



# Corporate Parenting Strategy

2025 to 2028

# Corporate Parenting Strategy 2025 to 2028

This is our plan to help outline how the council will provide children in care and care leavers with the tools, support, and opportunities they need to thrive independently and achieve their full potential.

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# A foreword from Simon Johnson

## Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

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As Lead Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, I am proud to call myself a Corporate Parent.

This means I help make sure that children in care, and those who have left our care, are supported just like any other child. We want every young person to be happy, healthy, safe, and confident about their future. We know that South Gloucestershire is a superb place to live, and ensuring we support our children and young people when they need us, is a collective responsibility across the Local Authority, and one we take seriously, and take great pride in.

Being a Corporate Parent means keeping the promises we've made to young people in our care. We must make sure they have the same chances as any other child to learn, to play, to progress into work and a career, and to enjoy life. It also means truly listening to them. Their voices and real-life experiences help shape everything we do.

Here in South Gloucestershire, we are Corporate Parents to 439 children and young people - an increase of 6% from 2023-24 and against a backdrop of foster carer shortages and housing pressures. However, we also have a strong and committed team, coordinated working relationships and close, collaborated arrangements with partners, all of which support our determination to work towards delivering the very best outcomes for children and young people in South Glos.

As corporate parents, we must remain committed to the promises we have made to our looked-after children and young people. As always, they are the most important people in the work that we do, and their voice and lived experience is instrumental in helping us to shape and influence all that we do. In turn, we need to ensure that we deliver services and opportunities that demonstrate to them that we're listening, and that what they say matters to us.

I want to thank everyone involved in shaping and contributing to our strategy. We have a superb network of partners supporting our children and young people across South Gloucestershire and together we will continue to work collaboratively to truly ensure children and young people are supported to thrive.

Meanwhile, I do hope that you find this report helpful and that it inspires you to think about ways in which you can also play a part in supporting our young people to thrive and have a happy, successful life.



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simon Johnson'.

**Simon Johnson,**

Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

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# A foreword from Chris Sivers

Executive Director – People Department

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Children and young people matter to us in South Gloucestershire; they matter a lot. Being a corporate parent is a big responsibility and one that we take very seriously.

Much like any parenting, being a corporate parent can be both challenging and rewarding. But collectively, we must work together in our aspiration to provide better and safer care for children and young people so that that they can go on to aspire, achieve and thrive as adults.

We're ambitious for our children and young people, and this ambition is echoed by everyone involved in delivering our corporate parenting strategy. Good corporate parenting doesn't stop with our social workers and social care professionals; it includes our senior leaders and elected members, as well as our multi-agency partners, such as education, public health and the police – all of which will be instrumental in helping us deliver improved outcomes for our young people.

So how will we achieve this? We'll listen to our children and young people and provide them with opportunities to participate in discussions and contribute their views, whilst also keeping them informed about matters that affect them. Alongside this, we'll challenge ourselves to be better corporate parents to them, every single day. That's why we've developed this strategy alongside our young people and with them at the core, so that their voices can be clearly heard and acted upon.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed and who continues to contribute to make delivery of our corporate parenting strategy a success.



**Chris Sivers,**

Executive Director – People Department

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# A foreword from Children in Care and Care Leavers

Callum, age 13, from TCC

Yo, Corporate Parents!  
Wait, what's 'corporate'?  
Corporate! Listen up!

What are you?  
Remember us!  
We're colourful!

By Amirah, age 15 from TCC and Skye,  
age 16 from EPIC

There isn't one way to support a group of people. All corporate parents should learn about different children and young people, get to know them, and take their feelings into account. As children who are in care or care leavers, we want our lives to feel as normal as possible and to not feel like the government's 'project' or to make you look like some 'heroes'.

We are just like everyone else, so we need you to talk to us like we're human, have a sense of humour, lighten up, and not be all serious. We don't want to feel like we're a job, an income, a news article, a statistic, or another task on your list. We'd like you to actually listen to our feedback, take it on board, use our words, not professionalise or change the meaning of it.

Take your time when you talk to us; half an hour will do, but five minutes is not enough. We're not going to tell you everything, so you need to understand the way we are first, show us that you keep your word and that you care, then we'll let our guard down. Before that - talk to people that know every side of us and the reasons for our behaviours.

If you must repeat things about us, remember the good things. Our struggles are a downside of our experiences, but they don't shape each of us as a person. We're not just children in care or care leavers, there is more to us! We are confident and strong, we are chefs, good students, footballers, and friends.

We need you to keep us in the loop, help us see our future, so we start thinking of a plan. Help us imagine how we'll do it and what our options might be: what will the neighbourhood, a flat or a job be like, how will we cook or work a dishwasher, drive or use public transport? Simple things that most people don't think about seem hard, and we need to know someone is there 'on a standby' if we're struggling. Every human has a basic need to feel loved and cared for.

There is not a set 'rulebook' on how to look after children, especially children in care, as they all have different personalities and come from various backgrounds. When reading this strategy, it should be kept in mind that it doesn't fix every child's and young person's needs. We feel that they should be cared for in a way that is suitable to their situation and that the corporate parent should support with that to the best of their ability.

# Introduction

This Corporate Parenting Strategy outlines our commitment to ensuring that every child and young person in our care receives the support, opportunities, and nurturing they need to thrive.

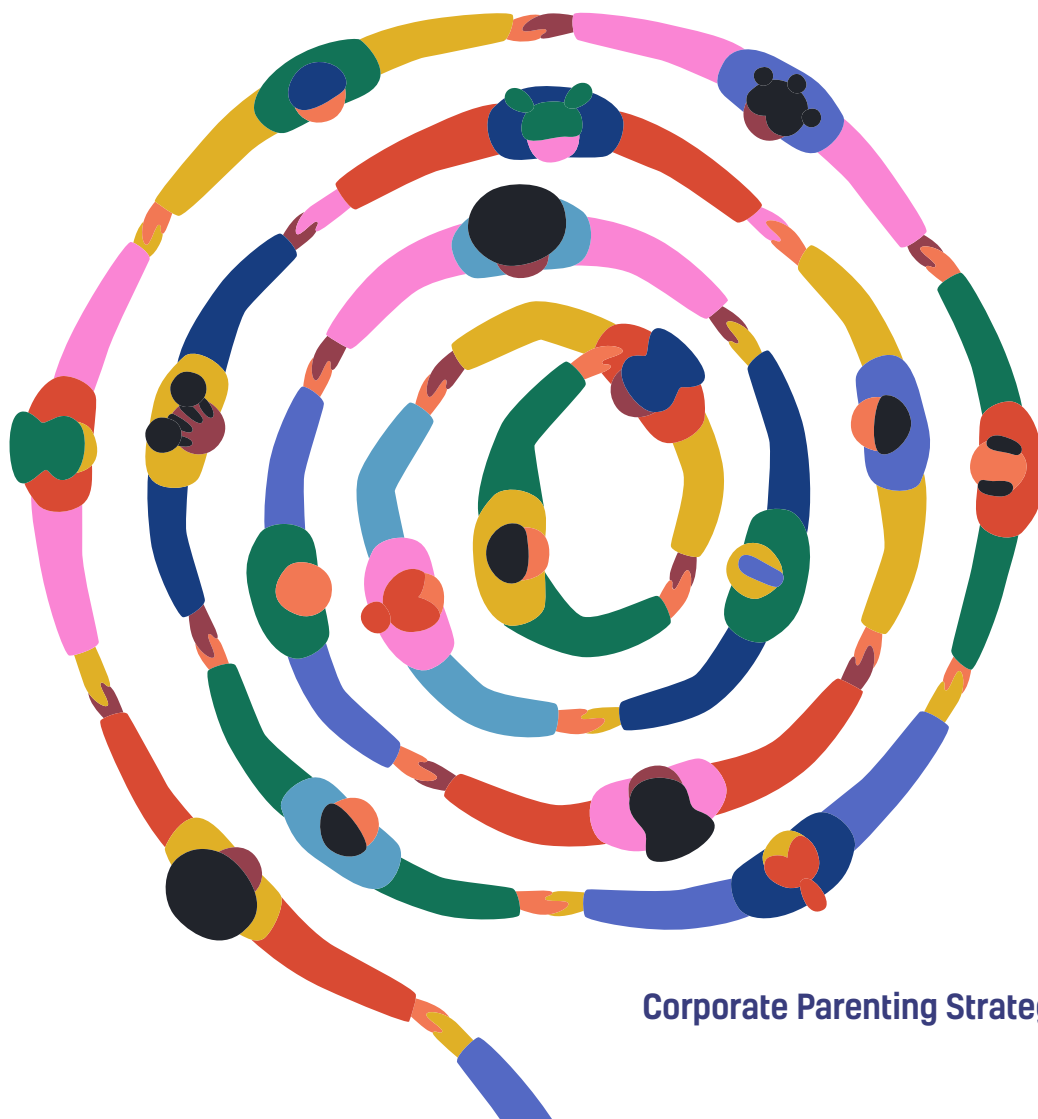
We recognise that the unique experiences and journeys of children in care and care leavers may require us as their corporate parents, to take on additional responsibilities of advocating for and safeguarding them. Many of the children and young people who come into our care will face more challenges before they reach adulthood than any child should have to.

It is our responsibility to stand by them, advocate for their needs, and provide every opportunity for them to reach their full potential.

By working together across the local authority and with our partners, we can create a powerful network of support for our children and young people. This approach ensures that every aspect of a young person's life is attended to, from their health and education to their social and emotional well-being. Together, we can achieve better outcomes and brighter futures for our children and young people.

The ambition of this strategy is to set out what we will be doing in realising our ambitions for the children and young people who are in our care or are our care leavers over the next three years. This document also brings together and summarises the wider context around our children in care.

This strategy is about partnership and working together and we have worked hard to bring together a strategy that aspires to harness all the resources of the local authority and our partners to provide our young people with the best start in life.



# The Role of a Corporate Parent

When a child becomes looked after, South Gloucestershire Council becomes the 'Corporate Parent'. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 sets out seven Corporate Parenting Principles that will enable us to achieve the best possible outcomes for children in care and care leavers. These are:

1. To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people.
2. To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings.
3. To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people.
4. To help those children and young people gain access to, and make the 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 those children and young people.
6. For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work.
7. To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

As a Corporate Parent, we must meet the needs of our children and young people just as any good parent would. We should use all available resources to promote their wellbeing, showing that we care both for and about them. By providing a safe and nurturing environment, we enable them to thrive. It's essential to demonstrate high aspirations for their future, celebrating and championing their achievements. We must ensure they have access to the opportunities and life chances necessary to grow and reach their full potential.

## Did you know?

Every council staff member, councillor, and leader is a Corporate Parent - not just those in Children's Social Care.

That means we all share responsibility for making sure children in care and care leavers are supported, cared for, and given every chance to succeed just like we would for our own children.

We ask ourselves:

**"What if this were my child?  
What would I want for them?"**

# South Gloucestershire’s Children in Care and Care Leavers

## Definition of Children in Care

A child under 18 is considered ‘looked after’ by a Local Authority if they are accommodated for more than 24 hours under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989, are subject to a care order, or are subject to a placement order.

This includes placements with foster carers, in residential homes, or with parents/relatives (in specific cases), and also applies to disabled children accommodated under Section 20.

## Definition of a care leaver:

A care leaver is a person aged between 16 and 25, who has been looked after by a Local Authority for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 is either currently in care or has left care and has been looked after for a period of time after their 16th birthday.

This data helps us understand who the children and young people we look after are, as well as those who continue to receive support as care leavers. The reporting period for this data is April 2024 to March 2025.

## Children and Young People in South Gloucestershire

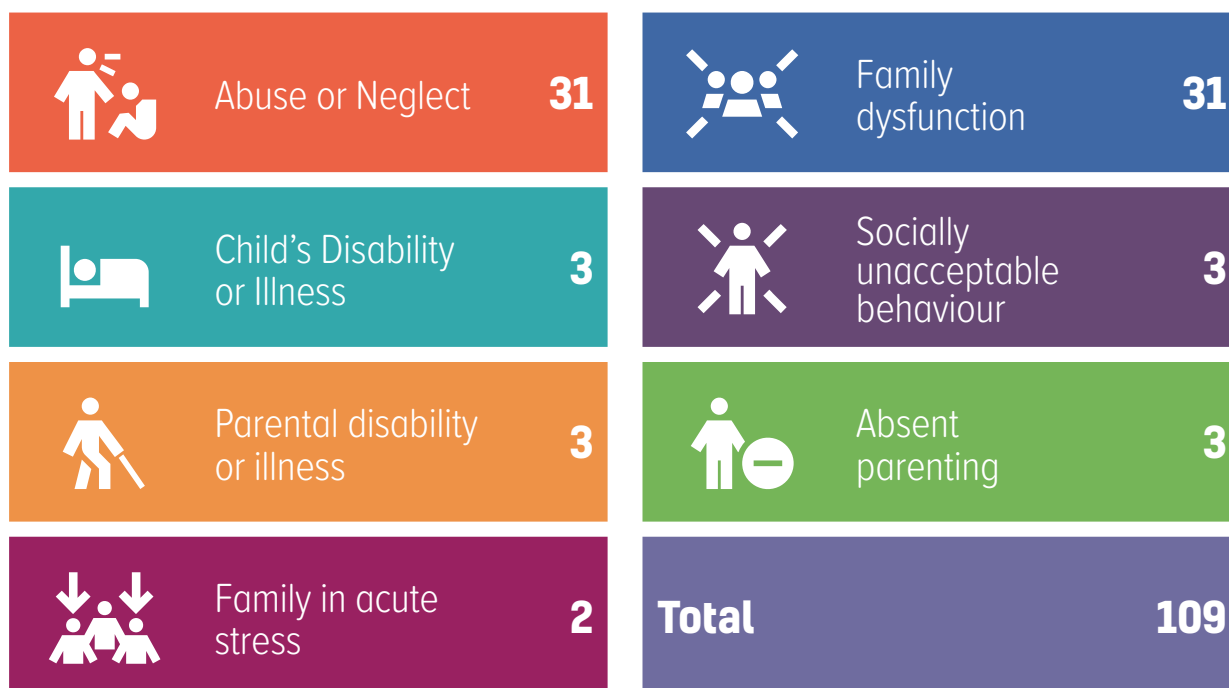
This data helps us understand who the children and young people we look after are, as well as those who continue to receive support as care leavers. The reporting period for this data is April 2024 to March 2025.

### Children in Care 2024/25:

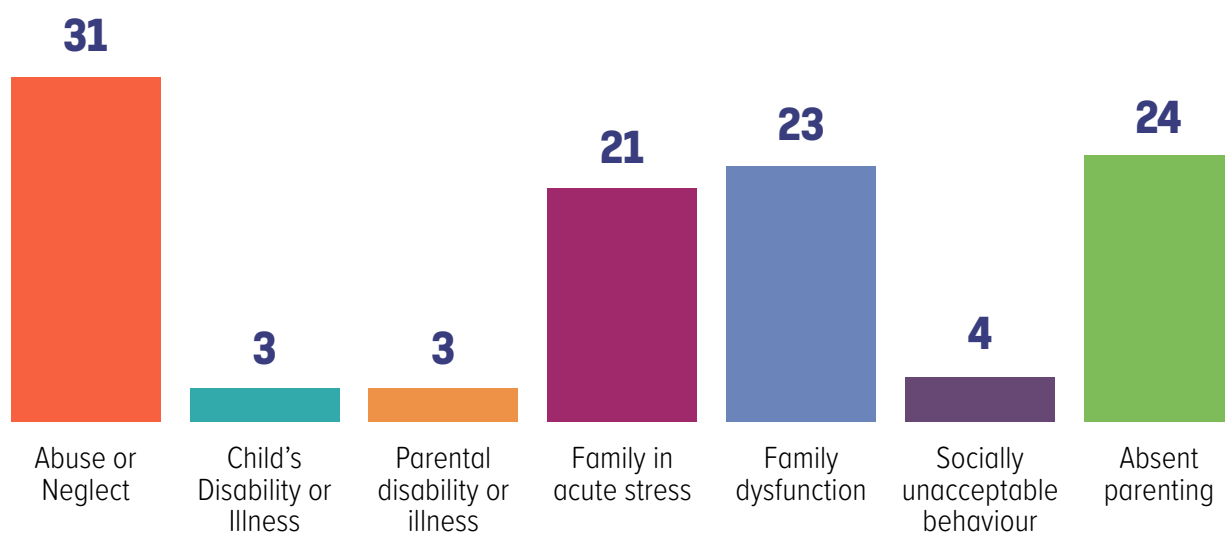
|                                                                                     |                                                        |     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|-----|
|  | Children in Care on 31st March 2025                    | 211 |
|  | Children entering care between April 2024 - March 2025 | 109 |
|                                                                                     | ...Of which the number of UASC entering care           | 24  |
|  | Children leaving care between Apr 2024 - Mar 2025      | 118 |



## Reasons for entering care 2024/25:



## Reasons for entering care April 2024 March 2025:



## Children in Care by placement type on 31st March 2025:

|                                                                         |            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Foster Placement                                                        | 105        |
| Foster Placement (IFA)                                                  | 36         |
| Placed for adoption                                                     | 2          |
| Placed with Parent(s) or other with PR                                  | 7          |
| Children's Homes - subject to Children's Homes regs.                    | 16         |
| Regulated supported accommodation                                       | 30         |
| Residential Care Home                                                   | 7          |
| NHS/Health Trust or other estab. providing medical / nursing care       | 3          |
| Family Centre or Mother & Baby Unit                                     | 2          |
| Residential Schools, except dual-registered as School & Children's Home | 1          |
| Placed in 16-17 years old unregistered placement                        | 2          |
| <b>Total</b>                                                            | <b>211</b> |

## Care Leavers on 31st March 2025:

|                                                    |     |
|----------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Total Care Leavers (excluding 'Eligible' children) | 239 |
|----------------------------------------------------|-----|

### Care Leaver categories:

|                 |     |
|-----------------|-----|
| Relevant        | 3   |
| Former Relevant | 231 |
| Qualifying      | 5   |

## Care Leavers accommodation types on 31st March 2025:

|                                           |            |
|-------------------------------------------|------------|
| Community home or res./NHS estab.         | 5          |
| Emergency accom. eg night shelter, hostel | 6          |
| Former FC/staying put                     | 22         |
| Foyers / similar supported accom.         | 9          |
| In custody                                | 2          |
| Independent living                        | 107        |
| No fixed abode / homeless                 | 1          |
| Not Recorded                              | 12         |
| Ordinary lodgings, without support        | 3          |
| Other accommodation                       | 2          |
| Semi-independent Living                   | 56         |
| Supported lodgings                        | 5          |
| With parent or relatives                  | 9          |
| <b>Total</b>                              | <b>239</b> |

# South Gloucestershire's Promise to Children in Care and Care Leavers

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South Gloucestershire Council has worked with children and young people to create 'Our Promises'.

We are committed to listening to what they have to say, involving them in decisions that affect their lives and in decision making across the Council regarding the services provided to them.

Our Promises relate to the following key themes, and we will ensure that those who have made these promises are supported to keep them:

**Important People:** We will ask you which people are important to you and ensure you keep in contact with them if it is safe to do so.

**Being Involved and Listening:** We will make sure that you are involved in the plans we make with you about your future. We will ask for your opinion and take account of what you say.

**Having Somewhere to Live:** We will make sure that you have somewhere to live and can make it your home.

**Helping you know about what you need:** We will provide you with information about your care, new opportunities and your rights.

**Help to Create a Good Future for me:** We will support you to discover your talents and abilities and find ways for you to make the most of these.

# How Well Are We Doing?

## OFSTED Inspection

In June 2024, South Gloucestershire Children's Services were inspected by OFSTED. We received an overall grading of 'Good'. We were especially pleased that OFSTED recognised the strong experiences and progress of both children in care and care leavers. Inspectors highlighted the significant and positive impact of our dedicated teams in supporting these young people's development, providing stability, and helping them successfully transition into adulthood. Here is what they had to say about the Corporate Parenting Service:

- "Children report that they live in caring, loving homes where they feel they belong. Children are afforded a range of suitable homes to meet their diverse needs, and most children live with foster carers who are well supported and provide good-quality care."
- "Children's care plans are comprehensive and accurately reflect their needs and experiences. Children's voices are recorded throughout their plans and most children attend their meetings and contribute to their planning."
- "Care leavers have positive, trusting and stable relationships with their personal advisers. Personal advisers are highly committed to their young people, are ambitious for their futures and celebrate their achievements."

The full report is available via the OFSTED website. Whilst of course it was a significant achievement to be graded as good, the work continues to improve outcomes for all our children in care and care leavers. Our new strategy has considered and been informed the feedback provided both as part of the formal report and the inspection process itself. We are confident that a new, refocused and ambitious strategy driven by an effective board will be a key part of our ongoing ambitions to improve towards Outstanding.

## What Did We Achieve?

Our previous Corporate Parenting Strategy was last updated in 2023. Since then, we have worked hard to improve services for our children in care and care leavers: Here is a summary of what we have achieved via the Corporate Parenting Board:

## What Areas Could We Improve On?

- Some care leavers told us the Local Offer after age 21 wasn't clear. We've responded by extending access to support up to age 25 and making all information available on the Bridges Care Leaver App.
- We've not yet achieved consistent attendance from young people at the Corporate Parenting Board. We're working with EPIC and the Teen Care Council to make meetings more inclusive, relevant, and youth-friendly, with ambitions to work towards a co-facilitation or co-chairing model, if this is what our young people want.
- We're focused on improving EET outcomes. We've set ourselves a target to ensure every young person not in education, employment, or training will be matched with a service to help them find the right opportunity.
- To support smoother transitions, we're ensuring young people meet their Personal Adviser earlier, before turning 18, so they feel informed and confident about their future.
- We've not had a consistent uptake of our care leavers 'drop in'. We're exploring a more accessible and welcoming Care Leaver Hub, learning from other councils to create a space that works for young people and staff.
- We want every child and young person to understand why they are in care. Our Children in Care team is delivering powerful life story work to help our children and young people make sense of their journey and build a strong sense of identity.
- We're committed to exploring reunification as part of every young person's permanence plan; carefully, proactively, and wherever it is safe, appropriate, and in the child's best interests to do so.

# Corporate Parenting Board

## How do we make sure we are keeping our promises to our children in care and care leavers?

At South Gloucestershire Council, we take our corporate parenting responsibilities seriously. To ensure we are meeting our statutory duties and delivering on our commitments, we have established a Corporate Parenting Board. This board plays a vital role in providing oversight, challenge, and accountability, ensuring that the priorities outlined in our Corporate Parenting Strategy are being delivered effectively.

The Board is chaired by the Cabinet Member for Children & Young People and includes a wide range of voices from across the council, including councillors, directors, senior managers, and frontline staff. We also work closely with key partner agencies, such as health services, to ensure a joined-up approach to supporting our children and young people.

Importantly, the voices of young people are at the heart of our work. Their contributions help shape our decisions and ensure that we remain focused on what truly makes a difference in their lives.

## What do we do:

The Corporate Parenting Board plays a central role in ensuring that children in care and care leavers receive the support they need to thrive. Our work focuses on the following key areas:

### **Monitoring and reviewing services:**

Ensuring that services provided to children in care and care leavers meet their needs.

**Advocating for young people:** Acting as champions for the interests of these young people, ensuring their voices are heard and their needs are prioritised.

**Strategic planning:** Developing and implementing strategies to improve outcomes for children in care and care leavers.

**Accountability:** Holding the council and other partners accountable for their responsibilities as corporate parents.

## Our Priorities

To deliver on our goals, the Board's work is organised into five key priorities. These priorities focus on specific areas of action, progress, and challenge.

- Each priority is driven forward by a Workstream which sets specific actions and targets to ensure we are working toward achieving our aims.
- Each workstream is led by a Senior Manager or partner representative and bringing together responsible and relevant officers from across the council and our partners.
- Leads are responsible for driving progress in their area and reporting back to the Board.
- This structure ensures focused attention and accountability across all aspects of corporate parenting.

Our priorities in this strategy have been clearly outlined to involve young people and to help council staff and partner organisations understand how they can best support and contribute to these goals.



**Our Goal:** Working together with you to shape the services and decisions that affect your life. Making sure we hear your voice, listen to your feedback and use this to ensure we are the best corporate parent we can be for you.

## What are we going to do for you

- Like a parent, we will work with everybody we know across the local authority and with our partnerships to create opportunities for you. Helping everyone understand their role as a corporate parent.
- We will make sure we are capturing your voice, using this to shape our services and plans for you. Being innovative in how we reach out to you all.

## How will we do it

- We will ensure there are opportunities of work experience, apprenticeships, as well as discounted offers within the local authority and beyond with our partners, that are specifically aimed at supporting you.
- We will maintain and continue to promote our extensive local offer. We will continue to work the Care Leaver Covenant and encourage businesses to create resources and opportunities for care leavers.
- We will strengthen our feedback and participation work to enable everyone to have their say. We welcome your views, ideas, and challenges on the services and support you have received.
- We will support you to understand who your corporate parents are and create opportunities for you to tell them about your experiences and journey so far.

- We will build understanding within the local authority and our partners as to the responsibilities we all have as corporate parent; building on what it means for care leavers to be a protected characteristic.
- We will become a trailblazer for partners and organisations to demonstrate what it means to be a corporate parent.

## How you will know we have done it

- There will be an increase in the number of work opportunities and programmes across the local authority and our partners which have been created especially for you.
- You will all be accessing our Bridges app, know about the offers created for you and will be taking advantage of these as they continue to expand.
- Young people will be represented at meetings and forums. There will be opportunities for you all to share your feedback either via your worker or in our participation groups.
- You will hear directly from us about how your suggestions and ideas have been used to make positive change within children services and across the local authority.
- Departments across the council will consistently consider care leavers as a protected characteristic in their decision making and planning.





**Our Goal:** Like any good parent, we are ambitious for you and what you can achieve, whatever that looks like for you – the sky is the limit! Everything we do will be about supporting you to progress working through barriers and challenges. We want there to be opportunities to suit everyone and we will support you along the way.

### What are we going to do for you

- As a child in care, your network, including the Virtual School will work together with education providers to deliver you a tailored education package that sets you on the route to success.
- As you approach adulthood and preparing for the world of work, the local authority and its partners will help you to experience different employment options, helping you to explore opportunities and discovers new skills.

### How will we do it

- We will ensure that every young person in care has an up-to-date Personal Education Plan which they are aware of and understand.
- We will work with departments across the council and our partners to provide you with work experience opportunities. This includes building upon our Education, Employment and Training Programmes and providing young people with apprenticeship opportunities.
- Work with our partners to develop opportunities and programmes.

- Understand the barriers young people face when looking for employment and education opportunities and what this means for them.

### How you will know we have done it

- You will be involved in the planning of your educational journey and understand what you would like to do in the future.
- You will have the opportunity to spend time with different departments across the council and learn new skills.
- You will have the support from HR to apply for apprenticeships and continue to be offered guaranteed interviews should you meet the criteria.
- Our Education Employment and Training figures for both our children in care and care leavers will improve, meaning more of you will be in some form of education, employment or training.
- You'll have access to support programmes which promote education, employment and training opportunities.



**Our Goal:** As a good parent, we want to be sure that you stay healthy, both physically and mentally. We acknowledge that as children in care and care leavers, you will be impacted by your adverse childhood experiences and trauma. Together we will work to ensure you can get the help you need, when you need it so that you can live a healthy and fulfilling life.

### What are we going to do for you

We will work to ensure that your health needs are being prioritised and that you are receiving services in a timely and responsive way, including when you are transitioning into adulthood.

Your emotional and mental wellbeing will be at the centre of our work. We want our services and staff to be trauma-informed and work in a way that responds to your needs.

### How will we do it

We will work with our health care providers to improve access to health services for you, responding to your individual needs as well as listening to your feedback and using this to create change.

Your mental health and wellbeing will be our priority. This will include ensuring the care you receive is trauma informed and as and when you need it you will receive targeted and specialist mental health support.

Through our Local Offer, we will support you to access activities that promotes your physical, emotional and mental health needs. You will also have access to tools that support your mental health – such as the mental health toolkit on the Bridges App as well as expanding counselling sessions via Ask Jan.

When you are nearing adulthood, we will work with you and those around you to ensure a seamless transition to adult services, if your needs require it.

### How you will know we have done it

As a child in care, you are able to access regular health assessment and appointments, such as one's dentist in a timely way. This will be captured in our data.

As a care leaver, we will know that your experience of health care providers has improved when accessing their service becomes quicker, more accessible and tailored to your needs.

You will know that your specific needs are met as you will feel supported to access services, particularly where you have protected characteristics such as being a care leaver, having a disability or where English is not your first language and/or, you are an unaccompanied asylum seeker.

You are able to access community services and opportunities which support your overall health and wellbeing.



**Our Goal:** You will have a safe, stable, and caring place to call home and live in an environment where you can thrive. Children in care will have access to high quality care and living arrangements. Housing options for care leavers will be individually right for them to move onto independent, stable living arrangements, when is right for you.

### What are we going to do for you

If you need to come into care, we'll work closely with your carers to make sure your home environment is safe, supportive, and meets your individual needs.

When leaving care, you will have access to a variety of housing options that will provide the right level of support and enable you to prepare for independent living.

### How will we do it

We will continue to recruit and retain highly skilled foster carers within South Gloucestershire. We will provide the right training and support for foster carers and continue to expand the networks of foster carers via Mockingbird Constellations.

Work with our commissioned services, placement providers and local partners to secure the right homes for you; this will include residential and semi-independent provisions. We will be proactive in identifying the needs of children in care and care leavers by using data analysis.

Promote all housing options for you and ensure that you are well prepared for your future. This includes being able to remain with your foster carers in staying put arrangements, moving to semi-independent or supporting you to access your own tenancy.

Ensure you are well prepared for living on your own and provide tailored support to make sure this happens.

### How you will know we have done it

We will have recruited more foster carers meaning an increase of in-house foster homes available for you whilst you are in care.

We will have launched and maintained 3 children's homes with our Partner Phoenix Homes, meaning those who need residential care can remain in the area.

- If you were an unaccompanied asylum-seeking young person, there are specific homes created for you, supporting you with your asylum journey and preparing you for independence.
- There will be more supported housing options available across South Gloucestershire.
- You will be prepared for independent living and have the opportunity to access workshops to prepare you for the realities of this.



**Our Goal:** We want all young people to feel accepted and that they belong in their community. Wherever possible, we will do all we can to support young people to be cared for by those within their networks. Where this is not possible, we will ensure that all young people understand why they have come into care and support them to maintain and build lasting relationships with their family and network.

### What are we going to do for you

- We will work with you and key people in your network to help you understand your care journey, responding to questions as they arise, keeping you safe and supporting you as you transition out of care.
- We will make sure that at all times you have a plan for how we are supporting you, those who care for you and how we support you as you grow older. This includes, thinking about how you would return home to your networks or how we would achieve the best possible permanency plan for you should you remain in our care.

### How will we do it

- We will work with you and those around you to ensure safety plans are in place and that you know who you can talk to when you do not feel safe. This includes helping you and those who support you to understand and be alert to indicators of grooming or exploitation.
- We will work with partners to identify and disrupt potential people and places that might be putting young people at risk outside their homes.
- Together with you and your networks, we will ensure that you have a long-term plan for permanence. This will be regularly reviewed and focused on ensuring you are being cared for and have stability.
- Your practitioners and carers will work in a trauma informed way, drawing upon support from specialist teams and services as required.
- Plans capture the voice of the young person and are used to plan for their future and help them understand their experiences.
- We want all transitions to be planned in an effective way with the young person at the centre of this.

- We will keep across and implement developments and changes in national policy, including those related to Adoption, Kingships and Special Guardianship Orders.

### How you will know we have done it

- You will be involved in creating safety plans alongside workers.
- You will have access to a range of support options.
- You will feel safe to access support and leisure activities in the community.
- You will live in a home that is consistent and provides you with the right support. This would also be captured in our data and show a reduction in placement moves throughout your time in care.
- Our aim is for you to have a support network around at all times, including after leaving care.
- There will be a reduction of young people being cared for in residential and/or out of county. They will be supported to return to people within their networks in a safe way.
- Your practitioners and carers will have up to date training and be supported with their wellbeing through regular supervision.
- You will have an up-to-date child in care plan or pathway plan which you have been a part of, and it makes sense to you.
- We will have conversations earlier, if this what you want and as a result you will be aware of what the future holds for you and how you will be supported to achieve this.

# Our Values and Commitment

In South Gloucestershire, our values and commitment underpin all that we do and how we work.

As a Council **we care**. We are dedicated to collaborating with our Partners to create opportunities that ensure the children and young people in our care receive every chance and encouragement to reach their full potential.

Our Values and Commitments set out how we will work together to achieve our goals, further improve services and ensure that every child and young person in South Gloucestershire has the best start in life, thrives and is best prepared for a successful adult life.

This Corporate Parenting Strategy responds to the South Gloucestershire Council Plan 2024-2028 and our Children's Services Strategic Plan 2021-2031.

The Children's Services Strategic Plan will deliver our commitments and vision by focusing on four themes:

## Children at the heart of everything we do

**"Nothing about us without us"** is our pledge created with our children in care and those with care experience.

- We will work in partnership with children and young people.
- We will enable them to voice their thoughts, feelings, ambitions and needs.
- We will listen to what they have to say and put their interests at the heart of decisions, ensuring they are involved and informed throughout.

## Providing the right help in the right way at the right time

With the right early support from preventative services, children, young people and families achieve better outcomes.

- Improved educational participation/achievement.
- Reduced health risks to children.
- Reduced involvement with police/judiciary system.

## Delivering social work and safeguarding practice which is consistently of the highest quality

We believe there are four key strands to delivering consistent best-practice social work.

- Ensuring manageable caseloads for staff.
- Enabling high quality regular supervision and oversight.
- Giving staff the tools they need to make their jobs easier.
- Offering high quality training and development, nurturing talent and allowing staff to do their jobs to the best of their abilities.

## Local support to help children build a life in their own community

Children want to grow up with their families, with their friends and with people they know locally. Working with partners and foster carers, we believe we can achieve this, bringing benefits for children, families and the council.

- Less disruptive for children and families.
- Easier to ensure young people's needs are being met.
- More closely aligned with other support services e.g. health and education.

The Council Plan sets out how everyone in the Council will support children and young people. This plan focuses on:

- To get the best start in life, all our children need love and support from those around them.
- Reducing the inequality gaps in education so that more children get good outcomes.
- Supporting care leavers into work, training and reduce our figures of those who are not in employment, education or some form of training.
- Supporting other organisations to take on a stronger Corporate Parenting Role.



# Your Feedback

We value your feedback and want to hear from you, whether things are going well or not. Please let us know if:

- We are not keeping our promises.
- You are unhappy with the support you are receiving.
- There are areas where we need to improve.
- You have feedback about a particular service we provide.

We also love to hear when things are going well. For example, if you have received support from your worker that you are happy about, please share your positive experiences with us.

You can always ask to speak to someone. Share how things are going with your foster carer, support worker, social worker, personal adviser, or independent reviewing officer (IRO).

Additionally, you can join our Teen Care Council and Experience Panel in Care.

These groups meet regularly and provide their feedback directly to the Corporate Parenting Board as well as other services within the council and our partners. To join TCC and EPIC please contact your social worker or e-mail [youthparticipation@southglos.gov.uk](mailto:youthparticipation@southglos.gov.uk).

You can also use the Mind of My Own App (MOMO). We are using technology to improve the way you can reach out to us as we know how important it is to listen to you. Talk to your social worker about this new tool.





# Important words and what they mean

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## Care leaver/Care experienced

When you turn 18, you become a care leaver. Even though you're now legally an adult, the council still has a responsibility to support you until you're 25.

We sometimes refer to care leavers from the age of 16.

## Childhood trauma

Childhood trauma refers to distressing or harmful experiences that happen during childhood and have a lasting impact on a young person's emotional, psychological, or physical wellbeing.

## Children's Services

In South Gloucestershire, Children Services is the department responsible for supporting you while you are in care and as you leave care. They work with you to make sure you have the help you need.

## Corporate Parent

The Local Authority has different departments, and together they share responsibility for supporting care leavers. This is known as Corporate Parenting, meaning the council acts like a parent to ensure you are safe, supported, and have opportunities to thrive.

## Eligible

An eligible care leaver is a young person aged 16 or 17 who is still in care and has been looked after for at least 13 weeks since turning 14, including time after their 16th birthday.

They qualify for support like a personal adviser and a pathway plan to help prepare for leaving care.

## Former relevant

A former relevant care leaver is someone aged 18 to 25 who was in care after age 14 and was still in care at age 16 or 17.

They qualify for ongoing support, including a personal adviser, a pathway plan, and help with things like housing, education, and finances.

## Foster placement

A foster placement is when a child or young person who cannot live with their birth family is placed in the care of a foster carer.

The foster carer provides a safe, stable, and supportive home while the child is looked after, either short-term or long-term, depending on their needs and care plan.

## IFA

An IFA stands for Independent Fostering Agency.

These are organisations (separate from the local authority) that recruit, train, and support foster carers to provide placements for children and young people in care.

## Local authority/council

The Local Authority (also known as the Council) is part of the government and is responsible for providing services in your area. This includes education, housing, and social care.

## Local Offer

The Local Offer is a document you can find on your council's website and on the Bridges App. It explains the support available to care leavers and what you're entitled to.

This includes things like discounts from local businesses, help with going to college or university, and grants to help you settle into your home. It also covers support for your health, wellbeing, and becoming independent.

## Looked After/Being in Care

If you are supported by social services and have a social worker, this is called being in care or being looked after. You might live with a foster carer, in a residential home, or in supported accommodation with staff who are there to help you.



### **Parental responsibility**

Parental responsibility means having the legal rights, duties, powers, and responsibilities to care for and make decisions about a child's upbringing.

This includes things like providing a home, protecting and maintaining the child, and making decisions about education and health care.

### **Participation**

Participation means actively involving young people in decisions that affect their lives.

This can include having a say in their care plans, contributing to service design, giving feedback, or being part of forums and boards like youth councils or corporate parenting panels.

### **Pathway Plan**

Your Pathway Plan is a key part of your journey as a care leaver. It's a document that sets out the support you'll receive from the Care Leavers Team and helps you work towards living independently.

It includes your goals, the steps to achieve them, and the help available to you—whether that's with housing, education, work, or your wellbeing.

### **Personal Advisor (PA)**

A Personal Advisor will be there to support you until you turn 25. Your PA will give you advice, information, and practical support to help you navigate life after care. They can help you understand your finances, build independent living skills, and make plans for your future.

### **Placement**

A placement refers to the living arrangement made for a child or young person who is in care.

This could be with foster carers, in a residential children's home, with extended family (kinship care), or in supported accommodation, depending on their needs and age.

### **Qualifying**

A qualifying care leaver is a young person aged 16–25 who was in care but doesn't meet the full criteria for more extensive support under the care leaver categories. They may have been in care for a shorter time or under different arrangements.

### **Relevant**

A relevant care leaver is a young person aged 16 or 17 who has left care but was previously an eligible care leaver (in care for at least 13 weeks after age 14 and still in care at 16).

### **Social Worker**

Your social worker is responsible for supporting you while you're in care. They're the main person you should speak to when you need help or have questions. Their role is to make sure you're safe, listened to, and getting the support you need.

### **UASC**

UASC stands for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Child. It refers to a child or young person under 18 who is applying for asylum in the UK and is not accompanied by a parent or legal guardian.

These young people are often placed in the care of a local authority and may become eligible for support as care leavers once they turn 18, depending on their time in care and immigration status.



[www.southglos.gov.uk/LeavingCare](http://www.southglos.gov.uk/LeavingCare)

