

PROTOCOL

THE ROLE OF ELECTED MEMBERS IN CORPORATE PARENTING

1. Purpose of the Protocol

To provide guidance and advice to Elected Members on:

- Their role and responsibilities in relation to corporate parenting and services to children looked after and care leavers.
- How Members should contribute to effective corporate parenting and receive assurance about services to meet the needs of children looked after.

2. Introduction and Context

The voice of children looked after and care leavers should drive and influence the council's corporate parenting policies, strategies and responsibilities by being an integral part of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee's work.

The law and guidance about children looked after and care leavers is substantial and complex. Part 6 of The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 is the central part of legislation, and Section 78 identifies the duty of the Council is to safeguard and promote the welfare of each child it looks after, and every care leaver.

Children under the age of 16 may be in the Council's care by agreement of those who have parental responsibility for them, or by order of the court. Capacious children of 16 and over can be accommodated without the agreement of those who have parental responsibility for them if the Local Authority considers their well-being is likely to be seriously prejudiced if the child is not provided with accommodation. They may also be looked after by virtue of a court order. The council becomes responsible for children looked after when it is not possible or in their best interests for them to be with their family.

Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is clear that "children have the right to participate in discussions which affect their lives".

The Children's Commissioner for Wales has been clear that "Councillors, as corporate parents, have an important role to play in ensuring that every child in their Council's care receives the best care possible".

The Social Services Improvement Agency 2016: Corporate Parenting Work Book advises "You can be an effective Corporate Parent without having to know individual children looked after and care leavers personally".

Councillor's key contribution to effective corporate parenting is to work constructively and effectively with the key professionally qualified staff to:

- Make sure parental responsibilities for children looked after by the Council, are being fulfilled.

- Make sure the Council knows how well the children looked after are doing.
- Identify where things need to improve and to make a difference for good.

3. Councillors Responsibilities

To achieve effective corporate parenting requires strong political (and professional) leadership together with robust performance management arrangements. Maintaining engagement with, and the participation of children looked after in delivering relevant and dynamic services is essential.

Corporate Parenting is not the sole responsibility of the children's social work service. It is the responsibility of the whole Council, including Councillors. Statutory partners; education, health and the police have a critical role in supporting the council, and children looked after, to deliver the best possible care and support.

Whilst all Elected Members have corporate parenting responsibility, the tasks that need to be undertaken will differ according to the roles of individual councillors. Responsibilities can be summarised as follows:

- Understand why children need to be looked after, and the legal and policy framework that governs this.
- Ensuring there are sound mechanisms and arrangements within the Council for listening and responding to the views of children looked after, and care leavers.
- Have access to both qualitative and quantitative information on the children looked after service, and have sufficient knowledge and insight to understand and evaluate this information.
- Ensure there are effective governance arrangements in place.
- Understand how well the Council is doing in comparison with other Councils who have a similar demographic profile.
- Be aware of the governance arrangements for corporate parenting within the Council.
- Know the profile of the children in care of the council, and the outcomes they are achieving compared with other local children.
- Understand the Council's corporate parenting strategy and its key points.
- Take responsibility for promoting the welfare of children in care and care leavers in their work with the Council.
- Understanding what the most important issues are for children in care and care leavers.
- Influencing the Council when necessary, to review its structures and systems in order for the Council to be an effective corporate parent.
- Ensure key statutory partners are engaged in delivering effective corporate parenting.
- Listening to children looked after to understand whether their needs are being met, and where the Council is failing to meet those needs.
- Ensuring there is an action plan across the Council and partner agencies to improve the service.

4. Officer Responsibilities

The role of officers is crucial to ensure services are developed and delivered to high standards and that they inform Elected Members on the progress of delivering safe and good quality services for and to children looked after. Officers are responsible for advising the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee and ensure that agreed actions are carried out. Officers will:

- Report on the performance of services related to children in care and care leavers.
- Provide and report on key children looked after information, for example; fostering, residential, adoption, kinship, and special guardianship.
- Ensure the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee has all relevant information to ensure it is able to monitor in detail the services provided to children in care.

5. Governance and the Role of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee

The Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee through its Terms of Reference will seek to ensure the corporate parenting strategy is successfully implemented, monitored, and reviewed.

The Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee will engage with relevant Children Looked After forums.

The Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee will provide an Annual Report to the Council's Cabinet, and full Council.

The Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee will engage and develop a shared dialogue with the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee

The Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee will report to the Regional Partnership Board every six months.

Each member of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee will undertake relevant training to ensure they properly discharge their corporate parenting responsibilities. The Council will provide Corporate Parenting training for members of the Council who are not directly involved in the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee.

The Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee will focus on key performance indicators for services for children looked after, for example:

- Rate, number, and profile of Children Looked After (CLA).
- Placement profile; fostering, residential, adoption, kinship, special guardianship.
- Timeliness of Statutory Visits.
- Timeliness of Statutory Reviews.
- Health Assessments of Children Looked After.
- Education: Achievements at key stages, benchmark CLA against non CLA, Exclusions.

The Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee's priorities will be determined by the Committee's Terms of Reference.

6. Raising Concerns

This section should be read in conjunction with the - Protocol: Role of Elected Members in Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults.

If a Member is concerned that a child looked after may be at risk of harm, this should be reported immediately to:

- **Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)**
- **Out of Hours: The Emergency Duty Team (EDT)**

CONTACT DETAILS:

The Multi Agency Safeguarding Team (MASH)	029 2053 6490
Emergency Duty (out of hours) Team (EDT)	029 2078 8570
Director of Children's Services	029 2087 3803
Director of Social Services	029 2083 7601