



2018 – 2020

Children Looked After and Corporate Parenting Strategy

Ensuring all our children are safe, happy and
healthy and reach their full potential

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1 Introduction

The Children and Young People's Plan sets out Torbay Council's objectives and priorities for all services which directly affect children and young people across all of the communities which make up Torbay. The Council's objective is:

To ensure that all of our children, young people and care leavers are safe, happy and healthy in order that they can reach their full potential.

This Children Looked After and Corporate Parenting Strategy has been developed, alongside a number of other strategies and plans, to ensure that we deliver that objective for those children and young people who are in the care of the Council.

Children and young people who are Looked After by the Council and our care leavers face a number of challenges as they grow up and develop in care and then move on to independence. In order to make this journey through care as smooth as possible and to ensure they go on to fulfil their potential, it is vital that all Councillors, Officers and Services across the Council work together in their interests.

This Strategy is exclusively focused on achieving the best possible outcomes for the children looked after and care leavers for whom we are Corporate Parents. It provides the framework for all of Torbay Council to fulfil its role in the lives of these children and young people.

In Torbay, we believe that ensuring the effective care and protection for children who are looked after by the local authority is one of the most important responsibilities we hold. In order to provide high quality services we must all work together to meet their needs.

The Strategy builds on Torbay's commitment to multi-agency working as we know that the best outcomes for children looked after and care leavers can only be achieved through effective partnership working. The Council, our foster carers and independent providers, our NHS and education partners, the Police and voluntary sector organisations all contribute to improving the lives of children and young people in our care.

This Strategy builds on the progress we have made in improving our services to children looked after and care leavers as a Council.

The Council remains committed to raising the quality of life of everyone living within Torbay. For children in particular, the Council aims to provide high quality opportunities for learning and ensure children are safe, happy and healthy. We will provide such care, education and development opportunities that we would afford to our own children.

2 Context

Legal Duties

Under the Children Act 1989, a child is defined as “looked after” by the Council if he or she is:

- Provided with accommodation for a continuous period for more than 24 hours
- Subject to a care order
- Subject to a placement order.

A young person stops being classed as looked after when he or she turns 18. At this point, they become a young adult eligible for help and assistance from the Council as a care leaver. The Council continues to provide a level of financial and transitional support to its care leavers until they are 25.

When a child or young person becomes looked after, Torbay Council becomes their Corporate Parent. This means that the Council (its elected members, its officers and its partner agencies) has collective responsibility to provide the best possible care and safeguarding for the children and young people it is looking after. A child or young person in the care of the Council looks to the Council as a whole to be the best parent it can be.

Every councillor and employee has the statutory responsibility to act for the children or young people in the Council’s care in the same way that a good parent would act for their own child.

Our Children Looked After

After a period of stability, our population of children looked after has grown appreciably over during the first five months of 2018 from around 301 in January to 325 in July 2018. Detailed analysis has identified that these are the right children coming into care and that no children have been unnecessarily subject to care proceedings. Where those children are young babies we are undertaking good work to achieve a permanent placement at the earliest opportunity. We are also providing a more robust response to those 16+ young people who present as homeless.

The chart on the following page shows the educational attainment of children looked after by Torbay (who may live and be educated outside Torbay) against the performance of all pupils in Torbay schools.

At 31 March 2018, 42% of Torbay’s care leavers were Not in Employment, Education or Training. The improvement in our delivery of services to our care leavers is having a positive impact on outcomes for Care Leavers with NEET performance better than statistical comparators. As part of its Corporate Parenting offer the Council has offered 11 apprentice opportunities all of which will be prioritised for Care Leavers prior to be released to other young people.

The differential between attainment and post-16 outcomes for Children Looked After and their peers also extends into others areas such as health, mental health, income and crime. These statistics emphasise the huge importance of our role as corporate parents in helping these children and young people overcome the challenges they face.

Outcomes 2018 – UPDATED TABLE						
Performance indicator		Torbay children in care %	National children in care %	Torbay all pupils %	National all pupils %	RAG Based Torbay CLA v national CLA
EYFS % reached GLD	↓	25%	47%	70.4%	71.5%	Red
KS1 % Reached at least expected standard - Reading	↓	50%	53%	73%	75%	Amber
KS1 % Reached at least expected standard - Writing	↑	50%	43%	68%	70%	Green
KS1 % Reached at least expected standard - Maths	↑	50%	49%	74%	76%	Green
KS1 % Reached at least expected standard – Reading, writing and maths	↑	50%	38%	Not available	Not available	Green
KS2 % Reached at least expected standard - Reading	↓	35.3%	51%	75%	75%	Amber
KS2 % Reached at least expected standard - Writing	↓	23.5%	50%	75%	78%	Amber
KS2 % Reached at least expected standard - SPAG	↓	29.4%	50%	73%	78%	Amber
KS2 % Reached at least expected standard - Maths	↓	23.5%	47%	74%	76%	Amber
KS2 % Reached at least expected standard - Reading, Writing and maths	↓	17.6%	35%	63%	64%	Green
KS4 % 5+ GCSEs at grades A*-C including English (Grade 4+) and Maths (Grade 4+)	↑	33.3%	Not available	Not available	Not available	Amber
KS4 % 5+ GCSEs at grades A*-C	↑	33.3%	Not available	Not available	Not available	-
KS4 % gaining a strong pass in both English and maths at Grade 5+	↑	33.3%	9.9%	46.7%	40.2%	Green
KS4 % gaining a Grade 5+ in English	↑	33.3%	21.5%	62.6%	Not available	Green
KS4 % gaining at least a Grade 4 in English	↑	42.8%	Not available	Not available	Not available	-
KS4 % gaining a Grade 5+ in maths	↑	33.3%	15.2%	53.4%	Not available	Green
KS4 % gaining at least a Grade 4 in maths	↑	38.1%	Not available	Not available	Not available	-
KS4 Attainment 8 score	↑	26.25	24.6	48.2	44.5%	Green
KS4 Progress 8 score	↑	-1.106	-0.93	-0.07	-0.22	Amber
Y1 – Y11 % attendance 2017-18	↓	95%	96.1%(2016)	94.9%	95.2%	Amber
% receiving at least one fixed term exclusion	↓	14%	11.8%(2017)	5.05% (2016)	2.3% (2017)	Green
% receiving a permanent exclusion	↔	0	0.10%(2017)	0.13% (2016)	0.08% (2017)	Green
KS5 number following and completing a L3 qualification	↔	2	Not available	Not available		-
Total of 18-24 year old care leavers participating in Higher Education	↔	8%	6%	-		Green

Key: **Red** – well below national CLA outcome
Amber – in line with national CLA outcome
Green – above national CLA outcome

3 Objectives, Principles and Priorities

Objectives

In the same way that we want all of Torbay's children and young people to be safe, happy and healthy in order that they can reach their full potential, the Objectives of this Children Looked After and Corporate Parenting Strategy are:

To ensure that all the children that the Council looks after, and its care leavers,:

- are safe, happy and healthy in order that they can reach their full potential; and
- have all the opportunities that good parents afford their children.

Overarching Principles

We will measure all of our work against the impact that it will have on the children and young people we look after and our care leaver. Reflecting on the principles with the Council's Corporate Plan, the principles within this Children Looked After and Corporate Parenting Strategy are:

- We will use our resources where they will maximise the impact on the child or young person
- We will use prevention and innovation to reduce the impact on children and families from key risks such as domestic abuse, alcohol/substance misuse and child exploitation
- We will take an integrated and joined up approach towards commissioning and delivery for children and families

Corporate Parenting Principles

In order to thrive, children and young people have certain key needs that good parents generally meet. In relation to all the children and young people we look after, Torbay Council will have regard to the following principles when exercising our functions in relation to those children and young people:

- We will act in their best interests, and promote their physical and mental health and wellbeing.
- We will encourage them to express their views, wishes and feelings.
- We will take into account their views, wishes and feelings.
- We will help them gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the Council and our partners.
- We will promote high aspirations and seek to secure the best outcomes.
- We will ensure they are safe and have stability in their home lives, relationships, education and work.
- We will prepare them for adulthood and independent living.

Priorities

Torbay Council will be an effective and trustworthy corporate parent to all the children and young people who are in our care through focussing on the following priorities. Under each of our priorities are the pledges that the Council has made to its Children Looked After and care leavers.

Priority 1: Our placements are safe and meet the needs of our children and young people

We will always listen to you and take your views into account to ensure you are getting the right support to achieve your goals. These will be set out in your Care Plan.

We will be upfront and honest about we can and cannot do for you.

We will work with your carers to make it the best placement for you.

We will provide you with information about your rights in a way that suits you.

Priority 2: Our children looked after and care leavers fulfil their educational potential

We will respect your privacy and work to ensure that you are not singled out at school or in other places.

We will work closely with your school and not move you without good reason. We will also discuss with you the reasons for any move and take your views into account.

We will encourage and support you to take up opportunities in education, employment and training in ways that suit you.

Priority 3: Our children looked after and care leavers are emotionally, mentally and physically healthy

We will celebrate your achievements with you in the ways that you would like.

We will provide a workforce to work with you to develop the life skills to achieve your goals and have the best opportunities for the future.

Priority 4: Our children looked after and care leavers develop into independent, confident and responsible adults

We will plan activities and visits in advance and involve you in those plans.

We will help you to stay in contact with your family if you want that and explain the reasons if this is not possible.

We will talk to you about the ways we will be working to keep you safe .

We will develop a plan of the things you do in school called a Personal Education Plan.

We will develop a plan to ensure you are healthy and making good choices called a Personal Health Plan and give you advice and support on harmful issues such as smoking, drinking alcohol or taking drugs.

We will support you to access regular health and dental checks and any appointments or treatment you may need.

Throughout our work, we will capture each child's lived experience through their wishes, feeling and experience of family life. We will ensure that the needs of the child are always the focus and ensure that their basic rights are not overlooked and prioritise their need for emotional warmth, stability and sense of belonging. Each child will understand, engage with and, where appropriate, have a copy of their plan. The child will always be at the centre of our interventions which will be evidence-based, outcome focused and appropriate to the age of the child. Each child will be seen at a frequency appropriate to their needs.

4 Corporate Parenting Standards

As effective corporate parents, Torbay Council has identified a set of standards which will assist in enabling us to meet the objectives and priorities of this Children Looked After Strategy. The Council's Senior Leadership Team will identify, progress and monitor any actions required across the Council to ensure that these standards can be met.

1. There is a golden thread through the Council's Strategic Vision, Corporate Plan and Children and Young People's Plan that clearly articulates our aspirations for children looked after and care leavers.
2. Key decisions, policies, procedures and performance in relation to Children's Services are subject to robust scrutiny and oversight through the Council's decision making and scrutiny processes.
3. Elected members and senior officers participate within a programme of corporate parenting training to equip them to understand how corporate parenting can be accommodated within their respective portfolios.
4. Priority interviews are offered to children looked after and care leavers for apprenticeships and work experience opportunities within Torbay Council, prior to these being advertised externally.
5. Dedicated support, advice and guidance is provided to care leavers to assist or sustain them in employment.
6. Locally commissioned services for adults including mental health, substance misuse and domestic abuse have child safeguarding as an integral element within service provision.
7. Family focused interventions such as 'Breaking the Cycle' are under development in Torbay to support families to provide effective parenting when capacity is compromised by health related issues.
8. As vulnerable groups that do not readily access services, care leavers and young offenders have direct support from community/primary health care services.
9. Torbay Council housing policy explicitly acknowledges care leavers as a vulnerable group, with appropriate support provided.
10. Care leavers are provided with individualised support to ensure they are in suitable and safe accommodation.
11. Care leavers have an exemption from Council Tax until the age of 25.
12. Care leavers and children looked after receive support to access cultural, sporting and leisure activities free of charge or at a reduced rate.
13. The achievements and progress of our children looked after and care leavers is recognised and celebrated on a regular basis, in accordance with their wishes and preferences.
14. The work of the Community Safety Partnership acknowledges that children looked after and care leavers are vulnerable groups who can become over represented within the criminal justice system and work together to avoid this.
15. Local arrangements for identifying and case managing adults who may pose a risk to children are fully integrated through a robust multi-agency tasking model.

5 Governance

The Council's Corporate Plan sets out its aspirations for the community of Torbay including children and young people. The Council's objective is to ensure that all of our children and young people are safe, happy and healthy in order that they can reach their full potential.

This objective is delivered for children looked after through a range of groups who collectively work to ensure that outcomes for children looked after and care leavers are comparable to their peers. Performance for children in care and our care leavers is an integral part of our performance and quality assurance arrangements. These are contained within the range of performance reports considered by the Children's Improvement Board, Corporate and Children's Services Senior Leadership, and Audit Committee.

Whilst corporate parenting is the responsibility of the Council as a whole and of its partners, on a day-to-day basis our arrangements for children looked after and care leavers are subject to oversight and scrutiny via the Groups set out below.

Corporate Parenting Board

This Board is chaired by an elected member and comprises of a wider group of members drawn from all political groups together with partner representatives and senior officers from Children's Services. Representatives from the Foster Carers Forum will be invited to join the Board. Work is underway to ensure young person representatives form a standing part of the Board to build on the ongoing dialogue with children and young people in care that is currently in place.

The Board meets every two months and forms a key element within the Council's Constitution, providing a forum for regular, detailed discussion of issues and a positive link with our Children Looked After. The terms of reference of the Board are at Appendix 2.

In addition, the Assistant Director – Safeguarding, Head of Service – Specialist Services, relevant Children's Services officers and partner representatives meet regularly to ensure delivery of the Council's corporate parenting responsibilities.

Virtual School

Torbay Virtual School provides the framework through which the educational needs of children looked after are met working closely with educational providers, carers, social care and health practitioners, and children and young people. The work of the Virtual School is overseen by a Governing Body and led by the Virtual School Headteacher.

Educational attainment and progress for children looked after is subject to regular review to determine the effectiveness of the arrangements put in place for each child via their Pupil Education Plan. The Virtual School also produce an annual report for the consideration of the Governing Body, Corporate Parent Members Group and Council.

Children in Care Club (CiCC)

The CiCC is facilitated by the Youth Service and brings a representative group of children in care together on a regular basis for activities and to obtain their views on the effectiveness of our arrangements for children in care. Their views have been instrumental in developing Torbay's Pledge towards our children in care.

Care Leavers Group

This Group is facilitated by Torbay Care Leavers Service and brings together a representative group of care leavers to ensure their views are heard in the development and delivery of our services for care leavers. Their work has been fundamental to the recent revision of our pathway plans and clarifying care leaver entitlements.

Appendix 1: Action Plan

Priority 1: Our placements are safe and meet the needs of our children and young people

Action	Responsibility	By when?
Update and deliver the Sufficiency Statement Action Plan	Director of Children's Services	September 2019
Increase our foster care capacity	Head of Service – Specialist Services	March 2020
Explore how Torbay Council can increase its residential capacity on a risk share basis, working with an acknowledged expert.	Head of Service – Specialist Services	September 2019
Develop 16+ provision along with housing to provide a “pipeline” of varied resources to meet different levels of need.	Strategic Commissioning Officer	September 2019

Priority 2: Our children looked after and care leavers fulfil their educational potential

Action	Responsibility	By when?
Continue to focus on outcomes at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4	Virtual Headteacher/ Assistant Director – Education and Schools	April 2018 and ongoing
Improve the monitoring and tracking at Key Stage 5 through effective links with Further Education and other post 16 providers	Virtual Headteacher/ Assistant Director – Education and Schools	April 2018 and ongoing
Enhance links with Early Years' providers to ensure effective monitoring of the Early Years cohort and use of Early Years Pupil Premium	Virtual Headteacher/ Assistant Director – Education and Schools	July 2018 and ongoing
Continue to ensure educational continuity for children placed for adoption	Virtual Headteacher/Head of Service – Specialist Services	Ongoing
Continue to ensure SEN work in a timely manner to secure appropriate schooling for those with an EHCP including those moved in an emergency	Virtual Headteacher/Head of Service – Special Educational Needs	Ongoing
Aim to ensure all Personal Education Plans are at least rated Good	Virtual Headteacher	September 2019 and ongoing
Improve the voice of the child through the Personal Education Plan process	Virtual Headteacher	September 2019 and ongoing

Priority 3: Our children looked after and care leavers are emotionally, mentally and physically healthy

Action	Responsibility	By when?
Continue to commission bespoke Therapeutic Services to provide support for Care Leavers and Children Looked After.	Strategic Commissioning Manager	December 2019
With partners, develop leisure/youth activities for Children Looked After and Care Leavers.	Strategic Commissioning Manager	December 2019
Care Leavers' Personal Assistants and social workers to make care leavers and children looked after aware of the Torbay Leisure Card and encourage uptake.	Head of Service – Specialist Services	April 2018 and ongoing
Explore opportunities for children looked after and care leavers to both attend and participate within the Council's programme of events and to encourage community events to do the same.	Head of Specialist Services	June 2019 and ongoing

Priority 4: Our children looked after and care leavers develop into independent, confident and responsible adults

Action	Responsibility	By when?
Deliver the Corporate Parenting Action Plan	Corporate Parenting Board	March 2020
Identify apprenticeship and work experience opportunities across the Council with children looked after and care leavers being offered priority interviews and work with partner organisations to encourage them to open their apprenticeship schemes to children looked after and care leavers.	Director of Corporate Services and Head of Specialist Services	April 2018 and ongoing
Specialist training to be provided to Care Leavers' Personal Assistants to enable them to provide support, advice and guidance to care leavers to assist and sustain them in employment.	Head of Specialist Services and Strategic Workforce Lead	April 2018 and ongoing
Care Leavers' Personal Assistants to share with care leavers the employment opportunities within Torbay Council which are all available online.	Head of Service – Specialist Services	April 2018 and ongoing
Care Leavers' Personal Assistants to encourage care leavers to attend regular Jobs Fair (and other related events) held in Torbay	Head of Service – Specialist Services	April 2018 and ongoing
Specialist training to be provided to Care Leavers' Personal Assistants to assist in ensuring care leavers can access appropriate, safe and sustainable accommodation.	Assistant Director - Community and Customer Services	April 2018 and ongoing
Care Leavers' Personal Assistants to provide individualised support to help care leavers sustain suitable and safe accommodation.	Head of Service – Specialist Services	April 2018 and ongoing
Develop a joint protocol with accommodation providers to avoid the criminalisation of children in care.	Strategic Commissioning Manager	December 2019

Appendix 2: Corporate Parenting Board

Purpose

To lead on behalf of the Council and partners of the Local Authority to ensure that all services directly provided for children and young people in care and care leavers are delivered to a high standard and to all statutory requirements.

To raise the aspiration, ambitions and life chances of children and young people in care, narrowing the gap of achievement and outcomes between children in care and their peers.

To ensure that children in care are protected and supported to develop as healthy citizens, able to participate fully in their community.

To ensure that all elected members are aware of their corporate parenting responsibilities and that all Council services are mindful of the needs of children in care and respond accordingly within their particular remit.

Functions of the Board

To receive regular reports in relation to the adoption, fostering, commissioning, children looked after services, care leavers and the virtual school with a view to identifying any areas of underperformance and recommending any changes.

To ensure that the principles of corporate parenting are incorporated within key plans, policies and strategies of the Council including interagency working arrangements.

To review reports relating to complaints from looked after children to ensure officers have dealt with these appropriately and made any recommendations for change.

To raise awareness in Torbay Council and amongst its partners and the wider community by promoting the role of members as corporate parents and the Council as a corporate family with key responsibilities;

To raise the profile of the needs and achievements of children looked after and care leavers through a range of celebratory events/activities determined by children looked after and care leavers.

To ensure that leisure, cultural, further education and employment opportunities are provided and taken up by our children looked after and care leavers.

To ensure that the views of children and young people are regularly heard through the Corporate Parenting Board to improve educational, health and social outcomes.

To meet with children and young people in care, frontline staff and foster carers to inform the Board of the standards of care and improvement outcomes for children looked after.

To monitor the ongoing commitment to providing support, training and clarity of expectations for foster carers to provide excellent and high quality care.

To appoint elected members of the Board to focus on the following strands:

- Housing
- Employment and training opportunities within council departments and with partner agencies
- Health (including mental health)

- Educational Attainment and access to Higher Education
- Foster carer recruitment and retention
- Response to those who go missing and children “placed at a distance”.

Children in Care Council

Representatives from the Children in Care Council will regularly contribute to the Corporate Parenting Board through methods and approaches agreed with children looked after and care leavers.

Work Programme

The Corporate Parenting Board will meet every two months, supported by an annual work programme to be reviewed at each meeting. In reviewing the work programme, the Board may request reports on particular matters of their own preference or as advised by the lead officer.

Performance Monitoring

The Corporate Parenting Board will regularly scrutinise and monitor outcomes for children in care and care leavers. The Board’s work will be underpinned by a core data set considered at each meeting. Additional detailed monitoring reports will be presented in accordance with the agreed work programme.

Membership of the Board

The membership of the Board will comprise five members of the Council appointed in accordance with political balance requirements and to include the Executive Lead responsible for Children. The Council will appoint the Board at its Annual Meeting.

Other Members of the Council will be invited to discuss issues and raise questions within a standing agenda item.

The Executive Lead responsible for Children will chair the Board. A vice chairman will be appointed by the Board at the start of each Municipal Year.

Membership will also include a foster carer and representatives from the Children in Care Council.

Membership will include key partners to support the delivery of key priorities in particular a senior local police officer, a Head Teacher, and designated health lead.

Officer support

The Director of Children’s Services is responsible for ensuring that the Board has sufficient officer support. The Assistant Director – Safeguarding will be the lead officer for the Board supported by the Head of Specialist Service, and the Head of the Virtual School.

Training

Appropriate training will be commissioned for members of the Corporate Parenting Board as required and will form part of the Members Development Programme.

Frequency of meetings

Meetings will be bi-monthly preceded with agenda setting informed by the members of the Board, annual work programme, performance monitoring and the views of children looked after and care leavers.

Reporting Mechanisms

The Corporate Parenting Board will report to the Local Safeguarding Children Board, the Overview and Scrutiny Board, Health and Wellbeing Board and the Post Ofsted Improvement Board as required.