



# Corporate Parenting Strategy 2026 – 2028

A contract of trust

**TORBAY COUNCIL**

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# 1. Foreword

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We are passionate and absolutely committed to wanting Torbay and its residents to thrive. Central to this vision is making sure that everyone can play their part in supporting Torbay's children and young people and making Torbay 'child friendly.'

We are so proud of our children and young people, and we are committed to do all we can to support them to benefit from the many opportunities that the Bay has to offer. In all we do, we want our children to feel personally supported, safe and benefiting from the advice and practical encouragements that will enable them to become successful young adults equipped to take their place in the world. We want them to have a collective voice so that we can understand and respond to their issues, priorities, stresses and successes.

We are committed to being the best parents by caring deeply for our children and young people and ensuring that our promises made in The Pledge as it is set out below are known and understood by our children, young people and our workforce and, most importantly, are fulfilled.

## ***The Pledge :***

*We, as your corporate parents, pledge to support, empower, and respect you. This pledge is built on your voices, your experiences, and your aspirations. It reflects our commitment to listen, act, and stand beside you—always.*

### 1. Respect and Empowerment

- *We will treat you as individuals, not labels.*
- *We will listen to you, involve you in decisions, and explain things clearly.*
- *We will respect your privacy and ensure you are not singled out or bullied.*

### 2. Health and Wellbeing

- *We will support your physical and mental health through regular check-ups and access to services.*
- *We will help you develop a Personal Health Plan tailored to your needs and choices.*
- *We will celebrate your achievements and support your resilience and self-worth.*

### 3. Education and Learning

- *We will help you stay in your preferred school or college and explain any changes.*
- *We will develop a Personal Education Plan to help you succeed.*
- *We will support your learning journey with encouragement and understanding.*

#### 4. Relationships and Identity

- *We will support your relationships with family, friends, and siblings.*
- *We will plan visits and family time around your preferences.*
- *We will help you build a strong sense of identity and belonging.*

#### 5. Independence and Future Opportunities

- *We will guide you as you grow, offering support when needed and space when wanted.*
- *We will help you develop life skills and access opportunities in education, employment, and training until at least age 21 and where applicable up to 25 years.*
- *We will celebrate your talents and support your goals.*

#### 6. Participation and Voice

- *We will ensure your voice is heard in all decisions that affect you.*
- *We will work with you individually or through groups like the Children in Care Council.*
- *We will review this pledge annually to ensure it reflects your evolving needs and priorities.*

This pledge was shaped through consultation with cared for children and care experienced adults in Torbay. It reflects real experiences and is aligned with restorative practice values and inclusive language.

The content of the Pledge has strongly informed this strategy, and we will ensure that its spirit and intent is carried forward into how we work and engage with Torbay's cared for and care experienced children and young people.

We would additionally like to take this opportunity to thank our incredibly dedicated foster carers and staff for the commitment they demonstrate to our cared for and care experienced children and young people every single day. We are committed to being great corporate parents, to ensure that each of our children and young people has every opportunity to live happy and fulfilling lives.

*The Corporate Parenting Board*

## 2. Corporate Parenting Vision

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The Children and Young People's Plan sets out Torbay Council's objectives and priorities for all services that directly affect children and young people across the communities which make up Torbay. Its overriding objective and common purpose are ***to ensure that all of our cared for and care experienced children and young people are safe, happy and healthy in order that they can reach their full potential.***

In the context of Corporate Parenting this objective becomes an ambition ***to ensure that our cared for and care experienced children and young people are:***

- safe, happy and healthy in order that they can reach their full potential; and
- supported to have all the opportunities that good parents afford their children.

We are committed to being an effective, caring and ambitious corporate parent and we will work effectively with our partners such as health, education, the police and the voluntary sector to show this through:

- our positive and unconditional support,
- our engagement, communication and collaboration with cared for and care experienced children and young people,
- our openness to challenge and our sense of accountability to cared for and care experienced children and young people,
- our focus,
- our language, and
- our actions.

We will ensure that our cared for and care experienced children and young people are at the heart of all that we do and receive the same standard of care that any good parent would provide to protect and support them to benefit from a range of good and enjoyable experiences and to cope with the dangers and risks of everyday life. We will celebrate and share in their experiences and achievements, no matter how big or small, and we will remain ambitious for them and will work hard to support them in reaching their full potential. We will do everything we can to make sure that our cared for and care experienced children and young people are set up for life. Equally importantly, and at every step along the way we will talk frequently with our children and young people, we will respect and understand them and wherever it is possible and right to do so, we will act upon their views and wishes. We will make sure we tell them what we have done even when like in all families, we may not always be in full agreement. We will give our cared for and care experienced children and young people the ability to influence and importantly to challenge the Corporate Parent so that they can be sure that we will do everything in our power to ensure this strategy works for them and helps them achieve their goals and improve their lives.

We want Torbay to be a 'Child Friendly' place, a place that champions our cared for and care experienced children and young people and where they can grow and thrive and live happily and safely.

### 3. Introduction

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This strategy is more than words on a series of pages. It represents the Council's responsibilities and accountabilities to each of its cared for and care experienced children and young people. It forms a ***'Contract of Trust'*** with those for whom it has a relationship bound in statute and moral obligation. It reflects a solemn determination to ensure that the intent of this important strategy translates to timely and positive action that enables each cared for and care experienced child and young person to have their needs met and their aspirations encouraged while being supported to live happily, safely and securely. It is the expectation of this strategy that each child and young person will actively participate in discussion and debate with their workers and understand and



contribute to the decisions that are made which affect their lives. Through these personal connections confidence and ultimately trust will flourish and grow, and the children and young people will experience positive relationships that they can constructively use to navigate the challenges that will face them.

*“I want my say in decisions”.*

- Cared for young person

*“Being a care leaver faces you up to not having a family around you like most of your mates. It is hard and lonely sometimes.”*

- Care experienced young person

*“Don’t just talk to us. Hear what we have to say and understand what it means”*

- Cared for young person, specific consultation session

The image contained within this introduction, is a photograph/illustration submitted by one of our care experienced young people. It symbolises powerfully the many diverse hands of friendship and support required by each cared for and care experienced child and young person as they grow into their communities with the support of the professionals with whom they form relationships.



**So, what precisely is corporate parenting?** It is a term enshrined in statute that incorporates all of the responsibilities that we have as a Council to ensure that our cared for and care experienced children and young people are provided with the best possible care and protection. This is about more than just keeping children and young people safe. It is about every department of the Council and each of our partners working towards the common purpose set out in our objectives to enhance every aspect of their lives and by working with each child and young person ensuring that they are equipped with the right support to achieve their dreams. It needs to be said that our children and young people who participated in the consultation process do not like the term *corporate parent* but

said they were prepared to accept it as it is used in law, but they want to work together to consider the term they would like us to use in our internal discussions.

This Corporate Parenting Strategy outlines our aspirations to become the kind of corporate parent Torbay wants to be and how the Council will work alongside its partners, including education, police and health services, to achieve this ambition. It requires everyone, from officers to elected Members to GPs and to teachers, not only to recognise their role as corporate parents but also to understand how they work together to achieve the very best outcomes for each cared for and care experienced child and young person. The effectiveness of the strategy will properly be judged against this exacting standard.

The detail of the strategy sets out the commitment of our wider partnership to these objectives, and achieving our ambitions through strong strategic, corporate and political leadership and meaningful performance management. We will maintain an absolute commitment to the ongoing engagement and involvement of children and young people in the development and implementation of our strategy and associated action plans, and effective collaborative working with our partners across Torbay. The mission statements and priorities set out within this strategy reflect not only the Pledge and the local and national priorities for cared for children and care experienced young people, but also the priorities that have been developed as a direct result of our engagement and consultation with children and young people.

Each mission statement and priority has elected Member support and is delivered through the work of the Corporate Parenting Strands that are defined within the Corporate Parenting Board governance structure. The Strategy also demonstrates how the Corporate Parenting Board is held accountable for the delivery of the action plans underpinning our comprehensive corporate parenting principles and priorities, including by direct contact with children and young people and through their dedicated representative, the Senior Corporate Parenting Lead (Cared For and Care Experienced Children and Young People). This is a new post created as part of this strategy development to ensure that the voices of our cared for and care experienced children and young people are heard and understood in each of the service development, practice delivery and Corporate Parenting Board accountability processes.

Cared for and care experienced children and young people also receive services as part of this strategy that are partly or wholly delivered by partners. It is therefore an expectation that the governance arrangements relevant to those organisations and individuals working with the children and young people will ensure proper scrutiny and liaison where appropriate with the Corporate Parenting Board.

## 4. The Statutory Context

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### *Legal Duties*

Under the Children Act 1989, a child is cared for by the Council if they are:

- Provided with accommodation for a continuous period for more than 24 hours,

- Subject to a care order,
- Subject to a placement order.

When a child or young person becomes cared for, the Council becomes their Corporate Parent. In February 2018, the Department for Education published Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities and outlined the key principles of Corporate Parenting and the statutory responsibility that **all** elected Members and council officers have in terms of the wellbeing of cared for and care experienced children and young people.

We are also the corporate parent for those young people who are care experienced. The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 outlines the legal definition in terms of who qualifies as a care experienced young person. Specifically, this is defined as a young person aged sixteen or above who has been cared for by the local authority for a relevant period of time since their fourteenth birthday, and for those who have been cared for on or after their sixteenth birthday for a period of time. The expectations in terms of the services and support that local authorities must offer is contained within the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, the Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010 and the Children and Social Work Act 2017. The Council continues to provide support to care experienced young people until they are 25 under the extended duties contained within the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

This strategy lays a responsibility upon elected members, senior officers and all staff across the Council to share a common vision, a conscious sense of collective responsibility and a demonstrable commitment to work collaboratively with our cared for and care experienced children and young people. These qualities will enable the desire to develop and deliver a range of quality services to our children and young people to come a reality.

## 5. Principles and Priorities

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### Corporate Parenting Principles

We will ensure that we meet the needs of our children and young people, and we will use these principles, the spirit of which is enshrined in the Pledge to guide every element of our approach.

On behalf of our cared for and care experienced children and young people, we will always:

- act in their best interests and promote their physical and mental health and wellbeing,
- actively encourage our children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings,
- demonstrably seek to fully understand and take account of their views, wishes and feelings by working in accordance with the Council's restorative principles,
- in collaboration with the children and young people, help them gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by us and our partners to meet their needs,
- promote high aspirations and seek to secure the best outcomes for them,
- ensure that they are safe and have stability in their home lives, relationships, education and work,
- prepare them for a successful transition to young adulthood and secure independent living.



## Priorities

We have identified a number of priorities in ensuring we are the best corporate parents we can be. We will focus on these priorities and continue to talk to children and young people, to make sure they remain the right ones.

Set out below are the Priorities that reflect the spirit of the relevant parts of the Pledge that we have made to our children and young people. They will be used to develop outcome-focused action plans that will specifically state what will be done, by whom and by when so that all involved will know how the priorities will be delivered in practice.

### Priority 1: We will work with you

***“Come when you say you will, don’t cancel on us and get to really know us”-Cared for young person.***

***Mission Statement:*** Every cared for and care experienced child and young person will have a positive, respectful and trusting relationship with a worker with whom they have regular contact and derive benefit from shared communication, advice and guidance and support.

***Child Friendly Mission Statement:*** You will have a worker who you see often, who listens to you, helps you, and treats you with kindness and respect. You can talk to them about anything, and they will give you advice, support, and be there for you when you need them

- We will come when we say we will, we will be prepared for our meeting, and we will listen to you and understand what you are saying.
- Your views will always be given priority, and we will be honest about what we can do and what is not possible.
- We will explain your rights and entitlements using language that is easily understood.
- We will use Language that Cares.
- We will respect your privacy and do everything we can to ensure that you are not singled out or bullied at school, college, or in any other setting.
- We will use our training to be thoughtful and understanding about the challenges you face.
- We will celebrate your achievements with you in the ways that you would like.

### Priority 2: We will ensure your living arrangement (placement) is safe and meets your needs

***“Unless our homes are good enough for you to live in, they are not good enough for us”-Care experienced young person.***

***Mission Statement:*** Every cared for and care experienced child and young person will benefit from a safe and secure living arrangement that enables each child and young person to grow physically and psychologically with support from carers and professionals while enjoying positive contacts with their families whenever this is possible.

***Child Friendly Mission Statement:*** You will have a safe and comfortable place to live, where people look after you and help you grow. The adults who care for you will support you and make sure you feel happy and secure. Whenever possible, you’ll also be able to keep in touch with your family and the people who are important to you.

- We will work with you and your carers to ensure your home is the best it can be.
- We will work together to keep you safe and protected.
- We will work with you and your carers to ensure that you have opportunities that you enjoy and enable you to have your voice.
- We will plan visits in advance and involve you in those plans and we will not change them unless it is absolutely unavoidable.
- We will help you to stay in contact with any family you may have if you want that and explain the reasons if this is not possible.

## **Priority 3: We will support you to fulfil your potential**

***“What has happened to us makes education, training and work hard for us. Be patient and help others to be patient with us too” Cared for young person.***

***Mission Statement:*** We will work tirelessly in conjunction with our education colleagues to ensure that every cared for or care experienced child and young person benefits from their full entitlement to education and training with no avoidable gaps and are supported in every way to achieve their best.

***Child Friendly Mission Statement:*** Together with your teachers and lecturers we will do everything we can to help you learn and do well at school, college, or in training. We’ll make sure you don’t miss out on any chances to learn, and we’ll support you in every way so you can achieve your goals and be the best you can be.

- We will ask you about what your goals are and support you to achieve them.
- We will work with you to develop a Personal Education Plan of the things you do in school, college or alternative provision, so you are encouraged and helped to do well.
- We will work closely with your school, college or provider involving you directly whenever possible, and offer you easy to understand reasons for any changes.
- We will encourage and support you to take up opportunities in education, employment and training until the age of at least 21, in ways that suit you.
- We will do everything we can to create work and training opportunities for you.

## **Priority 4: We will ensure that your physical, emotional, mental health needs are met**

***“Follow through on health issues to make sure we get what we need.” Care experienced young person.***

***Mission Statement:*** Every cared for and care experienced child and young person will benefit from a relentless focus on ensuring that their physical, emotional and mental health needs are met without delay by the appropriate specialists wherever they may live.

***Child Friendly Mission Statement:*** Together with our colleagues in health we will make sure you get the help you need to feel healthy and happy, both in your body and your feelings. If you need to see a doctor, nurse, or someone to talk to, we will help you get support quickly, no matter where you live.

- We will work together to help to support your sense of well-being and personal identity.
- We will develop with you a plan (called a Personal Health Plan) to support you to be healthy and make informed good choices about your lifestyle to keep you emotionally, mentally and physically fit and well.
- We will support you to access regular health and dental checks and help you make any appointments or access treatment you may need without avoidable delay.

## **Priority 5: You will be supported to develop into an independent, confident and responsible adult**

***“Don’t dump us into independence and expect us to survive. We need lots of help even if we say we don’t. Be there for us” Cared for young person.***

***Mission Statement:*** We will work tirelessly to ensure that each cared for and care experienced child and young person participates fully in planning and the work undertaken to support them to make the transition to becoming a secure, safe, confident and happy young adult equipped with the necessary life skills for success.

***Child Friendly Mission Statement:*** We will help you be part of making plans for your future, so you can become a confident, happy, and independent adult. We’ll support you to learn the skills you need for life and make sure you feel safe and ready for what comes next.

- We will support and work with you so that you build an understanding that challenges and uncertainty are part of life and growth, and help you develop skills and strategies for dealing with them.
- We will work with you to ensure you have support and advice, so that you become confident and skilled in making good choices and less likely to take worrying risks or be open to exploitation by others.
- We will work with you to develop the life skills we all need to achieve your goals and have the best opportunities for the future.

## **Priority 6: We will support you to secure good quality housing that you can call home and put down roots.**

***“All we ask for is somewhere decent to live so we can move on in life” Care experienced young person.***

***Mission Statement:*** We will ensure that each cared for or care experienced young person is prioritised and supported to secure without avoidable delay safe, stable and sustainable accommodation that is suitable for their assessed needs.

***Child Friendly Mission Statement:*** We will make sure you have a safe and stable place to live that suits what you need. If you need to move, we’ll help you find a good home as quickly as possible, so you feel settled and supported

- We will work to secure a range of suitable accommodation to meet the needs of our cared for and care experienced young people.
- We will continue to support young people with rent guarantees.

- We will consider how young people can be further prioritised for social housing.
- We will work relentlessly to prevent any young person from becoming intentionally homeless.
- We will continue to support the Council's established 'staying put' arrangements with fostering families when it is right for the young person.

In respect of all of these priorities and pledges, we will actively engage and consult with our children and young people, in taking forward the corporate parenting principles outlined above. We will make sure that we take what we learn from children and young people and embed this rich material in the partnership workforce development and training framework, to make sure that we as corporate parents share this learning.

### Restorative Practice

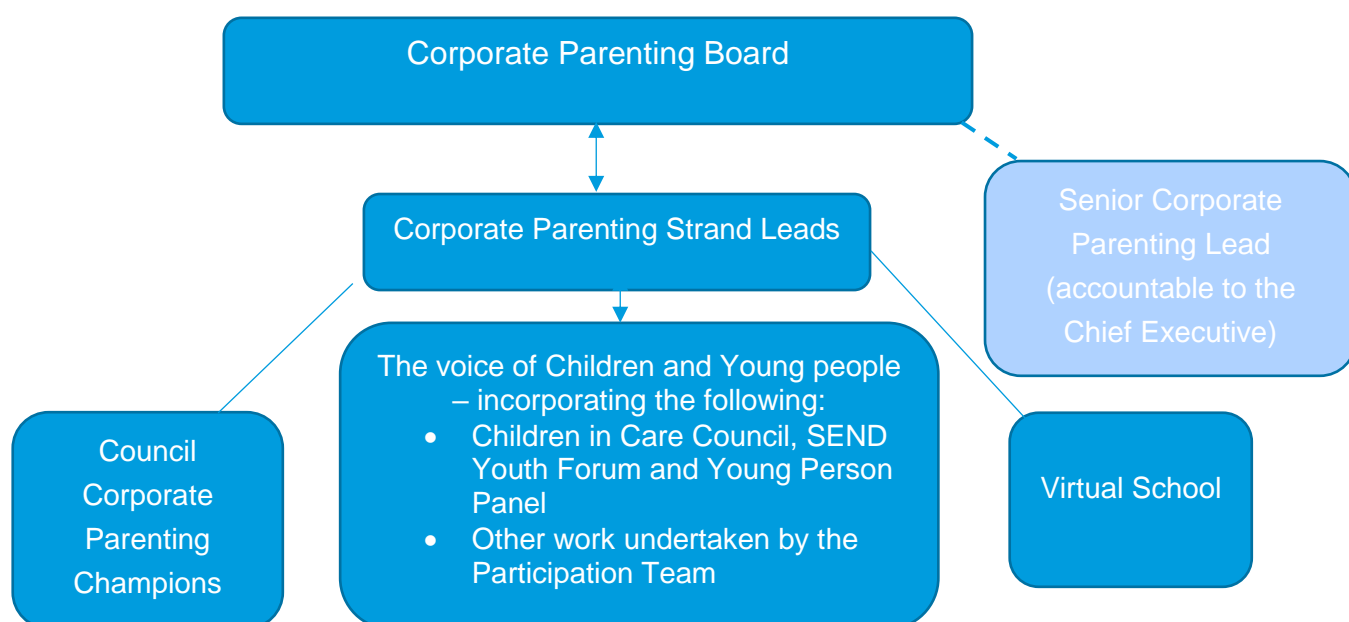
Torbay is committed to working with children and families in a restorative way. What this means is that we will value and place importance on the relationships we build with children, young people and families and always treat them with respect and dignity.

To Torbay's cared for and care experienced children and young people, we pledge that we will always try to work with you, as opposed to making decisions about you without involving you, or doing things for you without involving you. This means regularly seeking your views and reflecting these views in all assessments, plans or other forms of communication written with and about you.

## 6. Governance

The Council's Community and Corporate Plan sets out our aspirations for the community of Torbay including children and young people. The Council's objective is to ensure that all children and young people are safe, happy and healthy in order that they can reach their full potential.

As this strategy makes clear corporate parenting is the responsibility of the Council as a whole and of its partners. The diagram below illustrates how the various elements combine to ensure that the accountable Corporate Parenting Board has a clear line of sight to the work being carried out with cared for and care experienced children and young people.



## Corporate Parenting Board

**The three key principles govern the work of the Board** are (1) 'small is beautiful' reflecting the importance of keeping the Board as small as possible to maximise its effectiveness and efficiency and (2) a commitment to focusing upon the needs of cared for and care experienced children and young people and (3) capturing the voices of children that are critical to informing and assisting in evaluation of the strategy's development, effectiveness and progress.

**Membership:** *The membership of the Board will comprise politicians, senior professional from partner agencies and a representative of the foster care association.* Children and young people are represented by the dedicated full time, care experienced officer, the Corporate Parenting Lead who works across the partnership to gather views and to advocate on behalf of children and young people while performing a key role in ensuring that the Board delivers the strategy and its associated action plans. They will attend all meetings but will be an active participant to support the Board, rather than a member.

**Purpose of meeting:** To review the progress of the strategy and its action plans, and to monitor the progress of the associated action log. It therefore provides critical operational oversight and professional challenge to those responsible for Corporate Parenting activities. Reports to the meeting are documented using a template which requires the author to explicitly state which priorities of the strategic plan, strand priority action plans or requirements of the Pledge apply. Minutes of every meeting are produced in child and young person friendly ways and distributed to all Board members. Bi-annually, overall progress is reported to Cabinet and to Children's Overview and Scrutiny. A publicly available annual report is produced, similarly adapted to child-friendly form. accompanied by a revised strand priority action plans if amendment is required. The annual report will also be presented to Cabinet.

**Meeting frequency and support:** Every 2 months forming a key element within the Council's Constitution. It will take place at a suitable venue and will be supported corporately by Governance Support.

## Corporate Parenting Strand Leads

In line with the priorities outlined above, we have established five Corporate Parenting Strand Leads: Emotional Health and Wellbeing, Participation and UASC, Housing, Education and Employment & Fostering. Each Strand Lead is led by an elected Member who is a member of the Corporate Parenting Board, who each have their own job description. The Strand Lead's meetings also include Lead Officer support and key officers and partner representatives. Strand Leads take their strategic direction from the Corporate Parenting Board and the associated mission statements in respect of their area of focus. They monitor and evaluate the operational implementation of strand priorities, and use the meeting to scrutinise and explore relevant performance data and information, identifying barriers to progress before feeding the information into their reports to the Strategic Board and if necessary into proposed amendments to the strand priority action plans.



## **Virtual School**

Torbay Virtual School provides the framework through which the educational needs of our cared for and care experienced children and young people are met working closely with educational providers, carers, social care and health practitioners, and children and young people. The work of the Virtual School is overseen by a Governing Body and led by the Virtual School Headteacher.

We absolutely believe it is crucial and right that every cared for and care experienced child and young person (including those in custody) has a full and enriching education. We know that a failure to do so will have avoidable life affecting impacts for the children and young people concerned. Educational attainment and progress for our children is subject to regular and rigorous review to determine the effectiveness of the arrangements put in place for them via their Personal Education Plan and where necessary we will use all available resources in support of learner's right to have the education that they deserve. The Virtual School also produces an annual report for the consideration of the Governing Body, Corporate Parent Members Group and Full Council that will contain a detailed analysis of educational progress, development and barriers to progress, and recommendations to achieve further improvement for children and young people.

## **The Corporate Parenting Lead**

It is the Council's belief that cared for and care experienced young people deserve and will benefit from a dedicated support professional who because of their personal lived experiences will have the ability to understand and work closely and alongside children and young people. Advocating for their voices will be an important function together with a key role to actively hold the Council to account for its delivery of the strategy and its priority action plans. Sitting at Corporate Parenting Board meetings will mean that for the first time children's and young people's voices will be expressed and heard at every meeting and decisions will always be made taking into account the views and experiences of cared for and care experienced children and young people. When it is appropriate, the Corporate Parenting Lead will support children and young people to attend Board meetings to enable direct participation in debate and discussion.

## **Council Corporate Parenting Champions**

All departments across the Council and our wholly owned companies will have designated officers as Corporate Parenting Champions. The Champions come together on a quarterly basis together with the Senior Corporate Parenting Champion, to help to shape their department's role in ensuring that we are good corporate parents and to inform and influence Council-wide initiatives to enhance our Corporate Parenting Offer.

The established aims of this group are:

- To become an authority who thinks first about our corporate parent role and ensures that it is fully embedded in all we do as an authority.
- To provide a corporate parenting offer for our children.
- To provide a corporate parenting offer for foster families.

- To raise awareness of the Council's corporate parenting responsibilities and to lead or encourage action in furtherance of those responsibilities.

## **Children and Young People's Panel**

Torbay will establish a Children and Young People's Panel, consisting of a diverse group of young people who can represent all the children within Torbay, including but not limited to representatives from different educational providers, children and young people with SEND, cared for children and care experienced young people. This would not only be a means of bringing together the existing participation groups as a way of centralising feedback from children and young people but would also support us in being able to expand the representation within these groups and reflect the voice of a wider range of children and young people.

In addition, this will create a sense of community and collaboration for our cared for and care experienced children and young people as they unite to advocate for themselves and have their voices heard.

## **Participation Officers**

Torbay's Participation Officers endeavour to support and promote positive participation with children, young people and parent/carers, and going forward will work collaboratively and dynamically with the Senior Corporate Parenting Lead (Cared for and Care Experienced Children and Young People). They will obtain the views and lived experiences of children and young people and enter into discussion, debate and consultation about all aspects of the plan to ensure that the Corporate Parenting Strategy is effective as possible in terms of reach and impact. Together they will be a force to enable children and young people's voices to be heard and understood by the corporate parents and will work relentlessly to hold to account the Corporate Parenting Board members for delivering the Corporate Parenting Strategy, its mission statements and priorities.

## **7. Talking to us**

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The Corporate Parenting Strategy has emphasized how we value and see as crucial communication with children and young people. We believe that learning from their experiences and understanding their views and opinions are the richest sources of information to support policy and service development and service delivery to the highest standards.

We have emphasized throughout this strategy how we will work closely with children and young people and take their experiences of care and leaving care very seriously, whether this has been something positive or something which has been more difficult for them to manage. We will learn from those experiences and use them to make the strategy and services better. However, we recognize that although we benefit greatly from communicating directly, we do not reach all children and young people. We are committed to doing so and a key task of the Senior Corporate Parenting

Lead (Cared For and Care Experienced Children and Young People) will be to develop ways to involve those who have not yet been spoken with to include them in the processes in ways in which they feel comfortable. In doing so, we expect that social workers, Personal Advisors, carers, teachers, support workers and Independent Reviewing Officers will be enlisted to help, advise and play an active part. The broadest understanding of children and young people will help the corporate parents grow and develop in line with what children and young people say.