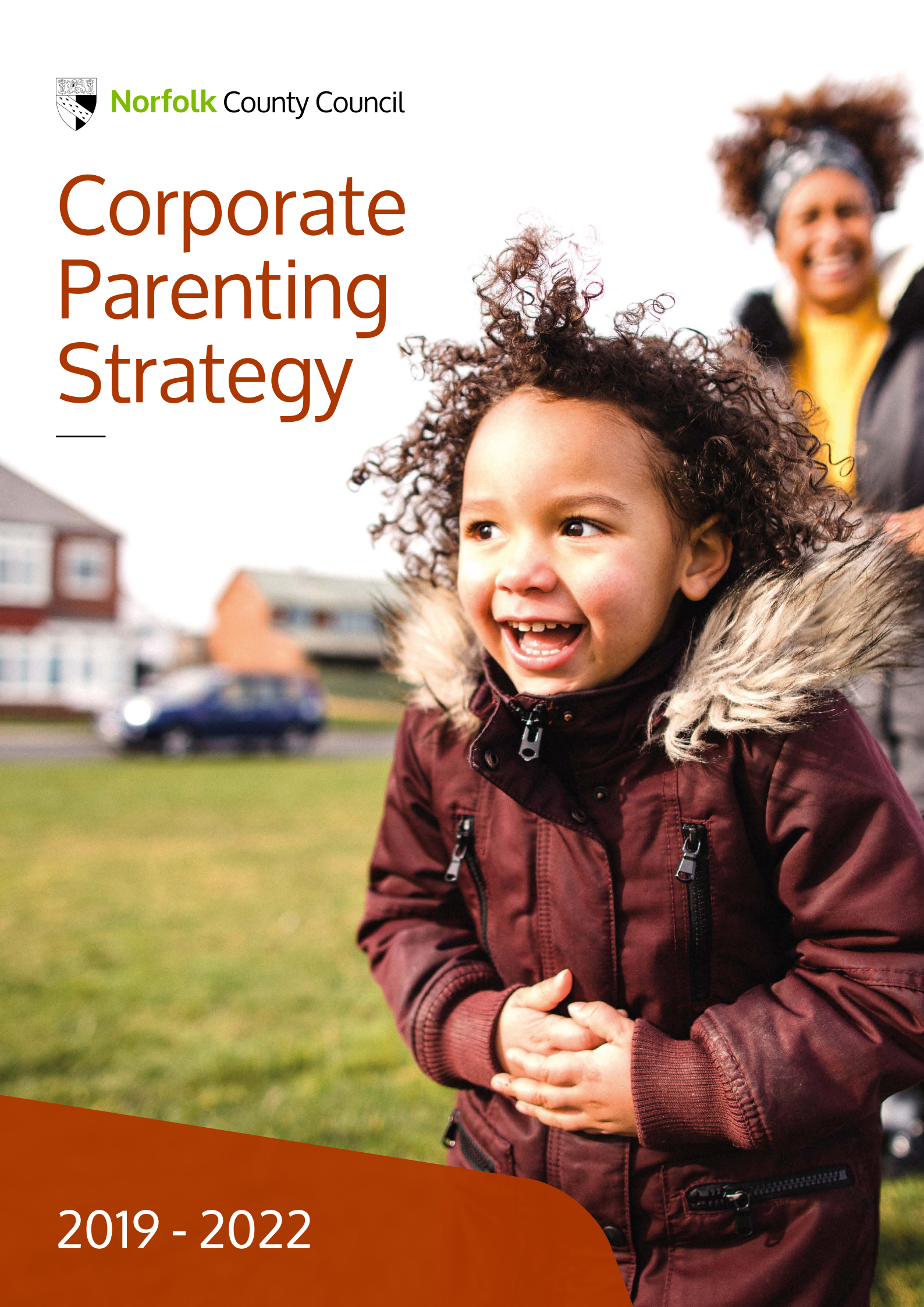




Norfolk County Council

Corporate Parenting Strategy



2019 - 2022



“I came into care quite late and when I did I was really confused and had no goals or dreams my life had been just coping day to day. My social worker has made a huge difference she has helped me think about my future, attended all school events with me and made sure I get all the support I need. She has even made sure that I start having interests outside school so that I can socialise and learn new skills. Without her I know I would not be doing as well as I am and be thinking about and planning for my future.”

A - aged 15

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FOREWORD

John Fisher

Portfolio Holder Children's Services

I am pleased to introduce Norfolk's Corporate Parenting Strategy, which sets out our commitment to ensure children and young people in our county receive the very best care, support and outcomes. There are many reasons why a child may come into care. Families can often struggle at different points in a child's life and when this happens we work with them, offering targeted interventions to support them to stay together. Caring for and protecting children and young people is one of the most important jobs we do, if it is not safe for a child to stay at home the local authority will step in to give them the care, support and stability that they deserve. In these circumstances we work actively with families to ensure their children only remain in our care for as long as it is necessary.

In Norfolk, we work very closely with our children and young people to ensure they are listened to, engaged with, that they are safe, healthy and happy and that they achieve the very best at school and in later life. This close partnership working is reflected throughout this strategy. As corporate parents to the young people we care for, we want the very best for them. It is our responsibility to make sure they receive a standard of care that we would consider to be good enough for our own children. My colleagues across the council and I take this responsibility extremely seriously.

"I am very proud of the progress we have made in Norfolk over the last few years."

In Norfolk we have an active Norfolk In Care Council (NiCC). NiCC provides a safe and secure forum for young people to express their views informally about life in our care. We have this year launched our Young Inspectors training and we will begin to see young people actively involved in service reviews and delivery.

This Strategy informs our children and young people about what we are going to do to improve their life chances and opportunities. It also informs our partners and the public about our ambitions for the children and young people of Norfolk.



FOREWORD

Rose Smith

Chair of NiCC. Co-Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board

As the current chair of the Norfolk in Care Council (NiCC) and Co-Chair of the Norfolk Corporate Parenting board I am really pleased that I was asked to write something for this strategy. Having been in care in Norfolk for a long time and having been involved with the NiCC for the last 7 years I am amazed how much difference there is. The voice and opinions of children and young people can be seen everywhere, in the development of services, through young inspectors' visits and recruitment of staff. Norfolk's care experienced children and young people are really being recognised as experts by experience and their opinions and feedback are being valued and used.

When I first started at the NiCC group we often felt we were always chasing people, having to start pieces of work we identified, now it's the total opposite with waiting lists in some areas for professionals who want to get the opinions of young people.

It is so great to hear young people talk positively about their care experiences. When I came into care over 12 years ago things were quite different and just hearing the current NiCC members makes me realise how far we have come. They are so much more positive, can identify what's going well with ease and are so much better informed about what's happening so nothing is hidden. This means where things aren't so great for example changes of social worker, they know how hard people are working to change that and instead of becoming frustrated they join in, asking how can we help.

“Working together, using each other's strengths supporting each other in any way we can sure sounds like family to me, maybe a crazy, large, slightly dysfunctional family at times with huge extended family lines but aren't they the best sort?”



Sara Tough

Executive Director of Children's Services

I am extremely honoured to be the Executive Director of Children's Services in Norfolk and feel privileged to act as Corporate Parent to our children in care and those leaving care. I am often humbled by what I hear and witness when staff or young people tell me about the achievements and triumphs of young people who may not have had the best start in life, but with the right quality of support and encouragement from Children's Services, alongside a range of partners, have gone on to succeed in adulthood and lead fulfilling independent lives.

"That is why I am determined to continually build on and strengthen our offer and services even further."

We have high ambitions for all our children, and our Vital Signs vision ensures we work as a whole system with whole families in relationship based, strengths oriented and outcome focused ways. We think it is vital that children are resilient and able to learn, can build positive and lifelong relationships and receive family-based care.

As such, whilst I want the absolute best for our children in care, whether that is achieving permanence, stability or success in what they do, we are also investing heavily in better helping families to stay together where it is safe and sustainable to do so. This should involve returning children home from care if we can, by ensuring we work with their family networks throughout, and explore all options to promote long term family solutions. We are providing our practitioners with greater capacity, tools and training to undertake more direct work that affects positive change and builds strong relationships, as well as putting in a range of intensive edge of care services, whether therapeutic support, Family Group Conferencing or short break alternatives that means children only come into care when absolutely necessary.

OUR STRATEGY

Our strategy outlines our vision, commitment and expectations in supporting care experienced children and young people in Norfolk

As corporate parents we have high aspirations for the children and young people in our care; wanting the best for them, supporting them to achieve in all areas of their lives and ensuring a smooth transition to a successful adulthood. To support this endeavour, we are committed to listening carefully to those children and young people and involving them in decision making and service development.

We want Norfolk children to be able to look back on their childhoods with positive and happy memories which will equip them to stride forward confidently, grasp opportunities, experiences and have successful adult lives. Care experienced children and young people deserve special attention in achieving this ambition. We will ensure that they are supported to overcome the difficulties they experienced before becoming looked after by the Local Authority, as well as getting the best from their experience of living away from home.



The Norfolk in Care Council (NiCC) represents our children and young people. We want all the children we have corporate parenting responsibilities for to be members of the NiCC. Since our last strategy, we have seen a number of key developments which have been led by NiCC.

We have recruited and trained our first group of Young Inspectors, and published our SNAP document, which is a matching tool co-produced by the NiCC and the fostering service. It provides children with the opportunity to share more information about themselves and helps the fostering team when looking at matching children and carers. The NiCC named the document SNAP after the card game where getting the right match means winning. The NiCC also completed work on our version of the "Language of Care" report, and our locality based NiCC meetings are going from strength to strength.

In Norfolk we want the voices of our children to be heard and considered and NiCC are the fundamental mechanism for achieving this.





“Being part of the NiCC is really important to me, it makes me feel listened to and gives me a chance to use my experiences and the experiences of others to help improve services and develop new ones. It was also the first time I had met other young people in the same situation as me. Being care experienced can feel very lonely but being part of a group helps deal with that.”

H - aged 15

The main objectives of the NiCC are;

1. To look at the services provided for our children and young people.
2. We will ensure that the voice of our children is heard and considered in all areas that affect their lives including service change, development and evaluation.
3. To provide links to locality management and teams ensuring that locality issues are identified early, and solutions co-produced with the relevant NiCC group.
4. To work in partnership with Children’s Services management and front line staff to ensure that our children get the best possible service.
5. To promote and improve the image of our children and to challenge stereotyping.
6. Making sure that private companies that work with our children and young people are aware of their needs and support our children.
7. Enabling NiCC to participate in the review of services provided for our children and young people.
8. Ensuring that NiCC have a prominent position within the governance arrangements including the chair of NiCC co-chairing the Corporate Parenting Board alongside the Lead Member for Children’s Services.
9. To work in partnership with elected members, senior managers, partners and front line staff to ensure NCC keeps the promise it has published for its care experienced children and young people.
10. We will support NiCC to pro-actively raise the awareness of our children and young people by contributing to the many initiatives regarding apprenticeships and working in partnership with agencies and community services to enable the best possible start in life and transition to adulthood.
11. Supporting the members of NiCC to undertake young inspectors training and be involved in preparing our children’s homes for Ofsted inspection.

The Promise

The Promise sets out the commitments made to our children and young people by those who are corporate parents for them. These commitments are endorsed by the Corporate Parenting Board. As corporate parents we want the very best for the children and young people we are responsible for.

We will prioritise our commitments to the Promise by:

- Using the Promise as a guide to the way we work and delivering on the commitments outlined within this document.
- Celebrating achievements and organising an annual celebration event.
- To ensure our children are aware of their rights by sharing the Promise with them, making sure it's understood and that all children and young people know how to gain support via advocacy if needed.
- The development of 2 websites one being the local offer for care-leavers and one for younger children and young people. These websites will provide comprehensive information on their rights and entitlements and also provide a place to highlight services that are available to them from partners and other organisations.

We will at all times place our children at the heart of what we do.



What is a Corporate Parent?

Most children and young people in Norfolk live and thrive with their families, but for some **this is not possible.**

There are many reasons why a child cannot be cared for in the family home, but primarily this is because they are at risk from harm. In such circumstances Norfolk County Council and partner agencies have responsibility to intervene and ensure that all the child's needs are met and that they are protected. If it is believed that they cannot be protected, they will need to live away from home e.g. with extended family or friends, or in the care of foster carers. Norfolk County Council becomes their Corporate Parent.

The term 'Corporate Parent' identifies a collective responsibility of the Council, elected members, employees and partner agencies for providing the best possible care and protection for children or young people who are 'Looked After', that is, children and young people for whom the authority has, or shares, Parental Responsibility, or for whom the Authority

provides care and accommodation on behalf of their parent.

Care experienced children and young people will look to the whole Council and partners to provide them with the best possible care and safety, and for ensuring their education and health needs are fully met. Care experienced young adults can expect care and support towards independence through to age 25.

In Norfolk we are changing the language we use when referring to care experienced children and young people in accordance with NiCC response to the "Language of Care" report. Acronyms such as LAC or CIC will not be used, and there will be ongoing consultation with care experienced children and young people to achieve language that we all can agree is appropriate, empowering and respectful.

"Words are really powerful, you only realise how powerful they can be when they are used about you and your life. They alter the way other people see you and how you see yourself. They are like labels, you don't feel like a person or an individual you just feel like a case or statistic. It's even worse when everyone around you uses the same language, teachers, health people, social workers, carers all using words that label you as different at the same time they are trying to persuade you that you are the same as any other child."

J - aged 16

Corporate Parenting in action

As the 'Corporate Parent' we will work together with our partners to provide the best possible care and protection for our children.

The collective responsibility was first laid out in the Children Act 1989. All children and young people have needs that must be met in order to thrive. In our role as Corporate Parents in Norfolk we are committed to ensuring needs are met, ambitions are fulfilled, and expectations are exceeded.

To do this we must ask ourselves three key questions when considering how we help and support children and young people in our care.

1. Would this be good enough for my child?
2. Is there more that we can achieve?
3. What do children and young people think?

"My carers stuck with me when I was being a real pain. I think I was seeing how much they wanted me to stay, because everyone else has left. They didn't give up just talked to me and told me all the time they wanted me to stay and they wanted to help me sort out any problems I had. Three years later I am still here but not a pain, well not so much of a pain and I feel safe and cared about. If they didn't care they would have given up on me."

T - aged 14



Children and Social Work Act 2017

Corporate Parenting Principles

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 sets out 7 Corporate Parenting Principles to achieve the best possible outcomes for our children and young people who live away from home.

When our children move to adulthood, we follow the principles to ensure we provide our care experienced young adults with the support and stability that any child would expect as they prepare to move forward with their lives.



To act in the best interest, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people in care.

To encourage children and young people in care to express their views, wishes and feelings.

To take account of the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people.

To help children and young people to gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners.

To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people.

For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work.

To prepare those children and young people in care for adulthood and independent living.

Our Priorities

Norfolk Children's Services overarching strategy, 'Vital Signs for our Children' underpins all the work we do.

Signs of Safety, Signs of Well-being and Signs of Success are the Vital Signs we want to see to ensure children's happiness and health. We believe it is vital that children are resilient and able to learn, build positive, long-lasting relationships and receive family-based care.

To achieve this, all our work must be:



Relationship Based

We work to build consistent and trusted relationships with children, young people, and families.



Strengths Orientated

We identify the strengths of children, young people and families and build on them to create positive change.



Outcome Focused

We do whatever it takes to achieve the best outcome for children, young people and families.



Whole Family

We think about family in the widest sense in all the work we do.



Whole System

We work in partnership to get the right support for children, young people and families regardless of organisational boundaries.

It is important to join-up this Corporate Parenting strategy with the other key strategies and developments that affect our care experienced children and young people.

Some of the ways in which these priorities have been implemented through transformation programme, Safer Children and Resilient Families (SCARF), and development projects to benefit children and young people in our care are:

Valuing Care Model

A strength-based way of describing children and young people's needs that facilitates the better

Family Values and Enhanced Foster Care Service

Increasing the number of Norfolk County Council Foster Carers offering high quality local placements for children in our care, including some of our young people with the most complex needs.

Family Networking and Family Group Conferencing

Ensuring we always identify and engage with a child or young persons extended family, friends, and potentially previous Foster Carers, so they stay connected with them and their community of origin, as well as support family based solutions and lifelong networks.

No Wrong Door

Using our residential homes differently as short stay alternatives to long term care, with multi-agency teams wrapping support around young people, and outreaching intensively to them and their whole families for as long as it takes to achieve positive change.

Stronger Families

Intensive therapeutic support provided to families in crisis to prevent children coming into care, or assisting their safe return home from care if that is in their best interests.

Increased Semi Independent Accommodation and Staying Close, Staying Connected

Ensuring that young people in our care approaching and into adulthood are provided with sufficient high quality accommodation that supports and promotes their successful move into independence.

Coram Voice Bright Spots Survey

Ensuring that young people in our care approaching and into adulthood are provided with sufficient high quality accommodation that supports and promotes their successful move into independence.

Inside Out

A service that provides mentoring and coaching for young people in residential care to help with a transition back to family life, whether with foster carers or back to their birth families.

Stronger Futures

A team of dedicated and specialist workers who work with some of our most vulnerable care experienced young people as adults facing homelessness to ensure they are support into accommodation and housing.

Norfolk Area Special Educational Needs and/or Disability (SEND) Strategy

We want children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities , their families and the professionals who support them to know that we have a joint commitment to making services for SEND in Norfolk the best they can possibly be.

"Its really good to go to the Corporate Parenting Board. We get a chance to talk about what's important to us and to show them what we have been working on. It also means we get to be part of the conversations that happen there so our opinions are included. We can take that back to our groups then and consult with other children and young people or come up with some recommendations."



The Corporate Parenting Board

Norfolk's Corporate Parenting Board is co-chaired by the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, and the Chair of NiCC.

This provides a direct link of accountability to both the NCC Cabinet and to the children and young people of NiCC. The Corporate Parenting Board has a responsibility to:

- Provide a forum for children and young people in Norfolk to talk about issues relating to their care experiences and to participate in decision making.
- Make sure that the voice of the child and young person influences both policy and the services that they receive, and that young people are engaged with any action intended to develop and improve services.
- Maintain a strategic overview of the development of all new policies, procedures and initiatives to ensure these are in line with local and national priorities and objectives including the Corporate Parenting Strategy, and that they will effectively meet the needs of our children.
- Monitor and review the quality and effectiveness of services across the council, partner agencies and commissioned services to achieve continuing improvements in outcomes for looked after children and care leavers and ensure that appropriate action is taken where services fail to respond to their responsibilities for our cared for children and young people.
- Ensure that the achievements of our children and young people are highlighted and celebrated.
- Monitor the performance of the Council by receiving progress reports on the key performance indicators including complaints and compliments, internal audits and external scrutiny including inspection and examine ways in which the Council and partner agencies can improve the life chances of our cared for children and young people.
- Review respective annual reports of Adoption, Fostering, Residential Children's Homes, Complaints, Independent Statutory Service, Virtual School, Children in care Council.
- Act as a critical friend.



The Strategic group

The Strategic group, made up of leads from each of the Corporate Parenting Board priority subgroups, is responsible for bringing aspects of practice, performance information, policy, innovation and successes they feel should be highlighted, to the attention of the Corporate Parenting Board.

The priority subgroups are:

- The **Education, Employment and Training** Subgroup
- The **Health and Well-being** Subgroup
- The **Housing and Accommodation** Subgroup
- The **Reducing Criminalisation and Exploitation** Subgroup
- The **Care Leavers** Subgroup
- The **Practice Development** Subgroup

"I have to use a wheelchair because of some health problems, my dad couldn't cope with that and so I went to live with my nan, I still see my dad most days and he helps me get around to the doctor and stuff. Living with my nan is best for everyone it takes pressure off me and my dad and so we get on way better now."

S - aged 13



Delivering the strategy

This strategy covers a three-year period from 2019 to 2022.

Delivery of the strategy will be underpinned by the six subgroups working to their priorities, in partnership with the Locality In Care Council Groups. These will enable us to measure and report on the differences we have made to the lives of care experienced children and young people.

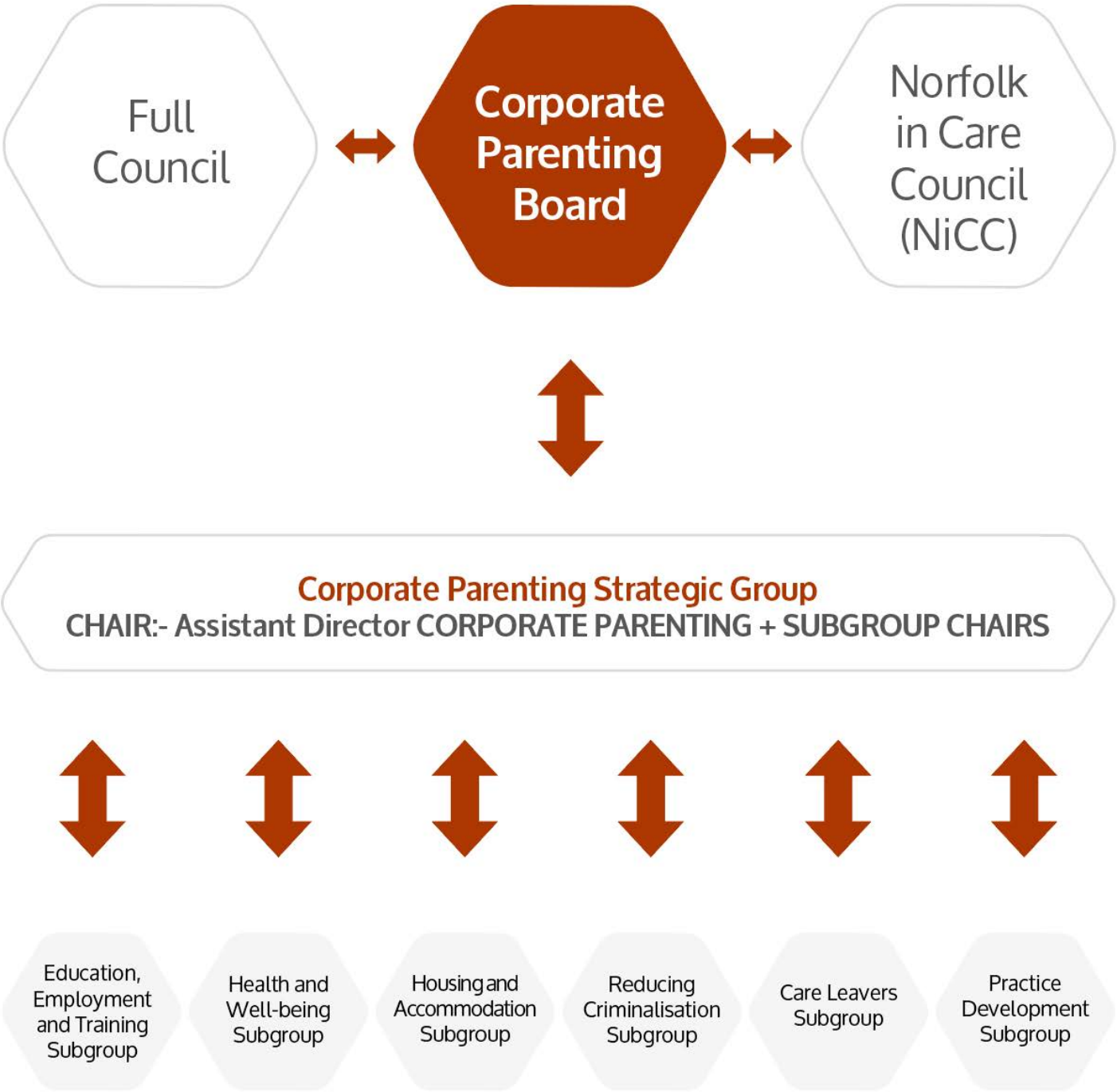
Each subgroup will provide bi-monthly reports to the Corporate Parenting Board that set out what's working well, what we are worried about, and what needs to happen, based on evidence of progress and performance indicators. **Annexe A** provides an overview of each priority area with their initial mapping and planning for 2019-2022. These reports will be subject to constant review to reflect changing priorities and areas of service development. Each priority area will reference the annual results of the Bright Spots surveys to ensure that the views of children and young people are central throughout.

"I am happy, loved, looked after, cared about, helped what more does anyone want it doesn't matter if that's done by your parents, friends or carers what matters is you are safe and loved."

J – aged 15

NB: Care experienced children and young people have contributed to this strategy and their comments and art work reflect our shared priorities. We thank all these children and young people for their valuable contributions.

Governance arrangements for the Corporate Parenting Board





Norfolk County Council

