



Brighter Futures for Children Corporate Parenting Panel Terms of Reference

SUMMARY

This document provides details of the terms of reference for BFFC's Corporate Parenting Panel

OWNERS

Hilary Loades – Head of Service
– Corporate Parenting

VERSION

1.0

DATE

September 2023



For decision



For discussion



For information

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The function of Corporate Parenting

'Corporate Parenting' is the term used to refer to the collective responsibility of the Council and our partner agencies to provide the best possible care and protection for children and young people who are 'Looked After'; that is, children and young people for whom the authority has, or shares, parental responsibility, or for whom the Authority provides care and accommodation on behalf of their parents.

The Authority also has a duty and responsibility towards care experienced young people aged 16 to 25 years.

Reading Borough Council supports the view set out by the Department for Education regarding Corporate Parenting principles, which states:

'The role that councils play in looking after children is one of the most important things they do. Local authorities have a unique responsibility to the children they look after and their care experienced young people (relevant and former relevant children) ... and the critical question that local authorities should ask in adopting such an approach is: 'would this be good enough for my child?''

We believe that children and young people in care have the same needs – to be loved, cared for, and feel safe – as other children. We also recognise that many Children Looked After (CLA) have suffered abuse or neglect prior to coming into care and it is important that this is addressed whilst they are kept safe and their education, health and care needs are met. Children looked after and care experienced young people face unique challenges and we are committed to ensuring that our corporate parenting principles are embedded in the wider work of Reading Borough Council, so that we can work collectively to help our children looked after and our care experienced young people to address these challenges.

It is our role as corporate parents to advocate on behalf of our children looked after and our care experienced young people, and to empower them to make their own decisions in preparation for adulthood. We want all our children and young people looked after and care experienced young people to achieve their full potential and to obtain the best possible outcomes, the same outcomes that we would want for our own children.

In Reading Borough the delivery of care to children looked after and care experienced young people, is largely delegated to Children's Services functions within Brighter Futures for Children. The leadership responsibility for corporate parenting rests with the Chief Executive of the Council and as a key element of their statutory duties, the Director of Children's Services, and the Lead Member for Children. However, all elected members and council employees, regardless of the department they are employed within, share corporate parenting responsibility for Reading's children looked after and care experienced young people.

The responsibility for corporate parenting also extends to partner agencies such as Police, Housing, Health, and schools, who, through s.10 of the Children Act 2004, have a duty to co-operate with the Council in meeting the needs of cared for and care experienced children and young people. The Headteacher of the Virtual School also has a statutory responsibility to promote the education of children looked after, and children who were previously looked after.

All sections within a local authority and all elected members have a responsibility and a positive role to play in enriching the lives of children and young people who are looked after by the authority, and their care experienced young people.

As corporate parents for our children looked after and care experienced young people, we share responsibility for ensuring that all children looked after receive a good standard of care and are able to achieve the high-quality outcomes that every parent would want for their own children or children within their family¹.

The key corporate parenting principles which local authorities should have regard to when exercising their functions in relation to looked after children and young people² are captured in our corporate parenting aims. We are committed to ensuring that children looked after by Brighter Futures for Children are able to enjoy childhoods in which they are safe, well cared for and supported to achieve their full potential. In order for them to achieve this we are committed to:

- Acting in the best interests of our children and young people and promoting their physical and mental health and wellbeing.
- Encouraging our children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
- Taking children and young people's views wishes and feelings into account.
- Supporting our children and young people to access and make the best use of services provided by Brighter Futures for Children, Reading Borough Council, and our partner agencies.
- Promoting high aspirations for our children and young people and seeking to secure the best outcomes for them.
- Ensuring that our children and young people are kept safe and enabled to experience stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work.
- Preparing our children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

The role of the Corporate Parenting Panel

The Corporate Parenting Panel will take a key role in monitoring and evaluating the services provided to Reading's children and young people looked after and care experienced young people, in order to ensure that Brighter Futures for Children is, on behalf of Reading Borough Council, meeting our corporate parenting responsibilities to a high standard.

The Panel will be directed and challenged by the Children in Care Council (Care2listen), Care Ambassadors (care experienced young people), and primary school aged children looked after (Care2havefun), who represent the care experienced population of Reading, to ensure that a positive impact is made, and that service delivery is making the differences that it is designed to achieve.

The Panel will:

- Promote a strong corporate parenting ethos and consider whether, and if so how, services need to be delivered differently to meet the needs of our care population as effectively as possible.

¹ This collective responsibility is laid out in the Children Act 1989. Government guidance for Councillors, *'If this were my child'* (DfES 2003)

² Outlined in The Children and Social Work Act 2017

- At each Panel meeting the Participation Officer will support members of Care2listen to provide a summary report of the work that the Children in Care Council are undertaking, and share any comments, compliments and complaints made by children and young people in care.
- Corporate Parenting Panel will receive reports and representation from health and education colleagues who can assist the Panel in understanding the needs and experiences of children and young people in care and care experienced young people and help to promote service improvements and better outcomes for children and young people in care.
- Receive information from our Independent Reviewing Officer service to provide an insight into their knowledge of life in care for children in Reading, as well as from advocates, foster carers, social workers, volunteers, and other professionals.
- Consider key service reports that relate to our children and young people who are looked after and our care experienced young people. These will include (but will not be restricted to):
 - BFFC's annual Corporate Parenting Report
 - BFFC Voluntary Adoption Agency's annual report
 - BFFC Independent Fostering Agency's annual report
 - BFFC's Independent Reviewing Officer Service annual report
 - BFFC's annual Participation Report
 - Annual Health report
 - Annual Virtual School report.
- Ensure that a whole council approach is taken to the delivery and development of services for children and young people in care and care experienced young people.
- Celebrate the individual and collective successes of children and young people in care and care experienced young people.
- Monitor the development of, and adherence to, Brighter Futures for Children's Promises to Children and Young People in Care, and Reading's Care Experienced Young People's Charter.

The Panel will not:

- Manage work programmes or overseas specific pieces of work – acknowledging that operational management needs to be given the freedom to manage.
- Be focused on the delivery of specific services – the Panel will concentrate on 'the big picture'.
- Take responsibility for the outputs and outcomes of specific services – these are best monitored at the level of the specific organisations responsible for them.
- Be the main vehicle for the voice of looked after children and young people – this will be the responsibility of the Children in Care Council (Care2listen). The Panel will however regularly listen to and respect the views of individuals and the wider looked after children's community.

The role of our Children Looked After and Care Experienced young people who attend the Panel will:

- Represent the voices and share the views of Reading children and young people in care.
- Support and guide Panel members regarding the wishes and feelings of our children and young people in care.

- Share our young people’s views on whether, and if so how, services need to be delivered differently to meet the needs of our care population as effectively as possible. This will include (but not be restricted to):
 - Activities and initiatives being developed by the council.
 - The design and delivery of services and strategic initiatives
 - The quality of services
 - Participation
 - The celebration of success.
 - Influence the decisions of Panel

Meetings:

Structure, management, and agenda of meetings

- The Corporate Parenting Panel will meet on a quarterly basis (4x yearly).
- The Panel will be chaired by the Lead Councillor for Children or in their absence by the vice chair.
- Administration to the Panel will be provided by Reading Borough Council.
- The Panel will agree an annual work programme which will align with its key priority areas:
 - Safeguarding
 - Engaging with and listening to our children and young people who are looked after
 - Assessment and planning
 - Placements
 - Education, training, and employment
 - Health and wellbeing
 - Leisure, culture, and life skills
 - Leaving care.
- Any papers for Panel consideration will be sent out to Panel members a minimum of 5 working days before each Panel meeting.

Membership of the Corporate Parenting Panel

Membership of the Brighter Futures for Children (Reading Borough Council) Corporate Parenting Panel will include:

- Elected members
- Senior officers from Brighter Futures for Children (see below)
- Senior officers from across the wider council (see below)
- Relevant strategic and operational leads from education and health (see below)
- Representative membership from key stakeholder groups (see below)
- A representative group of the children and young people who are looked after by BFfC and of our care experienced young people

(Please see further details attached in Appendix 1)

Quoracy

- While the Panel will welcome and benefit from the attendance of representatives from a range of stakeholder groups, including children and young people who are looked after by BfFC and care experienced young people, the Board is not a decision-making body, so a minimum quorum is not required.

Conduct

- The Panel and its members will operate in accordance with the standards of behaviour and principles required of RBC employees, as set out in the council's Code of Conduct; this will apply to both councillors and any persons appointed as a co-opted member of the Panel.

Note: These Terms of Reference will be reviewed after two Panel Meetings – i.e., in December 2023 and annually thereafter

Appendix 1 – Details of Membership of the Corporate Parenting Panel

Elected Members:

- The Leader of the Council
- Elected Members / Councillors with the chair of the panel being the Lead Councillor for Children.

Senior officers from Brighter Futures for Children:

- Executive Director of Children's Services
- Director of Children's Social Care
- Head of Service, Corporate Parenting
- Head of Service, Together for Families
- Service Manager, Corporate Parenting
- Service Manager, Conferencing, Reviewing and LADO
- Brighter Futures for Children's, Children's Participation Officer
- Brighter Futures for Children's Independent Fostering Agency Registered Manager

Senior Officers from across the wider council:

- Chief Executive Officer of RBC
- Head of Service for Housing
- Assistant Director for Adults

Strategic and operational leads from education and health

- Headteacher of the Virtual School
- Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children and Looked After
- Named Nurse Child Protection, Royal Berkshire Foundation Trust


Stakeholders:

- An approved foster carer representing the Reading Carers' Link
- Representative membership from:
 - Thames Valley Police
 - Source (Drug and Alcohol Counselling Service)
 - DWP (Department of Work & Pensions)
 - Reading Leisure Services

Children Looked After and Care Experienced young people:

- A minimum of 2 and a maximum of 4 children and young people who are looked after by BFC and/or Reading care experienced young people.

○ Appendix 2 – Pro-forma for reports to the Corporate Parenting Panel



Date

○ The main things we have found.

The reason we did this report.

○ What we did to get the information in this report



○ What we have found that is working well



Finding 1

Finding 2

○ What we have found that we are worried about

Finding 1

Finding 2

○ What needs to happen to improve things - our recommendations





	What we want to achieve	Our action to achieve this	Lead	Date
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1				
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2				
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3				
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○ Other documents to read.



○ Contact details of the person who wrote this report.



Name

Position

Telephone

Email

