people.

1.2.4 The Children Act 1989 defines a 'child' as being aged 0-18 years. However, the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 extends the Local Authority's responsibilities to care leavers to those aged up to 21 years,

and in some circumstances to 25 years. This policy extends to all relevant and formerly relevant young people as defined by the Act.

1.3 **The National Picture**

- 1.3.1 There were 61,100 children and young people looked after nationally at 31 March 2004. 68% of these children were accommodated in foster placements.
- 1.3.2 The outcome nationally is poor for looked after children and there is an over-representation of previously looked after children amongst those who are homeless, unemployed or in prison. In 2002, 6% of all school leavers were unemployed. Of this figure, 25% were young people in the care of Local Authorities. There is a high proportion of these children who suffer from poor mental health or become teenage parents with looked after children being 5 times more likely to develop mental illness than their peers. In comparison with their peers, looked after children can be lower achievers and are at greater risk of social exclusion. If the child also has a disability or comes from a black or minority ethnic background they face a double jeopardy and are at greater disadvantage. There remain a disproportionate number of disabled children accommodated by local authorities. Only one per cent of Looked After Children go to University.

1.4 **Looked After Children in South Gloucestershire**

- 1.4.1 There are, on average, 150 children per year who are looked after by South Gloucestershire. Of this figure, approximately 110 (81%) are placed with foster carers, either those recruited, trained and supported by South Gloucestershire Council or by foster carers from Independent Fostering Agencies. The remainder are placed in Residential establishments. Children and young people living in residential provision are those who have significant special needs such as learning and/or physical disabilities or severe emotional and behavioural difficulties. The residential provision can be residential units (Children's homes) or residential schools.

1.5 **Elected Members**

- 1.5.1 The Elected Member's "special responsibility" for Looked After Children was introduced in 1998 by Frank Dobson¹, the then Secretary of State, in a personal letter to all councillors.
- 1.5.2 "Think Child" 1999, guided Members through the Quality Protects Programme which introduced responsibilities for all vulnerable children and young people including those looked after by the Council.
- 1.5.3 The Local Government Act 2000 strengthens this responsibility of all councillors and placed particular emphasis on the lead role of the executive member, and also for those with scrutiny and overview responsibilities.
- 1.5.4 In 2003, the Government reiterated the responsibility of all councillors in the document "If this were my child"² which states "*The Council as a whole is*

¹ Dobson 1998: Personal letter from Frank Dobson MP to all councillors in England, 21 September 1998

² DfES (2003) If This Were My Child: A Councillors Guide to Being a Good Corporate Parent

the Corporate Parent, and councillors have a key role in that....Being a good corporate parent means we should seek for (the children in public care) the same outcomes as any good parent would want for their children.” All councillors are required to have a basic level of knowledge about issues for vulnerable children in their area and to know or to be able to find out answers to key questions about such children and young people, and how the Council is meeting it’s responsibilities to safeguard and promote their welfare.

1.5.5 This strategy requires all Council services to contribute to this agenda, so that the Council’s corporate parenting responsibility can be translated into service delivery across the board. This is underpinned by a commitment to ensuring that elected members are supported in understanding their role as corporate parents, and in effective scrutiny of service delivery and outcomes for looked after children and young people, primarily though not exclusively, via the Children and Young People’s Select Committee and the Lead Member for Children and Young People.

1.6 **Legislative Context**

1.6.1 **The Children Act 1989** is the key piece of legislation with respect to corporate parenting and sets out the duties of local authorities in relation to children looked after by them. Section 27 of the Act places a duty on Housing, Education and Health Authorities to assist Social Services to fulfil their functions under the Act, and this includes assisting with the corporate parenting function.

1.6.2 **The Quality Protects Programme** was launched in 1998, and established nine national objectives designed to improve the management and delivery of children’s social services to address the issues of social exclusion for the most vulnerable children in society.

1.6.3 **The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000** set the agenda and duties of local authorities towards young people who have been looked after in bridging the gap between these young people and their peers.

1.6.4 **Education Protects** has helped to develop improvements in the educational opportunities of looked after children through the introduction of a designated teacher in each school with responsibility for looked after children and a requirement for Personal Education Plans to be drawn up and regularly reviewed for each child and young person.

1.6.5 **Choice Protects** is the present agenda for change aimed at providing quality stable care for children looked after through better planning and commissioning with partner agencies.

1.6.6 The government has established a **Public Service Agreement** target to:

- improve outcomes for care leavers,
- reduce offending of looked after children
- improve the educational engagement and attainment of looked after children.

- 1.6.7 The latter has become a requirement on Local Authorities through the Children's Act 2004.
- 1.6.8 **"Every Child Matters"**, the Green Paper, 2003, led to the Children Bill, which was presented to Parliament in March 2004 and is now enacted as the Children Act 2004. The Act sets out a long term programme for change for children's services across the country. It places a duty on all Local Authorities to produce a plan which addresses disadvantage, raises achievement and safe guards children and young people in their area.
- 1.6.9 This strategy reflects many of the initiatives recommended in the Children Bill and subsequent Act and demonstrates the commitment of the Council to discharge its duties and improve children's services. The development of Children's Trust arrangements will bring together representatives from key agencies and Primary Care Trusts. Whilst the Council's responsibilities towards looked after children are discharged primarily through the Children and Young Person's Department, the Council recognises the significant contribution to the well being of looked after children and their carers to be made by other Council departments and therefore requires, as part of this strategy, the effective and executive engagement of all service departments in meeting the needs of this group of vulnerable children and young people.

2 Strategy Aims and Objectives

2.1 Overall Aims

- 2.1.1 The aim of this Strategy is to improve the life chances of looked after children and young people in our care through the development of a holistic approach to the delivery of services. The strategy supports the Council's Plan for Children and Young People 2005 -2006 and incorporates the Council's commitment to the six priority outcomes in the Children and Young People's Charter.
- 2.1.2 The strategy aims to drive forward, support and strengthen the areas of good practice and working within the Authority through a whole Authority approach to Corporate Parenting and through strong and effective working with key partners from other Agencies, including the voluntary and private sectors.
- 2.1.3 The strategy aims to achieve and support improvements in all the key Performance Indicators relating to looked after children and young people in line with National targets and to continuously improve the outcomes for looked after children and young people in line with their peers.
- 2.1.4 The strategy also acknowledges the need to ensure strong and effective prevention, to ensure that the vast majority of children who are in need are supported to remain living within their own families and communities, and that children and young people become looked after only when this is necessary to safeguard and promote their welfare.

2.2 Values and Principles

- 2.2.1 The Council has agreed with its partners a vision for all children and young people living in South Gloucestershire, and this is the framework for the Council's aspirations for looked after children and young people. That is, that all children and young people, aged 0-19 years have a right to a life in which they:
- Enjoy the best possible physical and mental health and live a healthy lifestyle
 - Have equality of opportunity
 - Are given encouragement and opportunities to learn, develop, enjoy and achieve, both in and outside school
 - Are protected from harm and neglect and feel safe both at and outside of home and school
 - Are supported by their parents and carers, and their peers
 - Are encouraged to play a full part in their communities and behave in a socially responsible manner.
- 2.2.2 In order to deliver these outcomes for looked after children, the Council recognises that such children and young people often start from a position

of increased vulnerability and disadvantage and will need additional help in order to overcome the factors which contribute to unacceptably high levels of poor educational attainment, mental illness, criminal activity, and homelessness in this group of children nationally. Services will therefore be required to prioritise the needs of these children, and, in partnership with the Department for Children and Young People to ensure that such poor outcomes are avoided through early prevention and effective intervention and support.

2.2.3 Specifically, the Council acknowledges that there is a need to focus on:

- improved long term stability of placements offered to looked after children;
- reducing the incidence of children being placed residentially Out of Authority;
- increased educational attainment;
- improved employment and training opportunities for care leavers.
- sustained low incidence of involvement in criminal activity.

2.2.4 This is reflected in the Council's promise in the Corporate Services Plan to:

"Implement changes to services for Children Looked After to ensure they have a stable home and effective support to enable them to reach their full potential".³

2.2.5 The Council understands that such changes can only be effectively implemented through an overriding commitment to ensure that all services that impact on the lives of looked after children and young people in South Gloucestershire are effectively engaged in the corporate parenting agenda. This means ensuring the provision of high quality, 'joined up' services⁴ across the Authority, driven by an informed Council whose members understand the corporate parenting agenda.

2.2.6 In order to achieve this, the Council will ensure that:

- It has in place an effective mechanism to collect and analyse information about the children and young people for whom it is responsible, the factors that influence their lives, and what this means about the life experiences and life chances of those children;
- It provides opportunities to engage with all looked after children, to hear and respond to their views, and to celebrate their achievements;
- In order to meet the changing needs of looked after children throughout their care experience and beyond, all Council services must be resourced and required to respond effectively to this ongoing analysis.

³ South Gloucestershire Corporate Services Plan 2004/7, p24

⁴ "Every child Matters", Government Green Paper, September 2003

- Through the creation and maintenance of effective partnership and commissioning arrangements, ensure that other service providers are influenced and engaged in meeting this agenda.
- The specific needs of Looked After Children with disabilities and children from different cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds must be met in service provision, communication and policy making.
- Corporate parents should raise awareness of their looked after children at all levels within the Authority and challenge negative and discriminatory perceptions.

2.3 **Good Practice Principles**

2.3.1 The provision of services to looked after children is highly regulated by the government, and this is reflected in the policy framework adopted by the Department for Children and Young People and supported by the Council:

- i. To design and direct services in a way which will enable families to continue to care for, or resume care of, their children;
- ii. To ensure that services provided to families are based on the principle that all children have a right to a positive, safe and healthy childhood that takes into account their race, gender, culture, religion, disability or special needs;
- iii. To ensure that, in circumstances where care or accommodation cannot be avoided the aim will be to achieve a speedy rehabilitation with the natural family in a way that safeguards the child and promotes the child's well being;
- iv. Every child who enters care or accommodation will be the subject of a core assessment which will inform structured and purposeful care planning;
- v. That every child in care or accommodation has a detailed Care or Pathway Plan which identifies the child's needs, the objectives of care and sets out specific timescales for action and review;
- vi. To ensure that if a child has to enter care or accommodation that the first consideration will be given to a family placement;
- vii. To undertake care planning in an open and honest way seeking to engage parents and the extended family in the planning process, and appraising family members of the factors which can influence the direction of planning;
- viii. To ensure that all children have an allocated social worker and that an up to date, comprehensive case record is maintained for each child looked after which details the nature and quality of care provided and contributes to an understanding of the child's life events;

- ix. To ensure that the child and anyone involved in his or her care is provided with accurate, relevant and up to date information on the reasons for care, the direction of care planning and the day to day details of placement planning;
- x. To ensure that, at a minimum, every child is visited within statutory requirements;
- xi. To maintain robust mechanisms for ascertaining, recording and responding to the wishes and feelings of children looked after, including access to Independent Visitor and Advocacy services;
- xii. Through the provision of detailed, inclusive care and placement planning to ensure that a care environment is assessed and obtained for the child which meets their emotional, developmental, educational and cultural needs;
- xiii. To ensure that when being looked after sibling groups are placed together wherever possible, unless their individual needs determine this to be inappropriate;
- xiv. To ensure that children looked after are supported to maintain links with their parents, wider family, social network and community;
- xv. To ensure that children looked after from black and other ethnic minority backgrounds are provided with the means to maintain continuity with the heritage of their birth family in their day to day life;
- xvi. To ensure that all children looked after have comprehensive health care, consistent education provision and the use of specialist advice and therapeutic interventions when required;
- xvii. To ensure that whenever plans for permanence are being considered, they will be made on the basis of the needs of each looked after child and within defined timescales;
- xvii. To ensure that all children are subject to a case review within the statutory timescales and that the child and parents are partners in the review process;
- xviii. Where secure accommodation is used, that this is a 'last resort' and for the minimum time necessary;
- xix. To ensure that those leaving care have been helped to develop skills, competence and knowledge necessary for adult living and that, for those eligible, a package of continuing support is available set out in a Pathway Plan which is regularly reviewed until the age of 21 (or 24 if in Higher Education).
- xx. To ensure a smooth transition to adult services for those severely disabled care leavers who are likely to need social care support, specialist health care and accommodation throughout their adult lives.

xx1 To ensure that all care provided adheres to the Healthy Care Standard laid down by the DfES.

2.3.2 These principles inform the vision statement and commitment to all children and young people and should be understood to extend to the provision of services to families and carers of Looked After Children in order to promote permanent and stable placements, which are the essential basis of positive outcomes for children and young people.

3 Consultation and Communication

3.1 Children and Young people

3.1.1 Communication and consultation with children and young people is an underlying principle of corporate parenting and at present is facilitated by the Department for Children and Young People in a variety of ways. The views of the children in South Gloucestershire about services and areas for change have been the feature of two video recordings that has been shared with service providers and partners to inform future plans and improvements.

3.1.2 Children and young people are kept up to date and encouraged to contribute to service planning through a newsletter prepared by young people. An advocacy service is provided to enable children and young people to represent their views and achieve change. A group of Looked After young people deliver training to professionals about the issues of being a Looked After Child.

3.1.3 Children and young people's achievements are celebrated at a specific event each year attended by many of the birth and corporate parents. It is well supported and the feedback from children and young people is very positive. A similar event for older young people and care leavers is required.

3.1.4 This strategy endorses an on-going commitment to increased communication, consultation and involvement with looked after children and young people. The opinions and views of our looked after children need to be taken into account by all providers of services and their representation needs to be increased on important issues.

Good Practice examples

In the London Borough of Newham the Corporate Parenting strategy is overseen by the Corporate Parenting Group, which is chaired by the Chief Executive. The membership of the group is made up of members, heads of services and key partner agencies and young people.

In Doncaster Metropolitan Borough, a focus group meeting for looked after children and young people was organised which enabled the young people to voice their concerns about housing, leisure, education, placements and accommodation. These issues are now addressed in the Corporate Parenting Strategy and action plan. A children's version of the strategy was produced and sent to all Looked After Children and Young People.

3.1.5 Children and young people will receive information on Corporate Parenting appropriate to their understanding including a children's version of this strategy.

3.1.6 A representative number of young people will be included as members of the Corporate Parenting Steering Group.

- 3.1.7 Advocacy Services will be used to enable effective communication between children and young people and Members to influence decision-making.
- 3.1.8 Young people will be included in the recruitment process of staff in the services with responsibility for looked after children.
- 3.1.9 Disabled children, who, due to their unique and complex needs are often looked after in residential Out of Authority establishments, far from their homes and family networks, are particularly vulnerable. The communication difficulties experienced by some of these children and young people increases this vulnerability. To consult with severely disabled looked after children and young people the Council will involve specialist services to ensure that people with skills in communicating with children and working directly with this vulnerable group.
- 3.1.10 Children and young people from black and ethnic minority groups also experience increased vulnerability when they become looked after. The Council will ensure that the views and specific needs of this group of children will be met in the consultation and inclusion programme.

3.2 **Elected Members**

- 3.2.1 The specific role in corporate parenting envisaged by the government requires all Council members to be aware of, and to find out about, the basic issues about looked after children in their area. The nine Key Questions⁵ Councillors are required to ask cover the basic requirements any parent would need to know about their child's life through to adulthood. This information can be provided in a number of ways.

Good Practice Example

Middlesbrough Council established a Corporate Parenting Board as an advisory body to the Council on issues around their responsibilities as corporate parent. The Board consists of nine elected Members, up to six young people who are looked after or care leavers, a Foster Carer, and representatives from the National Youth Advocacy Service and the Primary Care Trust. The Corporate Parenting Board has had considerable impact on the wider Council in ensuring that all elected Members and senior managers are aware of their responsibilities and have a firm commitment to corporate parenting. A specific section has been included in the Members Handbook that clearly sets out their responsibilities as corporate parents.

Good Practice Example

West Berkshire's Corporate Parenting Strategy is overseen by the Corporate Parenting Panel, made up mainly of Members, Social Services Managers, the Young Person's Participation Officer, a foster carer and the designated nurse and teacher for looked after children. The enthusiasm and active involvement of the panel and members was particularly noted in the recent SSI Inspection and began when the then Councillor Matthew Huggins from London Borough of Barking and Dagenham was invited to speak to the Councillors. Councillor Huggins was a looked after child and became the youngest councillor to be elected in the country. Following this visit a Corporate Parenting Panel was established.

⁵ DfES (2003) If This Were My Child: A Councillors Guide to Being a Good Corporate Parent. 2.3 page 8

- 3.2.1 In South Gloucestershire, the Council will establish a Corporate Parenting Steering Group with responsibility for the over sight and implementation of the Strategy to ensure direction is given to the many initiatives across the Council. The Steering Group will have representatives from Elected Members, young people and key stakeholders from the council and partner agencies. The Chair of the Steering Group will hold an executive position to ensure that the Strategy becomes a whole Authority activity.
- 3.2.2 The Steering Group will seek to ensure that Elected Members are enabled to meet directly with Looked After Children and their carers to listen to their views.

Good Practice examples

West Berkshire's Corporate Parenting Panel now have sub groups which concentrate on specific areas of services and the benefits of the greater involvement and knowledge is that the elected members from the Panel can inform and influence other Members first hand of the necessity of any changes required.

All Elected Members on the Corporate Parenting Group are CRB checked and undertake the Section 33 inspections of the residential facilities in the Authority.

- 3.2.3 Elected Members, through effective scrutiny, will ensure Looked After Children are considered in the development of all policy and service provision in relation to children. The Cabinet and full Council will be made aware of issues and developments.
- 3.2.4 Training will be arranged through the Corporate Parenting Steering Group so that Councillors are aware of issues of importance to children and young people and how to communicate with them effectively.
- 3.2.5 Elected Members will continue to be invited to attend the Celebration of Achievements of Looked After Children.
- 3.2.6 Elected Members will receive and be encouraged to contribute when appropriate to the Newsletter to all Looked After Children and to Foster Carers.

3.3 The Corporate Parenting Steering Group

- 3.3.1 The Corporate Parenting Steering Group will arrange for consultation of all Looked After Children, including those from black and other ethnic minority groups and disabled children and those placed outside the Authority, in respect of the implementation of the Strategy and the important issues for Looked After Children.
- 3.3.2 The Corporate Parenting Steering Group will commission a Corporate Parenting Newsletter to be produced for Council Staff, to raise awareness of corporate responsibilities through out the Council and to reduce stereotypical views of looked after children. A children's version of the newsletter will be produced.

- 3.3.3 The Corporate Parenting Steering Group will oversee the implementation of the Action Plan, with delegated responsibilities to Heads of Service or senior managers within all departments and partner agencies. The Steering Group Board will report on a regular basis to Elected Members and receive reports from other groups with responsibilities for Looked After Children to ensure Members receive the information necessary on the Looked After population.
- 3.3.4 The Steering Group will incorporate the role of the 'Healthy Care Partnership' and will invite relevant officers from key partner agencies to join the Steering Group in order to fulfil this function.

4 Providing support to improve outcomes

4.1 Strategic Commitment

4.1.1 In order to achieve the aspirations of the Council it is necessary for every department to have an appreciation and awareness of the importance of prioritising services for children looked after. Practical support can be offered by all services within the Council.

Good Practice example

Doncaster Metropolitan Borough has ensured the Corporate Parenting responsibilities are included in Strategic development and Policies throughout the council. All Directorates signed up to the Corporate Parenting Strategy, with a commitment to incorporate the responsibilities within future service plans.

4.1.2 Every Council department will ensure employee awareness of, and commitment to, the corporate parenting strategy through circulation of information published by the Department for Children and Young People on behalf of carers and looked after children, and through discussion about the implications for their service area. Agreed actions in respect of Corporate Parenting will be included in departmental and / or service plans.

4.1.3 Every Council department will support the needs of employees who become approved as foster carers for the Council and provide care to looked after children on the Council's behalf, through the extension of paid and unpaid carer's leave, as detailed in the Council's Personnel Policy. This will support the commitment to providing placement stability and choice through improved foster carer recruitment and retention.

4.1.4 Every Council department will make due consideration to the needs of looked after children and their carers in all new relevant initiatives and, through effective engagement and consultation – either directly or via consultation mechanisms within social services, ensure that any services being used by looked after children and their carers are responsive to their needs.

4.1.5 Every Council department will develop and promote provision of fair and equitable access to services for looked after children and their carers, including where feasible, the provision of such services at a reduced rate or at no charge. Access and inclusion of disabled looked after children to services will prevent these children from being further disadvantaged due to their individual circumstances.

4.1.6 Recruitment and employment practices will ensure that young people from South Gloucestershire, who are or have been looked after, will be included, where possible, in the recruitment of staff who directly work with looked after children or make decisions concerning their welfare.

4.1.7 Recruitment and employment practices will ensure that appropriate and supportive work experience and/or employment opportunities are available for young people who are or have been looked after.

4.1.8 Officers and Members, through effective working partnerships with other agencies, will seek to influence the delivery of services to support the corporate parenting agenda and seek to develop joint commissioning strategies to achieve this end.

4.2 **Improving Healthy Outcomes**

4.2.1 The designated nurse for looked after children will ensure that all children and young people who are looked after are provided with appropriate health care and advice including, for young people sexual health advice, and that annual health assessments are undertaken.

4.2.2 The designated nurse for looked after children will visit or liaise with the school nurse and other health professionals for all disabled children looked after in residential school to: -

- Ensure appropriate arrangements are in place with the health authority which covers the area where the school is situated,
- clarify whose responsibility it is to provide therapeutic health services such as physiotherapy/occupational therapy assessments e.g. school or the health authority.
- ensure there is a designated health professional in South Gloucestershire to have oversight of the child's health needs and provision, links with the health authority where the school is located and ascertain the annual health assessment arrangements.

4.2.3 The designated nurse will attend the Statutory reviews of disabled Looked After children who are placed out of authority or, where this is not possible, the annual joint placement and Statement of Special Educational Needs Review.

4.3 **Supporting Educational, Training and Employment Attainment**

4.3.1 A specific Work Experience and Employment Scheme, to enable young people to complete additional work experience successfully and increase employment possibilities and opportunities will be developed through the Children and Young Persons Department. A Coordinator will be employed to manage the scheme, and to provide regular updates to the Corporate Parenting Steering Group.

4.3.2 Initiatives to provide subsidised Transport for Students attending Sixth Form colleges will be inclusive of looked after children, where possible, and clearly state this within any leaflet and documentation.

4.3.3 Designated Teachers will ensure Looked After Children are aware of the opportunity to claim the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA).

- 4.3.4 All Looked After Children, including those from Black and ethnic minority backgrounds and disabled pupils will be made aware of the post-sixteen opportunities of University entrance and be provided with information about entitlements and support from the Universities and schools.
- 4.3.5 Awareness of any specific initiatives of a Council department relating to children and young people will be brought to the attention of the professionals working with looked after children to ensure engagement in the initiative where required.
- 4.3.6 Awareness of any apprenticeships within the Council will be brought to the attention of professionals working with young people who are or have been looked after in order for them to compete for the position.

4.4 **Preparation for Independence and Transition to Adulthood**

- 4.4.1 The Department for Children and Young People will continue to participate in the 'Help to Move On' project run by the Norah Fry Research Centre, which will explore the outcomes for young people with learning difficulties at transition from residential school/college.
- 4.4.2 The Department for Children and Young people will work with partner agencies to enable vulnerable young people preparing to leave care with the opportunity and experience to reside in a "Trainer flat" prior to leaving their foster placement in preparation for successful tenancy holding.

5 Financial arrangements

- 5.1 The outline of the present activities in Appendix One that support corporate parenting are funded predominantly through existing agency and departmental resources, social services budget and the use of grant funding.

Good Practice example

London Borough of Newham

The commitment to Corporate Parenting is reflected in the agreement to a Corporate Budget to meet the targets of the Corporate Parenting Strategy rather than it remaining the responsibility of one department. The budget is seen as providing broader corporate support through redirecting resources from existing departmental and corporate budgets.

- 5.2 The Action plan proposals introduce a number of new initiatives, which raise financial implications for the council. The corporate responsibility to support the initiatives will be met through the establishment of a corporate parenting budget managed via the Corporate Parenting Steering Group.
- 5.3 Young people who participate the work experience initiative, staff selection, training and consultation will receive remuneration from the Corporate Parenting budget for the work completed.

Corporate Improvement Priority	Objective	Activity	Involvement and Lead
Meeting the needs of and providing opportunities for our children and young people	LISTENING TO CHILDREN		
✓	Listening to the needs of individual children looked after	Provision of an Children's Advocacy Service to enable the looked after children to represent their views and achieve change to improve their experience	Department for Children and Young People/Reconstruct Nigel Shipley Jenny Raynes
✓	Listening to the needs of individual children looked after	Viewpoint – computer consultation software – giving children looked after an opportunity to comment on their care plan and needs.	Department for Children and Young People Simon Machin
✓	Involving children looked after in service planning	Video feedback of the views of children and young people	Department for Children and Young People Nigel Shipley Simon Machin
✓	Involving children looked after in service planning	Newsletter for children looked after and care leavers, prepared by young people and giving them an opportunity to comment on services.	Department for Children and Young People Simon Machin
✓	Involving children looked after in service planning	'New Faces' youth group for young people looked after, which is jointly run by Social Services and Youth Service, and gives young people an opportunity to meet and comment on services.	Department for Children and Young People Simon Machin Vicky Houselander
✓	Young People participate in training staff who work or make decisions about their futures	Young people are trained and deliver mandatory Total Respect training to staff	Department for Children and Young People Simon Machin Penny McLelland

✓	Provision of Independent visitors to support looked after children	Looked After children and young people who have little or no contact, or where contact is of poor quality, with their families are offered a befriending service from an Independent Person.	Department for Children and Young People/Reconstruct (in South Gloucestershire and close neighbouring areas)
✓	Involving children in recruitment of staff who work with looked after children	Specific training is provided for young people who are or have been looked after to enable them to partake in staff recruitment and selection	Department for Children and Young People Simon Machin Lesley Raison
	LISTENING TO FOSTER CARERS		
✓	Involving foster carers in service planning	Planet Foster Care - newsletter, which keeps foster carers and adopters informed of service developments and gives them opportunities to comment through questionnaire surveys and inviting carers to write articles.	Department for Children and Young People/Foster carers Nigel Shipley Mike Connolly
✓	Involving foster carers in service planning	Consultation meetings with foster carers to help to re-model the fostering service.	Department for Children and Young People Mike Connolly
✓	Involving foster carers in service planning	Independent Carers Support Group – informal meetings for carers at which they can support each other and develop a collective view on service developments	Department for Children and Young People Run by carers and facilitated by Nigel Shipley
	IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES		
✓	To improve educational attainments of LAC	Practice Supervisor based in the Looked After Team to liaise and co-ordinate educational issues pertaining to LAC offering advice to staff and teachers around educational needs of looked after children	Department for Children and Young People Paul Millman
	To improve the	All pre-school children who become looked after and	Department for Children and

✓	educational attainments of LAC to assist Placement Stability	the children of Care Leavers will be referred to Early Years Team at time of admission to care to have their needs for pre-school resources assessed and provision of support.	Young People Lesley Raison Jane Lund
✓	To improve educational attainments	All pre-school children who are looked after will have a Foundation Stage PEP when they attend pre-school or nursery which is regularly reviewed	Department for Children and Young People Jane Lund Paul Millman
✓	To improve educational attainments and employment opportunities	All looked after children of school age will have PEP with active Connexions input for those over the age of thirteen. The PEP will be reviewed on a regular basis and monitored through the statutory reviewing process	Paul Millman/ Clare Steel Joint protocol Department for Children and Young People / Connexions Lesley Raison Dawn Stevens
✓	To improve educational attainments	A dedicated teacher will assess all children of school age who attend South Glos schools become looked after to identify specific needs	Department for Children and Young People Jane Graham, Margaret Stobart Paul Millman
✓	To improve educational attainments and employment opportunities	Tutors are provided to assist Year 11 pupils with additional support in relation to GCSE study	Department for Children and Young People Paul Millman Clare Steel
✓	To improve educational attainments. To assist emotional stability	Home to school transport agreement to ensure continuity of school when a child becomes accommodated or changes placement	Department for Children and Young People Sue Bowers Lesley Raison
✓	To improve educational attainment To assist with placement stability	Support in school placements through the Special Case Advisory Panel to provide early intervention and prevent exclusion	Department for Children and Young People Youth Offending Team Mike Connolly

✓	To assist placement stability and improve educational attainment	Foster Carers advice line provided by the Education department in connection with looked after children	Department for Children and Young People Education Behavioural Support Team
✓	To improve educational attainment	Computer access in the homes of foster carers for children who are in placement to assist with their studies	Department for Children and Young People Nigel Shipley Mike Connolly
✓	To improve educational attainment	Attainment monitoring of the progress of all school age looked after children to ensure early identification of any particular problems	Department for Children and Young People Clare Steel Paul Millman
✓	To assist with emotional health and development	Annual event celebrating the achievements of looked after children including their educational attainments – funded by local businesses, Social Services Connexions, and Education Service	Department for Children and Young People Nigel Shipley Lesley Raison
✓	To ensure children are supported by their teenage parents	Foster carers specifically recruited to offer mother and baby placements for teenage looked after children to ensure the mother can continue with education and be supported in learning to care for their child	Department for Children and Young People Family Placement Team
	IMPROVING HEALTH		
✓	To improve the physical and emotional health of looked after children	Annual Health assessments provided by the Community Paediatrician to all looked after children and young people	South Gloucestershire PCT/Community Paediatrician North Bristol Health Trust/ Department for Children and Young People Designated Nurse
✓	To improve and maintain the health of looked after children	Appointment of a designated nurse specifically for looked after children and care leavers.	Joint initiative between Department for Children and Young People, South Glos Primary Care Trust, North

			Bristol Health Trust
✓	To improve the physical well being of looked after children	Provision of out of school activities during holidays both specifically for looked after children and also to integrate them within the community	Connexions Department for Children and Young People
✓	To improve the emotional and mental health of looked after children	Dedicated consultation service provided by Child and Adolescent Mental Health service (CAMHs) for foster carers and other professionals working with looked after children	North Bristol Health Trust Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service/ Department for Children and Young People Lesley Raison Nicky Guest
✓	To improve the emotional and mental health of looked after children	Specific service of individual direct therapy and counselling provided to looked after children provided by Child Adolescent Mental Health Services and voluntary organisation, Childtime.	Joint initiatives Department for Children and Young People /CAMHS/Childtime Lesley Raison, Nicky Guest Alan Moore
✓	To maintain or improve health of looked after children	Provision of leisure passes for looked after children and their carers to promote activities	Department for Children and Young People Family Placement Team Looked After Team
✓	To broaden the experiences of looked after children	Provision of a guide for staff and foster carers of venues for activities and contact	Department for Children and Young People Looked After Team
✓	To improve self esteem and social skills	Youth club specifically for looked after children	Department for Children and Young People/ Simon Machin Vicky Houselander
	LEISURE		
✓	Promoting an active and healthy lifestyle	Encouraging and supporting children looked after and care leavers to take part in activities (e.g. sports, artistic, cultural) through the 'Active for Life' programme.	Department for Children and Young People Kim Hazeldine, Nigel Shipley Peter Parry

	TRANSITION TO INDEPENDENCE AND ADULTHOOD		
✓	Mentoring scheme for Care Leavers	Provision of a mentor for young people leaving care	Department for Children and Young People Reconstruct
✓	To prevent homelessness	Housing support for care leavers to ensure tenancies are maintained	Housing Department Priority Youth Housing
✓	To improve self reliance skills to prevent homelessness	Britton House sheltered accommodation for care leavers.	Bromford Housing Association
✓	To prevent homelessness	Maximum points are awarded to care leavers who become a priority status to be housed when leaving our care	Joint Protocol Housing/ Department for Children and Young People
✓	To improve self reliance skills in an appropriate setting	Supported Lodgings Scheme recruit supported lodgings for care leavers who would have difficulties living independently	South Glos Bond Scheme Housing Department for Children and Young People