

Children and Young People's Services

Corporate Parenting Strategy

2019-2022



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Foreword



Councillor Jenny Bullen

*Portfolio Holder for
Children & Young People
Chair of Corporate Parent Board*



James Winterbottom

Director of Children's Services

Dear Colleagues,

Wigan's Corporate Parenting Strategy for 2019–2022 sets out the vision and plans for fulfilling our key responsibilities and ambitions to all of our cared for children as well as our care leavers.

The strategy links to the key priorities of The Deal for Children and Young People, our Sufficiency Report and importantly, draws on the experiences of all of our cared for children and our care leavers.

This document demonstrates Wigan Council's commitment to hold ourselves to account as corporate parents, along with our partner agencies and to ensure that the life chances of every child and young person in our care are the best they can be.

In Wigan we have strong ambitions for all of our children and young people; we want our cared for children to experience the same opportunities as all other children, to have their health and wellbeing taken into account, to ensure their success in education and to enable our children to be prepared for their future. We want our cared for children to be looked after as if each of them were individually our own.

We strongly believe that every child needs and deserves a good parent who will look out for them, who will speak out on their behalf and respond to their needs. For our cared for children and care leavers this is essential and through the pledges that we have developed jointly with our

young people, we are committed to enabling and supporting them to have a voice, to speak out about the services they receive and keep their identity.

This strategy describes our ambitions and key priorities for how we will work alongside our cared for children and care leavers, their carers, elected members and our partners to ensure that they are properly looked after. That they are accessing positive and enjoyable experiences, allowing them to feel secure, healthy and able to look forward to a successful future – this will provide them with stable foundations for the rest of their lives.

This strategy has been consulted on extensively with our young people in care engagement group, Voices for Choices, partners and key stakeholders.

I look forward to leading member support to deliver this strategy, to work with our cared for children and care leavers to realise their ambitions.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'J. Bullen'.

Councillor Jenny Bullen

*Portfolio Holder for Children & Young People
and Chair of Corporate Parent Board*

Introduction

Our legislative responsibility under the Children and Social Work Act 2017, means that any child or young person who comes into our care, we need to act as their corporate parent. This means that as a local authority we should:

- act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and young people
- encourage them to express their views, wishes and feelings, and take them into account, while promoting high aspirations and trying to secure the best outcomes for them
- make sure they have access to services
- make sure that they are safe, with stable home lives, relationships and education or work
- prepare them for adulthood and independent living.

Every councillor and officer within Wigan Council has a responsibility to act for those children and young people as a parent would for their own child. As corporate parents, councillors need to recognise the uniqueness of the children in their care, and make sure each child is getting what they need to do their best.

Under the Children Act 2004, local authorities have a duty to promote cooperation between 'relevant partners', including the police, the NHS and education providers, while those partners have a duty to cooperate with the local authority in turn. Guidance on the Act highlights that corporate parenting is a "task [that] must be shared by the whole local authority and partner agencies".



A child or young person is cared for if they are subject to a Care Order or are under a voluntary agreement, subject to the Children Act 1989. The local authority has a statutory duty to those aged 0 to 18 years, and up to 25 years as care leavers.



Our ambition

In Wigan, the Deal for Children and Young People sets out our ambition to look after our own children within their own communities and within the borough of Wigan - we currently have over 70% of our cared for children population in the Wigan borough in a family setting and we would like to see this increase.

We believe that a bigger, stronger more flexible edging away from care offer and placement stability offer (aligned to Signs of Safety) and a more attractive offer of support for foster carers (The Deal for Foster Carers and the import of Mockingbird programme) will deliver improved outcomes for our children and young people.

Vision

Wigan's Vision; The Deal

In Wigan we have a collective vision for our children, young people and families. This has been agreed by children, young people, workforce and partners:

The Children, Young People and Families of Wigan Borough are confident and resilient individuals who are connected to their community and make an effective contribution as responsible citizens. They feel safe and care about their health, education and employment, and their community.

The Deal for Children and Young People is our delivery programme for Public Service Reform for Start Well life course. This programme will result in better outcomes, improved quality of life for children, young people and their families and ensure that we build resilience in our communities. We know that we can do this and that it is the right thing to do because we have great aspirations for our children, young people and families.

This programme outlines the internal changes we need to make within our own workforce, enabling them to have a different conversation with children, young people and their families about what matters to them; undertaking an asset based approach using Signs of Safety and evidence based practice at the core of all we do (valuing the skills, experience, capacity, knowledge and expertise of the community). It includes the co-design and co-delivery with partners and more importantly children, young people and their families.

As corporate parents we recognise our vital role to ensure that our cared for children have the opportunity to achieve their fullest potential and we believe that the Deal provides a platform for Wigan to develop an asset based care system.

Wigan Council, along with our partners will act as ambitious and aspirational parents for our cared for children and care leavers.

Our Corporate Parenting Strategy is built on the values in our Corporate Parenting Pledges and in the Care Leavers' Charter, which are:

- Putting Children First
- Being an ambitious parent
- Closing the Gap
- Always keen to do better
- Listening

As Corporate Parents, we want our children to;

- Have a safe and nurturing environment
- Grow and thrive
- Be protected and supported with their worries
- Reach their potential
- Celebrate their successes



This means it is our responsibility as Corporate Parents to;

- Keep our cared for children safe and secure, we stick with them and go the extra mile for them
- Create a culture where we know and believe in all our children and young people. We help them to achieve their goals and ambitions - by recognising their needs, talents and aspirations
- Listen and make our children and young people's ideas happen, ensure their lived experiences improve practice and make sure they know and understand their story and their plans
- Believe in our children and young people and help them to be the best they can be both now and, in the future
- Embrace and celebrate the individuality of our children and young people
- We want our children and young people to be healthy and happy
- We will listen to our children and young people's worries and work with them to find solutions
- We want our care leavers to become confident and resilient adults living within their own community with support from trusted adults

To be effective corporate parents, we need commitment from all elected members, and council employees. The whole council needs to be involved, as well as our partners, i.e. Health, Police, other councils and the voluntary sector, all acting as good parents, committing resources and working together to improve the lives of all children and young people in our care and care leavers.





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**We treat the
child or young
person as our own,
we understand
and accept**

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Aims and Objectives

This Corporate Parenting Strategy is owned by the Corporate Parenting Board which aims to strengthen the participation and contribution of children and young people to allow more focus, challenge, support and leadership to the service and to fulfil its statutory duties to the highest potential.

This Corporate Parenting Strategy has been co designed with young people and with our partners to ensure we are able to deliver against our aspirations for our children and young people and more importantly we are delivering against 'their ask' of us.

This strategy looks at the areas of work that are needed to support young people and care leavers over the next three years. This will then develop into the Corporate Parenting Strategy Action Plan, which will be overseen by the Corporate Parenting Board.

The Action Plan will focus on five key priorities, which are;

Participation and Engagement

- Develop creative ways for children and young people to have their say and share their lived experiences. This will be recorded sensitively and thoughtfully
- Children and young people understand the decisions professionals make. Children and young people should know what is working well what we are worried about and what needs to happen to help them stay safe and have a secure and loving place to live that they can call home
- Care leavers to share their experience and allow us to learn from this and shape services which will meet their needs and the needs of future care leavers
- The Pledge is to be shared with children and young people entering care

Placement Stability and Permanence

- All children and young people to have a multi-agency team who are eager and passionate to make a difference and able to help and support their plans

- School places are considered as part of care planning arrangements and before children move, to promote attainment and a stable home life
- Foster carers to have an offer which makes Wigan their choice of agency
- We will widen the community-based support and strengthen the offer to foster carers and children who are experiencing difficulties living together.
- Teenagers, brother and sisters and children with additional needs have the right place to live with carers who can meet their needs

Independence

- Young people to have their ambitions and aspirations taken seriously. We actively work alongside them to help them become confident resilient adults living in and benefiting from strong community support.
- Young people to have the option of 'staying close' to the care giver if they wish. This will allow them to feel safer and more secure when making the move to live independently.
- Young people can stay with their carers beyond 18th birthday (staying put). They know this can happen and they feel a sense of belonging and security
- Young people, in particular circumstances, who need continued care and accommodation beyond the age of 18 years are helped to move to adult services at the right time and in the right way with the right plan
- Young people to have the option of living with a supported lodgings carer if they do not feel confident to live alone
- Care leavers will have the best housing and support offer we can give them as their corporate parent. We want all our young people to live in our borough and have access to our communities

Education and opportunity

- Children and young people must have Personal Education Plans (PEP) which are purposeful and draw out and build on their ambition
- Young people to have access to post-16 education, Training and Employment (ETE) options and, that as a good parent we monitor this and make sure the right conversations are taking place with young people to encourage them to do their best and access education, training and or employment
- Children and young people can access their appropriate support through Pupil Premium Plus, in a way that is helpful to them and their individual needs.
- Children and young people can share their lived experience through PEP's
- School Governors know and understand their role and responsibility as a corporate parent
- We will support all cared for children to have access to a good quality education matched to their individual learning, health and care needs.

Health of Cared for Children and Care Leavers

Children and young people have their health assessed in a timely way and assessments are of a good quality and used to inform the care plan

- Children and young people have their emotional health needs assessed and met
- Children and young people who need support for substance misuse are given this and are responded to based on individual need
- Care leavers have an appropriate offer to help them continue to make healthy choices and be able to access information, services and support
- A child or young person's health needs should be considered as part of care planning arrangements to ensure their health needs can be met by those caring for him/her.



Corporate Parenting Strategy and Key Strategic Plans

Our Corporate Parenting Strategy builds on the recommendations from our other key corporate and directorate plans:

The Deal for Children and Young People has translated into a Children's Services Transformation Programme and Delivery Plan.



The poster is titled 'The Deal for children and young people'. It features the Wigan Council logo in the top right corner. The main title 'The Deal' is in large, stylized letters, with a graphic of two hands shaking between the words. Below the title, there are two columns of text, each with a heading: 'Our part' and 'Your part'. The 'Our part' column lists seven points: 'Support you to learn and grow and achieve your goals', 'Put you at the heart of your community', 'Help you to be safe and secure', 'Encourage you to be healthy and active', 'Make sure we listen to you', 'Keep the borough clean and green', and 'Promote equality'. It ends with 'Believe in you' and a signature line for 'Cllr. Jenny Bullen, Cabinet Member for Children'. The 'Your part' column lists seven points: 'Be the best you can be', 'Get involved in your community', 'Tell someone if you don't feel safe', 'Care for your health and stay active', 'Share your views with us', 'Recycle more and respect the environment', and 'Respect difference'. It ends with 'Believe in yourself' and a signature line. At the bottom, there are social media icons for Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram, along with the website 'wigan.gov.uk' and the date 'Nov 2017'.

The Deal
for children and young people

Our part

- Support you to learn and grow and achieve your goals
- Put you at the heart of your community
- Help you to be safe and secure
- Encourage you to be healthy and active
- Make sure we listen to you
- Keep the borough clean and green
- Promote equality
- Believe in you

Signed
Cllr. Jenny Bullen, Cabinet Member for Children

Your part

- Be the best you can be
- Get involved in your community
- Tell someone if you don't feel safe
- Care for your health and stay active
- Share your views with us
- Recycle more and respect the environment
- Respect difference
- Believe in yourself

Signed

Wigan Council Online wigan council @WiganCouncil wigan.gov.uk @wigan council

Nov 2017

We know we are committed to getting the very best for all children and young people who live in the borough and Transformation Programme and Delivery plan sets out how we, with our elected member and partner agencies can achieve this.

This plan has been developed by building on feedback from our Listening into Action sessions, staff engagement sessions and specific areas of co-design work we have engaged in with children, young people and families. The plan belongs to all of us. It is organic and will develop and grow as we do. This plan will also be taken to your Team Time

sessions and any development days you may have as a team so that you can continue to develop our service delivery.

It's also vital that young people feel that this plan belongs to them, as it is for them and their families that we work so hard for. We are developing a young person friendly version of this plan so that our children and young people can engage with the priorities that we have developed with them and on their behalf – and can hold us to account for delivering these priorities

Key Priorities from our Sufficiency Statement

Wigan's Sufficiency Strategy sets out how we intend to meet the placement needs of current and future cared for children and care leavers.

While future numbers of cared for children are hard to predict, particularly when the impact of our Start Well model and more targeted approach to specialist family support services are only just starting to be realised, it is anticipated the number of cared for children will continue on the downward trajectory. However, the number of care leavers is expected to increase in line with demographic age range of cared for children and the highest increase of the proportion of children entering care being 16 years and over.

To meet Cared for Children and Care Leaver needs, placement sufficiency will need to ensure we have a range of placements available within the Wigan Borough and wider local area. Wigan Council is committed to 'having the right placement in the right place, at the right time', with the necessary support services such as education and health in place, to enhance placement stability, which leads to better outcomes for cared for children.

Areas of focus

- Ensuring timely access to the appropriate support and expertise for children and young people who are at risk of entering the care system
- Ensuring a sufficient choice of placements for the increasing cohort of adolescents who have high complex needs including; those at risk of offending and criminal exploitation, those experiencing or at risk of exploitation including CSE; those requiring parent and child placements; and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children
- Continue to develop the ATOM model across Wigan, including the recruitment of foster carers
- Increase capacity and retaining skilled high calibre in-house foster carers who we know can develop the capacity to meet the needs of our most vulnerable children and young people, including a more developed approach for step across placements

- Ensuring a sufficient choice of high support residential placements when needed that support children and young people transition into a family or into adulthood
- Improved transition to ensure our care leavers will be confident independent adults
- Increase the quality of leaving care and education provision
- To review our commissioning processes with critical friends and implement appropriate actions
- Implement a range of panels which will support care planning processes and provide robust monitoring and support for children, families this will include:
 - Edging away from care
 - Placement stability
 - Commissioned placements
 - MARAC (for complex care planning)
- Review of Front door access points including One Front Door, Early Help Hub, CSC Duty and Out of Hours
- A workforce development programme to implement an asset based delivery model within statutory services delivered through Signs of Safety

Our Corporate Parenting strategy builds on the recommendations from the recent external inspections including the Ofsted inspection February 2017 and March 2019.

The Corporate Parenting Strategy also provides a link between all directorate and service plans and all strategies relating to children and young people many of which have specific targets and key priorities to meet the needs of children and families.

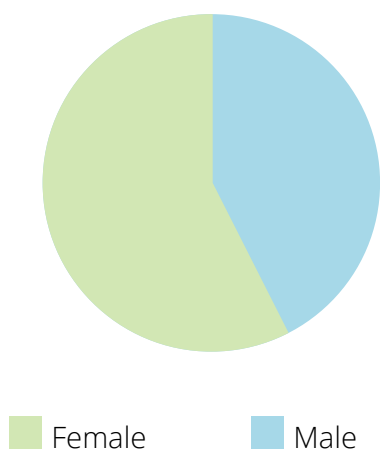
Cared for Children, Young People and Care Leavers

The term Child Looked After (CLA), young people and care leavers applies to all children being looked after including those children subject to a Care Order under Section 31 of the Children Act 1989 as well as those children cared for on a voluntary basis through agreement with their parents under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989. This group includes cared for children who are disabled, young people and care leavers as well as those children who have sought refugee status in the UK.

	2016	2017	2018
Wigan	483	446	479
Statistical neighbour	401.60	431.50	474.40
North West	12550	13220	14070
England	70400	72590	75420

The North West region continues to have the highest number of Cared for Children in England with a national trend showing increases of 4% over the last year. Wigan, however, continues to reduce numbers of Cared for Children, down 3% last year.

We currently have 455 Cared for Children in Wigan; of which 194 are female and 261 are males respectively.



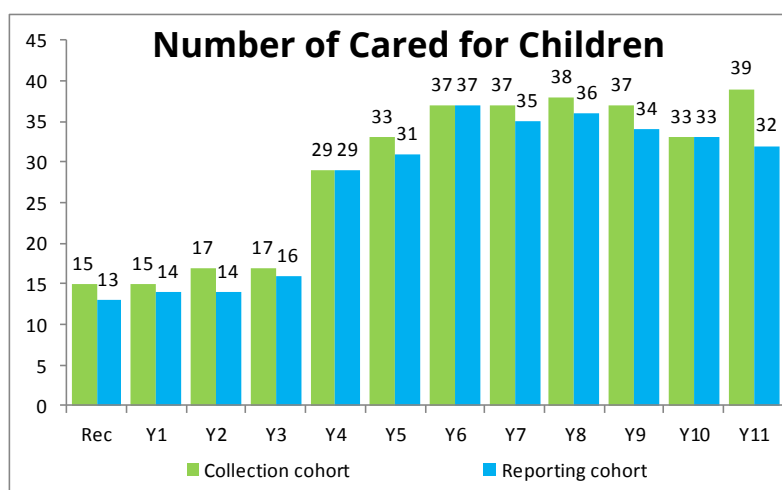
Placements split by Age Band:	Female	Male
a) Under 1	8	8
b) 1 to 4 yrs	23	36
c) 5 to 9 yrs	40	45
d) 10 to 15 yrs	90	123
e) 16+ yrs	33	49
Sum:	194	261

We currently have 144 care leavers in Wigan who are aged 18 – 25 years. All 144 care leavers receive support and intervention from their Personal Advisors.

	Local authority	Statistical Neighbours	North West Region	England total
Percentage of care leavers in suitable accommodation.	98%	91.5%	87%	84%
Percentage of care leavers in education, employment, or training. (aged 16+)	55%	48.4%	49%	50%
Percentage of care leavers not in education, employment, or training. (aged 16+)	45%	47.7%	45%	40%
Percentage of care leavers in higher education. (aged 18+)	8%	7.25%	6%	7.2%
Percentage of care leavers the local authority is not in touch with.	0% In touch with all care leavers	2.5%	6%	8%

81% of our cared for children are educated within the Wigan borough; this is in stark contrast to national averages of less than 60%. This enables us to gain greater access to local resources and offer direct support to our children as well as being responsive to local need. 76% of our cared for children are currently attending good or outstanding provision.

Currently, 347 children of compulsory school age, 55 key stage 5 pupils. 66% of our cared for children achieved attendance above 95%. 53% of our cared for children have identified Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and 25% have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).



The national measure of progress for children at the end of their first formal year of education is that they achieve 'Good Level of Development' (GLD) which relates to children meeting age-related expectations in twelve of the seventeen measure scores in the early years curriculum and therefore being school ready.

A lower percentage of Wigan's cared for children achieved this measure in comparison to their peers. This data represents nine children, two of whom have identified SEND. However, across all seventeen areas, the average attainment gap this year between cared for children and their peers is 15% which is an improvement on the previous year dataset. Wigan's cared for children matched their peers in meeting the standard in listening and attention, speaking, self-confidence and awareness, exploring media and materials and being imaginative.

Data set %	National cared for children	Wigan cared for children	Wigan all children	Regional all children	National all children	Regional children without SEND	National children without SEND	Wigan cared for children without SEND	Greater Manchester All children
EYFS GLD (12 months or more in care)	48.0	44.0	68.6	68.9	71.5	76.5	77.1	75	68.9

The main areas where there is a significant gap between cared for children and their peers are in the reading and writing strands, as they were in previous years.

In May 2019 there were 236 post 16 Cared for Children and care leavers aged 16 to 25 years old.

Employed	31
Apprenticeship	13
Confident Futures Programme	7
Further Education	52
University	11
Training	2
NEET	67
*Breakdown	
Out of area	15
NEET Parent	14
NEET SEND	16
Custody	5
Asylum seeker (not eligible to work)	3
Princes Trust	0
Voluntary Work	0
Armed Forces	3

As identified, in Wigan we have a positive percentage of care leavers in education, employment or training compared nationally and regionally.

	2016	2017	2018
Wigan	52	55	58
Statistical neighbour	47.80	48.40	57.78
North West	48	49	50
England	49	50	51

Role and responsibilities

of elected members, Wigan Council, and other partners

All services that support cared for children and care leavers are corporate parents, and every elected member, officer within a council and partner agency has a responsibility to act for those children and young people as a parent would for their own child.

Elected Members

All Members are in the unique position of being able to promote opportunities for cared for children and care leavers through their political power and influence and; through their connections to the community, schools, health services, youth justice, local businesses, employers and voluntary organisations.

The Portfolio Holder for Children & Young People has the lead political role in ensuring that cared for children have their interests protected, their opportunities maximised, their educational achievement enhanced, their voices heard and have services shaped to meet their needs. The Portfolio Holder is supported in this responsibility by fellow Elected Members on the Corporate Parenting Board.

Elected Members should;

- Understand the legal/ policy framework
- Know the profile of local children – and how well they are doing
- Consider the needs of cared for children in all their decisions
- Consider range of evidence to identify what needs to change
- Constantly drive improvements to the service

- Make sure that the needs of cared for children are incorporated in all council/ partner strategies
- Support the development of work experience / apprenticeship / employment opportunities for cared for children and care leavers
- Support the recruitment of foster carers in the borough

All Council Services

All council officers share corporate parenting responsibilities and should actively seek and promote opportunities for cared for children and care leavers. This should be by;

- Consider the needs of cared for children in all decisions
- Support the development of work experience / apprenticeship / employment opportunities for cared for children and care leavers
- Helping young people meet their potential and achieve their ambitions, hopes and aspirations
- Help young people become confident and resilient individuals

Children's Services

Across Children's services, it is the responsibility of all colleagues to

- Consider the voice of children and young people in all decisions that affect them as individuals and the service as a whole
- Corporate parenting principles will form part of the staff induction programme.



Virtual School

The responsibility of our Virtual School is to make sure that all Cared for Children and previously cared for children get an appropriate education to meet their needs and help them fulfil their potential.

Nationally, research has shown that as a group, CLA education outcomes are poor in comparison to their peers, but it is recognised that a good education helps their transition to a successful and fulfilling adult life.

Our Virtual School brings together information about all children who are cared for by the council - as if they were in a single school. It allows us to closely track each child's progress and ensure we can identify the specific support they may need at an early stage, so we can work with individual schools to implement any actions.

As a corporate parent of cared for children, the Virtual School has a duty to provide the kind of support that any good parent would provide for their own children.

Schools, Colleges and other Education Providers

Our educational organisations have a range of responsibilities including ensuring that every cared for child has a Personal Education Plan (PEP) and is supported to achieve their fullest potential. Keeping children in school and doing the upmost to avoid exclusions is an important part of achieving this. All schools should have a designated teacher with special responsibility for cared for children.

School governors have statutory responsibilities which include;

- monitoring the progress made by cared for children.
- engaging with the Virtual School
- respecting their role as Corporate Parent.

Promoting the health and well-being of cared for children.

Health partners have important responsibilities for improving the health, both physical and psychological, of all cared for children.

Statutory guidance for local authorities, clinical commissioning groups and NHS England

"The NHS has a major role in ensuring the timely and effective delivery of health services to looked-after children. The Mandate to NHS England, Statutory Guidance on Joint Strategic Needs Assessments and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategies and The NHS Constitution for England make clear the responsibilities of CCGs and NHS England to looked-after children (and, by extension, to care leavers). In fulfilling those responsibilities the NHS contributes to meeting the health needs of looked-after children in three ways: commissioning effective services, delivering through provider organisations, and through individual practitioners providing coordinated care for each child".

DfE, DoH (2015)

Housing Providers

Housing Providers have an essential role to play in providing enough good quality accommodation for care leavers who are ready to live more independently and. provide a range of move-on accommodation for care leavers wanting to move from more supported accommodation.



Leadership



for children and young people

Corporate Parenting Board

Our Corporate Parenting Board will take lead responsibility for the delivery of the Corporate Parenting Strategy and action plan in each of the five key priorities.

The Board will:

- Be a forum for regular, planned and detailed discussion of thematic presentations
- Be a positive link with cared for children and care leaver forums
- Be a mechanism to listen to our cared for children and care leavers; to promote their voice and have influence in decision making
- Receive regular progress reports and performance reporting aligned to the corporate parenting plan and service plans for cared for children and care leavers
- Receive the annual IRO Managers, fostering and adoption report
- Consider areas of good practice and areas for development and make recommendations to support continued improvement and development
- Receive updates on our transformation agenda and its impact, particularly for our foster carers recruitment and retention and placement stability of children
- Provide a governance structure for corporate parenting
- Provide challenge and scrutiny
- Act as the 'Board of Governance' for the Virtual School by scrutinising the Virtual School Head's annual report and offering appropriate challenge and support to improve educational outcomes for all our cared for children.

There will be an overarching Terms of Reference for the Board to ensure roles and responsibilities across elected members and partner agencies are clarified. This will ensure the appropriate membership of the Board.

Measures of success

The Board will seek to ensure that current and future priorities and decisions and deployment of resources will reflect the needs of cared for children and care leavers.

Performance data will be provided to support and evidence progress on the five priorities of the Corporate Parenting Board. The first question the Board will ask of themselves, is, "would this be good enough for my child?"

The Corporate Parenting Strategy will be monitored and evaluated by the successful delivery of the corporate parenting plan through:

- Children and young people feel valued and able to shape and influence services
- Our audits telling us about the lived experience of children and young people
- Delivery of an exciting and appropriate local offer for care leavers
- Delivery of care leavers hubs
- Ofsted judgement of good or outstanding for cared for children and achieving permanence
- Asset based care plans in line with Signs of Safety
- Improved placement stability and reduction in unplanned endings
- Foster carer recruitment and retention
- Increased number of care leavers entering education, training or employment