



Rochdale Borough Council

Corporate Parent Strategy

2017 -2019

Contents

1. Foreword
2. Introduction
3. Aims and Objectives of the Strategy
4. National and Local context to the drivers of the strategy
5. Roles and Responsibilities of Corporate Parents
6. Delivery of the strategy
7. Strategic Action Plan
8. Appendices

Foreword

Our experiences in early childhood and through to our teenage years are critical in shaping our future happiness and set the foundations for what we can achieve throughout our adult lives. Good parenting is vital. This is why the role of Corporate Parent is one of the most important responsibilities of the Local Authority. Rochdale has a legal and moral duty to support children in our care and those leaving care in the way that any good parent would support their own children. This is a role that we take very seriously. The circumstances and experiences of cared for children and young people mean that they are often disadvantaged in life. Narrowing the gap between the achievements of children in care and all children requires us to do much better for this vulnerable group. No one team or agency can do this alone. It is essential that every department within the Council and our partner organisations share the responsibilities of the corporate parent.

As a corporate parent, we are committed to do the very best to improve outcomes. To this end, we have worked with our young people to develop a charter and a series of pledges to our cared for children and young people. Our challenge is to deliver on these pledges, putting these children and young people at the heart of all that we do so that they have the opportunities they need to fulfil their potential.

This corporate parenting strategy outlines how Rochdale intends to fulfil its responsibility to cared for children and care leavers for the next 2 years. This strategy builds on the strong foundations laid by the previous strategy and is aspirational for our cared for children and care leavers.

This strategy forms the framework to which all Rochdale staff, Councillors and our partners will work.

Signed

Councillor Martin

1. Introduction to Corporate Parenting

Corporate Parenting is a high priority for government who have regulated the duties of the council towards the children in its care through legislation and guidance. This has been reinforced through the Children Act 1989, Children Act 2004, the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 and the Care Planning, Placement and Review Guidance 2011 and Care Leavers Regulations 2010. They have provided the drive for more integrated services for all children and a new statutory duty specifically to promote educational attainment for Cared for Children.

Corporate parenting was defined within the Children Act 1989 guidance 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 local authority in partnership with partner agencies along with parents.

The role of the corporate parent is to act as the best parent 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.’

In Rochdale our children and young people have asked to be called ‘Cared for Children’ and therefore in response to our young people’s wishes this strategy will refer to all children who are statutorily looked after as Cared for Children or C4C.

When a child comes into care, they become cared for, and Rochdale Council becomes their Corporate Parent. This means that everyone who works for Rochdale Council, in any capacity, its elected members and its partners – in fact all those who play any part in making decisions for children in Rochdale – have a special and important responsibility in fulfilling the corporate parent role. Decision making shouldn’t be assumed as only from Children’s Services. Decision making can be from a wider council perspective that impacts on cared for children.

A child or young person is cared for if they are subject to an interim care order, care order or are being looked after 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.

Rochdale Council is committed to being an effective and trustworthy corporate parent for any child or young person who is in our care irrespective of their age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, faith or ability.

Every good parent knows that children require a safe and nurturing environment in which to grow and thrive. Parents protect and support their children in coping with the dangers and risks of everyday life. Parents are ambitious for their children and strive to support them to reach their potential. Parents celebrate and share in their children's achievements, however large or small. A child who is cared for by the Council has the right to expect everything from a corporate parent that they would expect from a good parent in the community.

This means the Council will:

As Corporate Parents we will preface all our thinking, planning, actions and decisions with: "If this were my child I would..."

- Know our children, their needs, talents and aspirations and promote their interests
- Recognise, support and respect their identity in all aspects
- Support children's physical health and emotional wellbeing and resilience
- Ensure children and young people are consulted about their own lives and plans
- Listen to their views and ensure they influence practice, service developments and policy
- Hold high aspirations for our children's future and expect the best for and from them
- Ensure children take full advantage of the education offered to them, i.e. attend regularly and achieve their educational potential
- Promote and support high academic and vocational achievement by working with our schools and carers to ensure that the needs of our children are understood and met
- Take an interest in their successes and problems and show our pride in their achievements, and celebrate them
- Support transition to adult life, and promote a young person's economic prospects and prepare them to become responsible citizens
- Learn from outcomes of complaints from children and young people
- Do our best to keep them safe

For corporate parenting to be effective it needs commitment from all elected members, and council employees in a council-wide approach. 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. It is about prioritising children and young people's needs, listening to what they want and supporting them to make the most of their lives and opportunities.

In the last two years, 2015-2017 Rochdale Borough has been responsible for corporately parenting up to 560 children, at any one time. At the time of writing this strategy there are 465 Cared for Children and 145 care leavers who the council are the corporate parents for.

The annual Cared for Children needs analysis located at the appendices of this document provides a detailed picture of the children and young people who are currently Cared for in Rochdale current to the writing of this strategy.

The Needs Analysis is available every year and informs both the measurements of success against actions in the current action plan, as well as informing the development of the next yearly action plan, to ensure a continued cycle of review and action with the aim of improving the outcomes for our cared for children.

2. Aims and Objectives of the Strategy

The overall aim of this strategy is to strengthen good practice through a whole council approach to corporate parenting and a strong and effective approach to partnership working, thus improving the achievement, life chances and opportunities for all our children looked after and care leavers.

Rochdale's vision for cared for children and young people is to create an environment and deliver services in which they can individually flourish, as the foundation for successful adulthood. All corporate parents need to ask the questions in all of our interactions and service provision, *'Have I done everything I can for this child/young person? What more do I need to do?'*

We have a Corporate Parenting Strategy in order to help support children who come into care as the majority of them need extra support in their lives because they have experienced a lot of disruption and hurt. Their experience may make it harder for them to do as well as they could, for example in their education, looking after their health and in making good relationships. This strategy looks at the areas of work that are needed to support young people and care leavers over the next 2 years. From it will develop the Corporate Parenting Work Plan that will sit with the Virtual Cared for Children Team who will be the group to drive forward the strategy from an operational perspective. The progress of this action plan will be reported to Corporate Parenting Board on a quarterly basis so that board members can be assured of the impact the strategy is having or to take action if there are areas not being progressed by a responsible organisation.

The strategy will focus on 5 key strategic objectives. These key areas are:

- ✓ **Participation and Engagement** – This strategic objective is a priority in order to ensure all practice and service delivery has the voice of the child central. We will develop a framework (Participation Strategy) that enables the voice of children and young people (C4C and Care leavers) to be heard in a more structured way, and develop mechanisms to feed back to young people on action taken because of what they have told us

- ✓ **Placement Stability** – one of the recommendations from the Sufficiency Statement is to make sure we have enough skilled foster care placements for children looked after, in particular more homes for children in the 11+ age range, and

for sibling groups to be able to live together. Children will live in an environment where carers understand and promote their individual identity and needs through their delegated authority.

We also expect that young people leaving care will be encouraged to stay put in their foster home beyond the age of 18 and that Staying On is implemented for those children living in residential placements

✓ **Independence** – from the age of 18 young people who are not in a foster home where they want to remain, will be supported to access good quality and affordable accommodation, and all care leavers successfully take up/remain in further education, apprenticeship/traineeship or employment. Pathway plans will be of a good quality and are reflective of the changing needs of young people. Plans will be creative in terms of ensuring life skills are promoted for children and young people

✓ **Education and opportunity** – we will ensure that Cared for Children have the best opportunities to fulfil their potential, and that we have high aspirations for their futures, with the right support being offered, at the right time. We will encourage, enable and support care leavers to explore the education or career option best suited to their individual needs and preferences. They will receive support from their carers which allows them to test out independence and learn the skills needed to one day live independently

✓ **Health of Cared for Children and Care Leavers** – we will ensure that Cared for Children and care leavers have access to good health and wellbeing services, and are enabled to become responsible for their own health and wellbeing. They will know their health history, in particular when leaving care.

Corporate parenting operates at strategic, operational and individual levels. It has three key elements:

1. A statutory duty, detailed in the Children Act 1989 and the Children and Young Persons Act 2008, on all parts of a local authority to co-operate in promoting the welfare of children and young people looked after, and a duty on other partners and agencies to co-operate in fulfilling that duty
2. Co-ordinating the activities of the many different professionals and carers who are involved in a child or young person's life and taking a strategic, child centred approach to the delivery of services
3. Shifting the emphasis from "corporate" to "parenting", making sure our moral and statutory responsibilities towards children looked after and care leavers are being fulfilled.

3. National and Local Drivers

The vision for cared for children is driven by a range of legislation, policy and guidance that underpin corporate parenting. An indicative, but not exhaustive list appears below and informs the strategic approach across service delivery to our cared for children:

- Leaving Care Act 2000
- Leaving Care Guidance 2010
- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- Care Planning Regulations 2010
- IRO Handbook 2010
- Aiming High for Disabled Children - Transition Support Programme (2008-11)
- Transition - Moving On Well (2008)
- Healthy Lives: Brighter Futures. The Strategy for Children and Young People's Health (2009).
- Learning and Skills Act (2000)
- Every One Counts The Operating Framework for the NHS in England (2014-2019)
- Children and Families Act (2014)
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice (2014)
- The Care Act 2014
- National transfer scheme for Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers

And local drivers

- Cared for Children Annual Needs Analysis
- The Pledge
- The annual Listen Up survey (The Care Report)
- Children and Young People's Plan 2014-17
- Health and Well Being Strategy
- Strategy for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities 2014-17
- Joint Commissioning Strategy for Children's Services 2013-2015
- Leaving Care Offer 2017
- Permanency Policy 2017-2019
- Sufficiency Strategy 2015/16
- Ofsted Reports/Peer Reviews
- Engagement Strategy 2014
- Missing Strategy 2016

Rochdale Council will ensure that it responds to new legislation, guidance and research to ensure that it is always improving on the care it provides to its cared for children.

4. Roles and Responsibilities of Corporate Parents

All services that support cared for children are corporate parents, and we are all accountable to the children and young people who are looked after in Rochdale. We must all strive for children in our care to succeed in the same way that any parent would strive for their own child/ren. This can mean providing advice and guidance to a young person who is starting to live independently, supporting carers, ensuring that children's mental health is safeguarded, helping a young person find a job, or listening to their hopes and dreams, problems and insecurities. There is a wide range of people and organisations who need to work together.

All members of the Corporate Parenting Board should be aware of their corporate parenting responsibilities and must:

- ✓ Have a clear understanding and awareness of the issues for cared for children and care leavers in the authority area and those placed out of area
- ✓ Champion the interests of cared for children and care leavers in all they do
- ✓ Ask questions about outcomes for cared for children and care leavers
- ✓ Communicate with cared for children and care leavers so that they can have a say in how decisions are made about the services that affect them, and so that they can influence those decisions. This may include some councillors engaging with the Listen up Group (Children in Care Council)
- ✓ Lead on securing work based training opportunities, including apprenticeships for care leavers within the Council and its partners and contractors to improve their future prospects
- ✓ Be equally mindful and responsive in their role of corporate parent to children placed out of county
- ✓ Question whether the Council, as corporate parent, is keeping the promise it has made in The Pledge
- ✓ Demand evidence of positive outcomes for Rochdale cared for children
- ✓ Ask how all elements of council business have an impact for cared for children
- ✓ Make connections and links between council plans, strategies and decision-making for cared for children
- ✓ Consistently ask "*Would this be good enough for my own child?*"

Elected Members

All Councillors 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 Lead Member for Children and Families has the lead political role in ensuring that cared for children by the local authority have their interests protected, their opportunities maximised, their

educational achievement enhanced, their voices heard and have services shaped to meet their needs. Other councillors who are members of the Corporate Parenting Board have a specific role in ensuring that corporate parenting responsibilities towards children looked after and care leavers are being fulfilled.

Help support the development of work experience opportunities for young people looked after and care leavers within their respective organisations across Rochdale, and with key partner agencies

- ✓ Help support the development of apprenticeships and employment opportunities, having a buddying system, so individual support can be given to young people
- ✓ Have a system in place to support and prioritise care leavers for housing/move-on housing in all areas
- ✓ Support/request foster carers being a priority housing group
- ✓ Provide priority access to leisure facilities to children looked after and care leavers up to the age of 25 years
- ✓ Promote fostering for Somerset at a local level
- ✓ Be champions for children looked after and care leavers at every opportunity.

All Council Services

All councillors and council officers share corporate parenting responsibilities and cannot abdicate this responsibility.

Rochdale's most important collective contribution to corporate parenting is how we as the "family firm" in all council departments, can deliver better graduate schemes, employment, apprenticeship, traineeship, and work experience opportunities for cared for children and most importantly care leavers up to the age of 25 years.

These opportunities are designed to:

- ✓ Offer care leaver graduates opportunities to work in a graduate scheme
- ✓ Help young people meet their potential and achieve their ambitions, hopes and aspirations
- ✓ Help them become confident individuals
- ✓ Give them a taste of the world of work
- ✓ Broaden their horizons from little or no experience of employment options
- ✓ Help them become economically and socially contributing citizens.

Children's Services

Corporate parenting principles will form part of the staff induction programme.

The quality of relationships that young people have with their carers and the professionals closest to them is crucial to their success whilst in, and leaving, care. Young people looked after have told us again and again about their need for good relationships that provide stability, continuity and a sense of belonging in the home and in learning, their need to be listened to and involved in decision making, and most of all their need to be parented like other children. This is the basis of our strategy.

Virtual School

The Rochdale Virtual School is responsible for providing leadership, strategic direction, good inclusion and partnership working with schools to secure successful educational outcomes for all children and young people looked after. It maintains an overview of all children looked after to ensure they can sustain a school place and has in place support designed to meet their individual needs. The relationship between being a cared for child and poor educational outcomes is explained, in part, by the trauma of pre-care experiences, such as physical or sexual abuse and neglect. In addition, many children looked after have had, gaps in their education, which can sometimes be a continuing significant factor whilst they are looked after. Cared for children are more likely to be excluded from education than their peers. The assumption that being looked after leads to poor outcomes is incorrect. Educational targets are often set too low, or are not sufficiently challenging, or the support required for a child who is not attaining educationally is not provided. Accelerated progress targets would better reflect our ambition for children looked after, accompanied by appropriate and targeted support, having proper regard to the use of the pupil premium, for each and every child and young person in our care.

Schools, Colleges and other Education Providers

Have a range of responsibilities including ensuring that every cared for child has a Personal Education Plan (PEP) and is supported to achieve. Maintaining children in school, and endeavouring to avoid exclusions is an important part of achieving this. All schools should have a designated teacher with special responsibility for cared for.

School governors have statutory responsibilities which include monitoring the progress made by cared for children. Schools must engage with the Virtual School and respect the role of the Corporate Parent.

Health Service Providers

Health partners have important responsibilities for improving the health, both physical and psychological, of all children looked after. Health assessments must be undertaken and Specialist nurses for cared for children must ensure that health plans are in place and care leavers receive their health passports.

Healthy young minds have a responsibility to ensure that the emotional well-being needs of children and young people are met.

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.

Community Organisations

There is a wide range of community organisations throughout Rochdale, who provide important services and support for cared for children and care leavers, including advice and guidance, mentoring, supported housing, leisure facilities and drug and alcohol services. These services are vital to the task of being accessible services and promoting positive outcomes for cared for children and care leavers.

5. Delivery of the Strategy

The Corporate Parent Board will agree a yearly framework for reporting into the board around the themes emerging from the needs analysis and the Listen Up Survey to ensure it has oversight on key areas of development throughout the year.

In order to achieve the strategic objectives within the strategy, a detailed action plan will be agreed by the board and the responsibility for implementing the action plan will be with the Virtual Cared for Childrens Team. The update on the action plan will be presented to the Corporate parenting board on a quarterly basis. The chair of this group will have a responsibility to raise issues by exception should the board need to be cited on any areas that arent progressing or equally anything that the board needs to celebrate in terms of achievements.

There will also be a Quality Assurance and performance management framework developed for the virtual cared for children team so there is clear evidence to support that all partners are delivering on the plan and that the service provided to children and young people is improving.

Strategic Action Plan

What Are We Going To Do	How Are We Going To Do It
<p>Participation and Engagement</p> <p>This strategic objective is a priority in order to ensure all practice and service delivery has the voice of the child central. We will develop a framework (Participation Strategy) that enables the voice of children and young people (C4C and Care leavers) to be heard in a more structured way, and develop mechanisms to feed back to young people on action taken because of what they have told us</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and young people will be consulted about their care plans and pathway plans • Children and young people will be consulted about who they want to attend their statutory reviews and will, with support from their Social worker and IRO, set the agenda for these meetings • Children and young people will be supported to chair their own meetings if they wish to • Consultation and participation for children and young people will be creative and flexible to ensure that childrens views are sought in ways that the child feels comfortable with • Feedback will be given to children and young people so that participation is meaningful and trusting relationships are built. This will be on individual levels and also wider groups

Placement Stability

One of the recommendations from the Sufficiency Statement is to make sure we have enough skilled foster care placements for children looked after, in particular more homes for children in the 11+ age range, and for sibling groups to be able to live together. Children will live in an environment where carers understand and promote their individual identity and needs through their delegated authority.

We also expect that young people leaving care will be encouraged to stay put in their foster home beyond the age of 18 and that Staying On is implemented for those children living in residential placements

- Every child and young person will have an up to date care plan which has a clear plan of permanence.
- Fostering services will undertake targeted recruitment of foster carers for older children
- Siblings will be placed together unless there is an assessment that concludes it is in the best interests not to live together or where a young person chooses not to live with siblings
- Care planning meetings will take place at regular intervals to ensure that plans are progressing for children and that support is offered to carers to help maintain placements for children
- Quality of care planning will be monitored to ensure it is robust
- Delegated authority is completed at the point of every placement being made and then reviewed every 6 months as part of the statutory review process to ensure decisions for children are made by the right person and this promotes timely decisions about the day to day arrangements for children
- Every child and young person will know

	<p>who their IRO is and the IRO will ensure that their care plan is right for their needs is up to date and reviewed regularly and achieved on time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• If any child or young person Rochdale cares for cannot return to their birth family, we will find the right caring environment, quickly for them so that they can settle, build friendships and flourish• Life story work will be a universal offer to all cared for children• Every child and young person will have access to children's rights and will know about how they can have an independent visitor, an advocate and how to make a complaint.• Every child and young person will have access to leisure facilities and other activities they identify to enable them to develop other skills and interests.• Staying put will be promoted for those children in foster placements• Staying on will be developed for children in residential placements
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Education and Opportunity

Cared for Children have the best opportunities to fulfil their potential, and that we have high aspirations for their futures, with the right support being offered, at the right time. We will encourage, enable and support care leavers to explore the education or career option best suited to their individual needs and preferences. They will receive support from their carers which allows them to test out independence and learn the skills needed to one day live independently

- Children and young people will always have a place at a good school, college or training provider.
- Children and young people will always have their own, up-to-date Personal Education Plan (PEP) and their own version dependent on their age and understanding.
- Children and young people will be encouraged to contribute to their PEP and will have their PEP explained to them so that they understand. The PEP will ensure that there is support and encouragement to ensure children and young people achieve the very best throughout school,
- All children and young people will regularly be asked about their school experience and whether they have had the support they need including someone who they can talk with about any school issues.
- Children and young people will always be able to get information, advice and guidance about all the options open to them when they leave school and then further support to start college, training or university.
- Children and young people will be kept

	<p>safe from bullying so that they can flourish at school.</p>
<p>Health of Cared for Children and Care Leavers</p> <p>We will ensure that Cared for Children and care leavers have access to good health and wellbeing services, and are enabled to become responsible for their own health and wellbeing. They will know their health history, in particular when leaving care.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When young people leave care they will have access to their personal health/medical history. • Children and young people will receive the right support to develop the skills required to access health information so that they are equipped to make informed choices about their own health. • When young people leave care they will be registered with a General Practitioner and NHS Dentist of their choice. • Young people will be consulted on their experiences in accessing health services so that they inform future Commissioning and Design of health provision.
<p><u>Independence</u></p> <p>From the age of 18 young people who are not in a foster home</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people will have an up-to-date Pathway Plan which is reviewed regularly and reflects their individual needs and

where they want to remain, will be supported to access good quality and affordable accommodation, and all care leavers successfully take up/remain in further education, apprenticeship/traineeship or employment. Pathway plans will be of a good quality and are reflective of the changing needs of young people. Plans will be creative in terms of ensuring life skills are promoted for children and young people

choices for the future.

- Young people will live in caring environments that promote their autonomy and support them to safely test out independence so that they are ready for adulthood.
- Young people will have a choice about how they move to independence, including 'staying put' when this is right for them
- Young people will have good and consistent advice about their future options for education or employment and will be supported to access those options
- If young people move or live away from Rochdale they will know how to get in touch with a worker who will continue to offer them support up to at least the age of 21.
- Every young person will be provided with advice and support around their housing pathway.
- Young people will be provided with the appropriate support to help identify the skills and support that they may need as they move towards independence.
- Children and young people will have the change to develop life skills in placements

	<p>prior to leaving care. These will be detailed in care plans and be bespoke to individual children</p>
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Appendices

Needs Analysis 2016-2017

Listen Up Survey 2015 - 2016



Care report
2016.docx

Rochdale Pledge



Pledge.docx

Terms of Reference



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Parenting Board TOR

Membership and Terms of Reference for the Virtual Cared for Team



Membership and
Terms of Reference f

