



CORPORATE PARENTING

A GUIDE FOR ELECTED MEMBERS

AUTUMN 2020



States of
Guernsey

FOREWORD

In Guernsey we are committed to improving outcomes for all children and our Children and Young People's Plan sets out how agencies need to work together to achieve this.

Elected members have a crucial role to play in ensuring that the needs of some of our most vulnerable children are met – those who are looked after by the States of Guernsey, or those who have left care. These children can be at risk of poorer outcomes than their peers and the States of Guernsey, as their corporate parent, has a responsibility to ensure that we have the same aspirations and interest in their progress as any parent would have for their own child.

All elected members are corporate parents, and this guide is designed to provide an overview of what this responsibility means in practice. It also suggests ways in which we can all make a difference to the lives of looked after children and care leavers, whatever your level of involvement



with Children and Family Community Services. We hope you find it helpful and can use some of the suggestions in this guide to help us continue to develop our services for those we look after.

A handwritten signature in black ink.

Deputy Al Brouard
President of the Committee
for Health & Social Care



INTRODUCTION

When a child or young person cannot live with their birth family for whatever reason and becomes looked after, parental responsibility transfers to the States of Guernsey; this is referred to as corporate parenting.

We know from extensive data and academic research that children and young people who are looked after in the care system can be at risk of poorer outcomes than their peers who are able to remain at home with their families; for example, young people who have been in care are more likely to leave school with fewer qualifications, they also have a higher risk of offending and of not being engaged in education, employment or training.

Although corporate parenting does not have a formal legal definition, it is commonly understood to mean that officers and elected members of the local authority have a responsibility to take the same interest in the progress, attainments and wellbeing of looked after children and young people as a reasonable parent could be expected to have for their own children. Corporate parenting also extends to care leavers, as the States of Guernsey retains a level of responsibility for former looked after children up to the age of twenty one, or twenty four for those in full time education.

Good corporate parenting involves championing the rights of looked after children and care leavers, and ensuring that they have access to good services and support from the States of Guernsey and partner agencies.

WHY DO ELECTED MEMBERS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT CORPORATE PARENTING?

Every elected member becomes a corporate parent as part of their role. Whilst much of the responsibility for actually delivering care for looked after children and care leavers is delegated to staff within the children's workforce, officers and staff within the States of Guernsey deliver services and support on behalf of their elected members. It is important to note that the children's workforce is not limited to professionals within the children's social work service, but applies to all members of staff who may come into contact with looked after children, including schools and healthcare practitioners.

Guernsey's Corporate Parenting Board was originally established in 2016 and brings together elected members from a number of States Committees, as well as relevant senior officers and colleagues from partner agencies. The Board provides challenge and scrutiny to ensure that everyone is collectively delivering the objectives of the corporate parenting framework. The multi-agency Corporate Parenting Group and subgroups (for Leaving Care and Educational Outcomes) have responsibility for operationalising the strategic priorities and report to the Corporate Parenting Board on a quarterly basis.

The Corporate Parenting Board works closely with the Youth Commission which has responsibility for facilitating the Shadow Corporate Parenting Board. This group is made up of children and young people who are currently looked after or who have left care and they help to advise officers and members in Guernsey about their experiences of the care system, and what is important to them in terms of improving the services they receive. The Shadow Board also responds to consultations from the Corporate Parenting Group, which is then fed back to the Corporate Parenting Board.

Whilst the Corporate Parenting Board is an appropriate forum for elected members and relevant officers from the local authority and partner agencies to come together and offer challenge and support around services for looked after children and care leavers, this is not the only way in which elected members discharge their duties as corporate parents. The following pages outline ways in which all members can be effective corporate parents, whatever their role.



WHAT CONTACT SHOULD I HAVE WITH LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS?

You can be an effective corporate parent without having to know individual looked after children and care leavers personally; in fact, personal contact on an individual basis is not generally appropriate, unless looked after children or care leavers choose to contact their deputies, as is their right as Guernsey residents.

However, some communication and contact is valuable in helping deputies to understand the

importance of the corporate parenting role, and in giving young people an opportunity to express their views and concerns directly to those with the authority to make decisions and shape policy.

The Corporate Parenting Framework 2020-2023 sets out 7 key corporate parenting principles that elected members should familiarise themselves with.



When given the opportunity to meet with young people, e.g. at the Corporate Parenting Board meetings where the Shadow Board attend, you can show your commitment to their care by prioritising attendance.

You can become involved in visits and attend events to further understand the issues that looked after children and care leavers face, and to celebrate their achievements. In addition,

there are recruitment and celebration events for foster families, to show our appreciation of all that our carers do for the most vulnerable children in Guernsey. Elected member attendance at these events can provide encouragement for looked after children, care leavers and foster families and demonstrate to them the commitment of elected members to their corporate parenting role.

IS THERE ANY TRAINING AVAILABLE?

Looked after and adopted children have usually either suffered abuse and/or neglect and they can therefore display quite difficult and challenging behaviours as they try to overcome their past experiences. The trauma they may have suffered is likely to have impacted upon them and their ability to trust others and due to this they are likely to display negative and at times, challenging behaviours either by acting out aggressively, withdrawing from others or through self-harm to name a few.

The Reparative Care Team delivers training to carers of looked after and adopted children and the professional networks around those children. Elected members are welcome to attend any of the following courses which are all two hours long:

ACEs

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) can significantly affect both physical and mental health across the lifespan. Research has shown that ACEs are relatively common and far more prevalent than we thought a decade ago. The course explores the long term effect of Adverse Childhood Experiences as well as explore the Neurosequential model of brain development as outlined by Bruce Perry (www.bdperry.com)

Developmental Trauma

When children experience early loss, separation, abuse or neglect their brain development is affected in significant ways. They often experience what is known as Developmental Trauma, which means their development has gone off track and they cannot behave, feel, relate and learn like other children their age. This course takes a deeper look at Developmental Trauma and how it can be repaired with a holistic, 'bottom up' approach; with safe and sensitive relationships.

Trauma & Behaviour

Often children who have experienced trauma can exhibit behaviours that can be frustrating and confusing for the adults caring for them. It can be helpful to think about these behaviours as symptoms of trauma and consider the ways in which the adults can work with the child to reduce these symptoms, to enable the child to engage in life and relationships and be their best selves. This workshop provides a space to think about some of those behaviours in the context of trauma and explore some potentially helpful ways to respond as the adults caring for that child.

You can book a place on these courses via My Learning. If you do not have access to My Learning, then you can make a booking by contacting the Reparative Care Team directly on **723182** or **Reparative.CareTeam@gov.gg**

WHAT CAN ALL ELECTED MEMBERS DO?

Effective corporate parenting requires that all elected members:

- Are aware of the role and its implications for discharging the States of Guernsey's legal responsibilities for looked after children and care leavers – this guide and the Corporate Parenting Framework 2020-2023 provide a good overview (gov.gg/corporateparentingframework)
- Develop knowledge and awareness of the services available for looked after children and care leavers, both across the States Committees and from relevant partner agencies
- Are advocates for looked after children and care leavers – ensuring their voices are heard, their needs are met and their achievements celebrated

- Prioritise the needs of looked after children and young people in States decision making and budget setting discussions
- Consider the potential impact of all States decisions on looked after children, foster carers and care leavers
- Ask appropriate questions of officers across the States, not just in children's services, about the quality of services provided to looked after children and young people, and ensure that any issues identified are resolved in a timely manner
- Be accessible to professionals, carers and looked after children who may wish to raise issues or concerns
- Attend and/or support foster carer recruitment and celebration events

WHAT CAN I DO AS A MEMBER OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD?

- Champion and promote the corporate parenting role across the States and with partner organisations; develop your understanding of what effective corporate parenting looks like, e.g. through reading resources on the National Children's Bureau (NCB) (<https://www.ncb.org.uk/search/node/corporate%20parenting>)

- Review and monitor the services provided to looked after children and care leavers, by receiving and analysing the quantitative and qualitative information provided to the group, and offer appropriate support and challenge where improvements could be made
- Review the work of the fostering and adoption panels

- Consider how the group can effectively engage with looked after children and young people, as well as their parents and carers, and ensure that their views are listened to and responded to
- Ensure that looked after children and young people are involved in the running of the group, and in setting the priorities and work programme; e.g. support ‘takeover’ initiatives where young people can chair group meetings
- Attend and support events and meetings which aim to improve outcomes for children and young people, and to celebrate their achievements
- Question what all States Committees are doing to support looked after children, care leavers and foster carers

WHAT CAN I DO AS A MEMBER OF SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE?

Examine the arrangements in place to support the wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers, and monitor their effectiveness; challenge and scrutinise performance, and make recommendations for improvement

Ask demanding questions of officers with responsibility for looked after children and care leaver services; seek qualitative as well as quantitative information to ensure that the experiences of looked after children are consistent with what the performance data shows, and ask questions of officers’ interpretation of the data

Ensure that issues relating to looked after children and care leavers are regularly considered at Scrutiny – prioritise any areas of particular concern, e.g. identified through inspections or reviews

Involve looked after children and young people, care leavers, parents, carers and partner agencies in the work of the Board; their direct feedback, and case studies of their experiences, should drive the work and the priorities

Ensure that the findings and recommendations of the Board have an influence on policy, and encourage the sharing and embedding of good practice

WHAT CAN I DO AS AN ELECTED MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE?

Ensure that the needs of looked after children and care leavers are prioritised; including funding discussions

Make links with other committee members to ensure issues affecting looked after children and care leavers are taken into account and prioritised in all States decision making

Ensure that the views of looked after children and care leavers are sought and used to influence service development and delivery

Be accountable for the actions, decisions and delivery of services for looked after children and care leavers

Ensure that policy or service development does not have any adverse effects on looked after children and care leavers

Ensure that departments and agencies work with each other to ensure effective integrated working for existing services and ways of working

WHAT CAN I DO AS A MEMBER OF OTHER STATES COMMITTEES?

Consider opportunities for the needs of looked after children and care leavers to be prioritised within services in your portfolio

Consider whether the decisions you take have an impact on looked after children and care leavers, and ensure appropriate steps are taken to mitigate any adverse effects

Ensure that the States considers issues affecting children holistically, particularly links between children's services, leisure, transport, housing policies and any other relevant areas of work

WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?

For information and resources about what makes a good corporate parent, please see the website of the National Children's Bureau: www.ncb.org.uk/

For more information about fostering and adoption in Guernsey, go to: www.guernseyfostercare.com/

The Children and Young People's Plan can be found here: www.gov.gg/cypp



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