



National
Guidance

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Corporate Parenting

Local Authorities are legally the Corporate Parents of looked-after children in their care, and of care leavers under the age of 25. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 defines the following principles of Corporate Parenting for children and young people:

- To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people.
- To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings.
- To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people.
- 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.
- To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people.
- For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work.
- To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

Getting the balance right

The actual care of looked-after children may be delivered by employees of the Local Authority, by a third party provider contracted by the Local Authority, or by foster parents. This means that the Local Authority may need to balance its Corporate Parenting responsibilities with its responsibilities as an employer or its responsibilities when selecting third party providers.

As Corporate Parents, Local Authorities should ensure that their arrangements for the safety and welfare of looked-after children prioritise their needs and enable them to take part in a wide variety of opportunities, including outdoor learning, off-site visits and Learning Outside the Classroom. These arrangements should not present unnecessary bureaucratic barriers.

Enjoyable experiences provided through the normal activities of outdoor play and 'going out', or taking part in activities such as educational visits, are supportive of the Corporate Parenting principles and can contribute to the well-being and development of looked-after children. As part of encouraging such opportunities,

Local Authorities must ensure that those working with looked-after children have appropriate guidance and support.

Differing settings and appropriate systems

Local Authorities should recognise that they may need to support different settings in different ways. For example:

- A child in foster care should be able to live as normal a life as possible and take part in activities in much the same way as other children, particularly any birth children within their foster family. Appropriate delegation should be in place for foster parents to be able to give informed consent for visits organised by, for example, schools and voluntary organisations. The foster parents should know when and how they should seek guidance and/or permission from the Local Authority, for example, if they were considering leading the family in an adventure activity or going overseas.
- Children's homes are likely to need to make decisions about some weekend and holiday activities at short notice, whereas schools can usually plan their activities well ahead. Social workers or youth workers who organise activities for small groups or individual children may need significant flexibility to deal with challenging behaviour, whereas schools usually organise activities for larger groups and make firmer plans. Systems should reflect these different needs.
- Local Authorities should help the schools serving looked-after children to be aware of the particular issues that these children may face when taking part in outdoor learning, off-site visits and learning outside the classroom, regardless of whether or not the schools are controlled by a Local Authority. This can be done through liaison between a Local Authority's Virtual School Head and/or Outdoor Education Adviser and a school's Educational Visits Coordinator and/or Designated Teacher for Looked-After Children.

The arrangements for delegated decision making and accountability are commonly described in the Social Care delegation policy of the Local Authority.

Role of the Outdoor Education Adviser

The remit of the Local Authority Outdoor Education Adviser should extend across the whole range of the Local Authority's provision, and not be limited to schools, so that appropriate guidance and support systems are available to those responsible for looked after children.

Further information

- 3.1a "Requirements and Recommendations for Employers"
- 3.2a "Underpinning legal framework"
- 3.4a "Guidance for the Director of Children's Services"
- 3.4n "Guidance for Parents"
- 4.3d "Parental Consent"

