

Buckinghamshire County Council

# Corporate Parenting Strategy

2016 / 2019

*Together... Keeping  
Children Safe*



## Foreword

Children and young people who, for one reason or another, cannot live with their parents are some of the most vulnerable and have a unique place in our society. In Buckinghamshire we take our responsibility to be corporate parents seriously and commit to treating our Looked After Children (LAC) as any family would, by keeping them safe, meeting their health needs, ensuring that they have as positive an experience as possible whilst in care, by improving their life chances and supporting them to meet their full potential.

Based on the most up to date research we know that our children are very likely to have experienced significant trauma and abuse prior to being Looked After. They will also be at greater risk of sexual exploitation, going missing, offending and are likely to experience greater challenges with education. Therefore, it is essential that our Looked After Children receive the best possible services from us as corporate parents in order to support them to achieve the same outcomes and have access to the same opportunities that we would want for our own children.

It is essential that our children's experiences of care addresses the

disadvantages they have faced rather than compound them. Good local service provision is likely to improve our children's life opportunities, be better value for money and contribute to good performance.

As corporate parents we want to help the children and young people of Buckinghamshire who are currently looked after to thrive and reach their full potential.

Improving the role of the corporate parent, as part of our corporate responsibility, is key to improving the outcomes for our children. It is with the corporate parent that responsibility and accountability for their well-being and future prospects reside. Buckinghamshire takes this responsibility seriously.

Buckinghamshire is committed to being the best parent it can be to our children and this strategy provides clear direction for all agencies to understand what the objectives of corporate parenting are and holds the local authority accountable and partners for delivering on these.

**Warren Whyte**  
**Cabinet Member for Children's Services**

# **Buckinghamshire County Council**

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## Supporting Documents

It is important to note these documents to consider this Strategy within the context of other existing documents:

### **Buckinghamshire Children's Strategy**

<http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/media/1281/childrens-strategy.pdf>

### **Buckinghamshire Looked After Children's and Placement Sufficiency Strategy**

### **Change for Children Programme**

### **Buckinghamshire Strategic Plan 2015-17**

[www.buckscc.gov.uk/services/council-and-democracy/our-plans/our-strategic-plan/](http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/services/council-and-democracy/our-plans/our-strategic-plan/)

## 1. Introduction and Purpose

Throughout this document the term “our children” will refer to all children for whom Buckinghamshire has corporate parenting responsibility.

Once a child becomes looked after, the duty of all Members and Officers of the Council, acting in our individual roles as corporate parents, is to seek for our children exactly the same childhood that every good parent would want for their own children.

This duty encompasses their education, their health and welfare, what they do in their leisure time and holidays, how they celebrate their culture and how they receive praise and encouragement for their achievements. This duty also extends to providing appropriate support once young people have left care in order to enable them to achieve independence in the community. This continued support includes looked after children’s educational support post 16 years old.

In addition, it is important to us that looked after children have a chance to shape and influence the parenting they receive.

Corporate parenting is defined as:

*“The responsibility of local authorities to improve outcomes and actively promote the life chances of children they look after is referred to as “corporate parenting” in recognition that the task must be shared by the whole authority in partnership with partner agencies along with parents.*

*The role of corporate parent is to act as the best parents for each child they look after and to take action by speaking out on their behalf, arranging for appropriate services to meet their needs, standing up for them and representing them as needed to ensure they grow up in the best possible way.”*

### **The Children Act 1989**

The role of corporate parent extends beyond children’s social care and instead is the responsibility of each elected Councillor, every member of staff – both County and District – and wider partner agencies.

## Legislative Framework

It is important to recognize that the vision for our children is driven by a range of legislation, policy and guidance that underpin corporate parenting. This list is indicative and by no means exhaustive.

Legislation & National Guidance includes:

- Children Act 1989 and 2004
- Adoption & Children Act 2002
- The children and Young Persons Act 2008
- The Equality Act 2010
- Leaving Care Guidance 2010
- Care Planning Regulations 2010
- Independent Reviewing Officer Handbook 2010
- The Health and Social Care Act 2012
- *Making not Breaking; Building Relationships'* Care Inquiry 2013
- The Care Act 2014
- Children and Families Act 2014

Local Drivers include:

- Buckinghamshire Joint Strategic Needs Analysis
- The We Do Care Pledge
- The Health and Well Being Strategy
- Buckingham Safeguarding Children Board Strategy



## Context - Who Are Our children?

As of the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 there were a total of 458 looked after children (LAC) from Buckinghamshire (0 – 18 years). 62% of these children were placed with carers who lived within the county boundary.

The largest cohort by age of our children was between 10-15 years old:

LAC Age Breakdown	Number	% of Total LAC
0 -1	17	4%
1-4	66	15%
5-9	83	18%
10-15	190	42%
16 plus	94	21%

There were more males looked after than females by Buckinghamshire

LAC Gender Breakdown	Number	% of Total CLA
FEMALE	204	45%
MALE	254	55%

Our children come from a broad range of backgrounds, with the largest percentage being White British (65%).

LAC Ethnicity Breakdown	Number	% of Total LAC
ABAN - Bangladeshi	< 5	0%
AIND - Indian	< 5	0%
AOTH - Any other Asian background	< 5	0%
APKN - Pakistani	< 5	1%
BAFR - African	9	2%
BCRB - Caribbean	9	2%
BOTH - Any other Black background	< 5	1%
MOTH - Any other Mixed background	16	4%
MWAS - White and Asian	11	2%
MWBA - White and Black African	8	2%
MWBC - White and Black Caribbean	34	7%
NOBT - Information not yet obtained	< 5	1%
OOTH - Any other ethnic group	31	7%
WBRI - White British	296	65%
WIRI - White Irish	< 5	0%
WOTH - Any other White background	22	5%
WROM - Gypsy/Roma	< 5	0%

Children from minority ethnic group's account for 35% of all Looked After Children compared to 20.9% for all 0 – 18 years living in Buckinghamshire



## **2. The Role of Corporate Parents including Members, Officers and Partner Agencies**

Corporate parenting is a whole-authority endeavor and is not the sole responsibility of the Children's Social Care and Learning Business Unit alone. It requires services across the Council to work together with partner agencies to achieve the best outcomes for our children and care leavers.

The role of corporate parent is not a passive one.

Buckinghamshire's corporate parents work closely with their partners to ensure that the needs of our children are clearly identified and met at every level. This should encompass the strategic planning, commissioning, and integrated delivery of services.

The Director of Children's Services and Lead Member for Children's Services will take a lead on behalf of the Local Authority for services provided to Looked After children and those leaving care.

## **3. WE DO CARE!**

In Buckinghamshire, the Children in Care Council is called 'We Do Care!' They are a group of children and young people who are either looked after or care leavers and work to ensure looked after children and care leavers have their voices listened to and promote their right to be part of the decision making process that affect their lives.

In Bucks We Do Care! was established in 2009 to undertake the role of promoting our children's right to be part of the decision making processes that affect their lives. WDC! work collaboratively with the corporate parents to share our children's experiences and ideas on how to improve local practice.



## Advocacy Service for Our Children

The National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) support our children by providing an advocacy service on behalf of the Buckinghamshire. They provide independent support to our children and young people who may not feel heard or who wish to make a complaint about the service they have received. Full details of the role they provide can be found <https://www.nyas.net/>

## Children in Care Pledge

As part of our commitment to listen to the voice of children and young people we have created two Pledges which were written in collaboration with our young people involved in our WDC! made up from a diverse range of our children. The key themes of the pledge are:

- Treat you with respect
- Look after you
- Provide a good education for you
- Keep you healthy
- Support you to be independent

We Do Care have also worked collaboratively with young people who are leaving care to ensure they too have a pledge.

## After-Care Pledge

- We promise to be there for you and support you through the Leaving Care process in a way which suits you and your needs
- We promise to let you know about things that might help you to stay connected and make friends
- We promise to help you with your health and health care needs where we can
- We promise to explore all of your accommodation options with you and to help you find accommodation that suits you and your life
- We promise to explain your finances to you, talk about all of your options and help you make the right decisions
- We promise to help you fulfil your potential and will support you in your transition to adult life enabling you to be successful in your education, training or employment.

These commitments set a benchmark for all our staff and should be readily referred to if any looked after child or care leaver believes their care is not up to the standard they should reasonably expect.

The Pledge is distributed to all children and young people who are looked after or receiving aftercare services in Buckinghamshire.

The Pledge and the work of We Do Care! can be found on their dedicated website:  
<http://www.kidsincare.org.uk/>

## 4. Principles and Values

The Corporate Parenting Panel has identified a set of values that underpin their commitment to looked after children. The underlying principles and values that drive this strategy are as follows:

1. The family is usually the best place for bringing up children and young people.
2. The role of the corporate parent is to act as the best possible parent for each child they look after and to advocate on his/her behalf to secure the best possible outcomes
3. Early help is better for children and young people
4. We aim to get better services delivered earlier and quicker to families
5. Most of our time should be spent on direct intervention with families to effect positive change
6. We must make the journey for the child and families we work with safe
7. The measure of success of child protection systems is whether children and young people are receiving effective help, so in all our work we assess outcomes
8. We believe in providing strong professional development and professional support to our children's workforce to enable them to be effective
9. Underpinning all that we do is our commitment to ensuring people are treated with dignity and respect, promoting equality of opportunity and ensuring discrimination is not practised in our service delivery



As Buckinghamshire Corporate Parents we believe:

- Looked after children and young people are entitled to the same care, support, stability, health and education as our own children.
- We need to ensure that services are flexible enough to support children and young people in our care to have high quality lives and happy childhoods.
- In developing new practices and initiatives the County Council considers the needs of looked after children.

- Looked after children are actively encouraged to participate in decisions made about their lives, so that their experiences influence policy and practice.
- Access for looked after children to universal services is actively promoted, encouraging young people's sense of community and belonging.
- Service provision, communication and policies meet the needs of children with disabilities, and children from a range of cultural and religious backgrounds.
- Transition to adult services should be timely and services work together.
- In challenging negative perceptions and stereotypes and raise awareness at all levels of the County Council.
- Corporate parenting is about commitment and teamwork to bring about change.

## 5. Governance - Meeting Our Responsibility

### Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP)

Lead responsibility for corporate parenting sits with the Cabinet Member for Children's Services who chairs the bi-monthly Panel. The Corporate Parenting Panel works to ensure the strategic objectives are delivered and the care pledge is adhered to. Key actions are agreed against the strategic objectives and the required standard of service delivery is achieved. Both quantitative and qualitative data is analysed in order to ensure the objectives are being met. The CPP consists of a cross party group of elected Members and supported by officers and partners including the Director of Children's Services.

The Director of Children's Services along with key officers from within Children's Social Care and Learning Business Unit and key representatives from partner agencies responsible for aspects of working with looked after children and care leavers, also attend meetings including representation from health, education, participation, equality, advocacy services and the independent reviewing service.

There is also representation from various services requested, as and when appropriate. Looked after children and care leavers engage in the CPP and the Participation Team presents an annual report on the activity of We Do Care! We expect all Corporate Parents to have the knowledge and understanding of the diverse needs of our children.

We intend to ensure we are meeting our responsibility in the following ways:

- By support, guidance and challenge the Corporate Parenting Panel will examine all aspects of the provision made for looked after children and those in receipt of aftercare services.
- Ensure there is transparent communication between looked after children, their carers and the corporate parent.
- Actively promote best practice and high ambitions for all looked after children.
- Support the development of strong partnerships with other internal 'corporate parents including education, health, police, youth offending, youth services complemented by those in external partner agencies.
- Have a clear framework for accountability and responsibilities at all levels.
- Ensure there are regular training opportunities for all those with corporate parenting responsibilities and those involved with the Corporate Parenting Panel.
- Promote our moral and legal responsibilities as Corporate Parents and ensure that this continually owned by the whole Council and its partners



The full terms of reference and membership for the Corporate Parent Panel are located in the appendices.

The panel takes every opportunity to actively engage with our children, whether directly or indirectly in partnership with We Do Care!

## 6. Strategic Action Plan

The Corporate Parenting Panel strategic objectives are aligned with Buckinghamshire County Council's Strategic Plan 2015-17 in that its purpose is to ensure that looked after children and care leavers are safeguarded and their needs met.

In order to support the delivery of the action plan a Multi-Agency Looked After Children's Team will be established to drive forward the actions and report on progress to the Corporate Parent Panel. The terms of reference and membership of the new team are included in the appendix.



<b>What we intend to do</b>	<b>How we intend to do it</b>	<b>Who is responsible?</b>
<b>Ensure children and young people looked after are treated with respect</b>	<p>Ensuring our children have opportunities to have their voice heard, through listening to them &amp; responding to requests where possible.</p> <p>Communicate with our children, using appropriate language</p> <p>Ensure information is only shared on a need to know basis</p> <p>Our children will all have access to an Independent Reviewing Officer who will advise them about their entitlements, rights and responsibilities, providing support should they need someone to speak on their behalf</p> <p>All of our children will have the opportunity to contribute to their care plans</p> <p>Each of our children will have information on how to get an advocate or how to make a complaint.</p> <p>All of our children will be encouraged to become involved in the We Do Care Council</p>	<p>WDC! CPP Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Social worker</p> <p>Social workers</p> <p>WDC! NYAS</p> <p>WDC! IRO's, NYAS</p> <p>Social workers, IRO's</p> <p>NYAS</p> <p>WDC!</p>

<p><b>Ensure a stable home life in care or with their family where possible</b></p>	<p>Our children will have an up to date care plan which has a clear plan for permanency</p> <p>We will find a safe place for our children to live with foster carers or in a residential home. If the care plan includes returning them to their family, this will take place at the earliest opportunity.</p> <p>Where possible, placing a child within the family will be the primary consideration</p> <p>We will take every opportunity to ensure that our children maintain contact with their family, explaining why not if this isn't possible.</p> <p>Ensuring that continuity of social worker for our children is of paramount importance and will be maintained where possible.</p> <p>Ensuring that all standards are adhered to in terms of social work contacts with our children, which ensures oversight of our children's welfare and development.</p>	<p>Head of Children Management Head of QSP Service Director,</p> <p>Head of Care Services Children's Social Care, Head of Care Services</p> <p>Head of Care Management</p> <p>Head of Care Management NYAS</p> <p>Service Director – Children's Social Care</p> <p>Head of QSP</p>
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<b>Provide a good education</b>	We strive to help find the most appropriate school in our child's area and provide enhanced support with any transitions.	Virtual Head Teacher
	Through the Virtual School regular visits will be made to our children and their Personal Education Plans (PEP) regularly reviewed	Virtual Head Teacher
	PEPS will be explained to our children and they will be encouraged to contribute to them.	Head of Care Management
	We will offer guidance and support on future opportunities and assist our children if they wish to continue their education through an Apprenticeship, College or University.	Virtual Head Teacher
	We will provide Apprenticeship and work experience opportunities	Head of Care Management
	Support all of our children to gain work experience and help to find a job	Head of Care Management

<p><b>Provide health care</b></p>	<p>Make sure initial health assessments where ever possible are done in a timely fashion</p> <p>Provide regular dental, optician and health check- ups and any treatments that need to be followed up.</p> <p>Provide information to all young people to help them make informed choices about their health and have the skills and knowledge to keep themselves healthy and happy</p> <p>We will provide opportunities to participate in a range of leisure activities, interests and hobbies</p>	<p>Head of Care Management Designated LAC Nurse</p> <p>Designated LAC Nurse All corporate parents</p> <p>Designated Lac Nurse</p> <p>WDC!</p>
<p><b>Provide support to be independent</b></p>	<p>We will assist and support our children through the Leaving Care process in a way which meets their indivial needs.</p> <p>We will advise our young people about things that might help them to stay connected and establish a support network, including healthy peer relationships.</p> <p>We will support our young people to explore all of their accommodation options, to help them find accommodation that suits their needs and life including where appropriate assisting our children to stay with their foster family post 18 years of age.</p>	<p>Head of Care Management</p> <p>Head of Care Management WDC!</p> <p>Head of Care Management</p>

	<p>We will guide our young people and offer help with managing their finances as part of independent living skills in support of their future choices.</p> <p>We will assist our young people to fulfil their potential, advising them in their transition to adult life to enable them to be successful in their education, training or employment.</p>	<p>Head of Care Management WDC!</p> <p>Virtual Head Teacher Head of Care Management</p>
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# Appendices

## Terms of Reference Buckinghamshire's Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP)

### **Purpose**

The CPP ensures that the Council acts as a good corporate parent. To take an active role in ensuring the needs of our children are met.

The CPP has responsibility for delivering on the corporate parenting strategic objectives and ensuring that the care pledge is adhered to.

### **2. Functions**

- Listen to our children's views about their experiences and needs of being looked after and using this to inform decision making
- To agree collaboratively with our children the Pledge by which decision making will align
- To ensure strong links between all partners, officers and elected members in relation to corporate parenting.
- To monitor and scrutinise the performance of services delivered to our children through the analysis of performance data and our children's views.
- To take a broad oversight of corporate parenting responsibilities ensuring that our children's have access enhanced support to opportunities.
- Being well informed about services available and the challenges faced for this complex group of children.
- To maintain strategic overview of all service developments
- To ensure Elected Members are kept up to date on service delivery

### 3. Membership

. Current membership comprises of:

#### MEMBERS

- Cabinet Member Children's Services – Chair
- 7 other Elected Members

#### OFFICERS

- Director of Children's Services
- Service Director Children's Service's
- Head of Children's Care Management
- Head of Care Services
- We Do Care!
- NYAS
- Virtual Head
- Designated Nurse CLA
- 2 Foster Carer Reps

#### OTHERS BY INVITATION

- Partners on a needs lead basis

### 4. Operational Arrangements

**Frequency of meetings:** Meetings take place on a bi-monthly basis

**Terms of Reference:** The Terms of Reference will be reviewed on an annual basis.  
Date of next review: June 2018

### 5. Conduct of Business

- The CPP will work to an agenda which the Chair will co-ordinate and distribute with relevant papers at least five working days prior to the meeting to ensure attendees have time to review information prior to the meeting
- The Chair or an agreed substitute will be present at each meeting.

## Terms of Reference Multi Agency Looked After Children Team

### Purpose

Taking a multi-agency approach to ensuring the needs of our children are met through having operational responsibility to deliver against the strategic objectives as set out in the Strategic Action Plan.

### 2. Functions

- To identify opportunities to work in partnership to meet the needs of our children
- To ensure that our children receive services that meet their individual needs
- To identify gaps in service provision and make proposals in response to this
- Share good practice and outcomes achieved through delivery of the plan
- To ensure that partners are aware of the responsibility they have as corporate parents
- To make recommendations to the CPP as appropriate and inform them of any barriers to the delivery of the plan.



### 3. Membership

Membership comprises of:

- WDC! Manager
- Virtual Head Teacher
- Lead Designated Nurse
- Swan Unit
- R U Safe Manager
- YOS Operational Manager
- CAMHS Manager
- CIC Manager
- After Care Manager

### 5. Operational Arrangements

**Frequency of meetings:** Meetings take place on a bi-monthly basis

**Terms of Reference:** The Terms of Reference will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Date of next review: June 2018

### 6. Conduct of Business

- Work will be delivered by the group from the Strategic Action Plan