

# Corporate Parenting Partnership Strategy 2025 - 2027







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## Dear Corporate Parents

“Each and every person that works for Sefton Council is our corporate parent and we really do need you all to take this very seriously.

We only get one chance at life, and we need you to help us to make the very best of it. We need our social workers to really get to know us and build up a trusting bond with us.

We want you to give us somewhere warm and safe to live with people who really care about us. Remember too, that although we can’t live with our own families, we still love them very much and we worry about what is happening to them.

We might need help with concentrating at school and sometimes this might mean that we don’t want to go but it’s only because we have a lot more going on in our lives than other kids do. So, we need you to understand that and help us to deal with it. We need you to look at things from our point of view and put yourself in our shoes because then you might understand why we act the way we do.

We also worry about what will happen to us when we have to leave care, so we need you to help us get a job and find somewhere, decent, to live. We don’t want you to forget about us.

More than anything though we need you to care about us no matter what. If you don’t then who else will?

Thank you.”

*Rebekah.*

*Sefton Care Experienced Young Person.*





**Cllr Diane Roscoe**

Cabinet Member for Children,  
Schools and Families & Chair  
of the Sefton Corporate  
Parenting Board.

## Foreword

### Listening to our children.

All children want to feel loved, be safe and well looked after.

We have ambition for Sefton to be an outstanding place for all our children and young people to grow up in. We want all of our services to enable and support every child and young person to reach their full potential, to feel cared for, well looked after and safe through any challenges that they may face.

How well we care for the children and young people in our care is a measure of our commitment to that vision. Nationally, care experienced children and young people do less well in education, employment and are more likely to have poorer outcomes later in life, but as corporate parents to children in our care, we have the ability to change this in Sefton.

Every council elected member and officer working together with all our partners in education, health and police is a corporate parent with the ability and a duty to make a positive difference to the children in our care. To help them grow into the adults they deserve to be, fulfilling their full potential and achieving their dreams.

This strategy sets out how Sefton Council and our partners act as corporate parents to children and young people living in our care. How to recognise our role and what we can all contribute to be the best corporate parents to the children in our care.

It sets out our Partnerships commitment to always listen to our children and give them a voice and then to advocate to ensure that their needs are met in the best way. To always challenge ourselves and each other to ask, 'is this good enough for my child?' and ensure that it always is.

Councillor Diane Roscoe. Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Families & Chair of the Sefton Corporate Parenting Board



**Dr Risthardh Hare**

Director of Children's Services,  
Sefton Council.

I'd like to warmly welcome you to the Sefton Corporate Parenting Partnership Strategy. As Director of Children's Services, I want to thank you for your continued commitment to our children and young people in care. Together, we hold a shared responsibility to ensure they are safe, supported, and given every opportunity to thrive. We are dedicated to making meaningful improvements and our ambition is to ensure that every child in Sefton is safe, supported and empowered to reach their full potential. I looked forward to the discussions ahead and to working collaboratively as we strive to deliver the best possible outcomes to those we care for.

Dr Risthardh Hare. Director of Children's Services, Sefton Council.



# Introduction

## What is Corporate Parenting

‘Corporate Parenting’ is the term that is used to describe the responsibilities that a local authority or council has when a child or young person can no longer be looked after by their parent(s) or family. A Court will have decided that it is in a child’s best interest for this to happen.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 states that a Local Authority is the Corporate Parent of Cared For and Care Experienced children and young people. It should act in the best interests of these children and young people; keeping them safe; promoting their physical and mental wellbeing, encouraging them to express their views, wishes and feelings. It should make sure that they live in stable homes, have consistent education or training, and healthy relationships. It should have high aspirations for children and help them prepare for adulthood and independent living.

Statutory Guidance to the Act (2018) states that the role that councils play in looking after children is one of the most important things they do. It describes the ‘unique responsibility’ councils have towards these children and defines a simple and critical question for Corporate Parents to ask when considering matters affecting Cared For and Care Experienced children and young people –

*‘would this be good enough for my child?’*

The Guidance goes on to stress that all elected members and officers of a council should share corporate parenting responsibilities towards Cared For and Care Experienced children and young people. A test of the strength of a Corporate Parenting approach is that these responsibilities are a priority for everyone, both elected members and officers, and all are concerned about Cared For and Care Experienced children and young people –

*‘as if they were their own’.*



## Why do we have a Corporate Parenting Strategy.

This Strategy ensures we deliver the best outcomes for the children and young people we care for. We are committed to making sure that every child has the best possible start in life, is given help to achieve their potential, and has a safe and positive experience with us as their Corporate Parent. Our children come to be cared for by us due to a variety of reasons, and at all ages from 0-18 years; this strategy is for all Cared For and Care Experienced children and young people.

## Corporate Parenting Principles

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 set out seven corporate parenting principles to which councils should have regard in exercising their responsibilities to cared for and care experienced children and young people:

1. To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and young people.
2. To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings.
3. To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people.
4. To help those children and young people gain access to, and make best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners.
5. To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people.
6. For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work.
7. To prepare children and young people for adulthood and independent living

These principles are not new requirements, but rather describe a way of embedding a positive culture in local authorities and provide a framework which helps local authorities understand and comply with their duties to these young people. Sefton Council welcomes and supports these principles and aims and is determined that Officers, Carers and Elected members act according to the principles in their corporate parenting roles.



## Sefton's Vision

Our vision is:

*To be the best corporate parents we can be, working together to provide children and young people in our care with happy and healthy childhoods, helping them reach and exceed their potential and aspirations, and supporting them into successful adulthood.*

The values we bring to help us realise our vision are:

- We must be the strongest champions of, and advocates for, all our cared for and care experienced children and young people.
- We should have positive regard for all cared for and care experienced children and young people and make sure that all are nurtured, feel loved and supported.
- Cared For and Care Experienced children and young people are 'our' children and young people, and we must have strong ambitions and aim high for all.
- All our young people are individuals and unique and we must parent each child as such.
- We must build trusting relationships with our children and young people so they feel able to give us their views and can talk to us about their wishes and feelings, their anxieties and hopes.
- We must listen to our children and young people and take account of their views on all matters which affect them.
- We must be resilient and persistent parents with an uncompromising approach to doing the best for our children and young people and a willingness to 'go the extra mile'.
- We want to continuously improve as Corporate Parents and continuously improve outcomes for our young people.
- Our vision for our children aligns to the Children and Young Peoples plan (2020-2025). We maximize the health and wellbeing of all our children and young people living in Sefton, through the themes of safe, heard, happy, healthy, achieving.



## A Whole Council & Partner Approach

In February 2018 the Department for Education produced statutory guidance to support the introduction of the seven key principles to good corporate parenting. The document outlined the need for there to be cohesion and collaboration across all Council departments and with our key partners in order for our cared for and care experienced children and young people to thrive.

All children need love and stability in order to thrive. A strong corporate parenting ethos means that everyone from the Chief Executive down to front line staff, as well as elected council members, are concerned about those children and care leavers as if they were their own. This is evidenced by an embedded culture where council officers do all that is reasonably possible to ensure the council is the best 'parent' it can be to the child or young person. (page 6, DfE Statutory Guidance, 2018)

In Sefton we recognise that the wellbeing, welfare, safety and happiness of all of our cared for and care experienced children and young people is of primary concern for us all. We have worked hard over the past couple of years to truly embed this culture across all of our departments and in collaboration with our partners we have been able to make significant improvements.

Our achievements to date include:

- Introduction of the Caring Business Charter with over 60 local companies signed up to offer education, training and employment opportunities to our care experienced young people.
- Sefton proposal to Liverpool City Region regarding free public transport for care experienced young people introduced in October 2024.
- Opening in October 2024 of a dedicated building 'The Hub' in collaboration with our colleagues across the council and partners signed up to the Caring Business Charter.
- Zero council tax liability to age 25yrs.
- Free prescription and dental pathway to age 25yrs.
- Care Experienced Protected Characteristics Status.
- Band A Housing Status and Direct Matching of properties in partnership with One Vision Housing.
- Leisure offer pre and post 18yrs – includes foster family and/or friends.
- Ring-fenced Sefton Council apprenticeship scheme.
- Mandatory Elected Members Corporate Parent Training – 4 sessions offered per annum.
- Provide access to Sefton Council on-line learning for 16yrs plus.

We know that there is always more to do, and we will, therefore, continue to listen to our children and young people to ensure we provide them with the standard and quality of services and support that they truly deserve.



## Sefton Local Offer for Care Experienced Young People

In 2018 we published our first 'Local Offer for Care Experienced Young People' which outlined all the support available to our young people as they transitioned from care to independent living and adulthood.

Since then, we have worked tirelessly alongside our many Corporate Parenting partners such as, housing providers, health services, education and training establishments, community and faith groups and local businesses to improve that offer year on year.

In Sefton we recognise that, as a Council, we cannot hope to provide for or meet all the needs of our care experienced young people as they embark on their lives post 18yrs of age and we value the contribution made by our partners in helping us to do this.

As a Corporate Parenting Board, we have introduced our 'Local Offer' as a standing agenda item at every meeting. We also request that any changes made to the offer are brought before the board for discussion and approval prior to implementation.

It really does take a village to raise a child and our vision is that, in Sefton, that village will continue to grow.

Full details of the Sefton Local Offer for Care Experienced Young People can be seen at: Link to Local Offer: <https://www.sefton.gov.uk/media/3wujt0zb/cs-local-offer-jan25.pdf>





## Our Corporate Parenting Priorities

Taking account of the seven corporate parenting principles and the promise we have made to our young people in the Sefton Pledge, we have established 4 working groups to drive forward the key priorities identified in collaboration with our children and young people. The working groups report directly to the Corporate Parenting Board. Each board meeting is ‘themed’ as outlined below.

Our priorities are set out below with the actions we will take to address them.

### **Safe and Stable homes – Working Group Chair: Service Manager. Fostering & Adoption.**

We will ensure all children and young people have a safe and stable home environment. Our children have a very diverse range of needs and having a wide range of placements is essential to meet those different needs – the lack of placement choice can be an issue for social workers and young people alike. As young people move towards independence, we also need a wide variety of supported, semi-independent placements and permanent housing options for our young people.

We will

- Always seek to enable cared for children to live with extended family or kinship members when possible. Where this is not possible fostering should be a first option.
- Recognise that residential care may be a positive choice for some young people.
- Maintain our strong focus on recruiting more in-house foster carers investing strongly in their support and training and validating the contribution they make to our corporate parenting.
- Strive to place our children with providers rated as ‘outstanding’ or ‘good’.
- All children to be placed in regulated or registered provision.
- Seek to minimise the number of placement moves children may experience, especially those which are unplanned.
- Ensure all children and young people, where possible, are placed in Sefton.
- Develop and gather key data in relation to internal and external placement provision.

- Ensure all placements have robust care plans and Individual placement agreements in place.
- Seek to provide the offer of 'staying put', to young people 18-21yrs old living with foster carers subject to their wishes.
- Work with social housing and third sector organisations to commission and provide a range of supported semi-independent accommodation and permanent housing options for our care experienced young people.

### **Raising Aspirations – Working Group Chair: Head Teacher. Virtual School.**

We will ensure our children receive the best possible education and reach their potential, recognising children have different and varying needs. We want all our young people to enjoy and achieve in their schools, be able to access further and higher education if they wish or high-quality apprenticeships and training with increasingly good prospects for employment as adults.

We will:

- Work with our carers and social workers to increase their ambition and support for the educational outcomes of all our cared for and care experienced children and young people.
- Work with the Virtual School to be the strongest advocates for children's education in their dealings with individual schools and local authorities.
- Ensure that all children of or approaching school age have an individual personal education plan reviewed regularly and updated.
- Ensure that any cared for child or young person with special educational needs or disabilities has a comprehensive education, health and care plan.
- Work with schools to make best use of Pupil Premium entitlement to promote the educational outcomes of individual cared for children.
- Always seek to enable children to remain in the schools they were attending when they come into our care.
- Strive to reduce the number of changes of school experienced by cared for children.
- Always look to place our cared for children in schools rated by Ofsted as 'good' or better.
- Work closely with schools and carers to support a child's transition to a new school setting.
- Ensure a constant focus on school attendance and exclusions of children, keeping to a minimum the time our children are out of school.
- Work with further education providers, employers, district and borough councils and other public sector partners to expand the post 16 education, training and employment offer which can be accessed by older cared for and care experienced young people.

### **Health and Wellbeing – Working Group Chair: Designated Nurse Children in Care. NHS Cheshire and Merseyside (Sefton).**

We must provide all our children with good routine healthcare, making sure that they access more specialist treatment when necessary. Many cared for children will have experienced trauma through neglect or abuse in their earlier lives and some will experience trauma whilst in our care.

We will

- Ensure that every child has a timely, initial health assessment on becoming cared for which is reviewed at least annually.



- Ensure that our carers promote healthy lifestyles and understand both the physical and the emotional or mental health needs of our children, as well as health needs arising from 'risky' behaviours such as substance misuse.
- Provide support and consultation to carers and residential staff in respect of caring for children and young people with challenging health needs.
- Improve completion of emotional wellbeing form (SDQ's) for new to care and for those children and young people placed out of borough.
- Work with our partners to provide access to emotional and mental health support and services.

### **Transition and preparation for Adulthood – Working Group Chair: Service Manager. Cared For and Care Experienced Young People.**

Moving on from care is a critical time for our young people and supporting them through this transition into adulthood is a responsibility for us as all.

We need to understand that young people develop at different paces and that some young people will struggle to gain independence and struggle in independence. We need to be there for them and support them through this journey.

We will

- Ensure that all young people in our care over the age of 16yrs have a pathway plan specific to their needs and aspirations and an allocated personal advisor.
- Ensure that all pathway plans have a specific focus on care experienced young people being able to access suitable accommodation and education, employment, or training.
- Expect our foster carers and residential homes to provide opportunities for young people to develop independent living skills appropriate to their age and stage.
- Provide financial support, grants (eg setting up home) and other forms of financial relief to care experienced young people in line with our financial assistance policies.
- Fully support any young person who wishes to pursue higher education to obtain places and apply for student loans. We will look at funding accommodation for young people who wish to seek higher education as necessary.
- Continue our work with further education colleges, employment training providers to help young people access high quality training and apprenticeships.
- As a council provide internship, apprenticeship, and employment opportunities for our cared for and care experienced children and young people.
- Ensure we have a good quality Local Offer to support our young people to move successfully into adulthood. Link to Local Offer: <https://www.sefton.gov.uk/media/3wujt0zb/cs-local-offer-jan25.pdf>



## Children and Young People's Voices

Currently we have over 500 children cared for in Sefton; it is important that we listen to and hear their voices, ensuring they are actively involved in decisions which affect their lives. In addition to supporting young people's individual involvement in their own care planning, the council employ a full-time Participation Officer to develop opportunities for children and young people to be collectively involved in shaping the services they receive. We engage with children and young people in several ways, utilising their voice, to support council to improve services at both an operational level (through practice improvement) and strategically (via the development of policies and procedures).

### Children in Care & Care Experienced Councils

We have two Cared For Councils (7-11yrs and 12-17yrs) and two Care Experienced Councils (18-21yrs and 22-25yrs). The groups meet monthly with the option for young people to attend in person or online and are facilitated by the Participation Team with support from Children's Social Care staff. Feedback from young people is shared with senior officers via the Participation Team. Members from the groups are regularly involved with staff and foster carer training sessions, staff recruitment panels and staff and foster carer development & recruitment days.

We are piloting a 'Young Inspectors' programme whereby young people work alongside colleagues in quality assurance and compliance to undertake compliance visits to residential children's homes. We have several young people trained as Young Inspectors and visits are underway. Although still in its infancy the project is working well with positive feedback from young people, colleagues and staff working in the residential settings.

### Collaboration with the Corporate Parenting Board

The Corporate Parenting Board meet regularly with young people from our Cared For and Care Experienced councils typically directly before a board meeting is held. Board members discuss reports with our young people and their feedback and thoughts are shared at every meeting. In 2025 the Board are launching 'Corporate Parenting' Forums which will be open to all our young people who would like to join board members for a more 'informal' session discussing the issues that are important to them. In addition, there are two care experienced young people who are permanent members of the Corporate Parenting Board.

## Annual Pledge and Care Experienced Survey

The Pledge Survey is conducted annually over two age groups 5- 9yrs and 10-17yrs. The survey has been in place since 2009 and gives the Council the opportunity to take a 'temperature check' of the experiences of cared for children and young people in relation to the support and services we provide for them and the promises we make to them as set out in The Sefton Pledge. The Sefton Pledge was developed in collaboration with children and young people and sets out ten promises children and young people expect from us as Corporate Parents:

### We promise:

You will have a named social worker who you know how to contact and who will keep in touch with you.

To take an interest in your health and encourage you to be healthy.

You will have a care plan that is up-to-date and meets your needs.

That we will involve you in decisions that affect your life.

We will do our best to find a home that suits you.

We will help you, where possible, to stay in touch with your family and any other people who are important to you.

To work with you to give you all the help and support you need to make a success of moving on from care to adult life.

We will help you to do the best you possibly can at school and in your future education, employment and training.

We will encourage you to develop your talents, interests and hobbies and to support you to do things you enjoy.

We will work hard to sort out any problems or worries you have.

The Care Experienced survey is also conducted annually with young people aged 18-25yrs; It allows us to gain feedback from care experienced young people about the services they receive when moving on from care.

The surveys are reviewed each year, in collaboration with service managers and young people to ensure questions are relevant and provide sufficient data to enable us to make improvements to services. Feedback is collated into reports for Corporate Parenting Board, highlighting what we are doing well and any areas for improvement.

Where areas for improvement are identified these are each service area action plan. Progress is tracked and there is a requirement from the board that any reports presented include how the service area has responded to young people's feedback. Any changes made are communicated to young people via the Participation Team in the form of "you said, we did".



# Corporate Parenting Board

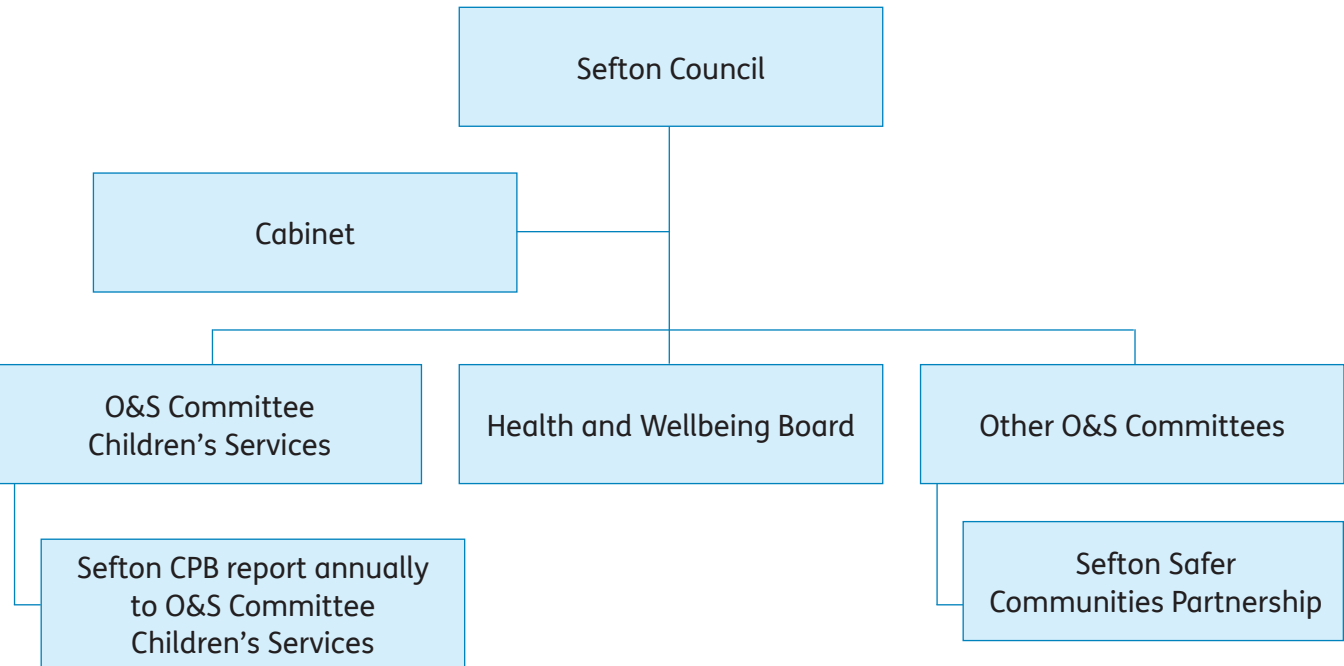
It is the role of the Corporate Parenting Board to monitor the key priorities and outcomes for Cared For and Care Experienced children and young people. The Board is chaired by the Cabinet Member for Children’s Social Care who will champion and monitor the Corporate Parenting strategy and help drive its implementation. The Board consists of cross-party members and Senior managers who meet bi-monthly, receive reports, including performance reports, undertake strategic and thematic enquiries into specific elements of the strategy and seek ways of resolving barriers to its success. The membership and terms of reference for the panel will be reviewed regularly to ensure partner agencies are appropriately represented.

Collectively and individually, Board members will engage regularly with children, young people, staff and carers to help their understanding of issues affecting their lives.

The Corporate Parenting Board will also receive regular performance reports on the following data indicators which will help members to monitor the progress of work undertaken by the service.

- Entries into care, exits from care and length of time in care.
- Placement categories.
- Young people in care going missing.
- Young people in care at risk of exploitation.
- Proportion of care experienced in education, employment, and training.

## Governance Structure



## Corporate Parenting responsibilities

The responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member in ensuring that the Council fulfils its role as an effective Corporate Parent was highlighted by the publication of 'Statutory Guidance on the Roles and Responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children's Services. (DfE April 2013).

Whilst the Director of Children's Services and Lead Member have specific roles and responsibilities as previously outlined, every council Senior Officer and every Elected Member has Corporate Parenting responsibilities, and it is therefore incumbent upon them all:

- To listen to our cared for and care experienced children and young people.
- To work in partnership with cared for and care experienced children and young people to improve services and support for all children and young people in care.
- To ensure that the commitments outlined in the Sefton Pledge are delivered.
- To ensure that the Sefton Local Offer clearly outlines support and services available to all Sefton care experienced young people.
- To provide leadership across the authority in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of our cared for children and young people.
- To understand the impact of all council decisions on cared for and care experienced children and young people.
- To ensure that governance arrangements are in place to implement any decisions regarding children and young people across the authority and partner agencies.
- To have access to both qualitative and quantitative information on the service and to evaluate this information.
- To ensure that the strategic plans of the local authority and joint plans with partner agencies address the needs of our cared for and care experienced children and young people.
- To keep up to date with emerging research findings and new initiatives that should inform the direction of services.

# Corporate Parenting Board Terms of Reference:

**Frequency of meetings:** Every 2 months.

**Work Programme:** Yearly.

**Senior Advisor to the Board:** Executive Director for Children's Services, Sefton Council.

**Support to the Board:** will be provided by the Corporate Parenting Officer, Sefton Council.

**Accountability:** Chair to report to the Leader of the Council.

**Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee:**

O&S will be represented on the board by elected members. Board will receive relevant reports and recommendations for information, planning and monitoring purposes.

**Relationship with the Local Safeguarding Board and Health and Wellbeing Board:**

A reciprocal arrangement will exist whereby the Corporate Parenting Board, the SSCP and the Health and Wellbeing Board will exchange the minutes of their meetings for information purposes only.

## Membership

Chair. Lead Member for Children, Schools and Families

Vice Chair. Deputy Leader, Sefton Council

Leader of Sefton Council.

X3 Elected Members

Chief Executive, Sefton Council.

Executive Director, Children's Social Care & Education, Sefton Council

Sefton Care Experienced Young Person

Sefton Care Experienced Young Person

Sefton Foster Carer Association.

Designated Nurse, Cared for Children. Merseyside and Cheshire NHS (Sefton Borough)

Assistant Director. Corporate Parenting & Care Experienced Services, Sefton Council

Head of Service. Cared For and Care Experienced Services, Sefton Council

Head Teacher. Sefton Virtual School

Participation Officer, Sefton Council.

Assistant Director. DASS. Adult Social Care and Health, Sefton Council.

Superintendent. Merseyside Police.

Consultant Clinical Lead. Sefton CAMHS. Alder Hey NHS Trust

Strategic Lead. Children and Families. Sefton CVS

Service Manager. Sefton Career Connect.

Chief Executive. One Vision Housing.

Partnership Manager. DWP.

Strategic Housing Lead. Sefton Council.

Sefton Association Secondary Heads (SASH)

Sefton Association Primary Heads (SAPH)



### Reporting Officers: Attendance as requested.

- Children's Complaints Officer. Sefton Council.
- Independent Visiting and Advocacy Service. NYAS
- Service Manager. Sefton Youth Offending Team.
- Departmental Leads. Sefton Council.
- AiM (Adoption in Merseyside). Chief Executive Officer
- Designated Doctor Children in Care. Merseyside and Cheshire NHS (Sefton Borough)
- Service Manager. Corporate Parenting Services. Sefton Council
- Service Manager. Fostering and Adoption Services. Sefton Council
- Assistant Director of Quality & Safety Improvement. Merseyside and Cheshire NHS (Sefton Borough)
- Assistant Director. Education. Sefton Council.
- Service Manager. Safeguarding Unit.
- Departmental Leads. Sefton Council.



