

Overview of Corporate Parenting Responsibilities

Committee name	Children, Families and Education Select Committee
Officer reporting	Alex Coman, Director of Safeguarding, Partnership and Quality Assurance
Papers with report	The Council's Corporate Parenting responsibilities
Ward	All

HEADLINES

- The report provides a briefing to the Children, Families and Education Select Committee regarding the Council's Corporate Parenting responsibilities. This briefing is aimed at reiterating to the Committee the role of the whole Council in looking after and protecting children and young people when, for whatever reason, they can't safely stay at home.
- This role is one that falls on all of us, officers and elected members and it is not the sole responsibility of the lead member or director of children's services.
- Championing the needs and right of our children across the Council and embedding the Corporate Parenting principles is key to doing the best for the children in our care.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Committee:

1. **Notes the content of the report;**
2. **Embeds the Corporate Parenting ethos in the workings of the Committee and champion them across the Council.**

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.
2. 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 Leavers of Care Experienced Young People)
3. At end of September 2022 Hillingdon Council was corporate parent for 339 children under the age of 18 and 575 aged 18 to 25.
4. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 defined for the first time in law the responsibility of corporate parents to ensure, as far as possible, secure, nurturing and positive experiences for looked-after children and young people, and care leavers.
5. 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?'
6. 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.

The Council's Corporate Parenting responsibilities

1. This report provides a briefing to the Families, Health and Wellbeing Select Committee regarding the Council's Corporate Parenting responsibilities. This briefing is aimed at reiterating to the Committee the role of the whole council in looking after and protecting children and young people when, for whatever reason, they can't safely stay at home.
2. This role is one that falls on all of us, officers and elected members and it is not the sole responsibility of the lead member or Director of Children's Services.
3. Championing the needs and rights of our children across the council and embedding the Corporate Parenting principles is key to doing the best for the children in our care and to supporting them through the childhood and into the adulthood.

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 young people". This is fundamental to our vision and values in supporting our children.
2. A child can become a child in care at any age and they continue to be so until their 18th birthday, or until they return home to their family, or are adopted.
3. Our corporate parenting duties do not end when a child reaches the age of 18. The duties continue until the young person is 21 and until they are 25 if they agree or ask for support.
4. At end of September 2022 Hillingdon Council was corporate parent for 339 children under the age of 18 and 575 aged 18 to 25.
5. As part of Pathway Planning with our children who leave care we support their transition into adulthood, including actively supporting their mental wellbeing, education, training and employment, having high aspirations and ensuring they are provided safe and appropriate housing choices.
6. Children may enter care for all sorts of reasons but many enter because they have been abused or neglected. In Hillingdon we have another significant cohort of children who are in our care as they are Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC). To put this in context, in Hillingdon 19% of our children are UASC whilst last national published average was 5%
7. Of the over 900 children and young people mentioned above, 56% arrived in Hillingdon seeking asylum and being unaccompanied by an adult.
8. Regarding the accommodation, our children are:
 - living with foster parents
 - living in a residential children's home
 - living in semi-independent residential homes

- living in residential settings like schools
- living in secure settings as a result of being remanded to custody

Corporate Parenting Role

9. When a child or young person enters the care of the Council, the role of being a parent is discharged by the local authority. This is known as Corporate Parenting. For the majority of our children, Hillingdon Council holds legal parental responsibility or shares parental responsibility with the children's parents.
10. The role of a corporate parent is undoubtedly one of the most important duties and responsibilities that Councillors, Council officers and staff have in trying to be the best "parent" possible.
11. '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. When reviewing any service that could impact upon our children, both officers and councillors should always consider "Would this be good enough for my child?"
12. 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

13. 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

14. In Hillingdon we are committed to our children and support them throughout their journey. We focus on ensuring their safety and wellbeing by ensuring they have clear and co-produced plans that meet their needs, these plans are monitored and scrutinised regularly by Independent Reviewing Officers and they develop good relationships with social

workers and personal advisors (Personal Advisors (PAs) are the allocated workers for our children when they leave care).

15. Their education and ambitious achievements are promoted by their carers, by their social workers and a dedicated Virtual School team.
16. The progress and achievements are 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.
17. The Panel meets quarterly and scrutinise 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 of the scrutiny process and share their lived experiences with officers and elected members.
18. 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. In addition to this, unique to Hillingdon we are implementing the "Choose your own Social Worker" approach that allows our children to decide themselves which worker should be allocated to them rather than a team manager making that decision. The pilot that tested this approach showed increased engagement and better working relationship between our children and their workers.
19. 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.
20. For our children "permanency" is defined as being a framework of emotional, physical and legal conditions that gives a child a sense of security, continuity, commitment and identity. Children require consistency and continuity of care in order to provide them with a foundation from which their physical, emotional and developmental needs can be fully met, allowing them to reach their full potential.
21. We achieve that by well trained and supported carers for your children and provision of well-matched and suitable placements. For young children adoption is always considered when appropriate and we are working well with the Regional Adoption Agency – Ambitious for Adoption to promote both adoption and early permanency for our children.
22. In recognition of Hillingdon's commitment to Early Permanence for our children (formerly referred to as Foster to Adopt) we have achieved the Early Permanence Quality Mark from the Centre for Early Permanence.
23. This quality mark endorses that we are a local authority who ensure we achieve permanence for young children as early and as quickly as possible where the care plan is likely to be adoption; from early identification, assessment, matching and placement.
24. Presently we are the only local authority in London to have succeeded in achieving the full quality mark.

25. In going forward, we remain committed to ensure that the principles highlighted in the legislation and our determination to put our children first are embraced by the entire local authority and our partners.

26. We strongly believe and recommend that the corporate parenting responsibilities continue to be incorporated into the activities and decisions of the Families, Health and Wellbeing Select Committees. This will strengthen further this important responsibility across the Council's functions and will further embed the 'corporate parenting ethos' across the Council, championed by our dedicated elected members.

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

AJ – 23-year-old care leaver

AJ has always had high aspirations to achieve and continues to be committed to his education. Having completed a very technical and highly challenging three-year degree in Aerospace Engineering at University he has chosen to remain in education to achieve a Masters. Throughout his education AJ has at times experienced bouts of depression, accessing support and service when required. We are incredibly proud of commitment to education and resilience.

PF – 24 years old care leaver

PF became looked after following the breakdown in her relationship with her mother. Having been a young carer for her siblings, and witnessing domestic abuse.

PF became pregnant at 17, despite some earlier concerns regarding the care of her child, PF has secured private rented accommodation, engaged well with professionals and her daughter is thriving. PF has just graduated from University following three years of studying for her nursing degree alongside caring for her now 7 year old daughter.

MA – 22 year old care leaver

MA and her siblings were looked after by the Local Authority since arriving in the UK in 2012. MA has been inspired by the support provided by London Borough of Hillingdon to pursue a career in social worker. Undertaking volunteering with the Adolescent Development service and the children's rights and participation team MA successfully completed her foundation degree in social work at University and has progressed onto the BA programme, she continues to volunteer, alongside part time work and studying.

KT - 14 year old looked after child

KT and his brother arrived in the UK as victims of Human Trafficking and speaking very little English. He has settled well in education and in May 2022 was selected for the role of prefect! He has been described by his school as a pupil that embodies the academy's values who can bring so much to the school community.

Implications on related Council policies

A role of the Committees is to make recommendations on service changes and improvements to the Cabinet who are responsible for the Council's policy and direction.

How this report benefits Hillingdon residents

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 child's parents. The Corporate Parenting principles and ethos support the delivery of services and support to all our children who are in the care of Hillingdon Council, regardless of where they live.

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

Corporate parenting resource pack published by Local Government association - [Corporate parenting resource pack | Local Government Association](#)

Working together to safeguard children, Department of Education, 2018
<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>