

OVERVIEW OF CORPORATE PARENTING RESPONSIBILITIES

Committee name	Children, Families & Education Select Committee
Officer reporting	Poppy Reddy, AD Care, Support and Transition Donna Hugh, AD Care Provision Services
Papers with report	The Council's Corporate Parenting responsibilities
Ward	All

HEADLINES

This report provides a comprehensive briefing to the Children, Families & Education Select Committee on Hillingdon Council's Corporate Parenting responsibilities. The report reaffirms the collective responsibility of the Council across elected members, officers, and departments to act as effective corporate parents and ensure the best outcomes for children and young people, who are looked after or care experienced.

Corporate parenting is not the sole responsibility of the Lead Member or Director of Children's Services; rather, it is a shared moral and statutory obligation across all functions of the Council. Championing the rights, needs, and voices of our children and young people and embedding Corporate Parenting principles throughout the organisation is fundamental to delivering high-quality, impactful services.

In Hillingdon, we understand that being in care can be a life-altering experience, shaping the trajectory of a young person's life. We acknowledge the importance of creating an environment that fosters stability, empowerment, and a sense of belonging for Children Looked After. We aim to ensure that every individual in our care can flourish, grow, and achieve their aspirations.

Services for children in care form part of a comprehensive continuum of support for children and young people who may be facing difficulties at home. These range from family support to intensive community interventions or seeking permanent alternative care. In taking this approach, we remain committed to ensuring that children only enter care when it is necessary for their safety and wellbeing. When we must exercise our powers to remove children from their homes to protect them, we seek to ensure that care proceedings are timely, and our planning is robust to achieve permanence for every child. Our priority will always be to achieve permanence for children in their extended family or network wherever possible.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:

- 1. Note the developments and achievements outlined in this report;**
- 2. Endorse the continued embedding of corporate parenting principles across all services; and**
- 3. Support ongoing efforts to prepare for the expanded statutory duties from 2025.**

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1. When a child or young person enters the care of the Council, the role of being a parent is shared by the local authority with the parents. This is known as Corporate Parenting. Corporate Parenting is the term used to describe the responsibility the Local Authority has towards children and young people in care. It is our responsibility to be loving, caring and aspirational for all children in our care and care experienced young people.
2. Working together with partners like health, education, housing and other partners to ensure that services are appropriate and meets the needs and improves outcomes for our children.
3. Above all else, it is about protecting children and young people from harm and keeping them safe whilst helping them to thrive and reach their full potential.
4. The Council has a statutory responsibility to children looked after until they are 18 years old and then as young adults until they are 25 years old. (These young people are known as Care Experienced Young People).
5. At end of March 2025 Hillingdon Council was corporate parent for 330 children under the age of 18 and 766 young people who are eligible for care leaving service of which 602 are aged between 18 to 25.
6. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 defined in law the responsibility of corporate parents to ensure, as far as possible, secure, nurturing, and positive experiences for our children and care experienced young people.
7. The statutory guidance identifies a critical question that Local Authorities (officers and elected members alike) must ask themselves in adopting a corporate parenting ethos: 'would this be good enough for my child?'
8. In Hillingdon, the way in which these duties are discharged is regularly reviewed and scrutinised by the Corporate Parenting Panel which is co-chaired by an elected member and one of our children who is a member of the Children in Care Council.
9. Our 5 Desired Outcomes for our Children were co-designed with our children and are:
 1. To be the best version of themselves
 2. To enjoy good physical and mental health
 3. To have pride in their unique identities
 4. To live somewhere where they feel they belong
 5. To be and feel safe

RESIDENT BENEFIT

Hillingdon Council's Corporate Parenting Strategy places our children at the centre of all we do, ensuring that we are not only meeting our statutory duties but actively working to improve the life chances of our most vulnerable residents. These strategies are well-aligned with national guidance and forthcoming legislative reforms, positioning the Council as a committed, forward-thinking corporate parent.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None at this stage.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

This report is in line with the existing legislation relating to children in care. The Borough Solicitor confirms that there are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Working together to safeguard children, Department of Education, 2023

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

The Children and Social Work Act 2017

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/16/contents/enacted>

APPENDIX

The Council's Corporate Parenting responsibilities

The Council's Corporate Parenting responsibilities

1. Hillingdon's Corporate Parenting responsibilities outlines the Council's approach to fulfilling its duties towards our children and care experienced young people. It provides a framework for delivering consistent, high-quality support that is shaped by the views and experiences of our young people. This briefing aims to re-iterate to the Committee the Council's role in safeguarding and caring for our children and young people who cannot remain safely at home.
2. Our Core strategic commitments include:
 - **Youth Voice and Participation** – Actively involving our children and young people in shaping services, ensuring they are heard, respected, and empowered.
 - **Multi-Agency Collaboration** – Working across partners in health, education, housing, and employment to deliver holistic, joined-up care and support.
 - **Continuous Quality Improvement** – Using performance data, audits, and feedback to drive innovation, accountability, and service enhancement.
3. This approach reflects a whole-council ethos, with elected members and officers serving as champions for children's rights, stability, and opportunities.

Who are Looked After Children?

1. Throughout this document we shall refer to children and young people who are looked after or leaving care as "our children and care experienced young people." This is fundamental to our vision and values in supporting our children.
2. Our children can become part of the care system at any point in their lives and stay in care until they turn 18 years old, they can also be reunited with their birth family, extended family or be adopted.
3. Our corporate parenting responsibilities extend beyond a child's 18th birthday, continuing until they are 21 and up to 25 if they request or consent to support.
4. As part of Pathway Planning for our children transitioning to adulthood, we support their transition into adulthood by actively promoting their mental wellbeing, education, training, and employment, whilst always maintaining high aspirations and ensuring they have access to safe and appropriate housing options including 'staying close' and 'staying put.'
 - **Staying close:** is designed for young people moving across from residential care or foster care. It provides an enhanced package that includes move-on accommodation, practical and emotional support.
 - **Staying put:** allows our young people who were in foster care to continue living with their foster carers after they turn 18. The support continues until they are 21, thereby providing stability and continuity during their transition to adulthood.
5. Our children may enter care for various reasons, often due to abuse or neglect. In Hillingdon, we also have a significant number of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) in our care. To provide context 22% of our children are UASC, compared to our statistical neighbour's average of 9%. We have an Unaccompanied Children's Assessment Team (UCAT) specifically dedicated to supporting our UASC, ensuring their needs and age assessments are completed promptly to prevent delays and gaps in meeting their care needs.

6. Hillingdon, as a port Local authority continues to have a sizeable percentage of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children. Of those looked after at 31/03/2025, 22%. We have been utilising the NTS (National Transfer Scheme) with 19 young people moving to other Local Authorities between January 25 to March 25. New children arriving in the borough are now securing permanent moves through the scheme within one to six weeks.
7. Of all children and young people mentioned above, 45% arrived in Hillingdon seeking asylum and unaccompanied by an adult.
8. Our children are cared for in a range of settings:
 - living with foster parents
 - living in a residential children's home both outside and in the borough
 - living in semi-independent residential homes
 - living in residential settings like schools
 - living in secure settings because of being remanded to custody
 - living in staying put or staying close accommodation

Corporate Parenting Role

9. 'Corporate Parenting' describes the collective responsibility of the Council and its partners to provide the same care and protection for our children as they would for their own children. Recent changes introduced under the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill (2025) extend corporate parenting responsibilities to all public bodies for the first time. This significant development reinforces the whole-system approach by mandating that agencies such as NHS bodies, schools, the Youth Justice Board, and Ofsted share statutory duties to:
 - Be alert to factors that may affect the wellbeing of care experienced children and young people (up to age 25).
 - Assess and offer services that can promote wellbeing and life chances.
 - Enhance access to support, opportunities, and tailored provision.
 - Work cooperatively with local authorities and other partners in safeguarding responsibilities.
10. The Department for Education will manage the implementation, including regular reporting and ensuring guidelines are followed. These reforms come from direct feedback from care experienced young people, emphasising the need for support networks, accessible information, and chances to shape their future.
11. The statutory responsibilities for Councils are rooted in legislation. They are set out in the Children Act 1989, including through amendments made by the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, the Children and Families Act 2014 and The Children and Social Work Act 2017.

Corporate Parenting Principles

12. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 introduced seven corporate parenting principles that Councils must have regard to when looking after children in care:
 - Principle 1 – To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people

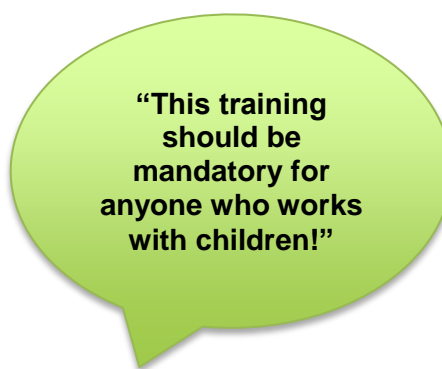
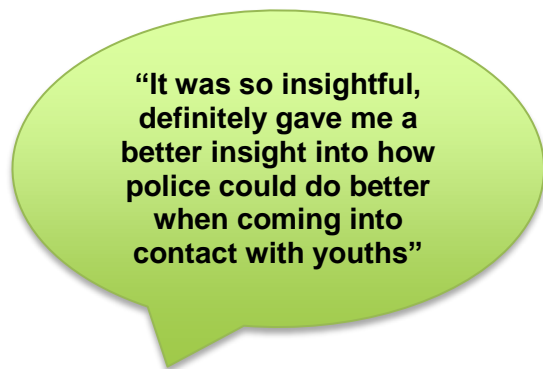
- Principle 2 – To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
- Principle 3 – Take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people
- Principle 4 – To help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners
- Principle 5 – To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people
- Principle 6 – For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and
- Principle 7 – To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

Corporate Parenting in Hillingdon

13. In Hillingdon we are dedicated to supporting our children throughout their journey. We prioritise their safety and wellbeing by creating clear, co-produced plans that meet their needs. These plans are regularly monitored and reviewed by Independent Reviewing Officers (6 monthly). Additionally, our children build strong relationships with their social workers and personal advisors (PAs) who are assigned to them as they transition into adulthood.
14. Their education and ambitious achievements are promoted by their carers, by their social workers and a dedicated Virtual School team.
15. Our children and young people's progress and achievements are regularly reviewed and scrutinised by the Corporate Parenting Panel.
16. The Panel meets quarterly and scrutinises the delivery of services, receive annual and thematic reports from council officers and other agencies and most important put our children in the driving seat and enable them to take part in the scrutiny process and share their lived experiences with officers and elected members.
17. In Hillingdon we have an effective Children in Care Council which ensures that children have a say in the decisions that are made about them, and they are also involved in service planning and recruitment. The Children in Care Council (CICC) directly supports the Corporate Parenting Panel to measure and monitor the effectiveness and quality of Corporate Parenting in Hillingdon. Its purpose is to provide young people with a forum to collectively voice their ideas and views; to challenge our care and support; influence service improvements and drive change; contribute to the development of strategic plans and hold their corporate parents to account.
18. Hillingdon has three established and well attended Children in Care Council's (CiCC) Talkers, Step Up and Stepping Out who meet monthly and are part of the regional Children in Care Council Network. Our CiCC have a powerful collective voice, including having had input in the development on marketing materials within fostering recruitment, consultation on the licence agreements for staying put and development of a leaflet for Care Experienced Young People. Consultation with the CiCC resulted in Operation Makesafe, a joint social care/ police operation to make Hillingdon's high streets safer.
19. Young people participate in the recruitment of staff and foster carers and meet with the

directors on a quarterly basis.

20. In addition to this, unique to Hillingdon we have successfully embedded the “Choose your own Social Worker” approach that allows our children, wherever possible, to decide themselves which worker should be allocated to them and promotes the element of choice and collaborative working.
21. The children’s right to have a voice and to be heard is further supported by provision of Independent Advocacy commissioned from Coram. During the year more than 60% of our children using this service have accessed it themselves without professional support which evidences that they are informed of and know their rights.
22. For our children, permanency means having a framework of emotional, physical, and legal conditions that provide a sense of security, continuity, commitment, and identity. Consistency and continuity of care are essential to meet our children’s physical, emotional, and developmental needs, helping them reach their full potential. Our new fostering offer is positively impacting this by promoting permanency and ensuring children have stable, supportive home environments.
23. We achieve this by ensuring our carers are well trained and supported, including access to trauma informed parenting and PACE (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy) training. We aim to provide well-matched and suitable placements for our children. For our younger children, adoption is always considered when appropriate and we collaborate effectively with the Regional Adoption Agency Ambitious for Adoption to promote adoption and early permanency for our children.
24. **Walking in our Shoes training** – the successful and popular training programme written and facilitated by the Children in Care Council has continued to be delivered to multi-agency professionals throughout 2024 and 2025.
25. Over 1,000 professionals have been trained during the year via multi-agency partnership and bespoke sessions to social work students at Royal Holloway University, the Police, schools, and nursing teams. Following the training professionals have identified some key learning including:
 - The importance of listening, to be clear and always respectful
 - Don’t just ‘tick a box!’
 - Care experienced children and young people have hidden traumas that are not always easily identifiable on the outside
 - Work together and build relationships
 - Never give up
 - To be considerate and mindful of lived experiences, feelings, and barriers



These are a few examples of the achievements of our children supported by their corporate parents:

Care experienced young person NF – was recently honoured with a Jack Petchey Award, recognised for being motivated, resilient, and hardworking. She has proven herself to be a true role model to her peers, consistently going beyond in all she does. Attending a celebration event on 30 April 2025 and presented the award by the Mayor of Hillingdon NF travelled down from her accommodation at Liverpool University to attend the event and celebrate her well-deserved achievement together.

Care experienced young person CMG – has recently joined the "family business" in securing a role with Hillingdon as a Programme Delivery Worker within the youth offer team. Having been an active member of Children in Care Council stepping out and undertaking various volunteering roles with the children's participation team over the previous 5 year this part time post offers her valuable paid work experience and utilise her skills and experience gained.

As part of the **Making Hayes Safer Project 2 young people** with lived experience were appointed to deliver focus groups in 8 local secondary schools in Hayes. They engaged with 239 young people, ensuring their voices were heard, asking for their feedback on what is good about Hayes and what needs to be improved on, feeding back into the project design and planning. Sessions were interactive, engaging and included games, whilst capturing insight. They delivered this extremely well and got brilliant feedback, which resulted in the team securing £10,000 funding to continue the work with children and young people in schools from the community safety team. This money will be utilised to further deliver sessions in school and during half terms.

Care experienced young person CM – has navigated the complexities of the social care system, demonstrating unwavering determination and resilience. Her commitment to personal and professional growth led her to pursue higher education, culminating in a degree in Web and User Experience Design. This academic achievement laid the foundation for her successful career in the digital sector and secured her an internship where she played a pivotal role in supporting the e-visa mechanism within government offices. Her responsibilities included providing comprehensive training to employees, ensuring they were proficient in using this system.