



monmouthshire
sir fynwy



Corporate Parenting Strategy

2018 - 2021

Foreword

The Monmouthshire County Council Corporate Parenting Strategy is an important document which identifies, as defined by the Welsh Government, ‘the collective responsibility across services and across local authorities.... to safeguard and promote the life chances of looked after children.’

All Councillors have a special responsibility as Corporate Parents to ensure that all our Looked After children within our County have the opportunity to live a safe, happy, healthy and fulfilling life. A good education and opportunities for social development are paramount to this and in this respect, Looked After Children are absolutely no different and must be afforded the same choices.

The strategy sets out clearly a reference guide for Corporate Parents to follow and emphasises the key aspects of the role which include how to listen, learn and question and act as advocates on behalf of this special group.

This is the Council’s second Corporate Parenting Strategy.

County Councillor Penny Jones

Cabinet Member and Chair of Corporate Parenting Panel

Corporate Parenting Priorities

Priority 1 – All elected members and officers understand and act on their responsibilities as corporate parents

Priority 2: All looked after children have a safe and stable home

Priority 3: Looked after children enjoy a range of educational and learning opportunities

Priority 4: Looked after children enjoy the best possible health

Priority 5: Looked after children enjoy a range of play, sport, leisure and cultural opportunities

Priority 6: Looked after children are listened to and treated with respect

Priority 7: Looked after children are supported and enabled to achieve independence

Priority 8: Looked after children are cared for by Monmouthshire carers and remain close to their homes and communities

Priority 9: All care leavers are supported in education, training and employment

Where I am Safe

Within Monmouthshire, our first pledge to children and young people is that whenever possible we will support them to remain within their families. We recognise that this is the best environment for the majority of children and young people to develop and achieve their outcomes.

There are however a small group of children and young people who will need to be accommodated, primarily as a result of abuse or neglect that they have experienced at home. We will ensure that children and young people who are unable to live safely within their own families are looked after and provided with the best possible care and support in placements that meet their needs.

Children in care will already have been placed at a disadvantage when they come into care. Monmouthshire County Council wants to ensure that the experience of children and young people does not add to this disadvantage but provides them with the stability and security they need to flourish. Children and young people will be healthy and happy, and feel valued and loved. Children and young people will enjoy learning and grow into successful adults who can have positive relationships, positive futures, become responsible citizens and achieve their goals and ambitions. “Our aspirations for the children and young people that we look after are the same as any good parent would want for their children. Where they need it children and young people will receive the very best possible standards of care and support” (Where I am Safe Strategy 2016).

Entitlements of Looked After Children and Care Leavers

Children who are looked after have the same entitlements as all children and young people. Under the Social Services and Well-being Act (Wales) 2014 this is now articulated through the concept of well-being. For children and young people this incorporates:

- Being safe
- Having somewhere suitable to live
- Being involved in decisions that impact your life
- Having friends
- Being part of good, strong communities
- Having every chance to do well in education, training, work-based learning and employment
- Feeling good about your life
- Being able to grow up happily and successfully,
- Being well-looked after

What is corporate parenting?

Parents always want the best for their children. For children in care it is elected members and officers who are together responsible for providing the quality of care that would be good enough for their own children.

Welsh Government defined the concept of corporate parenting as:

“The collective responsibility across services and across local authorities, to safeguard and promote the life chances of looked after children”

Councillors as Corporate Parents

Elected members have a ‘special responsibility’.

“When you became an elected member you took on one of your most important roles, as corporate parent to children your local authority looks after. The importance of your corporate parenting responsibilities cannot be overemphasised. Elected Members have a responsibility to ensure that children looked after by the Council are able to thrive, that they are nurtured, supported, educated, listened to and prepared for adult life in the way any good parent would want for their own children. These children will often have faced significant challenges and will need the help of adults who hold powerful and influential positions.”

Gwenda Thomas AM, Deputy Minister for Social Services

Key aspects of the role of a Corporate Parent include:

- To know what the key issues and concerns are of our looked after children and to ensure that the Council is responding to these.
- Ensuring that parental responsibilities for LAC are being fulfilled;
- To identify where things need to improve and to make a difference for good
- To consider and question the impact of Council decisions on looked after children and care leavers.

Officers of the Council

Corporate parenting responsibilities are not confined to elected members. All officers share the responsibility to promote the needs of looked after children.

Key responsibilities of all Officers are:

- To promote the life chances of looked after children and care leavers in their area of responsibility.
- To consider the impact of decision making on looked after children and care leavers.

Care Leavers

The Corporate Parenting Strategy applies equally to care leavers as it does to children and young people who are looked after.

A Care Leaver is defined as a child who was previously a Looked After Child and was in Care on their 16th birthday. Our duties to care leavers remain until they are 25. A young person can 're-connect' to care and support at any time during this period.

The local authority as a 'good corporate parent' will assist the young person with financial support to achieve economic well-being and make a positive and successful transition to adulthood. This recognises that supporting the emotional well-being of our care leavers is a key factor.

The report undertaken by the Children's Commissioner 'Hidden Ambitions' published in 2017 has re-emphasised to Local Authorities that Care Leavers still face many barriers, and that more needs to be done to ensure that care leavers have the support and resources they need to make successful transitions into adult life. Having access to some extra financial support at times of particular difficulty or crisis is an important element to this, and one that the young people's consultees felt needed highlighting.

At a regional level, the Institute of Public Care (IPC) recently undertook a review into the care leavers with complex needs to explore how support and accommodation services for this group of young people could be improved and developed. There are still circumstances when Young People with more complex needs or experiencing mental health difficulties are placed out of county making family contact difficult to maintain.

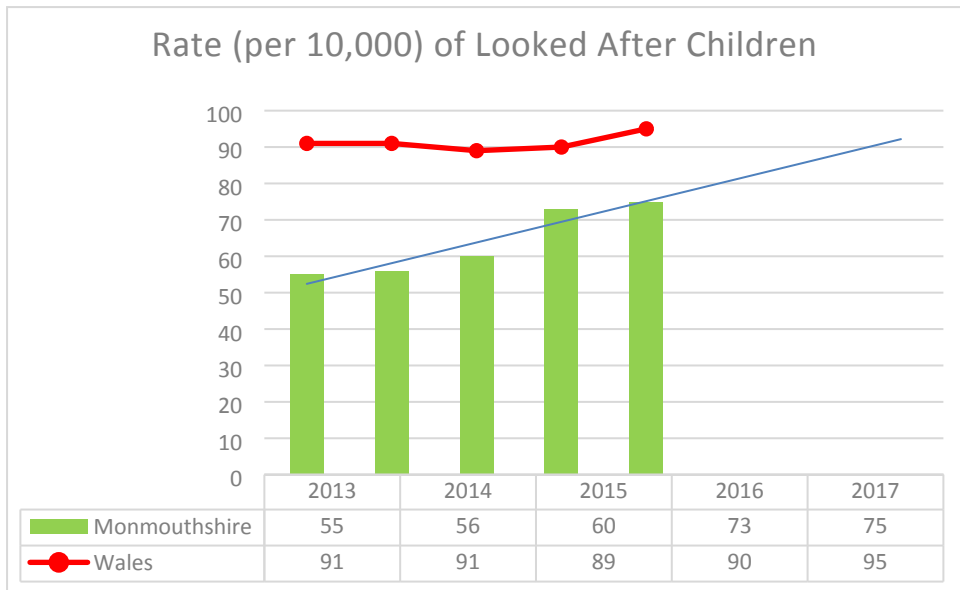
Looked after children

The National Picture

As at 31st of March 2017 there are 72, 670 children currently being looked after by Local Authorities in England and over 5,955 by Local Authorities in Wales, the majority of whom live in foster placements.

The number of children in care in Wales increased by 24% in the five years up until March 2017 and over the last 20 years has doubled.

Previously, Monmouthshire rate of looked after children per 10,000 children was lower than the all Wales average, however, over the last five years we have seen significant increase in Monmouthshire of looked after children.



Children who become Looked After are likely to have experienced trauma and exposure to multiple adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). Children who become Looked After who are disabled and / or come from ethnic minority backgrounds can experience further disadvantage.

The outcomes for children and young people in care remain poor, with research indicating that this group is over represented amongst

- homeless and prison populations,
- are more likely to be offending,
- experience drug and alcohol misuse, and
- have poor mental health.

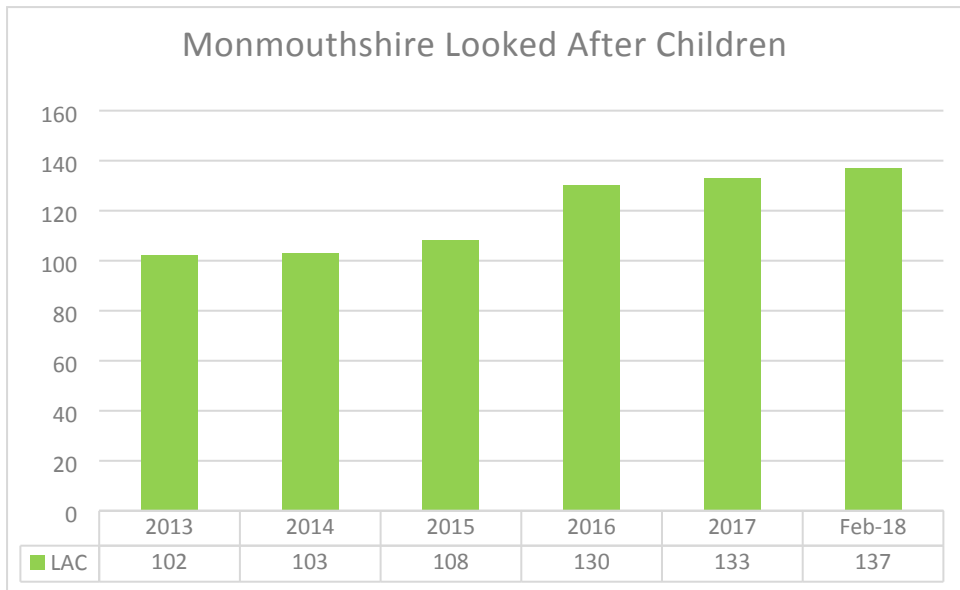
However, despite the complex needs these children and young people have, many can and do make a great success of their lives, with the right support and care.

As at Feb 2018, 72.73% (8 out of 11) of care leave engaged in education, training or employment during the 12th month after they left care

As at Feb 2018, 70% (7 out of 10) of care leavers engaged in education, training or employment during the 24th month after they left care.

The Local Picture

As at end of Feb 2018 were 137 children or young people Looked After by Monmouthshire Council and 56 category 1-4 care leavers. This represents a significant increase over the last five years.



The majority are being looked after because they have experienced significant abuse or neglect, and most are subject to Care Orders made by the courts under the Children Act 1989. These orders confer Parental Responsibility on the council (shared with their parents).

Breakdown by legal status

	Mar-13	Mar-14	Mar-15	Mar-16	Mar-17	Mar-18
Interim Care Order	24	12	10	23	17	15
Full Care Order	27	49	54	65	77	110
Placement Order Granted	50	13	8	15	13	4
Section 76		29	36	24	23	8
Wardship				3	3	2
Total	101	103	108	130	133	139

Breakdown by age

Age Band	Mar-13	Mar-14	Mar-15	Mar-16	Mar-17	Jan-18
0-4	27	26	25	39	32	32
5-9	21	26	24	30	32	38
10-14	26	26	28	31	44	42
15+	27	25	31	29	25	29
Total	101	103	108	129	133	141

Breakdown by type of placement

Placement Type	Mar-13	Mar-14	Mar-15	Mar-16	Mar-17	Jan-18
MCC Generic Fostering	36	35	34	32	26	28
MCC Kinship Fostering	28	19	16	29	23	26
Indep Fostering	25	25	37	32	42	42
Indep Living	2	2	1	1	5	5
Residential / Education Placement	6	5	8	10	8	11
Other LAC	4	17	12	26	29	29
Total	101	103	108	130	133	141

Breakdown by Age and time looked after

Length of time in care	Mar-13	Mar-14	Mar-15	Mar-16	Mar-17	Jan-18
Under 6 Months	12	12	25	20	26	14
6 Months to a Year	16	22	2	25	10	24
1-2 Years	35	16	27	16	35	22
3-4 Years	22	29	34	46	35	53
5+ Years	16	24	20	22	27	28
Total	101	103	108	129	133	141

Significantly, there are more children placed with foster carers working for independent fostering agencies than placed with Monmouthshire foster carers. This is something that the current strategy is seeking to address: In Monmouthshire we

want children to be looked after by Monmouthshire carers and, whenever possible, to remain within the geographical boundaries of Monmouthshire, closer to their home and communities. We believe that this is the best way of achieving best outcomes for our looked after children, and is the reason why we have added this to our Corporate Parenting priorities.

Review of the Corporate Parenting Strategy and Action Plan 2014 – 2017

The current strategy and action plan is built on a review and appraisal of the previous 3 years and through consultation with key stakeholders. This includes Corporate Panel Members, the young people's participation group, foster carers, operational social worker teams and SLT. The review recognises that whilst some real progress has been made in some areas, in others changes have been harder to sustain. The context is ever changing both in terms of the legislative framework and in terms of the operational services that are tasked with delivering against many of the identified objectives.

The key outcomes from the review are set out below:

Key Achievements

- Members 'Introduction to Corporate Parents' was updated and carried out as part of the induction programme for the new administration
- Consideration of Corporate Parenting responsibilities is now required in all reports for Cabinet or Full Council.
- There is a good understanding and awareness of Corporate Parenting through SLT and across the Local Authority directorates. Actions around Looked After children feature in Service Improvement Plans other than Social Care.
- The council has evaluated initial apprenticeship programmes and has strengthened the operational leadership of this. There is a post created in Enterprise to support 16 – 18 year old care leavers with education, training and employment.
- We have a team of dedicated and committed foster carers in Monmouthshire, who have a good network of support through FC4FC.
- There is a training programme in place for foster carers.
- Members of the Placement and Support team are trained in attachment based practice to help them support foster carers.
- There is support in place for generic and kinship carers through the BASE.
- BASE is well established and helps ensure that the emotional and psychological needs of Looked After children, young people and care leavers are understood and met.
- Looked after children's educational outcomes and achievements are reported on a cohort basis (e.g. mainstream, Additional Learning Needs, Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers and Looked After Children attending the Pupil Referral Unit) which allows greater analysis of the educational progress of looked after children.
- A SGO support worker is in place to support carers and the impact of this is

being evaluated.

- TLCY and enterprise continue to provide extra curriculum activities to our Looked After Children, young people.
- The Fostering Project is in place to support the recruitment and retention of Monmouthshire foster carers.

Barriers and Challenges

- The achievements of our Looked After children, young people and care leavers are not as well recognised or celebrated at a corporate level as we would want.
- The young people's participation group is not as well-developed as we would wish at this point. There is a desire to increase the support of and the link between Corporate Panel Members and members of the participation group.
- We do not have sufficient Monmouthshire carers and remain overly reliant on independent foster agencies.
- There is still a shortage of positive support and accommodation choices for care leavers.
- Foster carers do not always find training easy to access and training can be inconsistent.
- There is still work to do to ensure that all members understand their roles as Corporate Parents.
- Life-story work is still not routinely in place with all looked after children.

The Changing Context

- Numbers of Looked After Children continues to increase
- The number of kinship carers continue to increase
- There is a strong drive at national level to increase the regional alignment of fostering services through the National Fostering Framework
- The Social Services and Well-being Act (Wales) 2014 has been implemented.
- Advocacy services are now commissioned regionally.

How the strategy will be delivered, monitored and evaluated

The Corporate Parenting strategy includes an action plan to support implementation of its aims and objectives. Where actions have been brought forward or amended from the previous action plan this is indicated. Measures have been put in place where possible, so that Corporate Panel members have an evidence base through which progress can be monitored. Implementation will be monitored and evaluated by the Corporate Parenting Panel on a 6-monthly basis. The Corporate Parenting Panel will present an annual report to Full Council on progress.

Terms of Reference and Membership of the Corporate Parenting Panel is at annexe

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No.	What will we do?	How will we do it?	Who is responsible?	How will we measure progress?
1. B/Fwd	Increase elected members understanding of their responsibilities as Corporate Parents	Induct all elected members Hold annual corporate parenting members' seminar Present annual report on Corporate Parenting to Full Council.	Lead Member for Children and Young People HoS	# elected members inducted # elected members attending corporate parenting seminar Dates of annual reports to council
2. B/Fwd (amended)	Ensure that consideration of Corporate Parenting responsibilities remains high profile within the Council's Senior Management Team	Represent the rights of LAC and Care Leavers at SLT Annual reports	Chief Officer SCH	Dates of annual reports
3. B/Fwd	Celebrate the achievements of looked after children, care leavers and our foster carers.	Introduce programme of individual achievement awards Host an achievement event	Youth / Enterprise leads together with Children's Services with the support of Corporate Parenting Panel and Foster Carer reps	Awards made Date of event

4. B/fwd	Ensure that children and young people in care and care leavers have a voice, are heard and can influence service development	Support the development of young people's participation group Implement LAC survey and respond to outcomes	Youth lead working with Team Manager, Long-Term Support	Annual report from participation group
5. New	Ensure that all Looked After Children and young people are offered advocacy through an 'active offer'	Promote the 'active offer' within social work teams and foster carers	HoS NYAS	# active offers # LAC / Care leavers involved in advocacy
6. B/Fwd	Make every effort to avoid unnecessary changes of placement.	Training, supervision and support for foster carers both 'practical' and 'psychological'. Ensure good practice around matching processes. Ensure 'Stable Lives, Brighter Futures' arrangements are fully complied with	Service Manager, Managed Care	# of unplanned placement moves / placement breakdowns
7. B/Fwd	Improve support available to Special Guardians	Review of SGO policy and practice and implement new arrangements	Service Manager, Managed Care	# SGO support plans # SGO breakdowns and reasons

8. New	Ensure that adoption processes and adoption support is in place and working well	Ensure that operational link with SEWAS is working well	Service Manager, Managed Care working with SEWAS	SEWAS annual report including # of POs made and # of adoptions achieved
9. New	Increase the number of LAC placements with Monmouthshire Foster Carers	Implement the objectives of the fostering project	Service Manager, Managed Care working with the fostering project board	# increase in placements with Monmouthshire carers
10. New	Increase the options for support and accommodation for care leavers including 'When I am Ready' placements	Implementation of the LAC / commissioning strategy Where I am Safe Implement outcomes from the IPC review	Service Manager, Managed Care working with Lead Commissioner for CS	# Care Leavers experiencing period of homelessness or living in unsuitable accommodation
11. B/Fwd	Ensure that all children have a good understanding of their own "life-story" – why they live where they do and what the plans for their future are.	Ensure Support Workers, Social Workers and Foster Carers have skills and confidence in completing life-story work.	Service Manager, Managed Care	TBC
12. B/Fwd	Narrow the gap of educational achievement between looked after children and their peers	Ensure that cluster bids are strategic and are focussed upon improving outcomes for LAC pupils.	Inclusion Manager CYP	# (%) children reaching expected levels at key-stage Closing the gap between universal

		<p>Report Looked after children's outcomes on a cohort basis (e.g. mainstream, ALN, Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers and LAC in PRU)</p> <p>Ensure PEPs are completed within timescales; are of high quality and based on a multi-disciplinary approach</p>		outcomes and LAC pupils at each key stage
13. B/Fwd (amended)	Ensure that all looked after children and care leavers are fully supported to engage in education, training or employment post-16	Ensure that Pathway Plans are implemented through a partnership approach	Enterprise Leads together with Team Manager Long-Term Support	# (%) of care leavers who are in education, training or employment
14. B/Fwd (amended)	Ensure the health needs of LAC and young people are met	<p>Undertake LAC health assessments</p> <p>Ensure that Health records and information travels with children moving placements or entering care</p>	Lead Nurse for LAC ABUHB	# LAC health assessments completed on time Annual report

15. B/Fwd (amended)	Promote good emotional health and safe behaviours amongst all our looked after children.	Support carers in meeting the emotional needs of LAC and young people Ensure LAC and young people have access to psychological and therapeutic support	Service Manager, Managed Care working with Family Support services and BASE	
16. B/fwd (amended)	Ensure that all LAC and Care Leavers have access to a full range of 'extra-curriculum' activities	Support carers and young people to access activities and events as identified based on understanding of children / young people's interests and potential	Service Manager, Managed Care working with youth, enterprise and leisure leads and schools	# LAC / Care leavers participating in clubs and events

Annexe 1



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