

Agenda Item	19.
Report No	CLH 17/18

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Care, Learning and Housing

Date: 30 May 2018

Report Title: **Corporate Parenting Strategy**

Report By: Director of Care and Learning

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 The report sets out the requirement for a Corporate Parenting Strategy, the commitments that the Council makes to care experienced young people and how this will be delivered and monitored. It introduces a presentation at Committee involving Who Cares? Scotland.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to agree to the strategy outlined in Appendix 1 and the methods for monitoring work undertaken to progress the outcomes for care experienced young people in Highland.

3. Background

- 3.1 Part 9 of the Children and Young People Act (Scotland) 2014 Act provides a statutory bases for the requirement to provide 'corporate parenting' by local authorities and other agencies in Scotland. Section 59 sets out the requirement to provide a 'Corporate Parenting Plan'. The Plan must be published and kept under review. There is also a requirement to report to the Scottish Government at three yearly intervals on the progress of the Plan.
- 3.2 The Plan sets out the principles and framework that the authority has in place to meet the needs of Highland's most vulnerable young people as they are being cared for by the authority, and how they are supported as they move into adulthood. This requires corporate parents to work with each other to ensure the best possible outcomes for care experienced young people.
- 3.3 Highland's Plan has been produced in consultation with our partner agencies, and is intended to work alongside the Plans of other corporate parents to deliver our responsibilities for:
- Sharing information
 - Providing advice and guidance
 - Co-ordinating activities
 - Sharing responsibility for action
 - Jointly funding activities.
- 3.4 It is intended that the Plan can be used as a point of reference for both professional staff and young people. It is for this reason that the Plan has been kept short, and is written in a style that young people can engage with.
- 3.5 The requirement to keep the Plan under review will be achieved by the Looked after Children Improvement Group and CHAMPS Board, reporting on progress on each of the corporate parenting duties. This reporting will be overseen by the Corporate Parenting Board which was approved in February this year, and is responsible to the Community Planning Partnership. This process will also ensure oversight of the requirement for different corporate parents to work together.

4. Participation

- 4.1 The CHAMPs (Children Have Amazing Minds Personalities Potential and Stories) approach that has been developed principally between the Highland Family Firm and Who Cares? Scotland, supported by a wide variety of departments and agencies, have been expanding the participation activities. This comes on the back of the development of the care experienced young person's hub at Clachnaharry Old School in Inverness, with actions to reach out across the authority.

5. Looked after children

- 5.1 The Corporate Parenting Plan is underpinned by the 'Highland Practice Model' as the framework for delivering the 'Getting it Right for Every Child' approach. The details of how the services deliver on these policies can be found at the following link:

<http://www.forhighlandschildren.org/5-practiceguidance/GIRFEC-Guidance16-Sep.pdf>

- 5.2 One of the 'For Highlands Children' improvement groups is for Looked After Children. The improvement plan is wide ranging, and driving changes to the service which will

provide for better outcomes for this vulnerable group of young people.

6. Care Leavers

- 6.1 The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 provides for additional responsibilities for corporate parents to strengthen the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. These responsibilities are provided in partnership with other departments and third sector agencies. Aftercare responsibilities in Highland are addressed by Barnardo's Springboard. Inclusion and participation activities are organised in conjunction with Who Cares? Scotland, and employment opportunities are developed through the Highland Family Firm and Highland Council's Welfare Team.
- 6.2 Care leavers are entitled to different levels of support, depending on the care experience that they have received. The Council has specific duties regarding those that have been looked after and accommodated for a period of time and at their sixteenth birthday.

7. Implications

- 7.1 Resource
The Plan does not directly result in any new resource implications. Services are provided within existing budgets, and there is a major programme for new activity for looked after children.
- 7.2 Legal
The Plan provides a strategic vehicle to deliver on statutory duties towards care experienced young people.
- 7.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural)
Care experienced young people are likely to have experienced significant challenges in childhood and early adulthood. The Plan seeks to ensure that they are given support and the opportunity to raise issues.
- 7.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever
No implications were identified.
- 7.5 Risk
No new risks were identified.
- 7.6 Gaelic
It should be noted that Bòrd na Gàidhlig has developed its own Corporate Parenting Plan, at <http://www.gaidhlig.scot/bord/corporate/corporate-policies/>

Designation: Director of Care and Learning

Date: 21 May 2018

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Highland

Corporate Parenting Plan

2018-20

What is Corporate Parenting?

Corporate Parenting is about certain organisations listening to the needs, fears and wishes of children and young people, and being proactive and determined in their collective efforts to meet them (Scottish Government, 2015).

Who does Corporate Parenting apply to?

Corporate Parenting responsibilities' extend to all looked after children, aged from birth to when they cease to be looked after. This includes children in foster care, residential care, secure care, 'looked after at home' (on Compulsory Supervision Orders with no condition of residence) and those in formal kinship care.

Corporate Parenting responsibilities also apply to care leavers who were looked after on their 16th birthday (or subsequently); the responsibilities continue to apply until the care leaver reaches their 26th birthday.

How should Corporate Parents support children and young people?

Every Corporate Parent is expected to fulfil the Corporate Parenting duties in their own way, consistent with their own purpose and functions. These duties include:

- Being alert to matters which adversely affect the wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers;
- Assessing the needs of those children and young people for the services and support they provide;
- Promoting the interests of those children and young people;
- Seeking to provide opportunities which will promote the wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers;
- Taking action to help children and young people access such opportunities and make use of the services and support provided.

Highland Council has committed to implementing For Highlands Children 4, the Highland Practice model and the Scottish Care Leavers Covenant. These policies provide a framework for ensuring that the aspirations of our young people can become achievable.

So what does this mean for care experienced young people and care leavers in Highland?

Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC)

GIRFEC is the national approach in Scotland to improving outcomes and supporting the wellbeing of our children and young people by offering the right help at the right time from the right people. It supports them and their parent(s) to work in partnership with the services that can help them.

This is what all councils in Scotland are committed to working towards. Highland Council's Corporate Parenting Plan explains how they will ensure that all council staff and our partners will work with care experienced young people to improve their opportunities and achievements.

What does "For Highlands Children 4" say?

The Vision

All Highlands Children have the best possible start in life; enjoy being young; and are supported to develop as confident, capable and resilient, to fully maximise their potential.

The Themes

An improvement framework has been developed which details how services in Highland will be maintained, strengthened and developed to ensure that all of Highland's children are: Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included.

Key Outcomes

The achievement of better outcomes for Highlands's children, their families and the communities in which they live is the overarching objective for children's services. The fourteen outcomes detailed in FHC4 are centred around the wellbeing indicators.

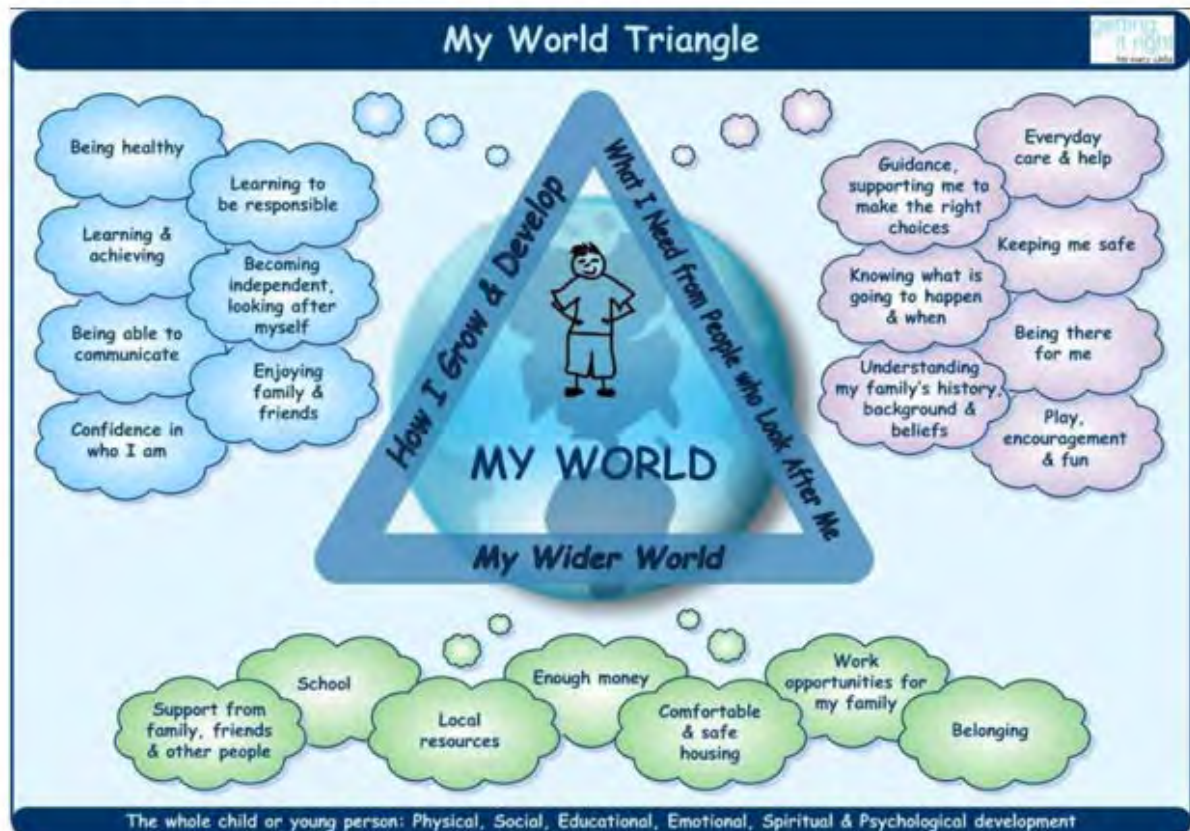
Improvement Planning

Each improvement group and operational team has an improvement plan with a common format. The plans show all current improvement priorities centred on the Key outcomes. The plans are dynamic and monitored and updated regularly. Each plan is formally evaluated on an annual basis. Current improvement plans for each improvement group are maintained on the For Highlands Children Website.

Performance Management

The plan provides a performance framework for planning. The framework articulates the mechanism agreed for evaluating and measuring outcomes, responsibilities and timescales.

GIRFEC: My World Triangle



The GIRFEC: My World Triangle illustrates the many areas of a young person's life that they may need support with. For Care Experienced young people they may not have the same help from families and friends that other young people have and therefore they may rely on the support of Corporate Parents to make up for this.

The law sets out a list of organisations that have Corporate Parenting responsibilities and it covers most local council and government services. While it is clear different organisations will do this differently they will all be contributing towards the duties listed in "How should Corporate Parents support children and young people" on page 1.

All of the commitments that are included in these laws are in agreement with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Who & Where are our Care Experienced Young People in Highland?



- **No. of children & young people looked after = 510**
- **No. of children & young people looked after at home = 148**
- **No. of children & young people looked after & accommodated away from home = 362**

January 2018

Looked After Children Improvement Group

This group is responsible for ensuring that looked after children in Highland are being well cared for and that their views and needs are being supported. There are clear targets set out to make sure that we are always striving to improve the support we provide and recognise the changing needs of care experienced young people. Here are some of the ways that this group are improving the lives of looked after children in Highland:

- Improving the quality of Child's Plans and consulting with care experienced young people on their views by using the viewpoint program.
- Developing new residential resources to prevent young people having to be placed away from Highland. This is to make sure that young people can live near their friends and families and where possible to keep their connections with their schools and communities.
- Develop a wider variety of placement options to better ensure young people can remain in Highland and have their needs met.
- Create services that can provide help and support earlier and within your own community. This will enable more young people to remain at home with their families and receive better help suited to their needs.
- Improve the access to CAMHs support and develop a more rounded approach to mental wellbeing.
- Achieve better education results by increasing the support available and reducing time out of school. We also want to create an education pathway to make the move between placements as smooth as possible.
- Reduce the number of placement moves particularly in foster care and speed up the long term planning for young people in foster care.
- Develop improved support for foster care and increase the number of placements for teenagers. This will enable more vulnerable young people to live in a family setting.
- Develop the Family Firm and increase the positive destinations for care experienced school leavers and the social networking opportunities to improve their quality of life.

Care Leavers

Highland Council signed up to the Care Leavers Covenant on the 30th June 2016. In doing this Highland Council has agreed to the following principles:

1. Care-proofing of policy: Corporate Parents recognise the vulnerability of care leavers as young adults, and prioritise and reference them in policy documents. Given the inequalities in opportunity encountered by care leavers, Corporate Parents will treat them as a 'protected group' with the potential impact of changes to policy measured through Equality Impact Assessments.

2. Assumption of entitlement: Corporate Parents will assume all care leavers are entitled to services, support and opportunities, up to their 26th birthday. Where discretion exists in definitions of vulnerability, or in giving priority access, these will be in favour of care leavers. This includes access to bursaries and grants; access to employment or training support and provisions; housing and accommodation options; health services; leisure, cultural and recreational opportunities with access to 'second-chance' opportunities.

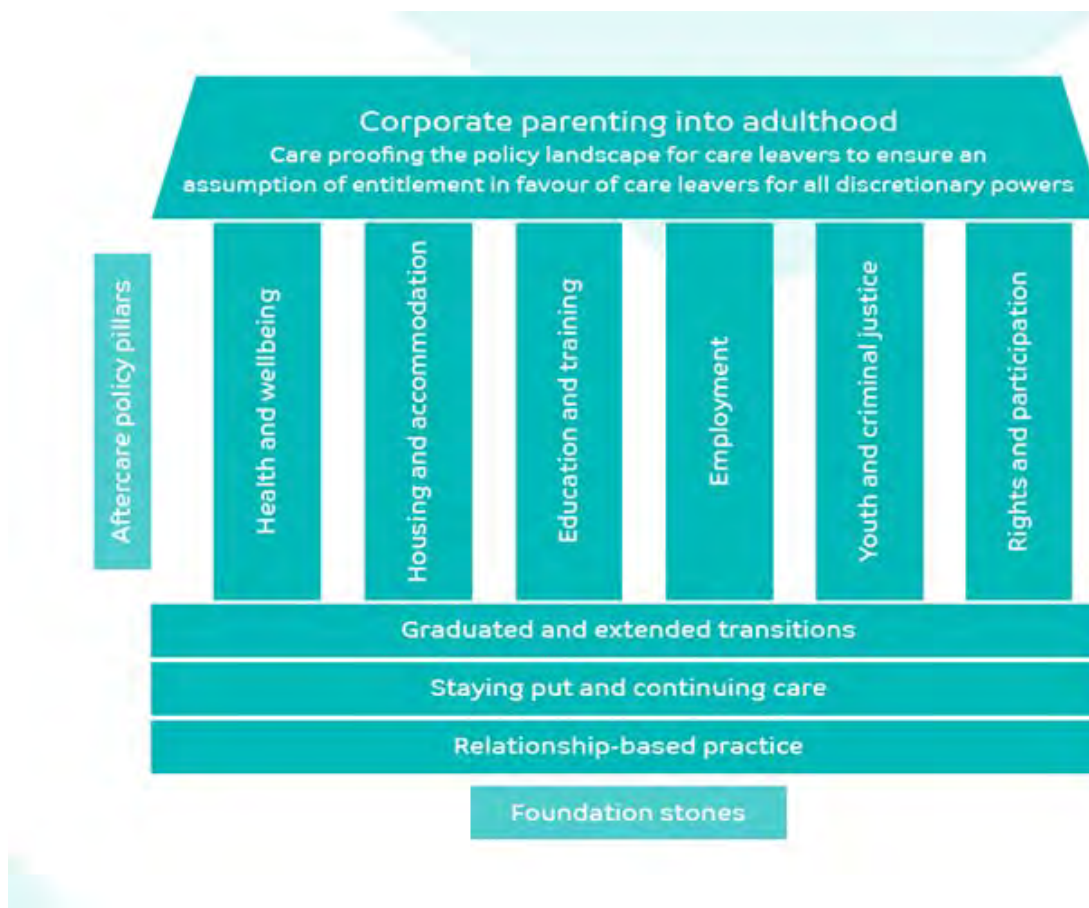
3. Staying Put and Continuing Care: Corporate Parents will demonstrate that looked after young people and care leavers are actively encouraged, enabled and empowered to benefit from 'Staying Put' arrangements, remaining in positive care settings until they are ready to move on. Transitions will be based on an individual's needs and stage of development rather than chronological triggers and bureaucratic thresholds.

4. Relationships are the 'golden thread' of good practice. Corporate Parents will demonstrate that priority is given to relationship-based practice, based on understanding, empathy, respect, and 'stickability'. They will do this by minimising staffing changes and promoting consistency in workers, considering changes to services based on individual need rather than age. They will support young people to maintain positive relationships and attachments with previous carers and professionals throughout their care experience and beyond.

Support for Care Leavers

Care leavers are being supported through the Highland Council's Aftercare service which is provided by Barnardo's Springboard. The Barnardo's workers are the main support for young people who have left care and known as 'lead professionals'. While it is not compulsory to accept this help it is the best way for young people to receive support with finances, housing and accessing employment opportunities.

The Family Firm works closely with Barnardo's and can offer help with employment or training opportunities, social activities and giving care experienced young people the chance to have a say in how things are done. This can help people change the way they work to make it easier for you and other care experienced young people or enable you to access things that you may not be able to if they are too expensive. Examples of this are the successes of the CHAMPs Board work e.g. cheaper bus fares and leisure facilities.



The Care Leavers Covenant sets out key themes:

The Covenant outlines key actions for each of the themes and the anticipated outcomes from them. This strategy sets out how Highland Council will work towards achieving these positive aspirations for our care experienced young people.

In order to ensure that care leavers and Corporate Parents are working together the Council's After Care Service will ensure that 'Pathway plans' are made to set out how the needs of young people can be met as they leave care.

Pathway plans are designed to help care leavers to identify what it is that they need support with as they leave care and what aspirations they have for the future. These plans will then help Corporate Parents to work out who is best placed to support you through these changes and ensure you have every opportunity to reach your potential and aspirations in life.

The commitments that Highland Council is making towards its care experienced young people can best be explained using the SHANARI wellbeing indicators.

Safe

Highland Council is committed to ensuring that care experienced young people are able to live their lives feeling safe and free from harm and neglect.

Healthy

Care experienced young people will be able to access the services that the Highland Council provide to enhance your health and wellbeing. You will also be supported to engage with other services to ensure all your health needs are met. This will include opportunities to improve your health and general feeling of wellbeing.

Achieving

Care experienced young people will be offered opportunities and supported to learn and develop knowledge and skills which will enhance your life. This will include the chance to study, work and develop personal interests and activities.

Nurtured

Workers who are involved with care experienced young people will ensure that appropriate relationships are developed to create a caring and supportive experience. It will be important to consider wider social and supportive networks for young people.

Active

The Highland Council will promote and provide opportunities for care experienced young people to take part in play, recreation and sport.

Respected

Care experienced young people will be listened to and enabled to take part in the decisions that are made which affect their lives. They will also be supported to set out their own aspirations for themselves.

Responsible

Care experienced young people will be given opportunities to take responsibility for their own lives and decisions. This will reflect their age and abilities but should always aim to enhance young people's ability to be independent.

Included

Care experienced young people will be helped to overcome social, educational, physical, economical inequalities and being accepted as part of the community in which they live.

How will we make sure that Highland Council lives up to these commitments?

- A steering group will be tasked to take these forward as part of the CHAMPS board program. This group will be made up of care experienced young people and a number of professionals working in Partnership.
- The Steering group will report to the Corporate Parenting Board at its quarterly meetings to ensure it is focussed on the commitments made in this strategy and that the Council are supporting the strategy as much as possible.
- The LAC improvement group will also report to the Corporate Parenting Board on the ongoing progress of its actions for improving outcomes for looked after children.
- There is a requirement in the legislation that Corporate Parents much work together to ensure the best for care experienced young people and it is the role of the Corporate Parenting Board to make sure that this happens.

This strategy will be reviewed and reported on to the Scottish Government every 3 years and will include details of what has been achieved.