

Meeting: Cabinet and Council **Date:** 2 December and 11 December 2025

Wards affected: All

Report Title: Corporate Parenting Strategy 2026-2028

When does the decision need to be implemented?

This document will be presented to Full Council for approval on 11 December 2025 and following approval will be implemented from 1st January 2026.

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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The Corporate Parenting Strategy is a statutory requirement to ensure that our cared for and care experienced children, and young people are central to the responsibilities of the whole council and where applicable, the council's partners. The proposed strategy builds on previous versions and represents the Council's unrelenting intention to fulfil its role to the highest standard thereby ensuring that our children and young people receive the best possible support.
- 1.2. The 2026-2028 Strategy strengthens considerably;
 - the contributions and participation of children and young people in the processes that affect them
 - the status of the Corporate Parenting Function and its Board by the active inclusion of the Leader of the Council and a membership that is acutely focused upon the achievement of its strategic objectives
 - the accountability of the council and the Corporate Parenting Board through the post of Corporate Parenting Lead (Cared For and Care Experienced Children and Young People), who will sit on the Corporate Parenting Board as a contributing participant to primarily inject the views and experiences of children and young people and support, monitor and challenge the progress of the strategy

- the role and function of the six key work strands, each led by a Councillor supported by a nominated officer, that are designed to ensure that the strategy translates into effective practices that positively help our children and young people.

1.3 The Council has recognised care experience as a protected characteristic through its Inclusion Strategy for Torbay for 2025-2030 but has not formally adopted this as part of its Equality Impact Assessments used to inform decisions. This report seeks to address that.

2. Reason for Proposal and its benefits

2.1. The proposals in this report help us to deliver our vision of a healthy, happy, and prosperous Torbay by stating clearly how cared for and care experienced children and young people will benefit from the revised and strengthened strategy which is entirely consistent with the principles of a *Child Friendly Torbay*.

2.2. The reasons for the proposal, and need for the decision reflects the need for a revised strategy to replace the previous version that expires on the 31 December 2025. In its revised form the strategy will

- place cared for and care experienced children and young people at the heart of everything we do
- emphasise the need for Torbay to be an efficient and enabling council
- strengthen the working together and partnership arrangements of the Council to the benefit of our cared for and care experienced children and young people.

2.3 Adding care experience as a protected characteristic within our Equality Impact Assessments will ensure that we consider how we can support care experience young people as part of our decision making processes in the same way we treat other people with protected characteristics.

3. Recommendation(s) / Proposed Decision

Recommendations to Cabinet:

- 3.1 That the Director of Corporate Services be requested to update the Council's Equality Impact Assessment Templates to include care experience under the list of protected characteristics in line with the Inclusion Strategy for Torbay for 2025-2030.
- 3.2 To approve the amendment to the Terms of Reference for the Corporate Parenting Board, to include the Leader of the Council and the Senior Corporate Parenting Lead (as a contributing attendee) to its membership. This change demonstrates the Council's strengthened commitment to delivering the objectives of the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

That Cabinet recommends to Council:

- 3.3 That the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2026-2028 set out at Appendix 1 to the submitted report be approved.

Appendices

Appendix 1: The draft Corporate Parenting Strategy 2026-2028

Appendix 2: The outcomes of the public consultation.

Appendix 3: The statutory frameworks relating to cared for and care experienced children and young people.

4. Background Documents

- [Record of Decision - Notice of Motion Show Us You Care.pdf](#)
- [Agenda for Council on Thursday, 15 May 2025, 5.30 pm](#)
- [Torbay Inclusion Strategy 2025/30 - Torbay Council](#)

Supporting Information

5. Introduction

- 5.1 The current version of the Corporate Parenting Strategy expires on 31 December 2025, and because of its statutory status the Council is required to replace it. In its revised form the strategy and the Corporate Parenting Board fulfils its legal duties.
- 5.2 The current strategy (2026-2028) enacts the Council's Pledge to children and young people by focussing upon;
- positively supporting them throughout their young lives,
 - assuring their care arrangements,
 - help to enable them to benefit from education and training,
 - promoting their health and the adoption of healthy lifestyles,
 - helping young people achieve independence, and
 - ensuring young people have good quality accommodation in which they can 'put down roots' and live independently and successfully.
- 5.3 Children and young people have clearly told the Council that they believe that these priorities remain relevant to the revised strategy, but they need to be strengthened and shaped by their contributions.
- 5.4 The Council is committed to supporting care experience young people and has implemented a number of changes including the following:

Since 2018, the Council has determined to use its discretionary powers under Section 13A(1)(c) and Section 13A(7) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to

define the following individuals as a class of liable persons that will receive a discount from their Council Tax:

- would have been in the care of Torbay Council (being “looked after”) for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and in care on their 16th birthday;
- is resident in Torbay; and
- under 25 years old.

5.5 The discount awarded is 100% of the share of the Care Leaver’s liability after any other statutory or local discounts has been deducted.

5.6 At the Cabinet meeting held on 21 March 2023 the Cabinet unanimously approved supporting the campaign to make care experience a protected characteristic. On 15 May 2025 the Council unanimously adopted the Inclusion Strategy for Torbay for 2025-2030 which states:

“We treat care experience as though it is a protected characteristic as we know that people who have been in care face lots of challenges.”

5.7 Whilst the Council is unable to change the Equality Act, it has chosen locally to recognise care experience as a protected characteristic due to the importance of everyone who is a part of Torbay Council being a corporate parent and us wanting to do all we can to support our care experience young people as though they were our own children. This approach has been taken by over 90 local authorities across the Country, in response to the Independent Review of Children’s Social Care (2022), which recommended care experience become a protected characteristic, but this was not adopted by the Government.

5.8 To ensure that this is embedded in our work it is proposed to include care experience under the list of protected characteristics within our Equality Impact Assessments which form part of the Council’s decision-making and governance processes.

6. Options under consideration

6.1 The option to undertake a straightforward update was immediately rejected in favour of significantly strengthening and improving the current strategy by;

- placing children and young people firmly at the heart of all that we do as Corporate Parents,
- seeking ways to enable the most effective contribution and participation of children and young people into every aspect of the strategy,
- learning from the best. To this end, all local authority areas judged through inspection to have outstanding services in this area were either contacted directly or involved in a literature review of their Ofsted reports and other publicly available information. The

findings of these exploratory exercises were used to inform the consultation and the direct communication with children and young people, and

- strengthening governance arrangements.

6.2 The preparatory consultation left no doubt that while the previous strategy was an improvement upon what had preceded it, significant further improvement was required to set plans to achieve outcomes for children and young people that are directly relevant to and improve their lived experiences. For these plans to be successful, trusting relationships between children and young people, the Council and its partners are required which are firmly located on a shared understanding of the plan's solid foundations which make explicit how needs will be met.

6.3 The six strands of the plan, each designed to tackle the fundamental issues that children and young people need to negotiate are governed by an outcome-specific mission statement supported by focused action plans.

It was concluded that:

- a simple roll forward of the current strategy was not viable as it failed to meet the ambition of the council to enable cared for and care experienced young people to become successful, happy, safe and contented young adults.
- progressive plans to achieve the Corporate Parenting Board's aspirations for children and young people requires a governance structure that has authority and the ability to engage the partnership in decisions that enable ambitions to be achieved while ensuring that children and young people's wishes and feelings are at the heart of the process. The revised membership of the Corporate Parenting Board reflects this intent.

7. Financial Opportunities and Implications

7.1. Not to include care experience as a protected characteristic. This option is not recommended as it does not recognise the Council's adopted approach and will not make this part of the Equality Impact Assessment and formal decision making processes.

8. Legal Implications

8.1. This proposal fully complies with legislative requirements and has factored into its thinking the principles behind the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill which is in the report stage as it progresses through Parliament. A full list of statute and guidance can be found at Appendix 3.

9. Engagement and Consultation

9.1. At the Cabinet Meeting held on the 16th September 2025 it was agreed that authority be delegated to the Director of Children's Services to launch a public consultation 'when appropriate' to inform the development of the new Corporate Parenting Strategy.

9.2. As such an online survey was carried out from October 13th to November 7th 2025 – the results from this survey can be found at appendix two.

- 9.3. In summary the Corporate Parenting Strategy consultation found broad support for the strategy's direction, especially its focus on participation, education, and wellbeing. Respondents recommended clearer, measurable goals—particularly in education—and stronger multi-agency collaboration. The “Contract of Trust” was generally understood, and feedback emphasized the need for accountability and keeping young people's voices central.

10. Procurement Implications

- 10.1 There are no procurement implications

11. Protecting our naturally inspiring Bay and tackling Climate Change

- 11.1. Nothing in the proposed Corporate Parenting Strategy undermines the Council's protection of Torbay and its commitment to tackle climate change.

12. Associated Risks

- 12.1. The Council would be in breach of its statutory duty to Cared For and Care Experienced children and young people if it failed to revise and implement a Corporate Parenting Strategy 2026-2028 following the expiry of the current strategy in December 2025.
- 12.2. Adding care experience as a protected characteristic is a local choice and does not change the Equality Act legislation. There is a risk that the Council could be challenged if it does not follow its policies regarding this local choice.

13. Equality Impact Assessment

Protected characteristics under the Equality Act and groups with increased vulnerability	Data and insight	Equality considerations (including any adverse impacts)	Mitigation activities	Responsible department and timeframe for implementing mitigation activities
Age	18 per cent of Torbay residents are under 18 years old. 55 per cent of Torbay residents are aged between 18 to 64 years old. 27 per cent of Torbay residents are aged 65 and older.	The Corporate Parenting Strategy recognizes the diverse needs of children and young people in care and care leavers across all age groups. The strategy is informed by demographic data and direct consultation with children and young people of different ages. It commits to providing age-appropriate support, ensuring that the voices of all age groups are heard and acted upon, and that transitions—such as moving into care, changing placements, or leaving care—are managed sensitively and effectively. The strategy will be regularly reviewed to ensure that no group is disadvantaged due to age, and that support is tailored to the evolving needs of children and young people as they grow and develop. Ongoing engagement and data monitoring will ensure that the	Ongoing engagement and data monitoring via the development of action plans will ensure that the impact on all age groups is understood, addressed and evaluated.	Corporate Parenting Board – Timescales TBA.

		impact on all age groups is understood and addressed.		
Carers	At the time of the 2021 census there were 14,900 unpaid carers in Torbay. 5,185 of these provided 50 hours or more of care.	Carers (including foster carers, kinship carers, and adoptive parents) are vital to the success of the Corporate Parenting Strategy. The strategy recognizes the diverse needs of carers and commits to supporting them through accessible information, training, and involvement in decision-making. Consultation with carers has informed the strategy's priorities, and ongoing engagement will ensure their voices continue to shape service delivery. The strategy aims to advance equality of opportunity for all carers, including those from minority groups, and to mitigate any potential negative impacts by providing targeted support and regular review. Monitoring arrangements will ensure that the impact on carers is assessed and addressed throughout the life of the strategy.	Ongoing engagement and data monitoring via the development of action plans will ensure that the impact on all carers is , addressed and evaluated.	Corporate Parenting Board – Timescales TBA.
Disability	In the 2021 Census, 23.8% of Torbay residents answered that their day-to-day activities were limited a little or a lot by a physical or mental health condition or illness.	No Differential Impact		

Gender reassignment	In the 2021 Census, 0.4% of Torbay's community answered that their gender identity was not the same as their sex registered at birth. This proportion is similar to the Southwest and is lower than England.	No Differential Impact		
Marriage and civil partnership	Of those Torbay residents aged 16 and over at the time of 2021 Census, 44.2% of people were married or in a registered civil partnership.	No Differential Impact		
Pregnancy and maternity	Over the period 2010 to 2021, the rate of live births (as a proportion of females aged 15 to 44) has been slightly but significantly higher in Torbay (average of 63.7 per 1,000) than England (60.2) and the South West (58.4). There has been a notable fall in the numbers of live births since the middle of the last decade across all geographical areas.	No Differential Impact		
Race	In the 2021 Census, 96.1% of Torbay residents described their ethnicity as white. This is a higher proportion than the	No Differential Impact		

	South West and England. Black, Asian and minority ethnic individuals are more likely to live in areas of Torbay classified as being amongst the 20% most deprived areas in England.			
Religion and belief	64.8% of Torbay residents who stated that they have a religion in the 2021 census.	No Differential Impact		
Sex	51.3% of Torbay's population are female and 48.7% are male	No Differential Impact		
Sexual orientation	In the 2021 Census, 3.4% of those in Torbay aged over 16 identified their sexuality as either Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or, used another term to describe their sexual orientation.	No Differential Impact		
Armed Forces Community	In 2021, 3.8% of residents in England reported that they had previously served in the UK armed forces. In Torbay, 5.9 per cent of the population have previously served in the UK armed forces.	No Differential Impact		
Additional considerations				

Socio-economic impacts (Including impacts on child poverty and deprivation)		The Corporate Parenting Strategy aims to address the socio economic challenges faced by cared for and care experienced children and young people in Torbay. By providing targeted support and services, the strategy seeks to mitigate the effects of child poverty and deprivation, ensuring that all children and young people have the opportunity to achieve positive outcomes. This includes access to education, healthcare, and other essential services that contribute to their overall well-being and development. The strategy will also focus on improving the socio-economic conditions of families and communities, recognising that a supportive environment is crucial for the success of children and young people. By working collaboratively with partners in education, police, health services, and the community and voluntary sector, the strategy aims to create a holistic approach to addressing socio-economic disparities and promoting social inclusion. Furthermore, the strategy will include measures to monitor and evaluate the impact of these initiatives, ensuring that they are effective in reducing child poverty and deprivation. This will involve collecting and analysing	To mitigate the socio economic impacts related to the Corporate Parenting Strategy, several targeted actions and interventions can be implemented. These activities aim to address the challenges faced by cared for and care experienced children and young people in Torbay, ensuring they have the opportunity to achieve positive outcomes: promoting inclusive practices across all areas of the strategy is essential. This involves working collaboratively with partners in education, police, health services, and the community and voluntary sector to create a holistic approach to addressing socio-economic disparities and	The Children's Services department will be responsible for implementing the mitigation activities outlined. The timeframe for implementation will align with the overall timeline for the development and execution of the Corporate Parenting Strategy action plans.
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		data on key indicators, such as educational attainment, health outcomes, and access to services, to identify areas for improvement and make necessary adjustments.	promoting social inclusion. By fostering a supportive environment, we can improve the socio-economic conditions of families and communities, which is crucial for the success of children and young people The ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the initiatives within the final strategy will be vital. This will include collecting and analysing data on key indicators such as educational attainment, health outcomes, and access to services. By identifying areas for improvement and making necessary adjustments, we can ensure that the initiatives are effective in reducing child poverty and deprivation. This will be undertaken via	
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			the development of an action plan.	
Public Health impacts (Including impacts on the general health of the population of Torbay)		By committing to this Strategy, Torbay will be committing to the supporting all of our cared for children and care experienced young people in order to meet their needs, and to achieve their best outcomes; by doing this, we will have a significant, positive impact on the longer term health outcomes for cared for children and care experienced young people	As above	As above
Human Rights impacts		Links to the Convention on the Rights of the Child: This consultation honour the rights of cared for and care experienced children and young people in terms of participation and non discrimination.	As above	As above
Child Friendly	Torbay Council is a Child Friendly Council, and all staff and Councillors are Corporate Parents and have a responsibility towards cared for and care experienced children and young people.	This Strategy is a fundamental part of Torbay's Child Friendly commitment.	As above	As above

14. Cumulative Council Impact

- 14.1 The cumulative impact on the Council for implementing the Corporate Parenting Strategy is multifaceted and significant. This strategy aims to enhance the Council's role as a supportive, responsive, considerate, and sensitive corporate parent. By doing so, it will positively influence the lives of cared for and care experienced children and young people in Torbay.

15. Cumulative Community Impacts

- 15.1. The cumulative community impact of the Corporate Parenting Strategy will be far-reaching - the strategy will foster a supportive environment by working collaboratively with partners in education, police, health services, and the community and voluntary sector. This holistic approach will help to promote social inclusion, reduce socio-economic disparities, and ensure that all children and young people have the opportunity to achieve positive outcomes.