

Corporate Parenting Panel report



15 March 2022

CHAMPION MODEL UPDATE

Report sponsor

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Report author

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Background

The Champion model is for all our elected members to support and champion specific areas of need and priority that affect our vulnerable children and young people, including Children in Care and Care Leavers. This was a direct recommendation from the Government's Lead Advisor for Care Leavers, Mark Riddell. It was launched in Milton Keynes during Summer 2020.

The model initially started with more areas than the current model of eight. It was condensed to recognise the alignment of certain areas, such as 'Care Leavers' and 'Housing' joining to be one area, with each individual aspect being integral to the other.

We recognise that this has taken time to formulate but propose that it is adopted in earnest post May 2022 elections and for us to ensure that all member are informed and equipped to be engaged and ambitious Corporate Parents.

Our Champion Model

Points of Contact

1. **Richard Lee**
Participation Team Leader
2. **Katie Connolly**
Deputy Team Manager,
16-25 Team Leader
3. **Ashley Edwards**
Interim Team Manager,
Children in Care Team
4. **Sharon Godfrey**
Acting Fostering
Team Manager
5. **Mandy Park**
6. **Jenny Cooledge**
Interim Virtual
School Headteacher
7. **Sophie Marshall**
Head of Safeguarding
& Quality
8. **Sivay Heer**
Head of Corporate Parenting



Our Champion Model is made up of eight different areas of our Children's lives, with each area having a Champion Member and officer.

The expectations of a Champion are as follows:

Supporting our Children

- Get to know our Corporate Children
- Hear their views first hand
- Attend events and groups with them
- Make a difference to the lives of Children and young people across Milton Keynes

Working with officers

- Liase regularly with link manager to review progress against key areas of the team's work and any identified priorities agreed by officers
- Get to know the team
- Promote the team's work across the Council and community

Wider reach and promotion

- Use your networks and communities to enhance and support the areas of work identified
- Develop a resource bank of local key contacts that can offer support to our Corporate Children
- Encourage all 56 members to work on the above

What has happened to date

Each Champion Member and Officer have met in a 121 setting to discuss the area of work, allowing the Member to gain a deeper knowledge, and understanding of this, and for the Officer to highlight any key challenges. Members have since been invited to attend several different engagement events to meet our Children in Care and Care Leavers. These engagement events have ranged from our True Triumph celebrations, through on-going regular provision such as the Children in Care Youth Club, to attending meetings with Officers to ensure the needs and views of our Corporate Children are raised, considered and appropriately acted up. The eight identified Champions have been engaged in attending these and championing the needs of our children and young people as we will see next.

Key successes

- 1) Champions have participated in Corporate Parenting events such as Care Leavers Week, Fostering Fortnight and Corporate Parenting Weeks in roles including:
 - Ice skating, football and making cakes.
 - Opening/speaking at celebrations such as True Triumph in Bistro Live.
 - Judging cakes and sharing things they enjoy doing.
 - Thanking and celebrating our Children and Carers.
- 2) Champion attending discussion across several Council services to ensure key decisions consider the best interests of our children and Care Leavers. This example included the scheme of allocations review prioritising housing for Care Leavers in a new and clearer way.
- 3) Attending Social Groups

Opportunity to spend time and have conversations with Corporate Children over baking, board games and Christmas celebrations.
- 4) As a result of the additional support Champions have given our children and the raised profile of their voice, the newly formed Children in Care Council, 'Raise Your Voice' now has a Chair, who has agreed to join Corporate Parenting Panel.

Challenges with the Champion Model

The Champion Model was introduced during the pandemic. While activities and engagement with our children was ongoing, it moved to be online rather than in person. This proved a challenge for general engagement, with our children either struggling with the technology or spending school days on screen and therefore not wanting to do additional online meetings outside of school. These factors saw a drop

in engagement of children and young people across the piece. This affected the Champion Model because it meant contact with children and young people in this context was significantly limited, and therefore opportunities for Champions to spend time with, and talk to, our children were hard to come by. As face-to-face provision resumes, and children and young people gain the confidence to resume socialising in group settings we are seeing engagement increase, as demonstrated by the Care Leavers True Triumph seeing 40+ Care Leavers attending.

Finding a mechanism that worked meaningfully for children and Champions alike has taken some refining. We have adjusted the engagement model several times, and following conversations with Champions and children, have settled on putting three engagement events or activities in the diary for each Champion across the year. This will be under continuous review and welcome Members to share any thoughts on what works best for them. Alongside this it became clear that having clear and tangible identified issues that Champions can work on was a more agreeable model, for some areas this is more challenging than others, but is something we continue to monitor and work on.

Recruitment of additional Champion Members has proved a challenge. The eight Champions are all actively engaged in the model and their area, but we are not limited to having just one member per area. The more Members engaged, the more impact the Champion Model will have. Gaining commitment from Members, particularly outside of Corporate Parenting Panel, has been difficult and this is an aspect we would be grateful to CPP Members taking back to their groups to support.

Moving the Champion Model forward

Starting with today's Panel, we are keen to move the model forward and overcome the challenges where necessary. The proposed plan, attached as an **Annex** to the report, includes the following steps, which will be presented on in more detail during the Panel meeting.

Proposed Next Steps

- 1) Training for Champions
 - Clarity on the role and expectations of being a Champion.
 - Understanding the role of a Corporate Parent and what this looks like in the context of the Champion Model.
 - How the process of the Champion Model can work.
 - Support available for Champions.
 - Potential positive impact of the Champion Model on the lives of our Children in Care and Care Leavers.

- 2) With Panel's agreement three events to be identified and put into Champion's diaries for the political year 2022/23. Alongside this the Corporate Parenting events calendar to be shared with Champions and Panel members at the beginning of the political year.
- 3) Quarterly round table reviews with all Champions, Director of Children's Services and Participation and Engagement Team Leader.
- 4) Conversation with Corporate Parenting Panel on how best to engage all Members in the model.
- 5) Publicity in Councillors news to encourage more Members to take on the role of being a Champion.

Perceived challenges moving forward

- 1) Members are not automatically DBS checked which may cause issues when arranging engagement opportunities. Mitigating action to include ensuring the DBS processes is started as soon as possible once a member commits to the model.
- 2) Elections and 'Purdah' may see momentum and engagement reduce. Mitigating action to include a 're-launch' of the Champion Model following the elections and continued focus from all Champions during these times.

Corporate Parenting Dates for the Diary - 2022

March	Young Carers Action Day	16 March
May	Fostering Fortnight	10 to 23 May
June	World Refugee Day	20 June
October	Kinship Care Week	3 to 9 October
	Adoption Week	18 to 23 October
	Care Leavers Week	24 to 30 October
	True Triumph Celebrating Care Leavers (16-25s)	24 October
November	True Triumph Celebrating Furze and Westminster houses	16 November 2022