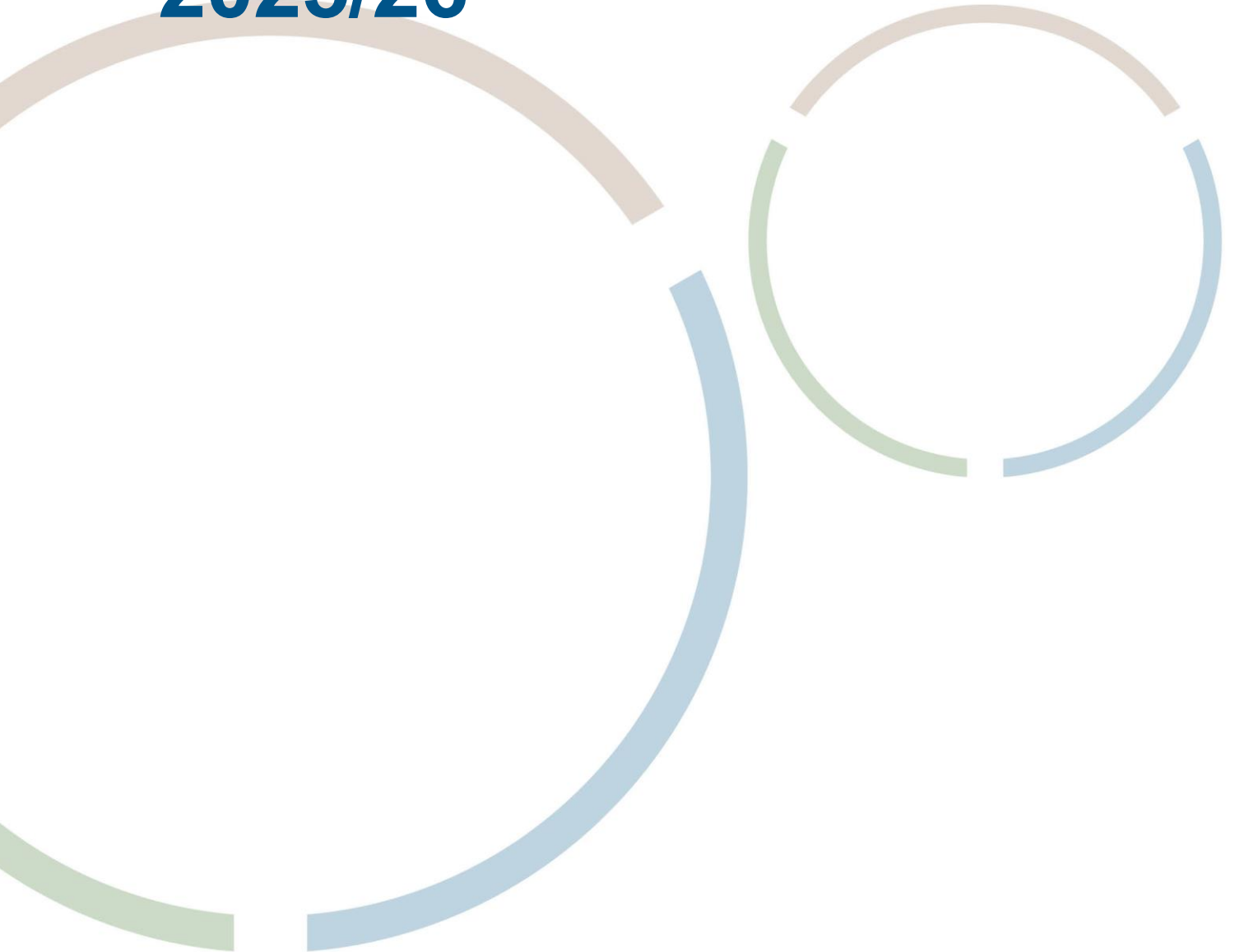




Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Members' Group 2025/26



Foreword by Councillor Caroline Goodrick

As Chair of the Corporate Parenting Members' Group, it is my honour to introduce our Annual Report for 2025/26.

It is important to remind ourselves that when a child or young person comes into the Council's care, we become their corporate parent, and it is our duty to ensure they and their family receive the most appropriate support at the right time – asking ourselves 'Would this be good enough for my child?'.

The Corporate Parenting Members' Group is a non-decision making, informal working group of Members, who meet with officers and relevant partner agencies to offer challenge and support around services for children and young people in our care and for those leaving care. The Executive Member for Children's Services is also a passionate corporate parent and committed member of the Group.

This annual report is an overview of activities and key issues that have been raised at meetings, and we continue to take a blended approach of both in-person and remote meetings.

Our workplan is centred around the seven key principles of our 'We Care Because You Matter' corporate parenting strategy and we receive annual updates on each one. We are pleased to have also met with other services and partners to hear about their work with children in care. These include annual reports from the Head of Virtual School, National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS). The Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Service and the Youth Justice Team.

This year, we invited officers from the Psychologically Informed Partnership Approach (PIPA) to learn more about how they support young people with their mental health and their work with other partners.

We greatly value the quarterly progress updates about our children in care, residential home inspections (Regulation 44s) and young people seeking asylum.

I recognise the varied officers and partner agencies, and I am grateful for the time they dedicate to supporting the Corporate Parenting Members' Group. Their commitment to children in our care and care leavers is clearly evident.

I would also like to acknowledge the Corporate Parenting Members' Group for their ongoing commitment, expertise and constructive challenge.

In addition, I thank those Members who have supported care leaver activities by contributing funds from their Locality Budgets over the past year.

Councillor Caroline Goodrick
Chair of Corporate Parenting Members' Group

1 Key Principles Reviewed by the Corporate Parenting Members' Group in the last municipal year

The Group has received updates on each of the key principles and is satisfied that the authority is progressing in all areas of the corporate parenting strategy principles. The following provides a brief update of some of the key discussion points for the Group and areas of interest moving forward.

2 Corporate Principle 1 – Health and Wellbeing of Children in Care

“To act in the best interest, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and young people.”

Members were informed that feedback from children and young people suggested that they prefer to use the term “Children in Care” or “Cared for Children” rather than “Looked After Children”, which they perceive to be quite negative.

Councillors wanted to learn more about how young people are being supported with their mental health. We were informed that emotional wellbeing and mental health are the biggest challenges for children who come into care, and appropriate support is put into place at the earliest opportunity, including the Psychologically Informed Partnership Approach (PIPA) and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).

Members heard about the importance of timely health assessments when a young person enters care. It was noted that a young person has the right to decline a health assessment, and for these children, health practitioners will seek to engage through alternative and more flexible approaches. In addition to this, a video is being created to help both younger and older children understand why health assessments are important. The Group was very pleased to learn that as of January 2026, performance in this area is over 80%.

It was encouraging to learn that the proportion of children in care with up-to-date health and dental checks and immunisations continue to improve. Members noted that children seeking asylum tend to have very few, if any immunisations at the start of their care experience and it may take time for them to achieve their optimum immunisation status.

There were discussions about children in North Yorkshire who use substances. An area of focus will be to ensure practitioners and carers are able to recognise signs of substance use and engage with children to support healthy choices.

3 Corporate Principle 2 - Youth Voice

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

Corporate Principle 3 - Youth Participation

“To consider the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people.”

With the clear overlap between these two principles, the Group reviews progress against them at the same point in the year.

Members learnt how the Council continues to strengthen Youth Voice and Participation. Key highlights were an update on engagement with refugee and asylum-seeking young people through regular house meetings, celebrations and targeted activities, and how the Council is working closely with partners to provide training to support neurodiverse children.

It was good to hear about how the views of young people are constantly being looked at and how they help to shape service delivery. This includes how they are helping to influence the questions asked in fostering panel processes, increased youth representation on the panels, and contributing to improvements to the Linking Lives app.

Members asked why some young people choose not to attend their child in care review meetings and heard how factors such as lack of confidence and timing of meetings can influence their decision. It is reassuring to hear that work is being progressed to better understand the barriers to children's participation in their reviews and to develop more child-led approaches.

A piece of work to increase support to children with a parent in prison was very much welcomed by the Group.

4 Corporate Principle 4 - Working Together

“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.”

Members heard about the range of activities that demonstrated strengthened joint working to support children in care, care leavers and other vulnerable young people. This includes a newly formed multi-agency task group to take forward the national kinship care reforms, and to develop a clear kinship care offer.

Delivery of supported accommodation has been brought in-house, which will improve supported housing options and the consistency of support packages available to young people. Members were also advised that the Multi-Agency Looked After Partnership (MALAP) will now involve a wider range of partners and representatives. Transitions between services remain a key focus. A new designated Preparation for Adulthood Team is being established to better support young people moving from children to adult services. Members understand that some young people seeking asylum choose to move out of North Yorkshire at age 18, often to areas with

stronger cultural or community links for them. It is encouraging to hear that efforts are made to maintain contact with our care experienced young people and ensure they are aware of available support.

Councillors asked how the increase in children being supported through child protection plans is being managed, noting that contributing factors include the impact of austerity, the aftermath of the coronavirus pandemic, and an increase in child protection involvement with babies and new families.

The Corporate Parenting Members' Group raised their concerns about the numbers of children allocated to some social workers and staff wellbeing and were informed that additional staff have been recruited, and extensive work is underway to upskill staff. Reassuringly, senior leadership teams regularly monitor workload and capacity.

5 Corporate Principle 5 - Ambition for Children

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

Members heard how the Virtual School continues to play a central role in promoting high aspirations and improving educational outcomes for children in care in North Yorkshire, acting as the Council's corporate parenting function for education.

Its work focuses on raising attainment, supporting emotional wellbeing and improving life chances through direct support to children and young people, robust oversight of Personal Education Plans (PEPs), and targeted advice and training for schools and professionals. It was reassuring to learn that PEPs are quality-assured by Education Liaison Advisors, with enhanced support provided for those children not making expected progress. An uplift to funding for the Post 16 Pupil Premium Project from the DfE resulted in being able to support many more children with interventions to improve their outcomes. Virtual School continues to play a pivotal role in the development of the Attachment Research Community Call to Action to make all schools attachment and trauma aware.

The Virtual School delivers a broad programme of enrichment activity, including academic initiatives, residential trips, creative and cultural opportunities, outdoor activities and learning, music tuition, and sustained engagement with further and higher education providers. Targeted provision for our young people seeking asylum included English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) support, summer schools and biking activities.

Educational outcomes are monitored across all key stages and compared nationally. Early Years outcomes compare favourably with national figures for children in care. Outcomes at later stages reflect the high proportion of children with identified special educational needs and disabilities. The Virtual School works closely with schools, Special Educational Needs (SEN) services and social care to secure SEN support and Educational Health Care Plans (EHCP) where required, and to identify

alternative or specialist provision when mainstream settings are unable to meet need.

6 Corporate Principle 6 - Safeguarding and Performance

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

Unfortunately, we were unable to discuss this corporate principle during this municipal year, an update will be provided in next year's annual report.

7 Corporate Principle 7 - Transitions

“To prepare children and young people for adulthood and independent living.”

Members were particularly keen to hear about the ongoing work that supports care experienced young people to move into adulthood and independent living. It was encouraging to hear that moving the supported accommodation pathway in-house will help with the co-ordination and consistency of housing packages. In addition, a new specialist housing worker funded by central government has been appointed to strengthen housing pathways for care leavers.

Councillors heard how the “Getting Ready for Adult Life” framework helps prepare young people for independence, and the “Linking Lives” app improves access to information, guidance and support for young people and professionals. To improve education, employment and training outcomes, work is ongoing to help care leavers access apprenticeship opportunities.

It was lovely to hear that events such as Christmas lunches and summer daytrips continue to play an integral role in bringing young people together and help to reduce isolation and loneliness.

Members were sad to hear that some young people seeking asylum have been refused their leave to remain, despite establishing strong links within their local communities. It was reassuring to hear about the support these young people are receiving, and how every effort is made to assist with their appeals and remain in contact with them.

8 Other Issues Considered by the Group

The Corporate Parenting Members' Group receive updates on a variety of other topics which help to give further context to the intersectional work done with other services and partners to support young people in care or who are care experienced. Below gives a flavour of the recent issues discussed.

8.1 Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) Annual Report 2024/25

The IROs Annual Report provided an overview of performance, practice developments and strategic priorities in North Yorkshire. It highlighted the IROs' statutory role in safeguarding, care planning, and quality assurance for children who are looked after and supported through child protection plans. Members heard that the number of children supported through child protection plans have risen significantly in comparison to last year, the IROs are working extremely hard and 98.8% of Child Protection Conferences were held within the statutory timescales.

It was reassuring to hear that there has been an increase in children participating in their reviews and Child Protection Conferences, and that the Mind of My Own App is well used.

8.2 National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) Annual Report 2024/25

Members received an annual report from NYAS to talk about the support they offer to the most vulnerable young people living in North Yorkshire. Between 2024-2025, they received 452 referrals, over a 100 more than the previous year. The biggest area of growth is in relation to child protection conferences.

A lot of work focuses on helping young people move from Children's Services to Adult Services, which can be a challenging process, especially for disabled young people who receive shared care and require coordination between parents and the Council. There has been an increase in the number of young people with a disability accessing the service, and they are matched with appropriate advocates, such as speech and language therapists and mental health specialists.

8.3 Psychologically Informed Partnership Approach (PIPA)

The mental health and wellbeing of children in care is a particular area of concern for the Corporate Parenting Members' Group, and we invited the PIPA service to learn about how they support young people and families/carers. The team is employed by the NHS and work with 0-25 year olds and over half of the children they support are children in care.

The rise in the work of the team over the years reflects the number of children supported through child protection plans and children coming into care. It was reassuring to hear that the team has managed to maintain the same level of service, with case workers allocated within 5 days and the young person having their first consultation within 10 days.

Members heard how Children's Social Care, PIPA and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) work together, with social workers consulting with PIPA and PIPA having an agreed process in place with CAMHS for discussions about specific children.

8.4 Quarterly Children in Care Reports

Members receive quarterly Children in Care performance reports that include detailed quantitative data, allowing them to compare performance across quarters and over time. These reports are supported by clear narrative commentary, which Members find particularly helpful in understanding the context behind the data and identifying trends and areas for improvement.

8.5 Quarterly Young People Seeking Asylum Updates

Quarterly updates on how young people seeking asylum are supported is included at each meeting. These updates cover a range of issues, such as accommodation provision and foster placements, number of young people leaving care and the support provided, number of completed age assessments and immunisations, and educational support.

Allocating a dedicated agenda item for this cohort is important, as their experiences and needs are often distinct from those of young people who are not seeking asylum.

8.6 Youth Justice and Children in Care Progress Update

This annual update is incredibly informative and provides lots of information about how data is collated. We are also able to see how North Yorkshire is comparing with neighbouring authorities and nationally.

It is reassuring to hear that overall, there are encouraging performance trends, particularly for children in care. Key strengths included strong partnership working, reduced use of custody, and a continued emphasis on prevention, diversion and restorative approaches rather than criminalisation.

8.7 Direct Engagement with Care Experienced Young People

The Chair of the Corporate Parenting Members' Group and the Executive Member for Children's Services held a baking session with a group of care-experienced young people in Scarborough to support engagement and demonstrate their care and commitment. For some young people, this was their first experience of baking, and they developed new skills during the session. The young people thoroughly enjoyed the day and took home a range of baked goods they had made themselves, along with a goody bag of baking equipment to encourage them to continue baking at home. A further cooking session with members and young people is planned for later in the year.

9 Performance of Residential Establishments and Regulation 44 Visits

Quarterly verbal updates on the performance of the Council's residential establishments are provided at each meeting. These updates provide valuable information and are greatly welcomed by Members, as they help build a clearer

understanding of the challenges faced by this group of young people and the support provided by staff and wider support networks.

The Chair and Vice Chair also receive detailed written reports following Regulation 44 residential visits and inspections. These reports provide a line of sight into practice within the homes, highlight positive developments across the service and clearly set out how any identified issues have been addressed.

Councillors continue to visit residential homes within their local areas, meeting with staff and young residents. These visits are consistently described as rewarding, and Councillors have provided very positive feedback on their experiences.

10 Membership and Governance

The Corporate Parenting Members' Group is not a Committee of the Executive but a non decision-making member working group responsible for supporting the Executive, and the Council as a whole, in its role as corporate parent. The Group may refer any issues directly to the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The membership of the group is as follows:

Cllr Caroline Goodrick (Chair)
Cllr Cliff Lunn (Vice Chair)
Cllr Alyson Baker (Young People's Champion)
Cllr Stephanie Duckett
Cllr Janet Jefferson
Cllr Heather Phillips
Cllr Kirsty Poskitt
Cllr John Ritchie
David Sharp (Voluntary and Community Sector representative on Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee)

Cllr Janet Sanderson, as Lead Executive Member for Children's Services, is a key member of the group.

The group held 5 meetings during this reporting period - in person on 2 occasions and remotely on 3 occasions.

11 Corporate Parenting Members' Group Work Programme 2026/2027

DATE	TOPIC	LEAD
Thurs, 4 June 2026 10am Brierley Room, County Hall	Corporate Principle 5 Ambition for Children Update	Julie Bunn, Cllr Alyson Baker
	Corporate Principle 6 Safeguarding and Permanence	Kate Reid, Cllr Janet Jefferson
	Sufficiency Update: Briefing on Accommodation for Children in Care	El Mayhew
	Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act Update	El Mayhew
	Children and Young People Seeking Asylum Update	Maggie Allen
	Regulation 44 Visits Update	Members, James Cliffe
	Annual Report Corporate Parenting Members' Group 2025/26	Alice Fox
	Work Programme 2026/27	Alice Fox
Thurs, 24 September 2026 10am Remote Meeting via MS Teams	NYAS Annual Update Report	Lesley-Ann Morris
	Corporate Principle 1 Health and Wellbeing of Children in Care	Alison Ferguson, Dr Natalie Lyth, Cllr John Ritchie
	Virtual Head Annual Report	Julie Bunn
	Sufficiency Update	TBC
	Next Steps Service (accommodation programme)	Teri Owens
	Children and Young People Seeking Asylum Update	TBC
	Regulation 44 Visits Update	Members, James Cliffe
	Children in Care Quarterly Data and Analysis Report	Stephen Miller
Thurs, 26 November 2026 10am Remote Meeting via MS Teams	Corporate Principle 4 Working Together Update	Kate Reid, Cllr Cliff Lunn
	Unregistered and Unregulated Residential Provision	Kate Reid
	Children and Young People Seeking Asylum Update	TBC
	Regulation 44 Visits Update	Members, James Cliffe
	Children in Care Quarterly Data and Analysis Report	Stephen Miller

DATE	TOPIC	LEAD
Thurs 28 January 2027 10am Remote Meeting via MS Teams	Corporate Principle 7 Transitions	TBC, Cllr Caroline Goodrick, Cllr Stephanie Duckett
	IRO Annual Report	Sam Clayton
	Youth Justice and Children in Care Annual Update and University of York Report (girls in the youth justice system)	Andy Dukes
	Children and Young People Seeking Asylum Update	TBC
	Regulation 44 Visits Update	Members, James Cliffe
	Children in Care Quarterly Data and Analysis Report	Stephen Miller
Thurs 4 March 2027 10am Brierley Room, County Hall	Corporate Principles 2 (Youth Voice) and 3 (Youth Participation)	Nicki Watkinson, Cllr Kirsty Poskitt, David Sharp
	Corporate Principle 6 Safeguarding & Permanence	Kate Reid, Cllr Janet Jefferson
	Children and Young People Seeking Asylum Update	TBC
	Regulation 44 Visits Update	Members, James Cliffe
	Draft Corporate Parenting Group Work Programme 2027/28	Alice Fox

The workplan may be subject to change or alterations throughout the year