

Corporate Parenting Fact Sheet

What is Corporate Parenting?

When a child comes into care, the council becomes the Corporate Parent. Put simply, the term 'Corporate Parent' means the collective responsibility of the council, elected members, employees and partner agencies, for providing the best possible care for the children/young people who are looked after and care leavers. A child in the care of the council or leaving care looks to the whole council to be the best parent it can be to that child/young person.

Who is a 'looked after' child?

The terms 'looked-after children' or 'children and young people in care' refer to all children under the age of 18 who are looked after by the local authority. It includes both those subject to a Care Order under section 38 and 31 of The Children Act 1989; and those looked after by a voluntary agreement with their parents under section 20 of that Act. Once they become looked-after, children may be placed by the local authority with family members, foster carers or in a residential children's home.

The purpose of 'care' is to look after children where parents are unable to do so, for a variety of reasons. These include situations where parents are abusive or cannot provide adequate care for them, or where there is no parent or relative available, such as asylum seeking children or those whose parents have died.

Who is a 'care leaver'?

A care leaver is a young person aged 16 to 21 and up to the age of 24 if they are in full time education, who has spent time looked after by the local authority as a child or young person. They may have left care before or after their 18th birthday. Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000

To be a care leaver, a young person must have been cared for by the local authority for at least 13 weeks continuously or in total since the age of 14 and at least one day following their 16th birthday. They may have lived in foster care, residential care or with family and friend carers. The care may have been formalised through a legal order such as a Care Order or through a voluntary arrangement under s20 The Children Act 1989.

Who are corporate parents, and what are their responsibilities?

Everyone 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 children and young people in care and care leavers to ensure they get the support they need to achieve the best outcomes, and challenging any poor practice.

Every good parent wants the best for their child. They want to see their child flourish with good health, to be safe and happy, to do well at school, to enjoy good relationships with their peers and to make the most of leisure opportunities, hobbies and interests. They want them to grow towards adulthood equipped to lead independent lives, to make their way as adults in higher education, in good careers and jobs and to be financially secure.

The whole of the local authority and 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 Board or not. These responsibilities include ensuring that the needs of looked after young people and care leavers 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 children and young people in care and care leavers.

Where can I find more information?

- There is more information on corporate parenting available from the National Children's Bureau (NCB) website, including a Corporate Parenting Toolkit and details of different approaches to corporate parenting across the country.
- Bury Corporate Parenting Strategy available from the corporate parenting page on the Bury Council website
- Bury Corporate Parenting Training Offer available from the corporate parenting page on the Bury Council website
- Bury Corporate Parenting Board is a Board of elected members and partner agencies who have lead responsibility for corporate parenting on behalf of the Council. If you want to know more or are interested in being involved, contact Democratic Services. 0161 253 6640