

Corporate Parenting Strategy

2023–2026

Contents

Forewords	3
Introduction	4
Hearing the voices of our children and young people	5
The Portsmouth Pledge	7
The children we care for	8
Corporate parenting priorities for 2023 to 2026	9
Corporate parenting: our expected activity	10

All photos posed by models



Forewords



**Councillor
Suzy Horton**

Cllr Suzy Horton, Cabinet Member for Children, Families, Education, Portsmouth City Council

I want to start by thanking everyone who has contributed to developing this corporate parenting strategy, especially our children and young people who we care for and those who are care experienced. As Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education the role of corporate parent is the most important of all of my roles. This strategy sends a strong message from our children and young people to all corporate parents ensuring that we embrace this role and recognise all children and young people

as individuals who have very different needs which need different responses.

There is no greater responsibility than being a corporate parent and this corporate parenting strategy reflects this commitment; it sets out our vision including how we will RESPECT AND VALUE each and every child and young person in their own right, that there is the provision and support to respond to their individual need and that this is provided in a caring, empathic and relational approach. I stand behind the pledges that are set out here and I will be relentless in working alongside all to ensure we deliver our ambitions.



Sarah Daly

Sarah Daly, Director Children, Families and Education, Portsmouth City Council

The role of Corporate Parent is a critical one and here in Portsmouth we are parents with our partners in the council and beyond to just under 800 children and young people we care for and care experienced young adults. As corporate parents we are charged with a responsibility to make sure that all of these children and young people are supported, safe, happy and thriving. This strategy frames how we will achieve this, informed fundamentally by the voices of our children and young people. We are determined

to be the very best parents that we can. This means many things, including enabling children we care for to grow up in stable loving homes, without frequent changes of home, carer or social worker; ensuring that as they grow they can access the best help and support. That our children and young people can access a good education and ongoing opportunities to learn, train and work. That they can maintain relationships and contact with important people in their lives, and have every possible opportunity to become independent, socially connected, economically sufficient, safe and happy adults.

Introduction

Corporate Parenting is the collective responsibility of all elected members, Portsmouth City Council, and partner agencies to provide the best possible care and support to children we care for and care experienced young people. Portsmouth's Corporate Parenting Board brings together all these people to provide a forum for accountability and change.



When a child comes into care Portsmouth City Council, its partners and elected members of the council become their Corporate Parent. Corporate Parenting is our collective responsibility to make sure that children and young people are provided with every opportunity to lead fulfilling lives, in the same way that any good parent would do for their child. We ask that all corporate parents consider the following questions: "Would this be good enough for my child? If I were that child, would it have been good enough for me?". This commitment includes when it is time to move on to independence.

This strategy sets a framework for how the council and partners will be held accountable on delivering the Portsmouth Pledge over the next three years with delivery against these promises monitored by



the Corporate Parenting Board. It has been informed by conversations with children and young people, who are the experts in their experience and with their families and carers involved in their journey.

Our relational approach means we engage purposefully with our children and young people encouraging them to share experiences so that we can better understand the issues that they face and adapt services to meet their needs.

In Portsmouth, we understand that each child has a unique history and vision for their future. By living up to our promises and delivering on this strategy we will ensure that the vision of all children and young people we care for becomes a reality - every child must be supported to reach their full potential, with no one left behind.

Hearing the voices of our children and young people



The Corporate Parenting Board is focused on ensuring the voices of our children and young people influence our work and our priorities. For the board to be effective we need to hear what things are like for children and young people. This is central to the board, its structure and the impact it needs to have. This strategy is supported by the Portsmouth Co-production Strategy that sets out in more detail how those who receive our services will shape them into the future.

This strategy has been co-produced with children and young people via a range of groups including:

- Children in care council
- Care experience voice group
- Children in care council activities
- Connect Brook Club activity
- Children's homes visits
- Mockingbird Constellations feedback
- Complaints and compliments
- Advocacy feedback
- Consultation events

During Autumn 2022 two large co-production events were held with children we care for, care experienced adults, foster carers, children's homes workers, front line practitioners and corporate parenting decision makers. Some of the key messages from these were:

To slow down placement processes and to have a gradual introduction to new carers

More appropriate matching e.g. due to religion, culture or interests

To have improved family and friend contact and for all children to understand the reasons for their level of contact

To treat each child cared for as an individual including understanding their individual ambitions and dreams and to take and respond to these seriously

To ensure professionals receive the right support to understand children's needs and that support is trauma informed

Widen the remit of the corporate parenting role to increase possibilities for children cared for

To start planning for the transition to adulthood earlier

To offer work experience opportunities to help prepare care experienced children for independence

Improve support for children to access social activities

Improve options of housing for care experienced children

In February 2023 we undertook our annual survey – Feedback February. Some of the key messages were:

85% felt well supported by their worker (up from 80% in 2022) with 1% feeling unsupported

69% felt involved in developing their plans (up from 67%) with 12% feeling they're involved sometimes

Only 43% of children we care for felt listened to when their care plan was made. 32% weren't sure either because they didn't know, sometimes or they were too young. 1 child felt they haven't been listened to in the past but are now

100% of children we care for felt safe, well cared for and supported by their carers

100% of children we care for felt supported in their education with all feeling their foster carers did this the most

84% felt their health and emotional needs were met

64% felt that contact with their family and friends was supported well with 18% feeling this only happened sometimes

86% of care experienced felt they were supported in their employment, education or training, an increase from 78%

The Portsmouth Pledge

The Portsmouth Pledge sets out the following promises for the children we care for:

1

We promise to make sure that you have the love and affection that everyone needs.

2

We promise to always respect your individuality.

3

We promise to make sure your relationships are always at the heart of everything we do.

4

We promise to give you the stable and consistent experience in care.

5

We promise that your mental health and wellbeing will be looked after whilst you are in our care.

6

We will never give up supporting and encouraging you to do the best you can in school, college, university, work and your life.

7

We promise that we will still be here for you, up to and beyond 25. You are as much a part of our lives as we are yours.

8

We promise we will always respect your identity and you, and we promise to help you to connect with your heritage and history.

9

We promise that your voice will always be at the centre of our decisions.

10

We promise to make sure you know what your rights are and how to access them.

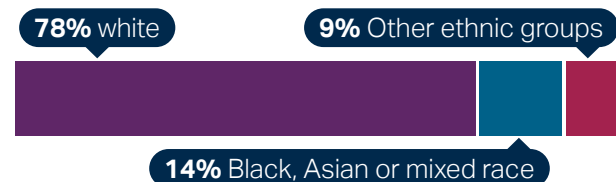
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We promise to always respect and value your experiences as you are the only people that know what it is like accessing our services.

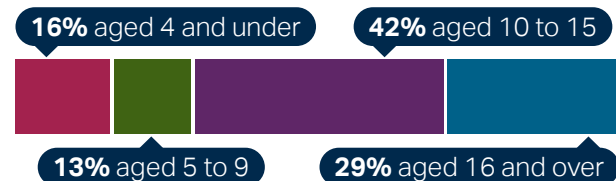
The children we care for

We currently have 386 children in our care.

Race



Age



Gender

We have a higher proportion of males than females.



Asylum seekers

40 of our children were unaccompanied asylum seeking children (as of 31 March 2023)

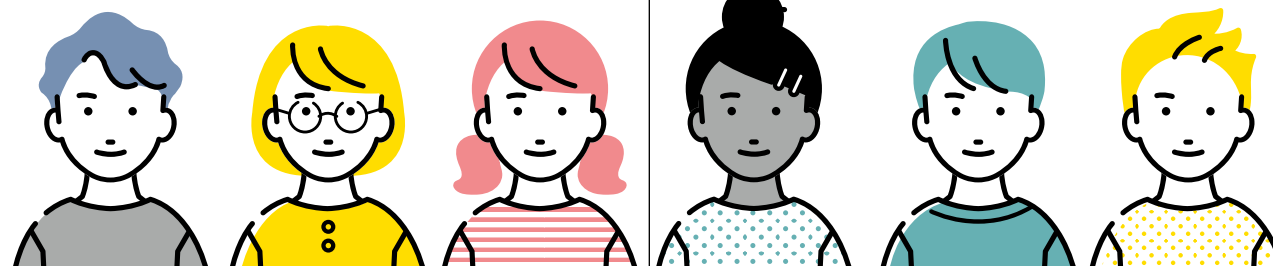


Living arrangements

	73% recorded as living in the same placement or their adoption and adoptive placement for at least 2 years. <i>71% nationally and 70% for the South East.</i>
	91% live in a family environment, either in a foster placement or placed with someone with parental responsibility. <i>77% nationally.</i>
	79% live 20 miles or less from their family home. <i>72% nationally.</i>
	The proportion with three or more placements increased is 9% . <i>10% nationally and 12% for the South East.</i>
	128 children ceased being cared for during 2021/22. <i>The associated rate per 10,000 children was 31 compared to 26 nationally and 25 for the South East.</i>

Education

	93% were placed in good or outstanding schools
	23.5% were persistently absent from school
	Only 8% of children that we cared for achieved 5+ in GCSE English and Maths
Care-experienced children	
	70% of our care experienced young people were in education, training or employment. <i>66% nationally.</i>
	91% of our care experienced young people were in suitable accommodation



Corporate parenting priorities for 2023 to 2026

These priorities are a list of commitments to ensure the children who are coming into our care, who we care for and who are care experienced get the right services and support.

As corporate parents we will ensure we RESPECT AND VALUE all these children and young people ensuring we recognise and respond to all their unique individual needs. This will be embedded throughout every commitment and the corporate parenting board will ensure that each commitment is closely monitored to make sure we are doing what we have promised.

Hearing your voice

We will ensure that children and young people are central to all decisions about their lives and that we understand their needs and feelings. We will make sure this is embedded across all services so that all children we care for know who to speak to to ensure they have every opportunity to have your say. This will include seeking feedback to continually improve the services we offer.

To promote and develop relationships with the people that are important to you

We will ensure children and young people have the right level of time with their family, friends and anyone else important. We will support children and young people to repair and restore these relationships when it is needed and possible to do so.

To promote your learning and employment opportunities

We will ensure our children and young people have the right support and opportunities at the right time to support them to do well in school, further and higher education, training and employment.

Provide a trusted, safe and stable home for you

We will ensure that children and young people have a safe, comfortable and caring home to live in and grow up in a community where they feel they belong and feel loved. We will ensure there is good support for those who provide care, including their own children.

To support your emotional and physical health and wellbeing

We will ensure we identify and appropriately treat the health needs of our children and young people. This will include their physical and mental health. We will make sure we have a good understanding of past experiences, how these may have impacted our children and young people at various times in their lives.

Develop skills for your life ahead

We will provide support and guidance to our children and young people from the day we start to care for them to equip them for the next chapter of their lives.

Corporate parenting: our expected activity

The responsibility for achieving the commitments we have made to the children we care for and for care experienced young people is shared by the whole authority in partnership with relevant agencies, such as education establishments and local health services.

Children and young people have told us that they would like to receive feedback on a regular basis to see how well we are using the strategy to improve outcomes. To enable this, we have identified leads for each of the six strategic priorities and subsequent actions:



Hearing your voice and co-production

All our children and young people are engaged in and co-produce their care plans. They will support our ongoing service improvement.

We will ensure that children and young people are involved in the decisions that are made about their lives when they come into our care and we will find ways to support them to have a voice. We want to know what our children and young people think about the support that they are given and the services we provide and to support us to be the best corporate parents that we can.



We will commit to:

Review and refresh our Co-production Strategy to reinforce how voices will be heard.

Ensure that children and young people are involved in decisions and plans that affect them.

We will provide all children and young people with an advocate to support them individually.

Provide a range of age and ability opportunities to ensure that the voices of our children and young people are heard. We will give our children and young people information and guidance on their rights, what support services are available and how to access an advocate or make a complaint.

Support children and young people to understand the intersections with race, gender, disability and sexuality if you identify as LGBTQ+. We will commit to be an active ally and remove barriers so that all feel safe and thrive.

Embed a trauma-informed working practice whereby all practitioners are trained to address specific needs (including those children from ethnic majority groups and children seeking safety and asylum). Staff, carers and support workers will actively address race and challenge their own biases when working with children and young people.

Create safe spaces for children and young people to speak freely, finding the right balance, without prejudice. Promoting strong relationships with people that understand need.

Enable children and young people to have access to an appropriately matched Independent Visitor.

Ensure that appropriate feedback is given to children and young people in a timely fashion about the impact their feedback has had upon the service delivered.

Ensure children and young people will be supported to be actively involved in the decisions that affect their lives, influencing and co-producing the design of services.

Ensure plans will be put in place to ensure that voices of young people who are quieter, dis-advantaged, vulnerable or professionals find hard to reach are heard.

Provide a trusted, safe and stable home for you

All of our children and young people will be safe from harm, with stability provided through secure placements and excellent carers.

When it becomes necessary for a child to come into care we will ensure that the child has a safe, secure and loving place to live. The duty to ensure a safe home extends to our care experienced young adults and this commitment is set out in our Housing Strategy.

As corporate parents we support our carers to have all the skills, tools and resources that they need to be the best carers to our children and young people. We also understand the importance of support networks and make sure our children and young people have adults that they can rely on and provide as much stability as possible.

We work hard to find long term suitable homes for our children that will allow them to flourish and achieve their full potential.



We will commit to:

Ensure our children and their families receive the right help and support at the right time to prevent the need for care wherever possible.

Ensure that we work to develop going home plans whenever it is safe to do so.

Ensure that children and young people are given information about their new homes and those who will be caring for them at the earliest opportunity.

Provide a secure, stable home where children and young people feel loved and cared for. Finding the right fostering home is important and we will ensure matching is consistently undertaken for all children coming into care.

Provide a range of homes that provide choice and stability. It is important to us that children and young people continue to live near to home and within the area they have lived in. This will ensure minimal disruption to education and the continuation of community ties and friendships.

Ensure siblings can live together when it is the right plan to do so. We will ensure we have more carers that can look after sibling groups through our recruitment campaigns.

Recruit carers that are able to confidently care for any additional needs that our children and young people might have.

Ensure cultural needs including race, language and identity are carefully considered when making matches with carers.

Ensure children and young people are part of the decision-making process at the earliest point of being cared for. Looking at both long term plan and day to day arrangements. We will encourage and support children and young people to chair their children we care for reviews.

Ensure that carers receive robust support and training. We will care for those who care to ensure they are compassionate and skilled in all they do.

Ensure carers and those supporting our children and young people have training to support our trauma informed practice.

Ensure carers have the right financial support to care for our children and young people.

Promote and develop relationships with the people that are important to you

All of our children and young people will be supported to maintain contact with family, friends and communities.

We will ensure that all children and young people have a positive support network around them to help them during their time in care and in adulthood.

We will support our children and young people to learn about their history and background, and have people that they can rely on to support them with this.



We will commit to:

Seek to ensure our children's voice is central in promoting and developing relationship with the people that are important.

Be curious and ambitious in our responses to maintain these links and identify relationships that may have been broken that need repair in moving forward.

Ensure family and network are brought together in a timely way through a family group conference where this is identified as being required.

Advocate for all the important people in children's lives to be able to promote their views and experiences from a trauma informed strengths-based perspective and ensure they are included in all meetings and decision making processes.

Ensure lifelong links are strengthened as young people move to adulthood knowing this is key to successful and happy adult lives.

Use the support of the family rights group to inform our practice and use creative ways to maintain links.

Ensure the people supporting our children and young people will receive training to have the rights tools and knowledge to progress this work confidently and compassionately.

Work intentionally to support family time that is strengths-based and respecting and appreciating individual needs in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, education, and national origin.

Minimise changes of social workers, and ensure social workers share their profiles in advance of working with children and young people to promote and develop a trusting relationship from the start.

Ensure endings are acknowledged and supported as situations change, including celebrating new beginnings.

Ensure children and young people understand their life story and have a clear narrative as to the experiences they have had so that they can talk confidently about these things with all those that are important

Support your emotional and physical health and wellbeing

We will encourage and support our children and young people to live a happy and healthy lifestyle, making sure that professionals work together to ensure that all their health needs are met.

Being happy and confident in identity is a key factor in looking after our mental wellbeing, particularly when it comes to race, sexuality, disability and gender. It is therefore crucial that we encourage and support our children and young people to be comfortable with who they are and demonstrate sensitivity and inclusivity in order for all to thrive.



We will commit to:

Provide a holistic health assessment within four weeks of a child entering our care, and annually or biannually following this, dependent upon age.

The longest interval between oral health reviews for patients younger than 18 years should be 12 months. However where there is suspected or known dental disease or dental neglect and you are struggling to get an appointment, we will support you in being seen as soon as is possible.

Ensure children and young people are able to discuss their physical and emotional wellbeing with a healthcare professional who has undertaken additional training.

Support children and young people to co-produce their health plans.

Provide children and young people the opportunity to be seen alone with the doctor or nurse (usually once they are 12 years of age or older).

We will talk with children and young people about all aspects of their health; from healthy eating, exercising and staying safe, to sexual health, smoking alcohol and substance misuse.

We will ensure that children and young people are able to access mental health support at the right time for the right level of need (KOOH, CAMHS StART, TIMOC, EAP etc).

We will work to understand the effects of race and identity on mental health and wellbeing, ensuring a trauma-informed approach. All children in our care seeking safety and asylum will have access to psychologist support and our Fast Feet Forward Programme (TIMOC).

We will ensure that information about our children's health is kept confidential and only shared with the people who need to know.

Ensure that young people receive a health passport before their 18th birthday, this will include useful information including how to access their health history and details of immunisations.

Promote your learning and employment opportunities

We will champion our children and young people and help them succeed in education and training, supporting lifelong learning and pursuit of their interests.

Ensuring that the children we care for and our care experienced young adults are in good education, employment, apprenticeships and training will always be a priority for us as we know this enables our young people to achieve the best possible outcomes and build successful careers. This includes making the necessary adaptations for our children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities, to ensure that they have an equal chance to succeed.



We will commit to:

Work with children and young people to ensure that they have a place at a school/ college/training provision and do not miss out on all the educational opportunities and pathways that are available.

Work with children and young people to enable them to achieve their potential at every age and stage of their education, helping them to meet their targets, goals and aspirations as set out in their Personal Education Plan, Personal Opportunity Plan (Post 16) or Pathway Plan (Post 18).

Work with children and young people to ensure bespoke packages of education and training support are put in place where support is needed to help support any lost learning or identified gaps in knowledge and skills, including effective use of pupil premium funding (SSA).

Be a strong advocate for children and young people, supporting and challenging the school / college / education setting, to make sure they are receiving the best possible education and are able to attend regularly.

Provide a wide range of external opportunities for children and young people to participate in and develop life skills that could include the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, residential trips, National Citizenship Service, sailing experiences, volunteering opportunities, etc.

Ensure that at the end of Key Stages (All) or change of education setting (SSA) children and young people have a robust and well supported transition plan as part of their PEP/POP, which supports their transition into the next stage of their education journey.

Work with children and young people to support their career aspirations and ensure that they receive appropriate information, advice and guidance in order to progress from education into further/higher education opportunities and employment.

Work with local education and training providers, employers, directorates within the council and the Jobcentre to ensure young people have a range of supported pathways and opportunities into employment including apprenticeships and work placements.

Ensure that post 16 year old care experienced young people who are claiming Universal Credit, are supported by a Youth Employment Coach working alongside the careers and progression advisor and personal advisor.

Develop skills for your life ahead

Our young people will be prepared for the world of work and supported to become active citizens when they leave our care. They will be prepared for independence in the best way possible.

In recent years we have become increasingly aware of contextual safeguarding risks for the young people we care for, including sexual and criminal exploitation. Our children do not become less at risk of this harm when they turn 18. When considering these risks we also recognise the need to target specific support to the children seeking safety and asylum who are likely to have very limited local connections.

We listen carefully to our care experienced young adults and work with them to assess and understand their needs to make sure they have all the services they need for a successful transition into adult life. This includes making sure they have access to suitable accommodation, access to employment and support with their emotional and physical wellbeing.



We will commit to:

Work with young people to support them to develop the practical skills needed to live independently such as managing budgets and applying for jobs and continue to provide advice as they gain independence.

We will ensure young people are supported to have access to leisure activities including swimming, gyms, sports, music and the arts.

Support young people to remain in contact with their family as we know these are important links as they journey into adulthood. If young people have lost contact with family living overseas we will support them by linking them with the agencies who will help to trace family members for example the British Red Cross.

Support young people to attend a specific place of worship.

Work to look at making transport/travel around the city affordable for our young people.

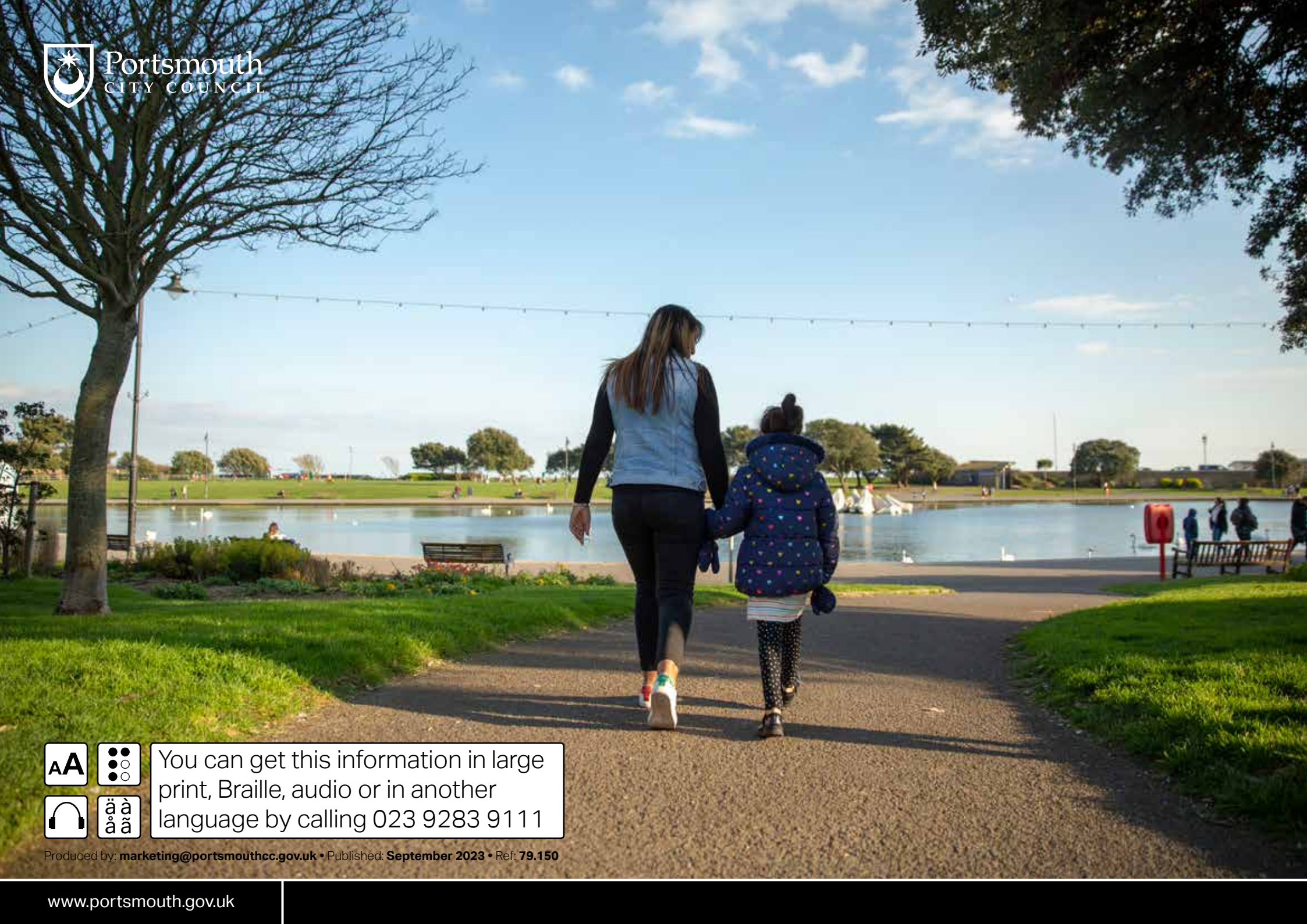
Support young people to develop your social and communication skills through a variety of CONNECT activities.

Help young people to identify and develop skills to achieve a positive outcome as they journey towards adulthood through co-production of their Pathway Plan.

Work with our partners to ensure that all children and young people have access to the right digital devices and connections, so they are not disadvantaged.

Embed transitional safeguarding practice so that those turning 18 years of age are safeguarded from exploitation and abuse.

Ensure young people have identity and travel documents to enable you to see the world, apply for jobs, college and any benefits as you enter adulthood.



You can get this information in large print, Braille, audio or in another language by calling 023 9283 9111

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