



Telford & Wrekin
Co-operative Council

Protect, care and invest
to create a better borough



Our promise to you

Corporate Parenting Strategy
2022 - 2025



The Promise

Being an individual

Believe in and trust you - celebrating all you have to offer and all that you achieve.

Give you fair boundaries.



Respect and value

Treat you with respect and support your individual identity.

Work with you to consider your choices and options.



Hearing your voice

Listen to your thoughts, wishes and feelings.

Put your needs and feelings at the heart of decisions.



Being safe and healthy

Make sure you have a good carer where you feel part of the family.

Make sure you have access to health services and guidance, including mental health support.



Developing your independence

Help you develop the skills needed to look after yourself.

Help you follow the pathway right for you and provide access to appropriate accommodation.



Fulfilling your ambitions

Ensure there are no barriers to you achieving your dreams and ambitions.

Offer you opportunities to enrich your education through extracurricular opportunities.



Support you to build strong relationships with people that are important to you.

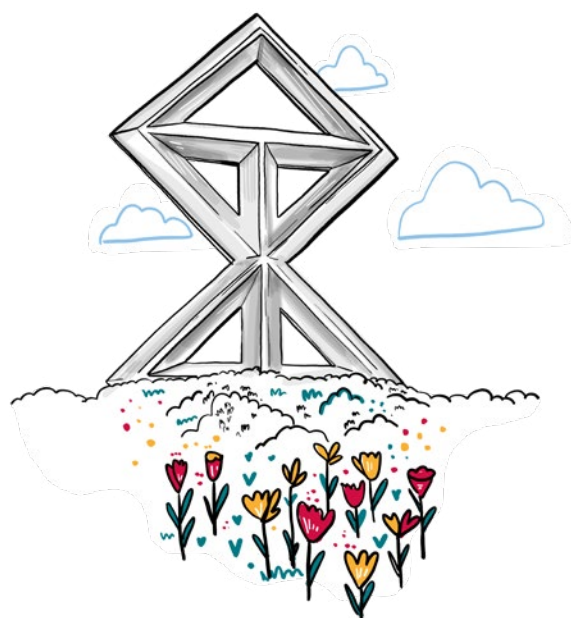
Provide easy access to impartial information, advice and guidance

Building strong relationships



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INTRODUCTION

We are passionate about doing everything we can to make sure children we care for and care leavers are set up for life. We hold high aspirations for you, strongly advocate on your behalf and will be your champions.

We are your corporate parents and therefore responsible for you. We care for you and importantly we really care about you.

Corporate Parents

People who work for the council are Corporate Parents for children cared for and care leavers. This includes foster parents, residential carers, social workers, members of the virtual school and the people who are 'in charge' including the Director for Children Services and the Elected Cabinet Member for Children and Young People. There are many others and these are just some examples of the people you are most likely to be with. If you are speaking to someone and you want to know if they are your corporate parent please ask them and they will tell you. Corporate parents treat you with respect, kindness and act only in your best interests.

We also work closely with partners in schools, the police and people in the health service who embrace an Extended Corporate Parenting Role. In short, every adult that works with you is committed to being effective, caring and ambitious for you.

The Promise

The Promise will guide us in delivering our actions for you over the next 3 years and helps to ensure everything we do is based on what you told us. What you told us will directly influence how we work. We will think about all of these things when we look at how well things are going and what we may need to change.



FOREWORD BY CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

The council's relationship with children we care for and care leavers is unlike any other relationship we have with people living in Telford and Wrekin. Because we are your 'Corporate Parents' we have legal and moral responsibilities towards you just like we have towards our own children. Put simply, we need to be good parents and try to be the best possible parents we can be for you all.

We know that getting the best start in life is crucial as early experiences have lifelong impacts and shape our futures. We support all children we care for and care leavers to thrive and flourish; reach and exceed their potential and expand their life chances. When it is time we help you leave our care to become resilient and independent adults.

We have big ambitions for you and take a 'whole council' approach to caring for you and raising you, involving staff who work at the council, carers and Elected Members alike. We do this together, bringing together all of our resources and capacity so that we are able to achieve the best possible outcomes for you.

We are passionate about doing the best for children we care for and care leavers and we want everyone connected to the council and all of our partners to share this passion.

This document is all about the promise we have made to you, children we care for and care leavers which is based on your views. It is this promise that has shaped our vision and how we plan to meet our corporate parenting responsibilities. We have identified priorities and actions to show how we plan to deliver on the promise.

For us, this is not just about fulfilling duties, but about ambition and aspiration. We value and care for you, not only through those who look after you on a daily basis but also through those who make decisions that affect your lives.

All children and young people in Telford and Wrekin are 'cared for and cared about'.



Cllr Shirley Reynolds

Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families



Jo Britton

Executive Director: Children and Family Services

CORPORATE PARENTING PRINCIPLES

There are seven corporate parenting principles, which always guide our work with children we care for and care leavers:

- 1** To act in the best interests and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of children and young people.
- 2** To encourage children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings.
- 3** To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people.
- 4** To help children and young people gain access to, and make best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners.
- 5** To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for children and young people.
- 6** For children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work.
- 7** To prepare children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

This strategy sets out how the council, and our partners will fulfill these ambitions through setting priorities.

Our vision

In Telford and Wrekin we are committed to support children we care for and care leavers to have happy and healthy childhoods, helping you reach and exceed your potential, and supporting you into successful adulthood.

We will show we care through our love, our language and our actions. We will do everything we can to make sure that you have a strong sense of belonging and are set up for life. We will ensure the same standard of care as any good parent, which means we will have high aspirations for all and will be strong advocates for you.

We will take bold and innovative steps to ensure that the people who are privileged to parent you have the right training, support, knowledge and skills that you need and deserve.



FEEDBACK FROM YOU

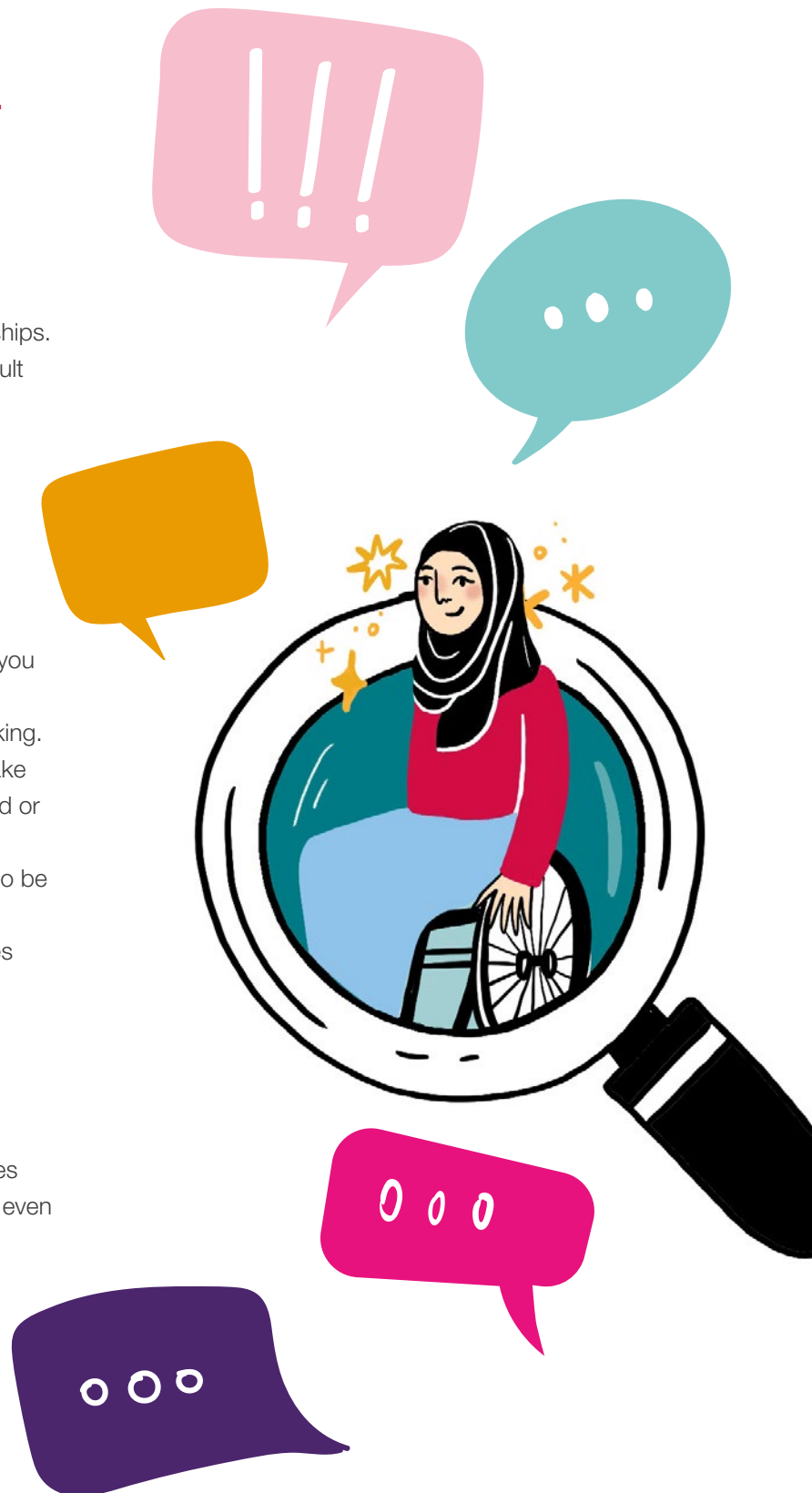
In 2021, all children we care for and care leavers were asked to take part in an online survey to find out how they felt about their lives (Bright Spots Survey).

Here are the key things you asked from us:

YOU SAID, WE WILL:

- Support you to develop and maintain friendships.
- Ensure that you have at least one trusted adult that you feel able to talk to.
- Prepare you well for your future move to independence.
- Provide financial support and learning opportunities in managing money.
- Celebrate your successes.
- Be aspirational for you.
- Ensure that you understand the reasons for you being in care.
- Ensure that you are included in decision making.
- Challenge stigma in the care system and make sure that you are not singled out, stereotyped or treated differently.
- Support you to do things that you consider to be fun and similar things to your friends.
- Promote time outdoors and hobbies/activities outside of school.
- Support you with your emotional health and wellbeing.

We have used your feedback, alongside *The Promise*, to think about a number of key priorities that we will work on to make our work with you even better.



PRIORITIES

Priority 1 Being an individual

You said:

“When I said I hardly ever go out, I mean I can but I don’t really want to!”

“Want to see my sister more and my brother and I want to do life story work.”

We will:

- Recognise that being in care is only one part of your lives, there is so much more to you;
- Ensure that you are seen and treated as individuals worthy of respect. We will promote that respect wherever we can;
- Ensure that you understand the reasons for your being in care;
- Help you to understand where you are from and support you to understand your cultural identity;
- Provide opportunities for you to have time to meet with others with lived experience and advocates to talk about cultural diversity;
- Ensure that you are supported to do things you consider to be fun and similar things to your friends;
- Encourage you to find and access clubs and hobbies that you are interested in;
- Listen to you about spending time with family and friends, where safe to do so.

How we will know we have made a difference:

- Future surveys will show that you believe we treat you with respect and as individuals;
- You will let us know that you have a strong sense of who you are, where you are from and that you understand the reasons for you being in care;
- There will be more opportunities for you to engage with people with lived experience;
- You will tell us that you have regular opportunities to do things that are fun and that you have access to clubs and hobbies;
- You will feel listened to about spending time with family and friends, where safe to do so.



Priority 2 Respect and value

You said:

"I think being able to give children in care more freedom, especially at a certain age, such as phones overnight, so that the child feels more connected to people instead of feeling like they have less freedom."

"[I would] like to see friends outside school and home. Friends have sleepovers, I'm not allowed to go. [Also], playing on-line games the same as my friends"

"In school they use my birth family's surname, but I use my foster family's surname so I fit in. Some teachers use my one or the other [one] and it means I have to explain myself, and I don't want to."

"[I was] identified as being 'special' for being in care. I didn't like it."

"They say, 'you can't do this because you're in care', and it makes me feel different to others."

We will:

- Ensure that you are properly and fully informed of your rights and offered advocacy;
- Review the language used within the care system and work towards the delivery of a 'language that cares';
- Challenge stigma in the care system and ensure that you are not being singled out, stereotyped or treated differently.

How we will know we have made a difference:

- There will be positive outcomes when you use advocacy and you will believe that you have appropriate access to this;
- Your feedback will let us know that we are using language more appropriately, for example 'family time' rather than 'contact';
- Future surveys will show that you do not feel singled out or made to feel different.



Priority 3 Hearing your voice

You said:

"I think I should have a [say] in what happens in my time growing up and what I want in my childhood leading up to my adulthood."

"I feel very included in the family I live with and with any life choices that are made."

We will:

- Make sure that you are routinely engaged, consulted and have a real say in your own lives;
- Ensure that you are included in decision making;
- Host regular participation activities and events through forums including VOICE and Leavers Come First;
- Ensure that a participation offer is available, to enable you to develop networks and to provide opportunities to discuss worries and concerns with others with lived experience of being in care;
- Ensure that you, our own children and young people, are represented and have direct input into our Corporate Parenting Strategic Group;

- Include you in recruitment and selection panels for Senior Staff within children's services;
- Work closely with our virtual school team to support stability in your school placements when there is a care placement move. We will encourage you to be a part of this decision making.

How we will know we have made a difference:

- Consultation activities will show input from a wide range of our children and young people;
- More young people will engage in VOICE and Leavers Come First forums;
- More young people will engage in participation events and activities;
- Young peoples' voices will be central at the Corporate Parenting Strategic Group;
- Young people will be involved in recruitment and selection for senior roles;
- More young people will be in stable education placements.



Priority 4 Developing your independence

You said:

“Tell children from at least 15 years old what to expect when 18 (finances, support from the PA, work, uni etc).”

“I have to have help. I’m getting better at not spending big amounts on things I don’t need.”

We will:

- Ensure that we support you for your future move onto independence at the right age;
- Recognise in our daily work that the impact of care experience does not end at 18 or 21 or even 25, and review our practice to remove age restrictions on support wherever we can;
- Ensure that services work together so that you are able to access opportunities for lifelong learning;
- Ensure that you have a pathway plan when you are 16, and that you are encouraged to be fully involved in this as you prepare for adulthood;
- Provide you with a JISA account and a savings account that you can access when you leave care;
- Visit you at home, ask about whether you feel safe, and support you if you don’t;
- Ensure you have access to the information included in our local offer to care leavers;
- Ensure that ongoing support is provided through your primary worker and carers;
- Ensure that mentors are available for you to access, for example through Smash Life or our Leaving Care Mentor scheme;
- Ensure that our Post 16 Education Adviser and Education Officer work closely together to promote and support you to access education, training and employment opportunities;
- Work to develop wider opportunities for you to access accommodation based on your individual needs;
- Ensure that from the age of 18, your pathway plan identifies options in the event of a crisis;
- Where you need ongoing support, we will work closely to develop a transition process with adults social care to build a seamless transition;
- Ensure that you are given the option to remain in a stable home, through Staying Put or Supported Lodgings, beyond the age of 18. You will be able to access support from the local authority if you experience difficulties moving to live independently.

How we will know we have made a difference:

- Support is provided to you up to and beyond the age of 25 where needed;
- You will have a pathway plan when you are 16 to which you will have the opportunity to contribute;
- Feedback through our annual wellbeing survey demonstrates that you have been given the appropriate support for budgeting;
- You will tell us you feel safe where you live;
- A comprehensive local offer will be available for you to access;
- You will have an appropriate offer of Education, Employment and Training;
- Feedback will demonstrate that you know where to go for help when you need it;
- Staying Put and Supported Lodgings will be available for you post 18. If you are experiencing difficulties you will have support through your Personal Advisor.

Priority 5 Building strong relationships

You said:

"My leaving care worker is always there for me and is very supportive. I can talk to my care worker about anything. She is funny, kind, caring and most importantly she is just there for me no matter what."

"They nag me to succeed and they have made sure I am doing amazing by pushing me to my full potential. They are just the most perfect and wonderful people ever can't ask for anyone better - my family for life."

"I live with one brother who I see enough, but my sisters live in different foster placements. So, I don't see them enough."

"Communication with friends and less restriction on going out in the communities to meet friends. More opportunity to play more games over internet etc."

"[I would like] More things to do with other local foster children so that we know we're not alone."

We will:

- Ensure that relationships are seen as central to all our policies and procedures;
- Build trusting relationships with you so that you feel able to give us your views and feel able to talk to us about your wishes and feelings;
- Ensure that you have contact with your social worker or personal adviser on a regular basis;
- Offer drop in opportunities for you to meet with the team and one another in the Leavers Lounge;
- Reduce your experience of having three or more social workers in a year;
- Increase the satisfaction you have with the time that you have with family members.
- Support you to develop and maintain friendships;
- Ensure that you have at least one trusted adult that you feel able to talk to.

How we will know we have made a difference:

- You will tell us that you have a trusting relationship with at least one key person;
- You will have regular contact with your social worker or personal adviser;
- More of you will visit the Leavers Lounge and engage in drop-in sessions.
- The number of you having changes of social worker will reduce;
- Your feedback will let us know that you have an appropriate level of family time.



Priority 6 Fulfilling your ambitions

You said

"I am currently under the provision of Universal Credit, which requires me to apply for jobs. I am very good at doing this as I frequently apply for jobs. I have two job interviews next week so I should be employed once again, great!"

"Looking for a job since March, Covid just [messed] everything up."

"I've applied for the army I'm just going through the process now."

"I wish I had the money to go horse riding, away on holiday or to a spiritual retreat, to a spa, a day on a canoe. Anything really."

We will

- Always be aspirational for you;
- Support you to make good progress in school through: tracking attainment; providing timely Personal Education Plans (PEPs); effective use of the Pupil Premium Grant to provide appropriate interventions; and by maintaining stability of education placements;
- Support you to access positive destinations post 16; working closely with Further Education and Higher Education partners;
- Support you to access education, employment or training;
- Ensure that you have appropriate support in schools and settings and that you have access to well-trained designated teachers;
- Ensure that you are supported to achieve at least the same, or higher rates of progress than your peers;

- Ensure an extensive offer of enrichment is available for you; including cultural entitlement;
- Continue to contribute to extended research projects to further develop practice and outcomes to provide better support for you;
- Celebrate your successes.

How we will know we have made a difference:

- You will have a good quality (Personal Education Plan) PEP every term;
- There will be a high level of stability of education places;
- A high proportion of post 16 children cared for and care leavers will be in education, employment or training;
- A high proportion of designated teachers in schools will attend dedicated training;
- You will be supported to make good progress in school;
- A range of enrichment activities will be on offer.
- We will celebrate your successes with you.



Priority 7 Being safe and healthy

You said:

“Better following up of issues such as dental; my teeth are horrendous, know it’s my fault but could have been pushed to go to the dentist.”

“For me, being in care (for the most part) has been a positive experience as I haven’t struggled regarding placements, families, support etc. However there are times where I feel a bit alienated or a burden when comparing myself to “typical” teen/children who live with their biological family as I realise that I don’t have that. On the other hand, I don’t mind too much because at least I’m safe, have a family and I know that my future will be better.”

“I feel that people staff, teachers or any adult in school or family should recognise how you’re feeling or if you are going through abuse or any home life struggles.”

We will:

- Ensure that you have regular health reviews;
- Embed and monitor a new Initial Health Assessment process to improve the quality of health assessments;
- Ensure that Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQs) are completed and are available at your health reviews;
- Promote the uptake of health passports for Care Leavers;

- Ensure that the adults you live with understand you by offering appropriate training, to include supporting them to understand that behaviours can be a different way of trying to communicate;
- Continue to develop our placement sufficiency to ensure that you have the right home during your time in care and also as a care leaver;
- Ensure that children in care reviews are held in a timely way with your voice at the centre.

How we will know we have made a difference:

- All children we care for will have a regular health and dental check;
- All children new into care will have a timely initial health check;
- Strength and Difficulties Questionnaires will be available to inform health reviews;
- All care leavers will have access to a health passport and there will be more take up;
- High uptake of training for foster carers to support emotional health and wellbeing;
- More of you will feedback that you like where you live;
- You will have timely reviews and your voice will be visible within the meeting records.



HOW WILL WE KNOW IF WE ARE DOING A GOOD JOB?

We need to make sure that we do all the things that we have said we will do. Often this involves many people from different organisations across education, care and health and so it is important that we check in with each other. Sometimes we need to ask each other difficult questions, particularly if we think something is not working well or when something goes wrong?

Corporate Parenting Strategic Group

The Corporate Parenting Strategic Group, chaired by the Executive Director: Children and Young People, will champion and oversee the delivery of 'Our Promise to you', and ensure we do what we said we would.

The Corporate Parenting Strategic Group will meet regularly and involve multiple partners from education, care and health. They will look to find ways to solve potential challenges.

How the group is organised will be reviewed regularly to ensure that the right people are attending the meetings so that we are able to deliver on our promise to you.

Most importantly the group will engage regularly with children, young people, staff and carers to ensure that they understand any issues that children we care for and care leavers might be facing. Our best test that we are delivering on our promise is what you tell us and so the Corporate Parenting Strategic Group will be supported by a Corporate Parenting Children's Panel.

The Corporate Parenting Strategic Group will itself need to show that it is doing a good job and elected members of the council will ask for updates about how well things are going at a meeting called the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee.

Corporate Parenting Children's Panel

The Corporate Parenting Children's Panel will be co-ordinated by SmashLife and will bring together updates from our children in care forum (VOICE) and our young people leaving care forum (Leavers Come First).

VOICE and Leavers Come First are self-selecting groups of children and young people which, amongst other things, make representations about things that affect and interest them. The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families, and managers will regularly offer to attend our children and young person meetings and may be 'called in' by the children to do so. The Virtual School Head Teacher will attend our children and young person meetings regularly.

The Corporate Parenting Children's Panel will regularly be asked to think about the Promise and the ways in which services that help them have changed for the better. This information will be feedback to the Corporate Strategic Parenting Group.

HOW DOES TELFORD & WREKIN COMPARE NATIONALLY?

At a glance	Nationally as at 31 March 2021	Locally as at 31 March 2021
Number of children we care for	80,850	425
Rate of care	67 per 10,000	102 per 10,000
Number of children living with foster families	72%	75%
Percentage of children living outside Telford and Wrekin	–	47%
Number of care experienced young people that we support	31,260	126
Percentage of care experienced young people in education, employment or training	52%	70%