

Love and Relationships

Our mission is to put love and relationships at the heart of young people's experiences of leaving care. So what do we think this looks like in practice?

We identified fifteen key behaviours (from 100 descriptions) that corporate parents can engage in to show they care for care leavers like their own child.

From 23 descriptions we identified five key experiences when care leavers feel loved.

You can use this information to reflect on your Corporate Parenting practices and as outcomes when designing Corporate Parents service.



Thinking

- 1 We can help
- 2 We believe in you (and mean it)
- 3 We understand the bigger picture and how it relates to behaviours
- 4 We'll be there when care leavers need us through everything
- 5 We'll think the best of care leavers - help them to improve



Saying

- 1 I love you
- 2 I accept you as you are
- 3 What's your opinion? (asking)
- 4 When you do..., it makes me feel...
- 5 I am here for you if you want to talk



Doing

- 1 Helping you to be heard by listening, enquiring
- 2 Breaking boundaries (having permission to push professionalism)
- 3 Not giving up and being there for life - unconditionally
- 4 Celebrating and congratulating
- 5 Practical and emotional help - allowing care leavers to make mistakes



Different ways of feeling loved

- 1 Quality of affirmation
- 2 Quality of time
- 3 Physical touch
- 4 Acts of service
- 5 Receiving gifts

Of note: The Co-Design Crew recognise these behaviours are already enacted by some of Falkirk's Corporate Parents. However they were generally perceived as times when Corporate Parents 'go the extra mile' and 'go above and beyond' what is expected/allowed. Going the extra mile was described as: asking difficult questions, responding outside 9-5 working hours, supporting a personal goal, being told 'I love you', spending time together on a shared interest, and being listening and being understood. We want the 'extra mile' to become part of our everyday.

Love and Relationships



1 We can help	
2 We believe in you (and mean it)	Being loving - Be proud of them Being positive - Thinking can make positive change in challenging times Responsibility - She/he has got this
3 We understand the bigger picture and how it relates to behaviours	Building relationships - Where to start to build a relationship of love and care - Where is your 'in' to connect with them? Being understanding/fostering empathy - Understand behaviours triggers and responses - Try to think about situations through their eyes Changing perceptions - Change perception so we aren't so focused why people are in care - less blame placed on child
4 We'll be there when care leavers need us through everything	Being loving - Think of them as your own Feeling valued - Can't believe they're leaving - Personalised and human "That's my child, her name is..." Feeling supported - We can get through this - Hope she/he is okay Feeling loved - Treat you like you were their child
5 We'll think the best of care leavers - help them to improve	Changing perceptions - They wouldn't think any differently about them! - That they deserve all the same chances in life - No preconceptions Being positive - Think the best of them Feeling loved - Loved / I love you - Special / happy Feeling valued - You're important to me, you're the most important to me



Love and Relationships



1
I love you

Encouragement

- So proud of you, well done
- You can do this
- I'm proud of you!

Emotional permission

- Sad you're leaving
- We'll miss you
- I love you
- Showing emotions relevant to the situation

Trust / following through

- Promising (know what you say is what you'll do)

Being loving

- I love you
- You are important to me

Being human

- How are you?
- How was your day?

Setting / having boundaries

- I love you but you made the wrong choice
- I love you but not your behaviour (accepting that)

Encouragement

- You've got this
- I believe in you

2
I accept you as you are

Giving time

- Share your passions and possessions with me

3
What's your opinion?
(asking)

Building relationships / 2 ways relationship

- I understand...
- I wonder...
- I can see...
- What is your opinion?
- What do you want to do?
- What would you do if?

4
When you do..., it
makes me feel...

Having fun

- Have fun together

Setting / having boundaries

- Of course you can, but also "...you can't..."
- Setting boundaries and explaining why
- When you do this, it makes me feel like

5
I am here for you if you
want to talk

Feeling supported

- I'm here if you need me
- We can work through this

Giving time

- Spend time with me
- Come and visit

Building relationships / 2 way relationship

- I'm here if you want to talk
- Speaking openly and being able to share about yourselves

Being Human

- How did that make you feel?



Love and Relationships



<p>1 Helping you to be heard by listening, enquiring</p>	<p>Championing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Validate with them - Stick up for them - Help them to be heard - Get annoyed with them - Get annoyed for them - Give independence - Respect them 	<p>Being supportive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unconditional support - Listen to them - Counsel them - Supporting to make good decisions - One on one time <p>Listening / offering advice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be a confidante
<p>2 Breaking boundaries (having permission to push)</p>	<p>Human Acts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cry with them - Find their best time to talk (and best environment/place) - Hug them <p>Being genuine</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mean what they say - Can I hug you? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I miss you (company) - Act in a way - the way they treat their child <p>Giving time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Let you visit - Visit you - Check in with you from time to time
<p>3 Not giving up and being there for life</p>	<p>Being protective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Protect them - Be there for them - for life <p>Human Acts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cry with them - Find their best time to talk (and best environment / place) <p>Feeling supported</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Don't worry, I'll still be here if you need me" 	
<p>4 Celebrating and congratulating</p>	<p>Kind gestures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Card to say "well done" <p>Having fun / positivity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have fun, celebrate - Validate 	
<p>5 Practical and emotional help - allowing us to make mistakes</p>	<p>Feeling supported</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Help out a little - practical and emotionally <p>Having boundaries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Set rules <p>Mentoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teach them - Learn with them - Build networks, social skills 	<p>Offering practical support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Feed them, do laundry - Give a home - Give time, lift (taxi) - Fund them - Take them to activities <p>Fostering trust / forgiveness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Forgive them - Trust them to make their own decisions



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Different ways of feeling loved

1 Words of affirmation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Getting praise at reviews- Encouragement, "you're going to be amazing"- Saying, "I love you"
2 Quality time	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Visiting and in turn, be visited- Making time to hold relationship- Meeting up regularly
3 Physical touch	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Hugging
4 Acts of service	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Respecting- Feeling supported- Being asked, "what's your opinion?" (appreciating)- Get to know me and not what you have heard- Being asked, "How was your day?"- Trusting that you can do it on your own- That they're only a phone call away- One person to fight, love and support you- Stability- Let me help you through things (feeling supported)- Less professional, more relaxed (this would work for me but everyone is different)
5 Receiving gifts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Kind gestures- Wanting to support you- Being honest- Proud

Of note, there were very different interpretations of what love looks like in practice for Care Leavers. For example the opinion that love only occurs in a sexual relationship and so is not relevant between a Care Leaver and a Corporate Parent was put forward. Other opinions involve love being present in small exchanges, for example a hug, memories, and knowing someone is therefore you.

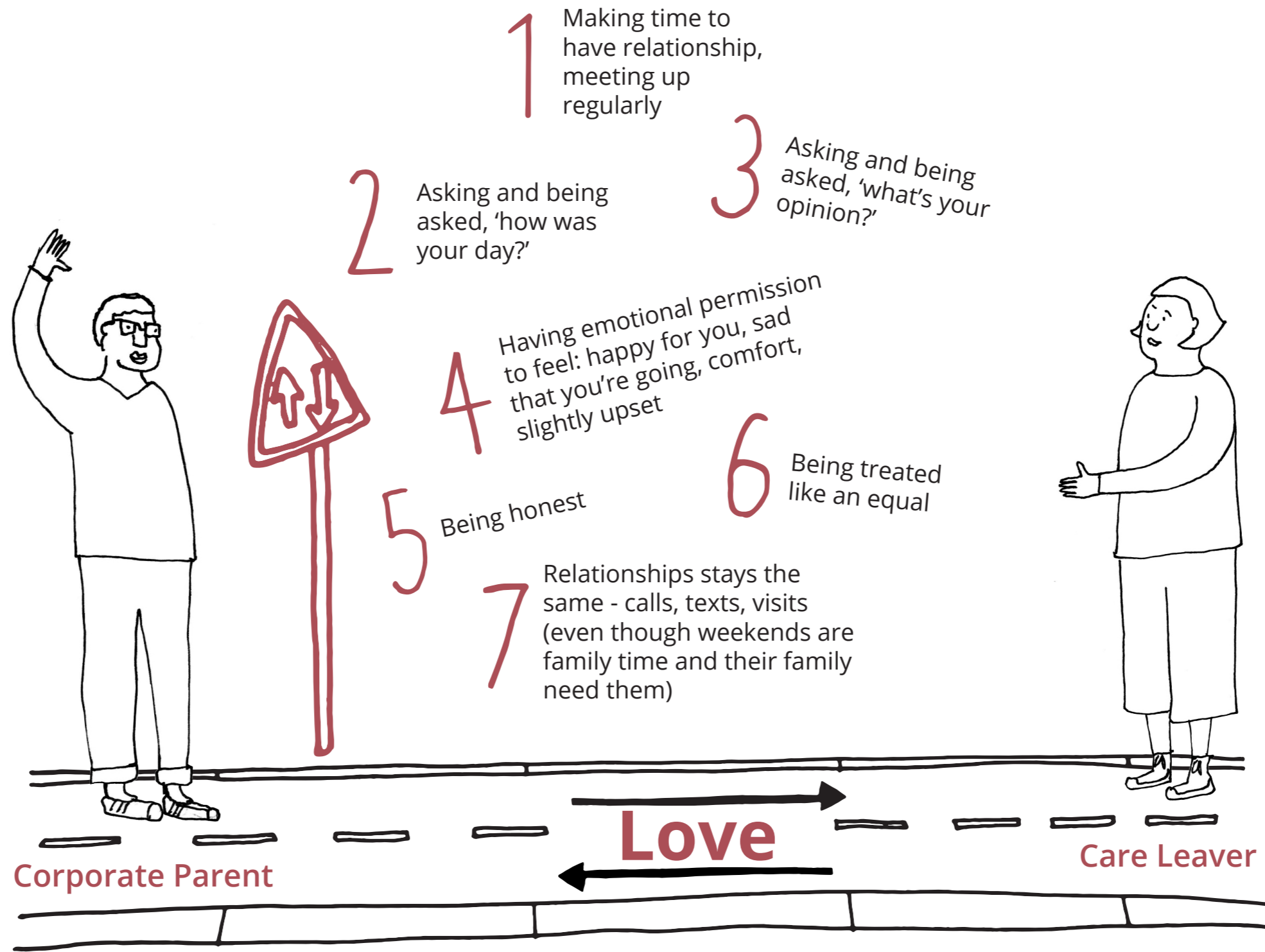
There was also acknowledgment from some Care Leavers that they have 'no idea' what was needed to make a relationship work well. Others were able to describe what a good relationship was to them, with examples ranging from being 'like a mum' and 'not needing anyone' because you are comfortable spending time by yourself.

There was agreement that people need to take time to understand what love means and looks like to them and the people they are spending their time with.



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Relationships were described as being a 'two way street', and things people thought should be two-way included:



www.relationshipsfirst.net

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