

# Corporate Parenting

**5** Minute Facts

## What is it?

**Research shows us that children achieve more when they have at least one dynamic adult in their life, an adult who is interested in them and promotes their personal growth and development. Children coming into care have often been raised within neglectful familial situations, therefore missing out on this type of encouragement. As a consequence we know that looked after children can (as a group) have poorer outcomes in both childhood and adulthood than their non-looked after friends. This is often called 'the achievement gap'.**

When a child becomes looked after, their local authority will assume joint or complete parental responsibility and begin the task of becoming that dynamic 'Corporate' parent.

### Who are the Corporate Parents?

Children's services front line staff will be aware of the Corporate Parenting responsibilities contained within their day to day work. However ultimately it is the whole of the local authority and its elected council members that hold legal responsibility to ensure the child is well cared for. In a letter sent to councillors in 1998, the Minister for Health addressed the achievement gap and reminded them of their responsibilities to close it. The letter encouraged local councillors to have the "same interest in and the same aspirations for looked after children as they would for their own children". This statutory responsibility on local authorities (and their partner agencies) to collectively promote good outcomes for looked after children is called 'Corporate Parenting'.

### Organising the Corporate Parent

Many parents discover how difficult it can be to raise children. Permanently checking children's health, their education and welfare and then seeking out opportunities which maximise their abilities, can be a complex and tiring task, requiring planning and organisation. For local authorities with hundreds of children to parent this task can often seem daunting.

Corporate Parenting responsibilities may involve many people, children's carers, staff from social care, from schools and education providers, from housing departments and many others. In Bolton the organisation and planning is coordinated through individual care plans and personal education plans (PEPs). The multi-agency 'Corporate Parenting Board' which is made up of senior officers from across council, health and education services oversee these systems seeking continuous improvement. The members of the board ask the questions, 'how are our children doing and how can we help them improve'

In Bolton the Corporate Parenting Board gets help in their work by asking for the views and experiences of young people themselves. The Voice4U groups consist of looked after young people of differing ages and situations. Young people have reserved seats at board meetings, reporting not only their own experiences but also, through consultation, on those of other young people we care for.

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## What does the law say about Corporate Parenting?

The term 'Corporate Parenting' first appeared in the Children's Act 1989, although it has been used in legal and government guidance documents that have been published since such as 'If this were my child'. Forthcoming amendments to the 1989 Act (due in 2017) will add clarity to the term and place additional parenting responsibilities on local authorities. Guidance documents are published regularly by government departments. Ofsted inspections also check that we are doing our job well.

## What do good corporate parents do?

Good Corporate Parents will champion the rights of the young people in care to achieve to the best of their ability. Through the Corporate Parenting Board the local authority will seek to ensure that all services offer maximum support to the children we care for and importantly be a 'critical friend' to our front line staff – always checking that services are doing all they can to 'narrow the achievement gap' between young people in care and their peers.

## Further reading

- [If this was my child](#) - A councillor's guide to being a good Corporate Parent
- [Letter](#) from Edward Timpson to Local Authority Lead Councillors 2013

## Key contacts and for more information...

- Lead member for Children's Services, Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board
- Corporate Children's Officer **01204 334078**

Contact Bolton Safeguarding Children Board at [www.boltonsafeguardingchildren.org.uk](http://www.boltonsafeguardingchildren.org.uk)

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