

## What Makes The Difference? TOOLS and RESOURCES

**Name of tool/resource:**

Corporate Parenting Strategy

**Name and region of agency/organisation that developed this tool/resource:**

Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council

**Purpose and brief description of tool/resource:**

Policy and strategy for children and young people in care – outline of services and entitlements.

Contains the following sections:

Who are Corporate Parents?

What is Corporate Parenting?

The Law and policy

Aim of the strategy

Principles of the Strategy

Children and Young People's views on the policy

Research

CP Circle

Working Together

Education

Leisure, Socialising and Hobbies

Employment, Training, College and University

Health

Your views and involvement

People who work with you (carers

Staying Put and Moving On

We All Count

Transport and Getting Around

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**Evidence for the effectiveness/ impact of this tool/resource**

**Positive impact of**

1. Unknown

**this tool/resource:**

2.

3.

# CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY



Children and Young People's Strategy

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## Corporate Parenting

### Who are Corporate Parents?

Everyone who works for the Council is a Corporate Parent to children and young people who are in care. This is not just people you see every day such as Foster Carers, Residential Workers, Teachers and Social Workers. Corporate Parents are also people who you never see who work for the Council. This includes Councillors (Elected members) and all the big bosses who make important decisions about Doncaster.

### But What is Corporate Parenting?

When children are in the care of Doncaster Council, the Government says that all the people who work for the Council, must look after you, and care for you as well as they would care for their own children. This means they must:



- Give you a safe and comfortable home
- Make sure you go to a school, which suits your needs, if you are of school age.
- Make sure you are safe and feel happy.
- Listen to you and make sure you know how and where to complain if you are not happy.
- Help you get ready to live as an adult, with all the knowledge, skills and support you will need.
- Make sure you feel part of the local community and make friends.

**Corporate Parenting is being a good parent to children and young people in care, so that they grow up happy and are able to make a success of their life.**

## The Law



### **What Does the Law and Government say about Corporate Parenting?**

The Children Act 1989 says that Housing, Education and Health Authorities must help Social Services to Corporate Parent the children in their care.

### **'Every Child Matters'**

The Government has just brought out a Green Paper called 'Every Child Matters' which sets out what the Government thinks will help local Councils to improve the lives of all children including looked after children and young people.

### **Quality Protects**

In 1998 the Government brought out 'Quality Protects', which is a programme to improve services for vulnerable children and young people. The Government gave local Councils money and training to help them improve the lives of looked after children and young people and care leavers.

### **The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**

All children and young people in this country have human rights, which means that they must be treated fairly and with respect and care. In Doncaster, the Children's Rights Service helps looked after children and young people to make complaints if they are unhappy or to tell the Council things that they think are good. This service helps to make sure that your rights as a child are always respected by the Corporate Parents.

## 2. AIM OF THE STRATEGY

### **Doncaster Councils Aim for Looked After Children and Young People**

#### **What does this Strategy Mean?**

This Strategy hopes to spread the word around the Council that everyone who works there has to help in any way they can. All the different laws and guidance from the Government is written in the Strategy to help the Corporate Parents understand what they have to do for you. **What ever you want from life, we want to help you reach your goals.**

#### **What Difference Will it Make to Me?**

The Strategy will bring together different departments of the Council, and the Health Authority and other people and organisations who work with you. Together, they can make changes in the system or improve services so that the needs and wishes of children and young people in Doncaster are better met. This Strategy is a way to make people listen to your experiences and plan ways to make life better for you. This could make a difference at school, at home, or in your spare time.



#### **Principles of the Strategy**

Here is a list of what we would like everyone in the Council to think about when they read this strategy and make decisions that affect your life. These are very important principles.

- ❖ **Treat looked after children and young people as well as you would treat your own children.**

- ❖ Children and young people who are looked after deserve a good life and a happy childhood.
- ❖ The views, ideas and wishes of children and young people are important and should be listened to.
- ❖ Corporate Parents should think about looked after children and young people when they make decisions and plans about the people of Doncaster.
- ❖ Young people, who have been in care, still need help and support after they are 18 years old.
- ❖ Corporate Parents should help all Council Workers to understand how things are for children in care and stand up for them.
- ❖ Corporate Parents should believe in children and young people and encourage them to do their best.
- ❖ All children and young people should be allowed to be different and individual, Corporate Parents must respect this.
- ❖ Looked after children and young people should be encouraged to say what they like and what they don't like without being worried.
- ❖ Many things in the Council and Health Authorities need to change to make life better for children and young people and care leavers.



## 3 YOUR VIEWS

### Children and Young People

**How can I say what I think Corporate Parents should do?**

Some children and young people, say what they think at:

- ❖ **SORTED** events: SORTED stands for **Standards, Rights, Training, Education and Decisions**. Children and young people and many different Corporate Parents including Councillors, come together and talk and have fun.
- ❖ **Listening to Children Group** is where children and young people talk with Councillors and Officers from Social Services.
- ❖ **Children's Rights Service** helps you to sort out problems or make good decisions about your life. Children can also write articles for the Children's Rights Newsletter.
- ❖ The **Corporate Parenting Focus Group** met in November and asked a group of young people what they thought were important issues about being in care, and what the Council could do to make life better.

**You have already told us that the 4 most important standards you think the Council should meet, they are:**

- ❖ **Having Your Say:** your own ideas and opinions will always be taken into account.
- ❖ **Keeping in Touch:** we will keep you in touch with any changes that affect you.
- ❖ **Stability:** we will do our best to provide you with a settled home.
- ❖ **A Right to Complain:** nothing will be held against you if you make a complaint.

## The Corporate Parenting Circle

**How will we make sure that the Corporate Parents, keep working hard to make things better for us?**

There will be a Corporate Parenting Circle (a group of people), which will meet four times a year, to talk about how well this Strategy is working. People from across the Council including Housing, Education, Youth Service, Leisure and Councillors will be in the 'Circle'. **Children and young people who have experienced the care system are the most important members of the Corporate Parenting Circle.** They have an important role in helping the Corporate Parents to do their work as best they can. The Circle will look at all the plans made in the Strategy and see if we are doing a good job or what we need to work harder at.

## Research

The Children's Rights Service send out questionnaires a couple of times a year to all looked after children and young people. These ask you questions about your placement and the people who work with you. The most important thing they ask, is are you happy and have people who work with you listened to you. You never have to write your name on the research.



These questionnaires are very important. They are your chance to tell the Council what you think so that we can make things better if you are unhappy. If you don't tell us, we won't know. We also want to know what the Council is doing well at, so that we can build on this.

## 4. MAKING LIFE BETTER

### All Working Together

The Government believes that the Council should work together with Health and other agencies to provide better services for children; especially children and young people in care and care leavers.

#### What we Would Like to Improve.....

#### ALL WORKING TOGETHER

Make sure that everyone in the Council and Health are working together as good Corporate Parents.

#### What Corporate Parents Will Do.....

- ❖ Corporate Parenting Circle
- ❖ Training for all Staff in Education, Health and Social Services.
- ❖ Corporate Parenting included in 'Big Bosses' meetings.
- ❖ Everyone in Council involved with SORTED event.
- ❖ Corporate Parenting Course offered to everyone in Council.
- ❖ More Council Workers attending Total Respect Course (which is run by young people who were looked after or who have left care.)



## Education

There is a difference between how well looked after children and young people do at school, compared to all children and young people. Some of the reasons for this are that children are moved around placements and have to move schools more often. The Government wants this to be improved. **Children who are looked after are just as able as any other children,** sometimes they just need more help, more stability and people around them who understand how they feel. There is already a plan in Doncaster to improve the education of looked after children and young people, it is called the Strategic Plan for Raising the Attainment of Children in Public Care.



### What we Would Like to Improve.....

#### EDUCATION

**Make sure that looked after children and young people do just as well in school as all children and young people.**

### What Corporate Parents Will Do.....

- ❖ All staff in schools will have training about looked after children and young people and how they can best help you.
- ❖ Make sure that children and young people can get straight into a new school, even if that school is full.
- ❖ Fewer school changes.
- ❖ Make sure children and young people have extra support if they need it and want it.

## Leisure, Socialising and Hobbies

We want to make sure that children and young people can take



part in activities, hobbies and leisure the same as any other child would. If children have something to do, and are encouraged to join in activities, it helps them to feel good about themselves. Some children and young people who are looked after said that they want to meet up with friends they lived with in

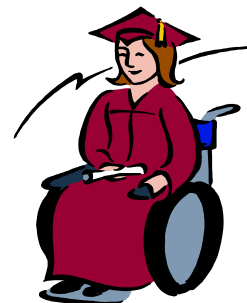
different foster homes or childcare units. Different departments in the Council need to work together to provide you with somewhere to meet and interesting stuff to do when you get there.

The Council needs to improve travel arrangements so that you can get around, stay after school for activities and see people who are important to you.

| What we Would Like to Improve.....  | What Corporate Parents Will Do.....  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>LEISURE, SOCIALISING AND HOBBIES</b></p> <p><b>Ensure that looked after children and young people and Care Leavers are encouraged to enjoy hobbies, after school activities and leisure activities.</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Free passes for use at all Doncaster's Leisure Centres.</li> <li>❖ Youth worker home visits for those young people who need or are interested in this service.</li> <li>❖ Partnerships between Leisure, Youth Service and Connexions and Social Services to organise activities in holidays.</li> <li>❖ Social groups for children and young people and Care Leavers</li> </ul> |

## Employment, Training, College and University

We want to make sure that all children have opportunities to reach their goals, what ever they are. This may mean carrying on at school after 16, or getting a job in an area of interest, and perhaps training in that area.



Some Care Leavers may wish to go to College and University and the Council wants the professionals in Colleges and Universities to give you more help, and show you what it's like so that you are interested. The Teenagers to Work Scheme may give some young people the chance to have work experience in the Council, to give you the skills you need for training or employment.

| What we Would Like to Improve.....   | What Corporate Parents Will Do.....   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING, COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY.</b></p> <p><b>Ensure that all young people are supported and encouraged to go onto training, employment and education after they leave school.</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Teenagers to Work Scheme</li> <li>❖ Better support for young parents</li> <li>❖ Work hard with young people who may be offending</li> <li>❖ Children and young people in care are a top priority for Connexions Service</li> <li>❖ Close work with further and higher education (college and university) to encourage children and young people</li> </ul> |

## Health

Some of you may have a **Personal Health Plan**, which helps to make sure that all your health needs are met especially when you change placement or school. Doncaster Council wants all children and young people to have a personal health plan in the next year. The Government believes that raising the standards of health for children and young people who are looked after is very important.



We also want to make sure that only the people who need to know personal things about you, share information and that children and young people are involved in their personal health plans. Sometimes it might be hard to register with a doctor or dentist and the Health Service will try to make this better

**What we Would Like to Improve.....**

**HEALTH**

**Raise the level of health for children and young people and care leavers, making sure they have a doctor, dentist and are given up to date information about all health services in their local area.**

**What Corporate Parents Will Do.....**

- ❖ A health team especially for looked after children and young people.
- ❖ Training for Carers about sex education and drugs
- ❖ More joint working between education, social services and health services.
- ❖ All children to have a personal health plan.
- ❖ All children registered with a doctor and dentist.
- ❖ More supportive help for children and young people with emotional and behavioural needs.

**Your Views and Involvement**

You know more than anyone what it's like to be in care. Young people are already involved in **Total Respect Training** for Councillors and Council Workers, (the young people train the adults about listening to children). Young people think that they should help to train Foster Carers, Residential Workers, Link Workers and Social Workers. This Strategy agrees. Also, we want all Corporate Parents to be involved with the SORTED events, so that they can make plans in their departments about how they can help you.



**What we Would Like to Improve.....**

**What Corporate Parents Will Do.....**

- ❖ Listening to Children Group

**YOUR VIEWS AND INVOLVEMENT**

**Make sure that children and young people are involved in the decisions made about their lives and people who work with children and young people understand what it is like to be looked after.**

- ❖ continued
- ❖ Whole Council involved with SORTED events
- ❖ More young people trained for Total Respect.
- ❖ Children and young people encouraged more to make their views known at reviews.
- ❖ Children and young people working on interview panels and training courses for Foster Cares and other adults who work with them.

**People Who Work With You**

It is really important that the Council helps, trains and supports Foster Carers so that they can help you. In Doncaster we need more Foster Carers to do this very important job, so Corporate parents who work in the community need to work closely with different community groups to tell them how wonderful it is to care for children, and sometimes how hard it can be. The Council has to make sure that Corporate Parents support Foster Carers properly and make sure that they know about all the help they can get and all the different services in Doncaster they can use.



**What we Would Like to Improve.....**

**What Corporate Parents Will Do.....**

**PEOPLE WHO WORK**

- ❖ Community Involvement
- ❖ More Foster Carers

## WITH YOU

Improve the way we support Foster Carers and provide training for all staff that work with children and young people.  
Involve the community with looked after children and young people, so they can help.

- ❖ Better Training, Support and more help with money for Foster Carers.
- ❖ Celebrate good Foster Carers more.
- ❖ Good information to reach all Carers.
- ❖ More: Independent Visitors, Mentors, and Supported Lodgings Providers.

## Staying Put and Moving On

You have told us many times that you would like to move around less, and have longer to get to know new Carers before you move. This message is clear and the Strategy hopes to support work that is going on in social services to make this better. When children and young people are settled, they can work harder at school, make friends in the community and join in local activities.



Care leavers often live alone before their friends who are not in care. They need lots of support, help and advice, but they also need practical skills training such as cooking, washing, managing money and bills. It is hard for any young person to live alone the first time.

At the moment, Doncaster does not have enough safe, affordable flats for care leavers.

| What we Would Like to Improve.....  | What Corporate Parents Will Do.....   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>STAYING PUT AND MOVING ON</b></p> <p>Make sure that children and young people move placement less and are asked what they want.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Make sure that less children move home</li> <li>❖ Children and young peoples' views given more importance in reviews</li> <li>❖ All children have proper luggage and bags they need</li> <li>❖ Accommodation Panel for care leavers to listen to their views</li> <li>❖ Unit especially for over 16s to teach them how to live on their own</li> </ul> |

### We All Count

Corporate Parents have to make sure that all children are encouraged and supported to reach their goals and enjoy a good and happy childhood. We need to make sure we look after children living out of Doncaster and children who may need more help and support due to learning difficulties or disabilities. Corporate Parents must do their best for children from a variety of cultures and who speak a variety of languages, or practice different religions. Every one is important! We must also ensure that children and young people feel confident about themselves and are encourage to express themselves.



| What we Would Like to Improve..... | What Corporate Parents Will Do.....  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <p><b>WE ALL COUNT</b></p>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Training for workers and Carers in communication</li> </ul> |

**Make sure that all children are encouraged and supported to reach their goals.**

- ❖ methods for children with special needs
- ❖ Council to investigate travel issues for children with disabilities.
- ❖ Joint working between education and social services to ensure children with disabilities are provided with transport for school and respite care.
- ❖ Children's Disability register
- ❖ Training for staff around how to care for children from a variety of backgrounds
- ❖ Wider community involvement.

## Transport and Getting Around

We want to make sure that problems with transport and getting around do not stop you from getting to school, or attending hobbies and leisure interests. The children and young people who we asked, said that they don't like the yellow Council buses and want us to get rid of them. Many children and young people have to rely on taxis, which can sometimes be late, or hard to find for children with disabilities. The whole Council needs to work together to improve this.



**What we Would Like to Improve.....**

**TRANSPORT AND GETTING AROUND**

**What Corporate Parents Will Do.....**

- ❖ Whole Council work on transport.
- ❖ Joint working between education and social services

Improve transport for children and young people so that they can get to school on time, attend activities and see people who are important to them

- ❖
- ❖

transport.

Get rid of the Yellow Buses

Review of bus pass scheme