



Isle of Wight caring together

A parenting in partnership strategy

2025 to 2028



Isle of Wight
Council

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Foreword

At the heart of our **caring together – a parenting in partnership strategy** lies a simple yet profound truth: every child and young person in our care deserves the same love, support, and opportunities that any good parent would provide. As corporate parents, we hold a collective responsibility to champion their aspirations, protect their well-being, and nurture their potential. This strategy sets out our unwavering commitment to ensuring that children in our care are not only safe and supported but are also empowered to thrive: academically, emotionally, and socially. Together, we will create a culture of high expectations, where every decision is guided by the question: **“Would this be good enough for my own child?”**

When a child or young person comes into our care, we become more than administrators or service providers, we take on a role far greater. We become their corporate parents, entrusted with their wellbeing, their future, and their dreams.

Our caring together, parenting in partnership strategy represents our commitment to every child and young person who we care for, and to those who have left our care but continue to need our support as they navigate their journey into adulthood. It is a promise that we will act with the same love, dedication, and ambition that any good parent would show for their own child.

The children and young people we care for have often experienced trauma, loss, and disruption in their young lives. They deserve nothing less than our very best efforts to provide them with stability, love, and the opportunities they need to thrive. We recognise that being a corporate parent is a collective responsibility, and includes the whole council, our children’s services teams, every councillor, every member of staff, and every partner organisation, relevant, statutory and voluntary, that works with us and most importantly the children we care for.

This strategy has been developed through consultation with our children and young people, our care experienced adults, our dedicated staff, and our partners. Their voices, experiences, and aspirations are woven throughout this document, ensuring that our approach is grounded in the reality of what matters to our care experienced children and young adults. Our children and young people have decided upon the naming of this strategy, one they feel reflects the importance of caring, and working in partnership to fulfil our corporate parenting duties and responsibilities.

The legislative framework provided by the Children and Social Work Act 2017 gives us clear duties and principles to guide our work. However, this strategy goes beyond mere compliance with legal requirements. It represents our moral commitment to ensure that every child we care for knows they are valued, loved, and supported to achieve their full potential.

We have taken an important step as a local authority in recognising care-experienced young people as a protected characteristic, ensuring that their unique experiences and challenges are acknowledged and addressed across all areas of policy, practice, and service delivery. This commitment strengthens our dedication to equity, amplifies the voices of those with lived experience, and helps to dismantle systemic barriers that have historically disadvantaged care-experienced individuals.

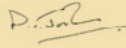
The local authority remains committed to reducing the criminalisation of the children we care for. This is addressed within the youth justice plan. In doing so, we are working collaboratively with partners across the criminal justice system to ensure that care-experienced children are treated with compassion, fairness, and understanding. We are embedding restorative approaches, improving staff training, and strengthening advocacy to prevent unnecessary contact with the justice system. Our aim is to uphold the rights of these young people and support them to thrive, not be punished for the circumstances they have faced.

As we implement this strategy over the coming years, we will be guided by a simple but powerful question: **“What if this were my child?”** This question will inform every decision we make, every service we design, and every interaction we have with the children and young people who depend on us.

We invite you to join us on this journey as we work together to create an Isle of Wight where every child we care for thrives, where every care experienced adult is supported to achieve their dreams, and where corporate parenting is recognised as one of our most important and rewarding responsibilities.



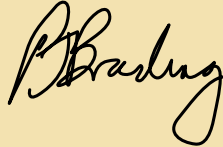
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As a health partner we fully support the Isle of Wight Council in their corporate parenting responsibilities and are committed partners in working together to improve the health and wellbeing of young people in care. We welcome this strategy and look forward to continuing our joint working to realise the ambition for the children on the Isle of Wight”.

Nicola Lucy, Executive Lead for Safeguarding, NHS Hampshire and Isle of Wight

1. Introduction

Purpose of the strategy

Our caring together, parenting in partnership strategy, outlines the Isle of Wight Council's unwavering commitment to its role as a corporate parent. Our primary aim is to ensure that all children and young people we care for or have experienced our care, receive the best possible support, opportunities, and outcomes, enabling them to thrive and reach their full potential. This strategy serves as a guiding document for all council departments, elected members, and partners (statutory and voluntary), ensuring a unified and consistent approach to fulfilling our corporate parenting responsibilities.

What is caring together, parenting in partnership?

Caring together is the collective responsibility of the local authority to act as a good parent to the children and young people in its care. This means providing the same level of care, support, and aspiration that any good parent would provide for their own child. It extends beyond statutory duties to encompass a moral and ethical commitment to safeguard, nurture, and promote the well-being of our children we care for and care experienced young people. It involves ensuring they have access to high-quality education, health services, stable homes, and opportunities for personal growth and development.

How 'creating change together' shapes our caring together parenting in partnership approach

At the heart of our caring together strategy is the belief that real, lasting change for children and young people in care happens when we work together – across services, with partners, and most importantly, with the children and young people themselves. The Isle of Wight Children's Services mission – **creating change together** – reflects our commitment to co-producing solutions, listening deeply, and acting with purpose. It reminds us that corporate parenting is not a task for one team or department. It is a shared responsibility that requires compassion, collaboration, and courage.

By embracing this mission, we commit to being active agents of change in the lives of our children and young people — not just meeting their needs, but championing their ambitions, celebrating their strengths, and removing barriers to their success.

Our vision

“Through caring together, we will foster a community where every child in our care feels a true sense of belonging: safe, valued, and empowered to thrive. Supported by a council and partners who act with the love, ambition, and commitment of a good parent.”

The Isle of Wight Council’s commitment

The Isle of Wight Council is dedicated and committed to being an outstanding corporate parent. We recognise that children and young people in our care have often experienced significant challenges in their lives, and it is our duty to provide them with the stability, security, and opportunities they need to overcome these challenges and build successful futures. Our commitment is rooted in the belief that every child deserves to feel safe, valued, and supported, and to have the chance to achieve their dreams. This strategy reflects our determination to continuously improve our services and work collaboratively with all stakeholders to deliver the best possible outcomes for our children and young people.



2. Our legal and strategic responsibilities as corporate parents

Good corporate parenting is about ensuring that every child and young person in our care has the opportunities they need to thrive, to heal from past experiences, and to achieve their goals. It means going the extra mile – positively prioritising their needs in everything we do, so they feel loved, supported, and part of our Isle of Wight family.

The Isle of Wight Council has a strategic and legal responsibility for children looked after and care experienced young people, as set out in national legislation and guidance. The **Children Act 1989** and the **Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000** place a duty on services including health, housing, education, and social care to work together to improve outcomes for children in care. The **Children Act 2004** further strengthens this by requiring local authorities and relevant partners – such as the NHS, police, and education providers – to co-operate and promote the educational achievement of children looked after.

The **Children and Social Work Act 2017** introduced seven key **corporate parenting principles**, which all local authorities must have regard to. These principles guide us to act in the best interests of children we care for and for our care experienced young people (care leavers), to promote their physical and mental health, to support their education and training, and to help them prepare for adulthood. These responsibilities are not just statutory – they are moral commitments to ensure that every child in our care is given the same love, support, and opportunities that we would want for our own children.

2.1. The seven principles of corporate parenting

The seven corporate parenting principles that local authorities in England must adhere to when exercising their functions in relation to care experienced children and young people, serve as the foundation for our corporate parenting approach and guide all our actions and decisions. Council is committed to embedding these principles across all its services and partnerships to ensure that every child and young person in our care receives the support they need to thrive¹.

1 Children and Social Work Act 2017. Available at: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/16/section/1/enacted

These principles are:

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

This principle underscores our commitment to prioritising the holistic well-being of children and young people in our care. It means ensuring access to comprehensive health services, promoting healthy lifestyles, and providing mental health support when needed. Our aim is to create an environment where children feel safe, supported, and empowered to lead healthy and fulfilling lives.

2 To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings.

We believe that the voices of children and young people in our care are paramount. This principle guides us to actively listen to their perspectives, respect their opinions, and involve them in decisions that affect their lives. We will provide various platforms and opportunities for them to express themselves, ensuring their views are heard and acted upon.

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

Building on the previous principle, this emphasises the importance of genuinely considering and incorporating the expressed views of children and young people into our planning and service delivery. Their insights are invaluable in shaping services that are truly responsive to their needs and aspirations.

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.

This principle highlights our role in facilitating access to a wide range of services, including education, housing, employment, and leisure activities. We will work collaboratively with our partners to ensure that children and young people in our care can effectively navigate and benefit from these services, maximising their opportunities for growth and development.

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

We are committed to fostering high aspirations in our children and young people, encouraging them to pursue their dreams and achieve their full potential. This involves providing access to quality education, career guidance, and opportunities for personal and professional development. We will strive to remove barriers and create pathways to success, ensuring they have the best possible outcomes in life.

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

Safety and stability are fundamental to the well-being of children and young people. This principle guides us to ensure they live in secure and nurturing environments, maintain positive relationships, and experience stability in their educational and vocational pursuits. We will work to minimise disruptions and provide consistent support, fostering a sense of security and belonging.

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

Our ultimate goal is to equip children and young people in our care with the skills, knowledge, and confidence they need to successfully transition into adulthood and live independently. This principle encompasses a range of support, including life skills training, financial literacy, housing advice, and ongoing mentorship. We will empower them to become resilient, self-sufficient, and contributing members of society.



3. What our children we care for, and care experienced young people have told us

As part of our ongoing commitment to being the best possible parents to the children and young people we care for, we have listened to our children and young people and taken time to reflect on the language we use – particularly the term **corporate parenting**.

While this term is widely used across the UK to describe the collective responsibility of local authorities and their partners, we recognise that the word ‘corporate’ can feel impersonal and distant. It does not always reflect the warmth, care, and commitment we strive to provide.

In response, we are adopting the language of **parenting in partnership** to better reflect our values and the way we work. This approach emphasises:

- **Relationships over roles** – putting the child or young person at the heart of everything we do.
- **Collaboration and shared responsibility** – working together across services, communities, and with families to provide consistent, loving support.
- **Language that cares** – using words that feel accessible, inclusive, and meaningful to our children, young people, and care leavers.

This shift in language is more than symbolic – it is a reflection of our culture and our commitment to being **ambitious, compassionate, and accountable** parents in partnership.

“Liking people who are looking after me.”

“For foster carers to have a better understanding of children.”

“Support with transport.”

“We need to prioritise education within young people... They need a ‘you can do it’ instead of ‘just get it done’.”

“Mental health of people in harsh situations.”

“A nice place to live and nice people to look after you.”

4. Isle of Wight Council's specific priorities

Building upon the foundational principles of parenting in partnership and drawing inspiration from best practices across the UK, the Isle of Wight Council is committed to a series of targeted actions and initiatives designed to enhance the lives of the children we care for and the adults who have left our care.

These actions are structured around six key priorities, each of which reflects our dedication to providing a nurturing, supportive, and aspirational environment for every child and care leaver. These priorities form the strategic framework for the parenting in partnership board and will guide our annual action planning.

Each priority will be led by a dedicated councillor, who will act as a champion for their area, ensuring strong leadership, accountability, and a clear focus on outcomes that matter most to our children and young people.

4.1. Promoting educational attainment and aspiration

"My school helps to inspire me. I want to be a vet or midwife when i'm older."

"Staying in my current school is important, because they know all the tricky bits about me and my life."

"I had tuition and they came to my home, this helped me get ready for my GCSEs."

"It was important for me that i did not change schools."

Education is a cornerstone of future success. We are committed to ensuring that all children we care for and care experienced adults on the Isle of Wight achieve their full educational potential. Our commitments include:

- **Dedicated educational support** – Providing targeted academic support, including tutoring and mentoring, to help children and young people in our care excel in their studies. This will involve working closely with schools and the Virtual School team to identify individual needs and implement tailored learning support to inform high quality personal education plans.
- **Access to higher education and vocational training** – Actively encouraging and supporting cared for children and care experienced young people to pursue higher education, apprenticeships, and vocational training opportunities. We will provide guidance on applications, financial support, and ongoing mentorship to ensure successful transitions.
- **Promoting school inclusion and engagement** – We are committed to working collaboratively with schools, the virtual school, families, and carers to ensure that children in our care are fully included in education and supported to thrive. By fostering strong relationships and implementing early, proactive support, we aim to increase school attendance and promote positive engagement, helping every child to feel valued, included, and inspired to succeed in their learning journey.
- **Celebrating achievements** – Recognising and celebrating the educational achievements of our cared for children and care experienced young people, no matter how big or small. This will include awards, recognition events, and sharing success stories to inspire others.



4.2. Enhancing health and wellbeing

The physical and mental health of our children we care for and care experienced adults is paramount. We are committed to providing comprehensive health support that addresses their unique needs. Our commitments include:

“Someone to make sure you get to dental and other health appointments.”

“Focussing on not stressing.”

“It’s good to talk about our feelings.”

“Making sure care leavers and foster kids don’t just get counselling they get therapy.”

receives timely dental treatment.

- **Sexual health and relationships education** – Providing age-appropriate and comprehensive sexual health and relationships education to empower young people to make informed decisions and maintain healthy and safe relationships.

- **Prioritising emotional wellbeing and mental health support** – Ensuring timely access to high-quality mental health services, including counselling, therapy, and specialist interventions, for all children we care for and care experienced adults. We will work to destigmatise mental health issues and promote open conversations. We will work with our health colleagues to improve the access to specialist assessments for the children we care for.
- **Promoting physical health** – Encouraging healthy lifestyles through access to sports, recreational activities, and nutritional guidance. We will ensure regular health assessments and follow-up care to address any physical health concerns. We will ensure every child we care for has access to a dentist and

4.3. Ensuring stable and nurturing homes

Stability in home life is crucial for the development and well-being of children. We are committed to providing secure, loving, and stable homes for all the children we care for and supporting care experienced adults in their transition to independent living. Our commitments include:

- **Recruiting and retaining high-quality carers** – Investing in robust recruitment and retention strategies for foster carers, ensuring that children are placed with skilled, compassionate, and dedicated individuals who can meet their needs. We will develop our sufficiency strategy to ensure our children and young people have access to the right home at the right time in the right place.
- **Minimising moves of homes** – Working proactively to minimise home disruptions and ensure stability for children we care for. We will develop comprehensive care plans that prioritise long-term homes and continuity of relationships. We will ensure home stability meetings are convened at the earliest opportunity if a child's home becomes unstable in order to identify additional support for our carers.
- **Support for care leavers' housing** – Providing comprehensive support and guidance to our care experienced young people in securing safe, affordable, and suitable housing as they transition to independent living. This will include advice on tenancy agreements, budgeting, and accessing housing benefits. We will review and agree a robust joint housing protocol with our housing colleagues so that young people avoid being homeless, gain access to affordable homes, and have a clear housing pathway enabling our care experienced adults to live alone.
- **Maintaining family connections** – Supporting children we care for in maintaining positive and safe relationships with their birth families, where appropriate, and fostering connections with their wider community and cultural heritage. Where assessed and safe to do so we will support the re-unification of children to their birth families.

“If it’s not my home but temporary it’s like a B&B.”

“We need a nice home to live in so your mental health is good and you can have people around.”

“Your bedroom is your space, when the rest of the house is shared. It’s important to have a big bedroom.”

“No favourite children give us all equal treatment! Always be kind to us.”

4.4. Fostering participation and voice

We believe that children and young people we care for have the right to be heard and to participate in decisions that affect their lives. Our commitments include:

- **Strengthening children we care for voice** – We will review our participation strategy to resource a children we care for council and further develop the care experienced VOICE forum to ensure that young people's voices are central to the development and review of policies and services. We will actively seek their feedback and involve them in co-production initiatives. We will feedback to young people the service developments and improvements from listening to their voice.
- **Advocacy services** – Ensuring that all children we care for have access to independent advocacy services to support them in expressing their views and having their rights upheld.

"Hearing children voices more about foster placements."

"In my home I am definitely listened to, people caring for me will pick up how I am feeling."

"Sometimes get things wrong because not listened too."

"Having a nice venue to hear our voice."

- **Youth-friendly communication**
– Developing accessible and youth-friendly communication channels, including the **care leaver** offer to ensure that information about their rights, entitlements, and available support is easily understood by children and young people and is accessible for all.
- **Feedback mechanisms** – Establishing clear and effective feedback mechanisms for children and young people to raise concerns, make suggestions, and provide feedback on the quality of services they receive – **you said, we did, so what?**
We will ensure that their feedback leads to tangible improvements, supporting us in the co-delivery and co-design of services.

4.5. Preparing for adulthood and independent living

Our goal is to equip the children we care for and our care experienced young people with the skills and confidence to successfully transition into adulthood and lead independent, fulfilling lives. Our commitments include:

- **Life skills training** – Providing comprehensive life skills training, including budgeting, cooking, household management, and personal care, to prepare young people for living alone. We will review the training of our foster carers and review regularly the progress of children in developing the skills to eventually live independently, staying put and staying close when right for them.
- **Employment and training opportunities** – Facilitating access to employment and training opportunities, including work experience, internships, and job search support, to enhance employability and career prospects. We will continue to work with the Isle of Wight Council apprenticeship board, NHS, and local employers to develop work experiences, apprenticeships and jobs for our care experienced young people.
- **Financial literacy** – Delivering financial literacy education and support through our personal advisers and Department of Work and Pensions colleagues to help young people manage their finances, understand their entitlements, and make informed financial decisions.
- **Mentorship and positive role models** – We will use and develop our network of volunteers to connect young people with mentors and positive adult role models who can provide guidance, support, and inspiration as they navigate the challenges of adulthood.

“Getting help with budgeting.”

“The people who look after me do prepare you for being independent.”

“Assistance in the moving process itself.”

“Money needs to be balanced, help to work out what’s important to spend money on.”

4.6. Opening doors to the ‘family business’: creating opportunities for our children and young people

“Supplying work experience.”

“Need to educate managers to ensure discrimination doesn’t happen and short listing isn’t just a tick box exercise.”

“I want support and guidance when I start a job.”

“I would like an apprenticeship, university does not interest me.”

As corporate parents, we believe that every child and young person in our care deserves the same opportunities we would want for our own children. That includes access to meaningful experiences that help them build confidence, develop skills, and prepare for a successful future.

We see the council and our wider network of partners as a **‘family business’** – a rich and diverse community of professionals, services, and opportunities. Just as any parent would help their child explore career paths, gain work experience, or find a mentor, we are committed to doing the same for our children and care leavers.

Through this commitment, we will:

- **offer mentoring** from professionals across the council and partner organisations to inspire and guide young people;
- **create pathways to apprenticeships, internships, and employment** within

the council and our wider partnerships;

- **provide work experience opportunities** that reflect the interests and aspirations of our young people;
- **champion inclusive recruitment practices** that actively support care-experienced individuals into meaningful roles.

We aspire to be a fostering friendly employer, to actively support our employees who are foster carers or who are interested in becoming foster carers.

By embedding this approach into our culture, we ensure that our children and young people are not just supported—they are **welcomed, empowered, and included** in the life and work of their extended corporate family.

5. Conclusion and next steps

The Isle of Wight Council is unwavering in its commitment to being an exemplary corporate parent, through parenting in partnership. This strategy outlines our dedication to nurturing, supporting, and empowering every child and young person we care for and care experienced adults to achieve their fullest potential. By embedding the seven principles of corporate parenting into every facet of our operations and learning from the best practices and research, we aim to create an environment where our children feel safe, valued, and inspired to build successful futures.

Our journey as parents in partnership is continuous. We recognise that the needs of children and young people evolve, and our strategies must adapt accordingly. Therefore, this document is not a static declaration but a living commitment that will be reviewed annually, updated, and refined based on feedback from our children and young people, their carers, our partners, and the wider community. We will measure our success not just by compliance with statutory duties, but by the tangible improvements in the lives of those we parent.



Next steps:

1. **Implementation and dissemination** – This strategy will be widely disseminated across all council departments, partner agencies, and relevant stakeholders. Clear action plans will be developed for each commitment, outlining specific responsibilities, timelines, and performance indicators.
2. **Training and awareness** – Comprehensive training and discussions will be rolled out for all council staff and elected members to enhance their understanding of corporate parenting responsibilities and foster a culture of shared ownership.
3. **Monitoring and evaluation** – A robust, relevant and aspirational action plan will be established to track progress against the strategic commitments and outcomes; this will be reviewed annually. Regular reports against action and progress will be presented to the parenting in partnership board and relevant council committees.
4. **Continuous engagement** – We will review our participation strategy and will continue to actively engage with children and young people in our care and care experienced adults through a children we care for council, and care experienced VOICE forum, ensuring their voices remain at the heart of our decision-making processes.
5. **Partnership working** – We will further strengthen our relevant partnerships with health services, education providers, housing associations, voluntary organisations, and the wider community to ensure a holistic and coordinated approach to supporting our children and young people as parents in partnership.

Together, as parents in partnership, we will strive to provide the children and young people of the Isle of Wight with the love, care, and opportunities they deserve, enabling them to flourish and become confident, resilient, and successful adults.

Isle of Wight caring together

A parenting in partnership strategy

2025 to 2028

If you have difficulties understanding this document, please contact us on 01983 821000 and we will do our best to help you.

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**Isle of Wight
Council**