



# CORPORATE PARENTING

*An Overview of  
Corporate Responsibility  
For Looked After and Accommodated Children  
Within  
Argyll & Bute*



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## **Foreword by the Head of Service for Children and Families**

For many years local authorities have been responsible for looking after children and young people who for different reasons cannot be cared for by their own families. Sometimes this is temporary – for others it is a long term need. The quality of corporate parenting has varied over time. Recently the Scottish Government emphasised the importance of Corporate Parenting by stating

“....those children who are looked after, your council has a legal and moral duty to try to provide the kind of loyal support that any good parents would give to their children.... to make sure that children in care get a good start in life.....”

Over the last number of years we have worked hard in Argyll & Bute Council to improve the quality of services, support and care we offer to looked after children.

We can however do much more. Corporate Parenting is everyone’s responsibility – it stretches beyond the the role of Children and Young People’s Services – indeed it is for all of us to ask the question

“Would this be good enough for my child?” If it wouldn’t, then we all have a responsibility to challenge and to rise to the challenge and to do as much as possible to give our young people the very best services, support and advocacy to help them develop and succeed.

**Douglas Dunlop  
Head of Service  
Children & Families**



## Introduction

The Council acts as a Corporate Parent to children who are looked after by the authority and has a number of responsibilities for ensuring their mental and physical wellbeing. As at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010 there were 97 children and young people accommodated by Argyll and Bute Council of whom 53 were in foster care or other family placements. In addition there were 93 children who were looked after at home subject to Home Supervision requirements from the Children's Hearing.

## Definition of a Looked After Child/Young Person

The term 'Looked After' refers to any child or young person for whom the Local Authority has, or shares Parental responsibility. The Local Authority may also provide care and accommodation to the child or young person on behalf of their parent(s).

The term child refers to any child or young person between 0-17 years of age.

A child or young person may become looked after if they have been taken into the care of the Local Authority through a legal order or with the voluntary agreement of the parent(s). They may be looked after by foster carers, in kinship care, in a children's home or other residential setting.

The Local Authority also has a responsibility to those young people who leave care and after they leave care to support them in reaching independence.

## What is a Corporate Parent?

Corporate Parenting is defined as:

*"...the formal and local partnerships needed between all local authority departments and services and associated agencies who are responsible for working together to meet the needs of Looked After Children and Young People."*

*(Looked After and Accommodated Children and Young People: We Can and Must Do Better; P 3; Scottish Executive, 2007)*

The Scottish executive has published a number of reports regarding the welfare of Looked After and Accommodated Children including

*Learning with Care 2001 We Can and Must Do Better 2007 Getting it Right for Every Child in Kinship and Foster Care 2007 and These are Our Bairns 2008.*

These reports emphasise the importance of the Corporate parenting Role in ensuring the best care for Looked After Children/Young people.



## What are the Responsibilities of a Corporate Parent?

The role and responsibilities of a Corporate Parent in its simplest form means the Local Authority pursues the same outcomes for the Looked After and Accommodated Child as a parent would want for their own children.

A Corporate Parent acknowledges and assumes responsibility as a prioritised principle for all the Looked After Children/Young People.

To achieve this principle the Council needs to have a vision which encapsulates a model whereby Looked After Children/Young People develop to be responsible and confident individuals.

That model will need to include

- Safety: protected from abuse, neglect or harm
- Nurtured: Have a nurturing place to live either in a family setting , or as close to that as can be achieved with additional help when needed
- Healthy: have a good standard of physical, mental and emotional health with access to health provision when needed
- Achieving: supported through learning, development of their confidence and self esteem
- Active: Have opportunities to take part in activities which contribute to healthy growth and development.
- Involved: given the opportunity to be involved in decisions which affect them
- Responsible: given opportunities and encouraged to play active and responsible roles in their communities
- Included: Having help to overcome barriers to inequality and becoming accepted

## Corporate Parenting Values

### The 3 Big Questions

- If this were my child, would it be good enough for him or her?
- If I were that child, would it have been good enough for me?
- How could I make it even better?



## Standards for Corporate Parents

### Being a Corporate Parent involves:

- Commitment to professional development, for example through participating in appropriate training to carry out corporate parenting responsibilities.
- Celebrating the success of our children and young people.
- Making sure that all foster homes and children's homes come up to the standard of the best in terms of comfort, homeliness, friendliness and openness of carers and staff. This will be achieved by visits, liaison with the staff responsible, being familiar with inspection reports, benchmarking and following up on identified areas of concern.
- Meeting with young people and listening to what they have to say!

## Principles at the Heart of Corporate Parenting

- Looked after children are entitled to the same care, support, stability, health and education as our own children.
- We need to ensure that services are flexible enough to support children having high quality lives, and happy childhoods.
- In developing new practices, initiatives or policies the Council considers the needs of looked after and accommodated children.
- Looked after and accommodated children are actively encouraged to participate in decisions made about their lives, so that their experiences influence policy and practice.
- Access for looked after children to universal services is actively promoted, encouraging young people's sense of community and belonging.
- Service provision, communication and policies meet the needs of children with disabilities, and children from a range of cultural and religious backgrounds.
- Corporate parenting does not cease at 18.



- Corporate parents challenge negative perceptions and stereotypes and raise awareness at all levels of the Council.
- Corporate parenting is about commitment and teamwork to bring about change.





## **Children's Champion and Corporate Parenting**

### **Vision**

The Council has identified Councillor Mary Jean Devon as the Council's 'Children Champion' for looked after children/young people. The role of a Children's Champion is to maintain a focus on these looked after and accommodated children through the appointment of a Councillor(s). This councillor has a dedicated role with sole responsibility for this particular group of children and young people. This involves having a close working relationship with the Director of Community Services, Head of Service, Children and Families and other identified Children and Families staff for the improvement in the delivery of services and effectiveness of that service delivery.

### **Role and Remit of a Children's Champion**

The role and remit of a Children's Champion is to champion the rights of looked after and accommodated children/young people. There are several areas the Champion will focus on:

- Provide further leadership that recognises the Council's statutory obligation as a Corporate Parent to the looked after and accommodated child/young person and further provide impetus for change and improvement in the service delivery
- Promote and safeguard the rights of the looked after and accommodated child/young person ensuring that the services they require are available and accessible, assisting service providers to remove barriers which are obstacles to progress
- Identify in association with recognised service providers at all levels the additional provisions required to ensure that the needs of the looked after and accommodated child/young person are best met
- Communicate with these children/young people by consulting with them and their service providers to ensure that the looked after and accommodated child/young person receives the support, security and stability they require to achieve their individual potential



## Message from Mary Jean Devon-Children's Champion

I am delighted to have been selected as the first Children's Champion for the Argyll and Bute Council area. I understand the very high priority that looked after and accommodated children have for the Council and its partners and I am looking forward to working with all those involved to ensure that children receive the best possible service from all agencies.

I am particularly looking forward to working with the young people who are looked after by the authority and to hearing their views about the important areas that affect them. I am committed to making sure that looked after and accommodated children have the same opportunities as all young people and I am sure that together we can make a real difference for all the young people involved.

I thought it may also be helpful to give details of my background. I am currently an elected member for the Oban South and the Isles ward within the Council. I have been involved with young people most of my life in various aspects of youth work. I was a volunteer for many years at Quarriers Homes working socially with children in care. This involved teaching children to swim, taking part in sports events and trips to different parts of Scotland.

I was a Boys Brigade Officer for a number of years which was very challenging. I was Youth Worker on Mull and had a great time teaching the youngsters new skills. We have done Ice Climbing, Sailing, Sponsored Walks, Drama and Beach Clean ups.

My interests are sports motivated, and I love all different kinds of music. I have to be honest and say that Skerryvore and the Vatersay Boys are high up on my list but I do enjoy Lady Gaga.

I firmly believe that childhood is the most important part of any person's life and it is vitally important that we learn to listen to our young people's views, opinions and needs.



## **Engagement of Looked After and Accommodated Children and Young People**

The views of young people have been sought in an effort to engage with those young people who are looked after to influence the development and implementation of services. It is critical for the success of Corporate Parenting that the views of young people are implemented to shape future development of this service.

This has been achieved by consultation days have been held and are regularly scheduled where young people have the opportunity to meet with all levels of management together with elected members, particularly those who have an interest in social services and looked after children/young people in general.

In addition Viewpoint is actively promoted as a tool for each child/young person to have their say.

### **Support**

The Corporate Parent ensures every child/young person has the right to a package of support to achieve the outcomes set out above. Each looked after child/young person has a level of need specific to their own particular needs which will enable them to achieve their full potential.

To achieve this correct level of support means enabling the child/young person to be involved, according to their age and level of development. This involvement will be supported by family and others who are significant in the child/young person's life.

To achieve stability, security and a sense of well being the planned support must have the flexibility to allow for changes that occur.

### **Through Care and After Care: services for children leaving care**

Young people who have been in care face particular challenges when they become independent. The Local Authority is required to offer them the kind of support a good parent would to their own children as they reach adulthood.

Because looked after young people may have little family support and have missed out on opportunities taken for granted by other young people they are particularly vulnerable in early adulthood.

Support and guidance in relation to education, training, employment and housing can make a difference between achieving independence or requiring long term support and care as an adult.



## Our Multi-Agency Looked After Partnership Priorities-Joint Services Management Group

While setting out our aspirations for improved outcomes for Argyll & Butes Looked After Children and Young People agencies have emphasised the critical need to work together to support young people in achieving their potential.

The Joint Services Management Group partnership arrangement which oversees the performance of services to looked after children and care leavers. The Joint Services management Group priorities for 2009/10 are:

- **Maximising foster and kinship care arrangements and improving placement Stability**  
So that children and young people have the opportunity to attach to carers and form positive relationships.
- **Targeted Resource Distribution**  
The distribution of resources to meet the needs of the looked after and accommodated child/young person in the most effective and appropriate manner
- **Preparation for Adult Life**  
So that young people are equipped for their future lives.
- **Communication and Participation Strategy**  
So that children and young people can both help shape the services that they receive, and influence future planning.

These priorities will be measured and evaluated against performance with the achievements evidenced by feedback, audits and inspections.

### What Will Success Look Like?

- Effective corporate parenting is a clearly defined policy resulting in working together in the best interest of and seeking better outcomes for their looked after and accommodated child/young person These outcomes include improvements in the following areas:
- **Increased stability in placements**, with children/young people well matched to the best placement for them and supported in those placements based on care plans that are regularly reviewed;



- **Improved health**, with policies and protocols revised and developed further, in conjunction with health services, to ensure their children and young people's physical, psychological and mental health needs are comprehensively provided.
- **Improved educational outcomes** –when children and young people reach their potential with support and additional help when needed, through training and raised awareness of the educational needs of looked after and accommodated children and young people among school, social work, foster carers, residential workers and the community.
- Corporate Parenting will include elected members establishing a **robust scrutiny mechanism** to ensure that a clear set of outcomes for children/young people are developed; including educational outcomes- including higher and further education –training and employment destinations, the number and nature of placement moves and moves between educational establishments
- **Involvement:** Looked after children have access to the same range of social activities, places to go and things to do, that are available to all young people;
- The **quality and safety** of placements offered to children and young people are positively assessed and are cared for by staff or carers who are **safely recruited**, trained, supervised and managed to deliver the highest quality of care;
- Children and young people are supported to improve their emotional well being, increase self esteem and confidence so that they can contribute and **make positive contributions** that mean they influence the development of services and policies / plans that impact on them now and in the future, with the collection , reporting and sharing of accurate information underpinning policy and practice development.
- Children and young people are supported in planning for their future, and engaged in education, employment and training opportunities that will support them in **achieving future economic well being** and success.