

**Corporate Parenting in Jersey**

**Children in Care and Care Leavers**  
**A Policy Framework**

**October 2018**

## 1. Vision Statement

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It is our vision that all Jersey's children should be safe, able to flourish and fulfil their potential.

Children do so when they grow up in strong, safe and nurturing relationships. Every child needs someone who is unconditionally "crazy about them."<sup>1</sup>

In almost all cases, such relationships are formed between children and their families. In some instances, though, this is not possible and, for a minority of children, they will not be able to grow up in their families of birth and will need the States of Jersey to become their 'corporate' parent while they are in care.

It is our vision that, where this is the case, we, as corporate parents, will put children at the centre of our thinking and will do everything we can to create a nurturing environment. We will support our children to enjoy and benefit from loving, strong and dependable relationships, wherever possible within families, so that, regardless of their start in life, they can go on to enjoy positive and fulfilling relationships, flourish and fulfil the promise of a bright future.

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<sup>1</sup> "Every child needs at least one adult who is irrationally crazy about him or her" – quote from child psychologist Prof. Uri Bronfenbrenner

## 2. Background and Context

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The States of Jersey has a statutory duty to safeguard children for whom there is a risk of harm or neglect. There are currently 94 children who are looked after by the States. There are a further 37 care leavers aged up to 21 years old. For these children and young people we are already acting as a *de facto* corporate parent, despite there being no legislation covering the role of corporate parent in Jersey.

The Independent Jersey Care Inquiry (2017) recommended that we established in legislation the role of corporate parent and noted that:

“...there seemed to be little evidence of a full commitment to the concept that children looked after by the States were entitled to have the full resources of the States applied to their best interests throughout their time in care and indeed, beyond’ (IJCI: 2017: Vol 3 of 3 pp.61)”.

This has been reinforced by the recent Ofsted inspection in June 2018 during which it was made clear that the continued lack of clarity and focus afforded to our role as corporate parents means we continue to provide a poor service to the most vulnerable in our society.

If we are to make good on our pledge to children and young people we must provide clear guidance on what a corporate parent is, the associated roles and responsibilities and take the necessary steps to enshrine our responsibilities in law, setting ourselves high standards, for the delivery of which we will be held accountable.

This paper represents the first step in providing a coherent policy framework to identify the responsibilities and aspirations of the States of Jersey in its role as corporate parent. This policy will also inform future children’s legislative developments.

The contents of this paper covers:

- What it means to be a corporate parent
- Why it is important to children
- Our priorities as corporate parents
- Proposed new governance arrangements
- Progressing new approaches

It is worth noting that whilst this will fulfil our requirement to respond to the Inquiry and inspection findings, much more importantly, this is also the right thing to do. These children are Jersey’s children. For those who are unable to live within their families we have a moral duty to do all we can to ensure they thrive and develop into secure, confident and happy young adults.

Children who are looked after and care leavers are, because of their life experiences, a more vulnerable group than their peers who have not been looked after. Comparative data clearly demonstrates that their life chances and overall

outcomes are significantly statistically poorer because of this and they require additional support to help them to overcome their early disadvantage and reach their full potential.

This is where we as corporate parents need to step in and be clear about our commitment to supporting all looked after children and care leavers to achieve their full potential and make a successful transition to adulthood.

All our plans and actions must be framed by our ability to answer 'yes' to the question, 'would this be good enough for my child?'

For all our children who have been in care for some time, we must rigorously review their needs and their plans as a priority to ensure their opportunities for success are optimised.

Finally, we must set out our aspirations for all our children and young people in care and those leaving care.

This is not something that we can deliver in isolation. We need to call on the whole of our Island to work together to support our children to flourish. It is important, therefore, that we set out the expectations that we will place upon all partner agencies and commissioned services who work with us in the development and delivery of services for and with looked after children and care leavers. This policy document is the start of that process.

### 3. What is a Corporate Parent?

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The policy framework proposes that under new legislation, when a child comes into care, the state will become that child's corporate parent. This responsibility continues to apply to those young people as they leave care and the States' formalised, statutory responsibilities should extend to those who have left care up to their 25<sup>th</sup> birthday. Of course, as with all good parents, the States' should remain interested and supportive of those care experienced adults for the rest of their life.

It is important to note that 'corporate parenting responsibilities' are underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and are closely linked in with the obligations set out in Part 1 (Rights of Children) of the Act. All corporate parents should, therefore, have a good understanding of the UNCRC, and what it means for them.

A child in care or a care leaver looks to the whole of the state to be the best parent it can be to them. This policy framework proposes that every Minister and employee of the States of Jersey will have the statutory responsibility to act for that child in the same way that any good parent would act for their own child.

In practical terms this would be discharged as follows:

**Universal responsibility** – a general statutory duty to “consider the best interests of looked after children and young people and care leavers in all policy making, decisions and services that affect them”. All Assembly Members and Officials would have responsibilities as corporate parents but for those Ministers and Members who do not have a direct role with children's services, they would be expected to discharge this duty as part of their day-to-day work in parishes and by their regular and on-going engagement with local children, young people and services. For example, by checking that there is sufficient youth service provision in their parish or by advocating on behalf of groups or charities in parishes that are providing services to children in care or care leavers.

**Targeted responsibility** – this would apply to all Members who have roles on children's boards or panels such as fostering panels or the corporate parenting board. These Members would have specific roles to play in discharging their duties as corporate parents and these would be laid out as part of their 'job description' for the appointed role.

**Specialist responsibility** – this would apply to a small number of Members and is likely to be limited to the Ministers who make up the Corporate Parenting Board.

Whilst Members of the States Assembly have different roles in relation to how their role as corporate parents is delivered, it is worth reiterating that **ALL** States Assembly Members and employees of the States of Jersey Government retain this statutory duty and it cannot be devolved or delegated.

Further to this, we are also proposing that there should be legislation that would place a duty on a range of named organisations (Appendix 2) to assist the States in

delivering its corporate parenting function and to provide joined up services that best meet the needs of the child.

Key responsibilities of these organisations include a requirement to:

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

Every good parent wants the best for their child - to see their child flourish, to enjoy good health, to be safe and happy, to do well at school, to enjoy good relationships with their peers, to make the most of leisure opportunities, hobbies and interests, and to grow towards adulthood equipped to lead independent lives and to make their way as confident, happy, healthy, successful and financially secure adults.

That's why we are proposing that the States of Jersey has the same goals for the children it looks after as those of every good parent and takes seriously the moral and legal responsibility for enabling the children in its care to experience happy and fulfilled lives.

This does not mean that everyone with the responsibility of being a corporate parent should meet and get to know every looked after child on an individual basis.

However, being a good corporate parent means we should:

- accept responsibility for children in the state's care and this means putting the needs of looked after children and care leavers at the heart of all that we do;
- seek for them the same outcomes any good parent would want for their own children;
- be alert to matters which do or could potentially adversely affect the wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers;
- promote the interests of those children and young people;
- provide looked after children and care leavers with opportunities to participate in activities designed to promote their wellbeing;
- support children to become successful, resilient, happy, fulfilled adults.

Corporate Parenting is one of the competencies described in the new States of Jersey job roles. These competencies are in development but there have been a number of resources developed which can help individuals in different parts of the organisation to understand what they need to think about to deliver on their corporate parenting responsibilities. Further resources:

- <https://www.catch-22.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Corporate-Parenting-Research-Summary-Report.pdf>
- [Corporate parenting resource pack | Local Government Association](#)

#### 4. Why is the role of Corporate Parenting Important?

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Children and young people who are or have been looked after by the state almost always have poorer outcomes and reduced life chances compared with their peers. The statistics are sobering<sup>2</sup>:

- 50% of looked after children have a mental health issue and care experienced children are 4 or 5 times more likely to self-harm in adulthood
- 6% of children from care go on to higher education compared with 1/3 of all 19 years olds
- 25-30% of looked after children become homeless
- Children from the care system are 5 times more likely to be excluded from school
- 41% of care leavers are not in education, employment or training (NEET) compared with 15% of all 19-year olds.
- Children who have been in care between the ages of 10-17 are five times more likely to be convicted of a criminal offence
- 49% of males under 21 who come into contact with the criminal justice system had been in care at some point
- 23% of female care leavers become teenage parents

This situation for children in care in Jersey is likely to be similar but these statistics are not yet collected on a routine basis.

The Care Inquiry was stark in setting out the shortcomings in the way the States historically provided services to vulnerable children. The recent Ofsted inspection has identified that many of these shortcomings are still in existence.

Our children deserve better. They need us to become strong advocates for them. They need us to be good parents.

Unquestionably, where it is safe for them to do so, the best place for children to grow up is with their families and we have much work still to do to ensure our early help, prevention and edge of care services are sufficiently targeted and impactful. The 'brand' of early help is not well understood or consistently and systematically applied across Jersey to prevent needs escalating.

For those children for whom staying at home is not possible, they already face disadvantages compared to their peers. The role of the corporate parent, therefore, becomes critical in supporting these children where possible to benefit from permanent relationships, to overcome their disadvantages and to go on to flourish and achieve their potential.

The provision that we have for children who need to come into care is also insufficient to meet needs – this is both in terms of volume of placements but also

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<sup>2</sup> Statistics are captured from a range of sources including NAO and NSPCC and reflect the most recent data reported

suitability of those placements. The lack of suitable foster care provision, for example, means that we have too many children placed off Island or placed into inappropriate residential care settings. This was raised by Ofsted and has been picked up in the recently approved Children's Services Improvement Plan.

The Corporate Parenting Plan will inform and be informed by the Children's Services Improvement Plan and, in particular, will support the delivery of the following actions:

- Develop and extend the range of preventative and early help services that are targeted to support children to safely stay with their families wherever possible;
- Increase the number of foster care placements that are on Island so that children those children who are unable to stay with their birth families are brought up in a family setting and retain their links with Jersey.

## 5. Our Priorities as Corporate Parents

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To enable us to deliver on our pledge to children, we propose the following Jersey corporate parenting priorities. These are consistent with the outcomes identified in the Children's Plan. These priorities and the actions required to deliver on them will be captured in the corporate parenting implementation plan (See Appendix 3).

### **Priority 1**

All Ministers and senior leaders across key partners will understand and act on their responsibilities as corporate parents by placing children at the heart of all that they do.

### **Priority 2**

All children will have a safe and stable place they call home where they feel loved, valued and cared for by excellent carers.

### **Priority 3**

All children will be supported to achieve their potential in education.

### **Priority 4**

All children will enjoy the best possible health, including being supported to achieve good physical and mental wellbeing.

### **Priority 5**

All children will have access to and are encouraged to participate in things they are interested in, including a range of play, sport, leisure and cultural activities.

### **Priority 6**

As corporate parent, we will actively listen and respond to the voices, wishes and feelings of our children.

### **Priority 7**

All children will be encouraged to be proud of themselves and recognise that we are proud of them by the way we celebrate their successes.

### **Priority 8**

All children are supported in their transition to adulthood so that when the time comes for them to leave our care they do so in a way that enables them to become confident, successful, secure and fulfilled members of society.

## 6. What Governance Arrangements are Required?

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Our corporate parenting policy will be linked to and informed by the following:

- Jersey's Children's Plan
- Pledge: Putting Children First
- Joint strategic needs assessment
- Corporate Parenting Strategy & Implementation Plan
- Children's Services Improvement Plan
- Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy
- Corporate Parenting Promise to Looked After Children and Care Leavers
- Jersey Offer to Care Leavers
- Early Help Strategy

The corporate parenting strategy and its implementation plan will be the key document that will set out Jersey's ambition and actions for becoming an excellent corporate parent. This document will cover a 3-year period (2019-2021) and should include statements and actions from connected bodies and organisations who have a relationship with the States, children who are looked after and care leavers. This will be a public document and open to scrutiny.

In line with the general statutory duty that is proposed, each Department within the States will be tasked with setting out how it will contribute to the delivery of the ambition set out in the corporate parenting strategy. Director Generals from each Department will be responsible for monitoring and reporting on progress against the actions allocated to their Department. It is proposed that the formal mechanism for reporting on this will be through the Corporate Parenting Board.

To ensure we have a coherent and consistent set of standards for how we deliver these services, we propose to create a set of corporate parenting metrics that are both department specific and States-wide. This links to the fact that we will have some actions that departments need to own and others where we require cross departmental co-operation. These metrics will be built into performance appraisals and will provide the 'golden thread' down from strategy to front line delivery.

We propose that a Corporate Parenting Board is established. This board will be responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of the strategy and progress and impact of agreed activities and actions. It will have oversight and receive reports on delivery across the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

This board should meet quarterly and report progress annually to the Council of Ministers. At the end of 3 years (to coincide with the strategic document timescale), we will invite an independent assessor, such as the Children's Commissioner, to review our progress and evaluate the impact of the strategy. This will be reported publicly.

In addition, we propose that a Children in Care Council is established to represent the views of children in care and be a powerful voice for those children. This council

will be equal partners in monitoring progress and will hold the States to account for delivering on its corporate parenting plan.

To further enhance public accountability it is proposed that the Chair of the Care of Children in Jersey Review Panel be invited to attend Board meetings as a participant observer. This will support and inform the work of the Review Panel in the future.

## 7. Progressing New Approaches

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As part of the work to improve outcomes for Looked After Children and Care Leavers, new approaches to delivering services will be explored. In particular this will include:

### Jersey Care Leavers Foundation

We propose to develop and create a Jersey Care Leavers Foundation. The purpose of this body will be to extend some of the support, encouragement and financial assistance that most of us take for granted from our parents to those who begin their adult lives in Jersey with no family to fall back on.

This will be the forum to share any 'good news' or communications about activities for Care Leavers but will also be a vehicle for engaging with care leavers on what we are doing, the progress we are making, what is working and what we need to do better. It will be part of the Foundation's commitment to convince care leavers that we actively care about what is happening for them.

To support the governance arrangements for our care leavers we will need to develop a formal care offer for those young people who are leaving care; something that currently does not currently exist in Jersey. This offer needs to be developed by those in care and care leavers themselves and may include:

- A specific fund, derived from charitable donations and fundraising, which would provide grants to care leavers based on the principle that 'if a reasonable parent would help out in the situation described, then so should we'. Types of things that grants would fund include:
  - Further Education courses
  - Higher Education courses
  - Training courses
  - Laptop
  - Travel costs to place of study/training
  - Driving lessons - subject to meeting criteria
  - Practical Driving Test
  - Household goods – Sofa, chairs, cooker, fridge, freezer, washing machine bed, wardrobe, drawers.
- Primary purpose would be to make grants to care leavers who have no recourse to statutory funding or other sources of support.
- Would also offer support and guidance to young people to reduce their experience of social exclusion and enhance their life chances – including specific and targeted support around areas such as CV writing, interview skills etc.
- The eligibility criteria for providing support will ensure all care leavers have equal rights to support them to flourish and achieve their potential.

- The Foundation would encourage businesses to provide support to the foundation, either through direct bursary financial support and/or through support in kind via a mentoring programme, offering of work placements or business partnering on key areas such as careers advice.

#### Alternative Delivery Model:

We are also considering an option that would create a child centred philanthropic entity. This organisation would take on the responsibility for commissioning a range of services for children in care and be accountable for delivering better outcomes for them.

It is proposed that that such an entity would have the ability to raise additional private capital for public good through its mission. Funding for this organisation could also come from contributions from existing public-sector budgets including social care, health, education, justice. This would be predicated on the hypothesis that, by building excellence into commissioning we can achieve better life chances for children leaving care. This would in turn deliver a greater value to the public purse by:

- Avoidance of future costs. We know that care experienced children make up a disproportionate number of people who are homeless, in the criminal justice system, require social care support as adults etc. and thus an invest to save approach should reduce the burden placed on these budgets if early interventions are successful;
- Increasing the positive measurable 'fiscal' contribution to society of having happy, secure young people who are supported to thrive as adults.

## Appendix 1 – Key Definitions

Corporate Parent – an organisation or person in power who has special responsibilities to carry out the role of parent for children and young people who are looked after by the State.

A Child Looked After (sometime abbreviated to CLA or LAC) by the Minister is set out in Article 1A of the Children (Jersey); Law 2002 (the Law). The child is looked after when he or she is:

- A child in the care of the Minister. A child in care is defined as a child who is subject to a care order including an interim care order (Article 1 of the Law)
- A child who is provided with accommodation by the Minister for a continuous period of more than 24 hours (colloquially referred to as voluntary arrangements, and provided in accordance with Part 3 of the Law);
- A child pursuant to the Young Offenders Law who is detained in custody on remand or following sentence, in secure accommodation, a young offender institution or the prison. It is important to recognise that looked after children do not just include those who are in residential care or in foster care. A looked after child can include a child in custody, on remand or on probation. Furthermore, when a child is subject to a private fostering or kinship fostering arrangement that child could be considered to be a looked after child for all practical purposes.

A Care Leaver currently has no legal definition locally. We are proposing that a care leaver will be defined as a person aged 25 or under who was looked after by the States at school leaving age or after that date. The rights and entitlements for care leavers will be established as part of our work on developing the corporate parenting offer.

Appendix 2 – Table of Government Departments and Organisations which may contribute to the Corporate Parenting Implementation Plan

<b>Ministers</b>	<b>Comité de Connétables</b>
<b>Government Departments</b>	<b>Non-ministerial Departments</b>
Children, Young People Education and Skills	Law Officers
Health & Community Services	Judicial Greffe
Justice & Home Affairs	Bailiff's Chambers - Youth Court
States Treasurer & Exchequer	Probation and After Care Services
Growth, Housing and Island Environment	States Greffe
Strategic Policy, Performance and Population	Viscounts Department
Office of the Chief Executive	Customer and Local Services
<b>Grant Aided Bodies<sup>3</sup> /Arm's length organisations</b>	
Jersey Arts Trust	Jersey Child Care Trust
Citizens Advice Bureau	The Jersey Employment Trust
Jersey Arts Centre Association	Sport Jersey
Safeguarding Partnership Board	
Children's Commissioner	
Jersey Care Commission	
Nurseries receiving NEF funding	
<b>Directly Contracted Services</b>	
Family Nursing and Home Care	Centre Point
Shelter Trust	New Horizons
Silkworth Lodge	Jersey Women's Refuge
NSPCC	Barnardo's
Autism Jersey	Brighter Futures
<b>Part or Wholly Owned Subsidiaries</b>	
Andium Homes	

<sup>3</sup> Organisations taken from list contained within States of Jersey Treasury: 2016: Financial Report & Accounts, Notes of the Accounts pp.140-141

## Appendix 3 – Corporate Parenting Implementation Plan Template

Corporate Parenting Policy Priorities	Children’s Plan Outcome	Action	Lead Organisation
<p><b>Priority 2:</b> All children will have a safe and stable place they call home where they feel loved, valued and cared for by excellent carers.</p>	<p>All children in Jersey grow up safely</p>		
<p><b>Priority 3:</b> All children will be supported to achieve their potential in education.</p>	<p>All children learn and achieve</p>		
<p><b>Priority 4:</b> All children will enjoy the best possible health, including being supported to achieve good physical and mental wellbeing.</p> <p><b>Priority 5:</b> All children will have access to and are encouraged to participate in things they are interested in, including a range of play, sport, leisure and cultural activities.</p>	<p>All children live healthy lives</p>		
<p><b>Priority 1:</b> All Ministers and senior leaders across key partners will understand and act on their responsibilities as corporate parents by placing children at the heart of all that they do.</p> <p><b>Priority 6:</b> As corporate parent, we will actively listen and respond to the voices, wishes and feelings of our children.</p> <p><b>Priority 7:</b> All children will be encouraged to be proud of themselves and recognise that we are proud of them by the way we celebrate their successes.</p> <p><b>Priority 8:</b> All children are supported in their transition to adulthood so that when the time comes for them to leave our care they do so in a way that enables them to become confident, successful, secure and fulfilled members of society.</p>	<p>All children are valued and involved</p>		