One Minute Guide

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 Corporate Parenting

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**What is it?**

When a child’s parents or family cannot provide appropriate care for them and the child becomes looked after, the local authority assumes parental responsibility for that child when a care order is made. Corporate Parenting is the term generally used to describe this legal responsibility, but the concept is wider than that; good Corporate Parenting emphasises that we should have the same interest in and aspirations for children and young people in care (or leaving care) as we would for our own children. The term corporate parenting appeared in legislation for the first time in the [Children Act 1989](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents) .

We know from national research that children and young people in care can be vulnerable to poorer outcomes than their peers. Corporate Parents champion the rights of young people in care and care leavers and support the practitioners working with those young people to help improve outcomes and ‘narrow the gap’ between young people in care, and care leavers, and their peers.

**Who are corporate parents, and what are their responsibilities?**

Everybody working with or representing the interests of looked after children and young people is a corporate parent, and should be aware of their responsibilities. In practical terms, being a corporate parent means advocating on behalf of looked after young people to ensure they get the support they need to achieve the best outcomes, and challenging any poor practice.

Corporate Parenting responsibilities are not limited to the Children’s Social Care; the whole of the local authority, as well as relevant partner agencies, have a duty to ensure that looked after children and young people and care leavers have their needs recognised and appropriately met, in a way which does not disadvantage them in relation to their non-looked after peers.

All elected members have responsibilities as corporate parents, whether they serve on the Corporate Parenting Panel (see next page) or not. These responsibilities include ensuring that the needs of looked after young people are appropriately recognised by relevant services, such as housing, as well as making representations on behalf of individual looked after young people who wish to make a complaint about the services or support they have received. Elected members are able to offer a higher level of challenge than officers, and can hold services to account for what they provide to looked after children and young people and care leavers.

**How does Corporate Parenting work in West Sussex?**

West Sussex takes its Corporate Parenting role seriously, and considers how we can best support children in care and care leavers throughout the council, for example offering work experience opportunities across a range of departments to care leavers. [The West Sussex Children Looked After and Care Leavers Strategy](http://www2.westsussex.gov.uk/ds/edd/cyp/cyp04a_17-18.pdf) outlines how we intend to meet our responsibilities, which will be delivered through the Quality Improvement Plan devised and monitored by the Multi Agency Children Looked After Improvement Group (MCLAIG), and subject to the scrutiny of The Children in Care Council and the Corporate Parenting Panel.

The Corporate Parenting Panel aims to ensure that West Sussex County Council undertakes its duties as corporate parents for all children looked after and care leavers it is responsible for, so that young people can achieve their full potential and a successful transition into adulthood.

The Panel does this by ensuring the services provided for children and young people looked after by us are of good quality and meet their needs. It works with all elected members and officers within the County Council, colleagues from partner agencies and children and young people who are looked after.

Key elements of its role are to:

•     act as advocates for children looked after and care leavers to the Leader of the County Council, the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and other cabinet members as appropriate

•     contribute to the development of the Children Looked After and Care Leavers Strategy and monitor progress against it

•     endeavour to ensure that our ‘Pledge’ to children looked after and care leavers is delivered

•     monitor the effectiveness of the Virtual School and its governing body in improving the educational attainment of children looked after and care leavers

•     raise members’ awareness and understanding of children looked after and care leavers, their needs and experiences, and consider how all members can contribute to improving results

•     to report to the County Council when appropriate and at least once a year.

The Corporate Parenting Panel has regular contact with looked after children and young people through the [Children in Care Council](https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/education-children-and-families/your-space/participate/children-in-care-council-and-care-leavers/). Members of the Panel also attend the annual EPIC awards where the achievements of looked after children and young people are celebrated, and the Foster Carer Awards.

Officers and elected members who belong to the Corporate Parenting Panel are responsible for scrutinising the services provided to looked after children and young people and care leavers, offering support and challenge to improve those services and, wherever necessary, championing their rights in other forums.

**Further information and Key Contacts**

There is more information on corporate parenting available from [the National Children’s Bureau (NCB)](https://www.ncb.org.uk/taking-it-next-level-resources) ,including a Corporate Parenting Toolkit and details of different approaches to corporate parenting across the country.

West Sussex’s Corporate Parenting Panel are has eight elected members and an employee to support the panel.

Chairperson: **Councilor Morwen Milson email:** morwen.millson@westsussex.gov.uk

**Support Officer:** Natalie Jones-Punch on 033 022 25098. Email:  natalie.jones-punch@westsussex.gov.uk

Details of the current board and meetings of recent meetings can be found [**here**](https://westsussex.moderngov.co.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=564) **.**