

Corporate Parenting Committee

Agenda

Date:	Tuesday, 7th June, 2016
Time:	5.00 pm
Venue:	Committee Suite 1, 2 & 3, Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

The agenda is divided into 2 parts. Part 1 is taken in the presence of the public and press. Part 2 items will be considered in the absence of the public and press for the reasons indicated on the agenda and at the top of each report.

PART 1 – MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED WITH THE PUBLIC AND PRESS PRESENT

1. **Appointment of Chairman**
2. **Appointment of Vice-Chairman**
3. **Cabinet Report and Terms of Reference** (Pages 1 - 8)

The report considered by the Cabinet on 19th January 2016, together with the Committee's Terms of Reference, are attached for information.

4. **Corporate Parenting in Cheshire East** (Pages 9 - 62)

There will be a presentation covering the role of a corporate parent, strategy, performance and improvement plan areas.

The following documents are attached for background information:

- 10 questions to ask if you're scrutinising services for looked after children (LGA document)
- Cheshire East Corporate Parenting Strategy

5. **Forward Plan for Future Meetings**

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Cheshire East Council

Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 19 January 2016

Report of: Kath O'Dwyer
Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services

Subject/Title: Corporate Parenting Committee

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Rachel Bailey, Children and Families

1. Report Summary

- 1.1. This report proposes the establishment of a new Corporate Parenting Committee to ensure that the Council, with its partners, effectively discharges its role as Corporate Parents for all their children in care.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 It is recommended that:

- a) Cabinet appoints a Corporate Parenting Committee, with cross party membership of 12 Elected Members and the terms of reference at Appendix 1;
- b) The Committee shall have the status of an advisory committee and include representative young people from the Children in Care Council to perform an advisory role to the Committee;
- c) The Committee shall, once its membership has been agreed, formally commence its role; and
- d) The existence of the Committee be noted in the Council's constitution.

3. Other Options Considered

- 3.1. There are a number of different models for a Corporate Parenting Board or Committee. One option is to operate the Corporate Parenting Board as an officer group, with member involvement. This has been the model to date. However, this group has not provided a strategic level of accountability around services for cared for children and does not have the influence to make some of the changes needed to other services within the Council.
- 3.2. Another option would be for the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee to take up this role. Whilst part of the function of Scrutiny Committee is to monitor the effectiveness of services for cared for children, this is not the same as leadership, and is unlikely to result in an effective strategy for corporate parenting.

- 3.3. Thirdly, an option would be to assign the role to another partnership, such as the Children and Young People's Trust or Local Safeguarding Children Board. Whilst these boards need to monitor and challenge outcomes for cared for children, their remit is much wider and they would be unlikely to give the needs of cared for children the necessary focus. The advantage of establishing a Corporate Parenting Committee is that it gives it the importance, status and influence of a formal council committee. The leadership and commitment of Elected Members in their role as corporate parents is of critical importance in achieving good outcomes for children and young people in care.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1. Corporate parenting is a statutory function of the Council. The Corporate Parenting Committee will act in an advisory role to Cabinet, which will assist the Council in continuing to fulfil its legal obligations and responsibilities towards cared for children and care leavers and provide the strategic direction to ensure that they are effectively supported to reach their potential through the provision of excellent parenting, high quality education, opportunities to develop their talents and skills, and effective support for their transition to adulthood.

5. Background

- 5.1. As at the end of November 2015, there were 395 children and young people in the care of Cheshire East Council and 221 care leavers. A child or young person is 'looked after' if they are subject to a Care Order or are being looked after under a voluntary agreement, subject to the Children Act 1989. The local authority has a statutory duty to those aged 0- 18 years and up to 21 years as care leavers or 24 years if they are in full time education. In Cheshire East, these young people decided that they wanted to be called 'cared for', so this is the term generally used in Cheshire East.
- 5.2. When these children and young people come into care, the Council takes on a role described as 'Corporate Parent'. The term 'Corporate Parent' means the collective responsibility of the council, elected members, employees, and partner agencies, for providing the best possible care and safeguarding for the children who are looked after by the Council to provide a standard of care that would be good enough for their own children.
- 5.3. The current iteration of the legal corporate parent responsibility comes from section 22 of the Children Act 1989, which imposes a duty on local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of each child they look after. Several pieces of more recent legislation have built on this including extending this to cover care leavers, requiring other local agencies to cooperate with the local authority and various duties in planning and reviewing care for individuals and as a locality. These are supported by a suite of statutory guidance, which helps explain what these duties mean in practice, and to which local authorities must have regard.

- 5.4. The corporate parenting responsibility rests with all councillors and council officers and extends into district councils, where they exist, and other local agencies. How involved individuals may be will depend on their role, with Directors of Children's Services and Lead Members having this responsibility as a core focus. Many decisions and functions, however, as diverse as leisure, health, planning and school governance, can have an impact on the wellbeing of looked after children.
- 5.5. Children and young people who are looked after by the local authority rather than their parents are amongst the most vulnerable groups in our community. Outcomes for this group are generally poor and, as corporate parents, the Council has the responsibility to keep them safe, make sure their experiences in care are positive and improve their on-going life chances.
- 5.6. The existing Corporate Parenting Board is made up of officers from within the Council, jointly chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Children and Families and young people representatives from the Children in Care Council. Whilst this group has been effective in developing and monitoring a strategy for cared for children and care leavers, it does not have influence at a policy level. Under the proposed governance arrangements, this group would continue to meet to deliver the strategy and provide information and advice to the Corporate Parenting Committee.
- 5.7. A recent Ofsted inspection has identified a number of areas for improvement in relation to cared for children and care leavers. A new Children's Improvement Plan will set out how these areas for improvement will be addressed. The proposed governance arrangements puts individual boards responsible for delivering, monitoring and challenging progress against the improvement plan. The Health and Wellbeing Board will be the accountable body for overseeing the 'sign off' of action plans.
- 5.8. As part of the governance arrangements for the improvement plan, it is proposed to establish a new Corporate Parenting Committee which would be an advisory committee of Cabinet, given that as a matter of law the Committee will be. The proposed terms of reference for this group are attached at Appendix 1. The current Board is co-chaired with young people and it is proposed that representatives from the Children in Care Council would perform an advisory role in respect of the Committee.
- 5.9. Nevertheless, Cabinet may choose to appoint the Committee on a cross-party basis which, in line with current political proportionality, would have a membership of 8:2:2 (Conservative, Labour, and Independent).

6. Wards Affected and Local Ward Members

- 6.1. The recommendations will affect a small percentage of children and young people across all areas of Cheshire East. Our cared for children live across Cheshire East and some are placed outside of the borough.

7. Implications of Recommendation

7.1. Policy Implications

- 7.1.1. The proposal is expected to put cared for children, young people and care leavers at the centre of Council policy and decision making.

7.2. Legal Implications

- 7.2.1. There are a number of pieces of legislation and statutory guidance that set out the role of the local authority in respect of cared for children and care leavers. There are statutory obligations and guidance for the role of the Local Authority as the Corporate Parent in the Children's Act 1989 and 2004, and the Children and Young People Act 2008.
- 7.2.2. *The Children Act 1989* is the primary legislation setting out the local authority's responsibility to children 'in need', including cared for children. Section 22 imposes a duty on local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of each child they look after. *Section 27 of the Children's Act 1989* (amended 2006) places a duty on Housing, Education and Health Authorities to assist with Corporate Parenting.
- 7.2.3. *The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000* extended the responsibility of the local authority to young people leaving care, requiring them to plan the young person's transition to adulthood and provide ongoing advice and assistance until at least the age of 21.
- 7.2.4. *The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 and Statutory Guidance* clarify the expectations of care planning and review for cared for children and strengthen the role of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) to challenge when identified needs are not being met. The manager of the service is required to prepare an annual report that should be made available to corporate parents.
- 7.2.5. *The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume3: Planning Transitions to Adulthood for Care Leavers* gives details of how care-leavers should be provided with comprehensive personal support so that they achieve their potential as they make their transition to adulthood. It includes the need for care-leavers to be living in suitable accommodation and receiving support to continue in education or training and to find employment
- 7.2.6. *The Adoption and Children Act 2002* required all local authorities to appoint Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) to review the care plans of looked after children, and the Act introduced Special Guardianship orders that provide permanence for children but are alternatives to adoption.
- 7.2.7. *The Children and Young Persons Act 2008* requires local authorities to take steps to secure sufficient suitable accommodation for looked after

children within their area that meets their needs. It also strengthens the care planning process and the role of the Independent Reviewing Officer in monitoring the plan, and children's health and education plans are essential components of this.

7.2.8. *Statutory Guidance on Promoting the Health and Well-being of Looked After Children, 2002*, placed the contribution of NHS agencies towards meeting the needs of looked after children on a statutory footing.

7.2.9. *Promoting the Education of Looked After Children: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities, 2014*, updates the 2010 statutory guidance clarifying the duty to actively support cared for children's education. The guidance details the duty local authorities and Virtual School Heads have to promote the educational achievement of the children they look after, including those placed out-of-authority.

7.2.10. The Children Act 2004, s52 inserted paragraph 3A to s22 of the Children Act 1989 being:-

22 (3A)The duty of a local authority under subsection (3)(a) to safeguard and promote the welfare of a child looked after by them includes in particular a duty to promote the child's educational achievement.

7.2.11. The Children & Families Act 2014 s99 inserted paragraph 3B and 3C to the Children Act 1989 being:-

In the Children Act 1989, in section 22 after subsection (3A) (duty of local authorities to promote the educational achievement of looked after children) insert:-

22 (3B)A local authority in England must appoint at least one person for the purpose of discharging the duty imposed by virtue of subsection (3A).

22 (3C)A person appointed by a local authority under subsection (3B) must be an officer employed by that authority or another local authority in England."

7.2.12. *Statutory Guidance: Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked After Children, 2010*, requires local authorities to develop a plan to secure sufficient accommodation for cared for after children within their local authority area and which meets their needs. They can only do this if they work in partnership with other agencies as the requirement is not just about accommodation and placements but also securing a 'diverse range of universal, targeted and specialist services working together to meet children's needs' and applies not only to cared for children, but also those on the edge of care and at risk of custody.

7.3. Financial Implications

7.3.1. Bringing children into the care of the local authority represents a significant cost for the Council. The Corporate Parenting Committee would be better able to monitor these costs and the implications of keeping

children and young people in care. There will be some costs to the Council in establishing a Committee in terms of administration and Elected Member time.

7.4. Equality Implications

7.4.1. None at this stage.

7.5. Rural Community Implications

7.5.1. None identified at this stage.

7.6. Human Resources Implications

7.6.1. There are no human resource implications.

7.7. Public Health Implications

7.7.1. Cared for children are more at risk of health inequalities than their peers. The proposals are expected to improve the awareness and response in respect of these health needs.

7.8. Other Implications

7.8.1. None.

8. Risk Management

8.1. Cared for children are a vulnerable group that are risk of a number of factors – poor education and training, health, safeguarding and transition into adulthood. The creation of a Corporate Parenting Committee would enable these risks to be properly monitored and evaluated.

9. Access to Information/Bibliography

9.1. The legislation and key statutory documents in relation to cared for children and young people and cared leavers are set in this paper.

10. Contact Information

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CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE

Purpose

The purpose of the Corporate Parenting Committee in its role as an advisory committee to the Cabinet is to ensure that the Council effectively discharges its role as Corporate Parent for all children and young people in care and care leavers from 0- 25 years of age and holds partners to account for the discharge of their responsibilities.

Terms of Reference

1. Act as advocates for cared for children and care leavers, ensuring that their needs are addressed through key plans, policies and strategies throughout the Council and its commissioned services.
2. Ensure key strategic plans and reports relating to children in care and care leavers including the Children's Improvement Plan, Corporate Parenting Strategy and Sufficiency Statement.
3. Oversee the implementation of Cheshire East's Corporate Parenting Strategy and action plan and monitor the quality and effectiveness of services to ensure they fulfil the council's responsibilities.
4. Monitor the quality of care delivered by Cheshire East's residential children's homes via the provision of regular reports including summary reports of Regulation 44 visits and Ofsted inspections.
5. Review the performance of the Council in relation to outcomes for children and young people in care via the scrutiny of both quarterly performance reports and the annual reports of the Cared for Children Service, the Independent Reviewing Service and the Virtual School.
6. Establish an environment whereby Elected Members and young people work together to address the needs and aspirations of Cheshire East's children and young people in care and empower children and young people to participate in decision making with adults.

7. Oversee, with the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the implementation of best practice principles in all aspects of service delivery, with the aim of producing positive outcomes for children and young people in care.
8. Support the work of foster carers and adopters in making a difference to the care and support they provide to children and young people in care and those adopted.
9. Make sure that staff and partners follow Cheshire East's pledge for cared for children and young people and the care leaver's charter.
10. Receive and scrutinise the Independent Review Officers' Annual Report

Governance

The Committee will:

- meet bi-monthly;
- report to the Council's Cabinet on at least an annual basis;
- report to the Council's Scrutiny Committee annually: and
- include young people representatives from the Children in Care Council.

Administration

The Board will be serviced by Democratic Services in line with other Council Committees.

Minutes and agendas will be distributed and published no later than 5 clear working days prior to the meeting.

The meetings will take place out of school hours to enable cared for children and young people to participate.

Review

These terms of reference will be reviewed yearly.

10 questions to ask if you're scrutinising services for looked after children

Revised June 2012





Contents

Introduction	4
Key points	5
Jargon busting	6
10 questions to ask:	
1. How well does your authority do in commissioning or providing services for looked after children?	9
2. How well do your children in care do at school, both academically and in terms of other kinds of achievements?	11
3. How good is the health and wellbeing of children in your care?	13
4. How stable and secure are the lives of your looked-after children while they are in your care?	14
5. How well does your authority do at finding appropriate adoptive families for children for whom it is decided this is the right option?	16
6. How well do your foster care arrangements work?	18
7. How good is the standard of residential care provided or used by your authority?	20
8. What support does your authority provide to young people leaving care and how effective is it?	22
9. How effective is your professional workforce of social workers and others responsible for running services for and working with looked-after children?	24
10. What more could be done to fulfil the council's responsibilities as a 'corporate parent'?	25
Case studies	27
References and further information	29

Introduction

This guide has been produced by the Local Government Association in partnership with the National Children's Bureau. It follows on from a previous guide produced by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) for Local Government Improvement and Development and forms part of a suite of offers for elected members and others working in children's services.

The Centre for Public Scrutiny is an independent national charity which carries out research, supports online networks and provides training, development and events to promote and improve public scrutiny and accountability across government and the public sector.

The Local Government Association has sector-led improvement as a key corporate priority. Councils are the most improved part of the public sector, and local politicians and senior managers lead the transformation of place. A significant sector-led improvement programme is established in children's services with governance provided through the children's improvement board and funding to the board from the Department of Education (DfE).

The National Children's Bureau is a leading research and development charity working to improve the lives of children and young people, reducing the impact of inequalities. It works with children, for children to influence government policy, be a strong voice for young people and frontline professionals, and provide practical solutions on a range of social issues.

The National Children's Bureau has been funded by the Department of Education to develop materials that will support councils in their role as corporate parents. More detailed briefings on specific topics of relevance to corporate parents and self-audit tools are being developed by the National Children's Bureau and will be available shortly. A National Voice, an organisation providing a voice for looked-after children and care-leavers, is also producing 'top tips' for corporate parents on working with their children in care council.

This guide aims to provide clear and succinct advice for scrutiny members and officers on the key issues to cover in a scrutiny review of corporate parenting, as well as jargon-busting, links to further information and case studies.

The ten question areas can be used by overview and scrutiny committees (OSCs) to scope a review that takes an overview of all services relevant to looked-after children, or to focus on an area of particular interest. They can also be used by corporate parenting groups or other elected members to support them in their ability to scrutinise and challenge the service provided by their council to looked-after children.

If corporate parents are to assess whether the standard of care would be good enough for their own children, they need good quality information on which to base their judgements. These questions will provide a framework to structure this information.

Key points

Children in the care of a local authority are one of the most vulnerable groups in society. The majority of children in care are there because they have suffered abuse or neglect. At any one time around 65,000 children are looked after in England, although over 90,000 pass through the care system each year. There has been an overall increase in the numbers of children entering care since 2007 and a rise in the proportion who are removed through the intervention of the courts as opposed to coming into care by agreement with parents.

When they are elected, all councillors take on the role of 'corporate parent' to children looked after by their local authority. They have a duty to take an interest in the wellbeing and development of those children, as if they were their own. Although the lead member for children's services has particular responsibilities, the role of corporate parent is carried by all councillors, regardless of their role on the council.

Overview and scrutiny offers a key way in which councillors can fulfil this responsibility, by giving them the opportunity to ask searching questions of a range of service providers and assure themselves that children in the care of the local authority are being well looked after.

Overview and scrutiny also offers opportunities for councillors to hear directly from children looked after by the authority and to ensure that their voices are heard

when considering the effectiveness and impact of services. This should include not just children's social care, but other services which may have an impact on the lives of children in care (including care-leavers and those on the edge of care), such as housing provision, crime and feeling safe in the community, access to public transport and the quality of schools and leisure activities.

In April 2011 the government introduced new regulations and guidance to improve the quality and consistency of care planning, placement (where and how children are looked after) and case review for looked-after children. It includes statutory guidance on independent reviewing officers, the 'sufficiency duty' requiring local authorities to ensure there is enough accommodation locally for looked-after children, as well as guidance on improving their educational attainment. This was part of the implementation of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008, and it updated and consolidated previous guidance on the Children Act 1989 and other legislation.

Local authorities are required to collect data about their performance in relation to looked-after children, and to report this to the Department for Education. This data is published annually and, although it is no longer accompanied by targets, provides a useful benchmark for comparisons between an authority's present and past performance and with that of other authorities.

Jargon busting

‘Looked-after children’, ‘children in care’

The terms ‘looked-after children’ or ‘children in care’ refer to all children under the age of 18 being looked after by a local authority. It includes both those subject to a care order under section 31 of the Children Act 1989 (see below); and those looked after by a voluntary agreement with their parents under section 20 of that Act. Once they become looked-after, children may be placed by the local authority with family members, foster carers or in a residential children’s home. The purpose of the ‘care’ system is to look after children where parents are unable to do so, for a variety of reasons. These include situations where parents are abusive or cannot provide adequate care for them, or where there is no parent or relative available, such as asylum seeking children or those whose parents have died.

‘Care leavers’

Care leavers are those who have been in ‘care’ for at least 13 weeks from the age of 14 onwards and therefore qualify for services to support them once they leave. This support should be provided up to the age of 21 or until they have completed their education if this is longer.

Care order – Section 31 Children Act 1989

Care orders are made by the court if a ‘threshold of significant harm’ is reached and there is no likelihood of improvement in the standard of care provided for a young person. The local authority then shares parental responsibility with the parent(s) and can make the decisions that a parent would normally make. A care order expires when the young person reaches 18 or when another Order is made placing the child with an alternative family, such as an adoption or ‘special guardianship order’. It can also be discharged by the court before the age of 18 if it is considered that the child would no longer be at risk of harm if they returned home.

Children ‘at risk’ of harm

These are children where there are concerns that they are suffering or are likely to suffer harm through abuse or neglect. Children considered ‘at risk’ have a ‘child protection plan’ which should be regularly reviewed.

‘Children in need’

Children in need are a wider group of children and young people who have been assessed as needing the help of services to achieve a reasonable standard of health or development. They have a ‘child in need plan’ to address the difficulties identified in the assessment

Interim care order – Section 38 Children Act 1989

If the local authority is concerned that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer 'significant harm', they can apply to the court for an 'interim care order', which is a time-limited order renewed while care proceedings for the child continue through the courts.

Emergency protection order section 44 Children Act 1989

An 'emergency protection order' removes a child into accommodation provided by or on behalf of the local authority and is granted by the court (or magistrate outside court hours) if there is reasonable cause to believe that the child is likely to suffer significant immediate harm. It is to be used only where the child is thought to be at immediate risk and for a maximum of eight days, although this can be extended by the court for a further seven days. It allows the child to be cared for in a place of safety whilst further enquiries are made.

The pledge

Each local authority is required to develop a 'pledge', setting out its commitments to the children in its care. The Care Matters Initiative envisaged the pledge as a key communication tool between children and young people and the authority responsible for ensuring they receive the parenting they need. Every child and young person's care or pathway plan should reflect how the commitments made in the pledge will be delivered for that individual child and it is monitored by the local 'children in care council' (see below).

Regulation 33 visits

These are the scrutiny visits that have to be made at least once a month to children's homes in order to quality-assure the service being provided. This includes checking that the home is compliant with regulations, that the environment is suitable and seeking the views of staff and residents. Where an authority operates its own children's homes, councillors may be involved in undertaking these visits.

Children in care councils

The Care Matters Initiative created the expectation that local authorities should to set up a 'children in care council' to represent the views of looked-after children and to enable them to be involved in developing services. There should also be mechanisms in place for involving young people in care in the recruitment of key staff members, such as the director of children's services. The local children in care council is also responsible for helping to develop and monitor the implementation of the pledge.

The 'sufficiency duty'

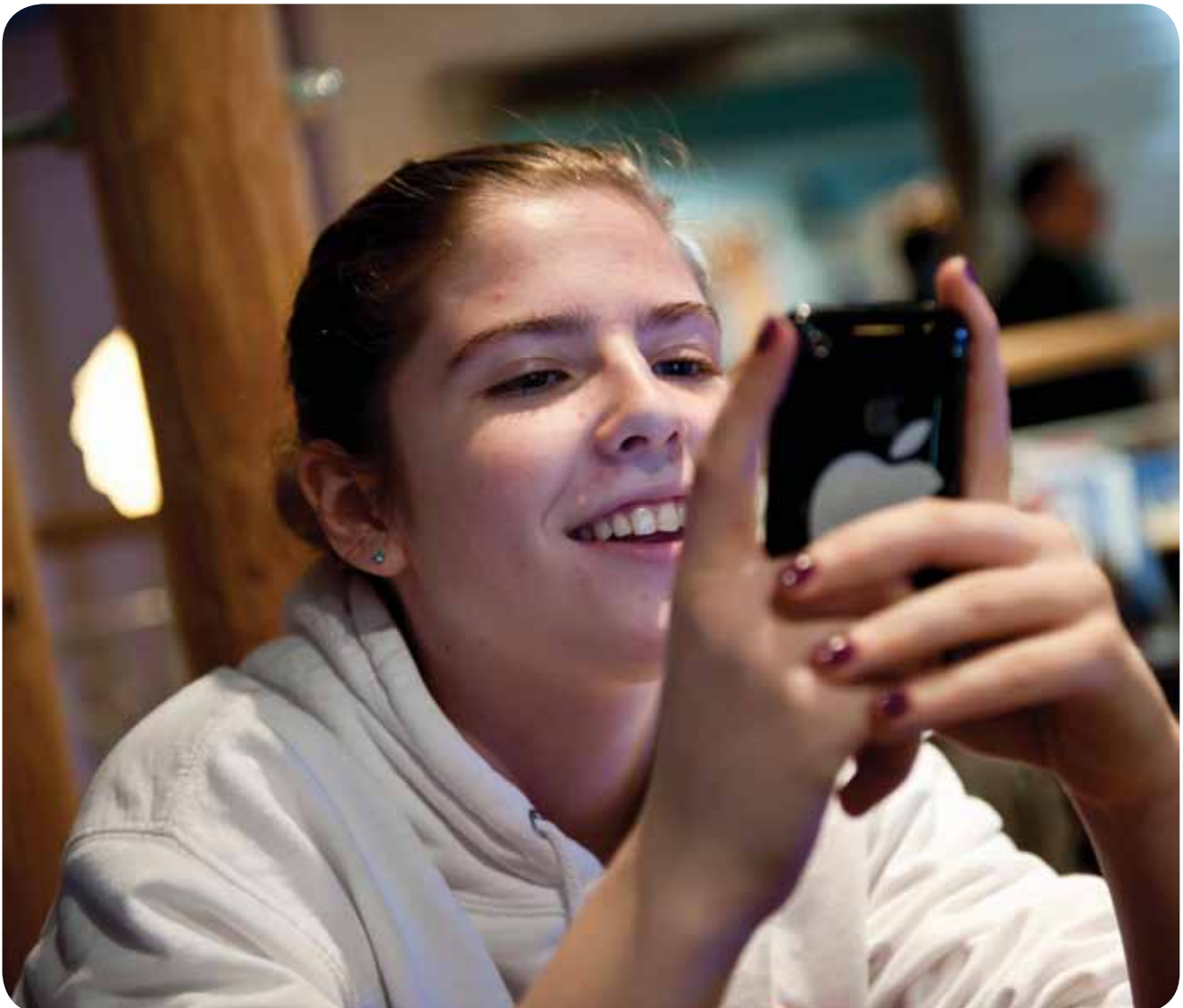
This is a duty placed on local authorities under 22 (G) of the Children Act 1989 (amended by the 2008 Act) to ensure there is sufficient accommodation to meet the needs of their looked-after children. Sufficient accommodation must be provided "where reasonably practical" (lack of resources is not considered a barrier), and having "regard to the benefit of having a number of providers and a range of accommodation".

Commissioning

The process by which an authority decides what level and type of services it wants in order to meet identified needs, and seeks providers of those services, often through a competitive process. Increasingly this is done jointly, for example with the local health service, and in the context of looked-after children should be based on an analysis of their needs. Commissioned services should be monitored and evaluated, and constantly reviewed to make sure they are continuing to meet changing needs.

Independent reviewing officers (IROs)

The Children and Young Persons Act 2008 requires local authorities to appoint a named IRO for each looked after child. Their role is to oversee the child's care plan, monitor the case and challenge the local authority if the plan is not meeting the child's needs or is not being implemented effectively. The IRO must communicate directly with each child they are responsible for to establish the child's wishes and feelings and ensure that these are taken into account.



1

How well does your authority do in commissioning or providing services for looked after children?

Policy context

As corporate parents, members need access to information to enable you to identify how well your authority is doing in relation to outcomes for your looked-after children, and to any areas for improvement. National performance data will enable you to assess how well your local authority is doing in comparison with others. It is also useful for analysing trends within your own authority.

Ofsted inspections provide an independent perspective on the quality of your service.

As part of the sector-led improvement programme for children's services, the Safeguarding Children peer review is on offer to all authorities. This peer review can be tailored to the requirements of individual authorities and can have a focus on looked-after children. It is important that scrutiny members participate in the peer review process in their authority and also consider the findings of the peer review team. This will provide valuable insight from a 'critical friend' perspective.

Whatever these sources of information tell you, there is always a need for additional local mechanisms for you to judge whether the quality of care provided would be good enough for your own child. Statistics alone are not enough: it is important to ask questions of those responsible about the factors that affect your authority's performance, and to seek qualitative

information about the experiences of the children themselves.

The circumstances and needs of looked-after children vary widely, with some children just spending a short period in care during a family crisis while others effectively grow up in care. Each child must have a 'care plan' that sets out the long-term plan for the child and the action that needs to be taken to provide them with good quality care.

Questions to ask

Who are your looked-after children in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, religious or cultural background and disability, and what needs and challenges does this profile present?

- Do you have a system for seeking feedback from looked-after children and care-leavers about the services they receive?
- Do you receive a copy of the annual report from the IRO service, and is it used to identify gaps in services?

The services provided must meet the identified needs of the children, while offering 'value for money'. Members need to ensure that arrangements for commissioning services are effective.

- Do arrangements for commissioning services involve all relevant council departments and other agencies?
- How will any changes in local health service structures, for example the move to GP commissioning, impact on any joint commissioning arrangements?
- Does your local joint strategic needs assessment (JSNA) include information on the needs of your looked after children and care-leavers?
- Do you have mechanism for reviewing the effectiveness of the services you commission, based on outcomes?

Cost comparisons can be one indicator of how your authority compares with others, for example:

- What is the cost of your residential provision by comparison with other areas?
- How much do you spend on out-of-area placements for looked-after children? Is this rising or falling?

London Borough of Enfield developed a commissioning strategy for looked-after children which had the reduction in the number of children placed in residential care as one of its aims. The implementation of this strategy has been effective in this aim, reducing the numbers of looked-after children in residential placements from 17 per cent in 2004 to 6.5 per cent in 2010. This has ensured that more of the most complex young people can benefit from a family setting. The financial efficiencies achieved have been reinvested into preventive services to allow more children and young people to be cared for within their own families¹.

¹ <http://www.c4eo.org.uk/themes/vulnerablechildren/vlpdetails.aspx?lpeid=381>

2

How well do your children in care do at school, both academically and in terms of other kinds of achievements?

Policy context

A better education for children in care (Social Exclusion Unit 2003) identified five reasons why looked-after children may underachieve in education

- their lives are characterised by instability
- they spend too much time out of school
- they do not have sufficient help with their education if they fall behind
- primary carers are not expected or equipped to provide sufficient support and encouragement for learning and development
- they have unmet emotional, mental and physical health needs which impact on their learning.

Statutory guidance makes it clear that corporate parents must tackle this, and have high aspirations for the children they care for.

“Though some do well, the educational achievement of looked-after children as a group remains unacceptably low. That is why the Children Act 1989 (as amended by the Children Act 2004) places a duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of looked-after children.”

The way in which local authorities should fulfil this duty is set out in Promoting the educational achievement of looked-after children: statutory guidance for local authorities (DCSF 2010), with a specific section for corporate parents. Responsibility is shared by all schools, including free schools and academies, and the schools admissions code describes the priority governing bodies must give to looked after children.

Personal education plans (PEPs) are completed for all looked-after children within ten days of becoming looked-after and are part of the care plan. There is a joint responsibility for the PEP between the child's school and the local authority children's service.

Ensuring looked-after children have the right support to be able to participate fully in school life, and that their school career is not disrupted by constant placement moves can make a big difference. Looked-after children tell us that they value education and want support to do well.

In one authority looked-after children often missed out on after-school activities and trips because of delays in getting permission from social workers and their managers. As a result of the scrutiny review which brought this to light, the authority changed the system so that social workers could delegate the decision to foster carers, ensuring that looked-after children were not missing out.

- What do looked-after children and young people themselves say about their education and aspirations?

Celebrating the non-academic achievements of children in care and enabling them to benefit from all the opportunities school can offer is also important. Children in care should be cared about and not just cared for.

Questions to ask

- What results are achieved by looked-after children compared with other children at local schools, and with looked-after children in other authorities?
- How well are children placed outside your local authority area doing at school?
- What plans does the council have to raise the educational attainment of looked-after children?
- Do you have a 'virtual school head', designated teachers and designated school governors in place? How effective are these arrangements?
- How are individual children and young people supported to achieve, both within and outside school?
- How are children supported to continue in further and higher education?
- How do schools' admissions policies treat looked-after children, for example are they able to attend the same school as other children in their foster family, and how many looked-after children get into the highest performing schools?
- Do all looked-after children have a PEP and are these audited for quality?

In one authority a young person was unable to attend an after-school photography course because for two years no-one would buy her a camera: when this came to light during a scrutiny review, councillors intervened and got action taken to sort it out.

- Are looked-after children able to participate in after-school activities and enjoy learning and achievement in all its forms? If not, what are the barriers?
- Does your council have a way to celebrate the achievements (whether sporting, academic, musical, attendance, personal bests) of looked-after children, and are councillors given regular updates?
- Do you monitor the numbers of looked-after children excluded from school, and do you know what alternative provision is available for them?

3

How good is the health and wellbeing of children in your care?

Policy context

Looked-after children and young people share many of the same health risks and problems as their peers, but they frequently enter care with a worse level of health due to the impact of poverty, abuse and neglect. Evidence suggests that looked-after children are nearly five times more likely to have a mental health disorder than all children.

As with educational attainment, there is statutory guidance on Promoting the health and wellbeing of looked-after children (DCSF 2009). This applies to local authorities, primary care trusts and strategic health authorities but consideration will need to be given to the impact of the NHS reforms.

The health needs of each looked-after child must be assessed within four weeks of a child becoming looked-after and should form the basis of their health plan. As with the PEP, this feeds in to the child's care plan.

Local authorities are also required to make sure that a 'strengths and difficulties' questionnaire is completed to assess for emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Questions to ask

- What proportion of children's health assessments and dental checks are carried out on time?
- Is there a designated doctor and nurse for looked-after children?
- Are looked-after children a priority group for getting access to child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) and how long are waiting times for referrals?
- As an at-risk group, what access do looked-after children and young people get to services to help with substance misuse, sexual health and teenage pregnancy?
- What support is given to foster carers and young people themselves about promoting healthy lifestyles?
- Do you receive regular reports on the health needs and outcomes of looked-after children?
- What do looked-after children and young people themselves say about their health needs and priorities and how well they are met?
- Is this evidence about outcomes and experiences used to inform the commissioning of services?

4

How stable and secure are the lives of your looked-after children while they are in your care?

Policy context

When children and young people enter care and are placed either with foster carers, in residential homes or even at boarding school, they risk losing regular contact not only with family members but also with friends or other significant people in their lives.

This is exacerbated if the 'placement' has to be out of the area, perhaps because of a lack of local foster families or children's homes. If the placement breaks down, they may have to move again, causing yet more anxiety and disruption. Yet children themselves tell us that stable and supportive relationships are crucial if they are to thrive in care.

Ensuring placements are stable and work well for children and young people is therefore key to their wellbeing. The 'sufficiency duty' requires local authorities to take steps to secure sufficient accommodation within the authority's area which meets the needs of its looked-after children, and they must demonstrate how they are fulfilling this responsibility. To do this, there must be a good understanding of who your children are and what they need.

Every council has to collect data on how far placements are from the child's home and the number of placements that children experience but the quality of the care offered must also be taken into account. It is not good enough to place a child in a stable placement, within the local authority boundary, if the child is unhappy there.

There are important links with safeguarding: children who come into care should do so at a point where their experiences have not been so damaging that they cannot settle.

Questions to ask

How stable are your placements? How many children move placements three or more times during a year or remain in the same placement for two or more years?

- What do you know about the children who experience changes of placement?
- What are the needs of children that require them to be placed out of the area of the authority?
- If additional services were provided either by the local authority or by partner agencies, could they be looked after within the area of the local authority?
- How are you fulfilling your 'sufficiency duty'?

- What choice and information do children and young people have about their placements, for example, do they get to meet potential foster carers or visit children's homes before they go to live there?
- If children have to move placement, what arrangements are made to keep them at the same school, for example transport?
- Are you satisfied that children are supported to maintain relationships with people that are significant to them?
- What do looked-after children say about their placements?

As a result of one authority's scrutiny review, a looked-after children and care leavers' drop-in centre was developed, to provide a safe space for looked-after children and young people to go to find out information and meet support workers and others in one place.



5

How well does your authority do at finding appropriate adoptive families for children for whom it is decided this is the right option?

Policy context

If a child or young person's birth family have completely broken down or it has been decided that they will never be able to care for the child safely, the best option for a long-term stable family environment may be adoption. The law governing adoption is in the Adoption and Children Act 2002, which aligned adoption practice with the 1989 Children Act, making the welfare of the child the paramount consideration.

The government has recently announced An Action Plan on Adoption (DfE 2012) to increase the numbers of children being adopted from care, and to speed up the process. The measures it proposes include considering the suitability of adoption for children at an earlier stage; streamlining bureaucratic processes that can lead to delay and encouraging a broader range of potential adopters. This includes the relaxation of expectations about matching the ethnicity of children and adopters if this will cause delay.

These changes will be accompanied by stronger systems for holding local authorities to account, with a new framework for inspection and a new 'adoption scorecard'. This will indicate how each local authority has performed in relation to placing children for adoption and in responding to prospective adopters.

It is important not to forget that there are other ways of securing a permanent home for children within the care system. For some, family and friends may be able to care for them if the right support is available. For others, particularly older children, adoption may be unsuitable but foster carers make the commitment to offer the child a permanent home. These alternative routes to permanency can be secured legally through arrangements such as 'residence orders' or 'special guardianship'.

South Tyneside Council routinely places over 12 per cent of its looked-after population for adoption and is one of the best performing councils in placing them within one year of the decision being made. This has been achieved through the use of 'concurrent planning' in which, if children are not rehabilitated to their birth family, they are adopted by their foster carers².

² <http://www.c4eo.org.uk/themes/vulnerablechildren/vlpdetails.aspx?lpeid=363>

Questions to ask

- What percentage of children have a permanence plan by their second review?
- What percentage of children are placed for adoption within 12 months of the decision to adopt and are subsequently adopted?
- How long does it take to make the decision to place a child for adoption, particularly for new-born babies?
- What is the profile of your children in care compared with prospective adoptive families, and if there is an imbalance, what steps are being taken to address this?
- How are sibling groups treated and what steps are taken to ensure they stay together, whether in adoption, fostering or residential care?
- What is the profile of children waiting for a permanent placement and what are the barriers to finding them a home?
- How long does it take to respond to prospective adopters and what are their views on how they have been treated?
- What do children and young people, for example in your local children in care council, say about adoption processes?



6

How well do your foster care arrangements work?

Policy context

Nationally, the proportion of children in care placed with foster carers as opposed to children's homes or other placements is about two thirds. Fostering is generally seen as a preferable option because it enables children and young people to live in a family environment.

Foster carers can play a valuable role in stabilising and caring for children from disrupted backgrounds for both short and longer periods of time, but nationally there is a shortage of people willing to take on the role. In the 1990s, independent or private fostering agencies developed and there is now a mixed economy. The way in which foster carers are supported, the fees they receive and their access to information may all play a role in making them feel valued, ensuring that they in turn can value and support the children they look after in the most effective way. The extent to which they hold delegated responsibility for day-to-day decisions on matters such as 'sleep-overs' or school trips can make a difference to their role satisfaction and the child's sense of belonging.

The Foster Carers' Charter sets out the expected commitment that foster carers and local authorities will make. It is designed to be used locally to develop a shared understanding and to encourage challenge.

Some 'family and friends' foster carers are approved only for a specific child, where they have an existing relationship and the local authority has decided that it is in the child's best interests to stay with them.

'Private' foster placements are those where the child's parents have made the arrangement directly with the foster family. The local authority should be informed in these situations so that they can check the suitability of the arrangement and monitor the care being provided.

Dreamwalls project in Southampton provides 'time-out' breaks for foster carers and has reduced by 95 per cent the proportion of foster carers leaving fostering. The cost equated to £674.43 per child per year, and 182 children received the service. Using the social return on investment (SROI) method of calculating value and benefits as well as costs, there was a £1.63 return for every £1.00 invested in the project.

Questions to ask

- Do you have a sufficient pool of suitable foster carers locally to meet the needs of children needing placements? If not, what steps are being taken to address this?
- What support is given to your foster carers, including family and friends carers, and how easily can they access it, both for themselves and the child in their care?
- What do foster carers themselves say about the support they receive, including out-of-hours support and about their relationships with social workers and other professionals?
- Are there clear arrangements for delegating responsibility to foster carers for day-to-day decisions?
- Is there more 'in-kind' support that would facilitate and make the fostering role easier, such as bus passes, access to leisure centres etc?
- What do looked-after children and young people themselves say about their experience of fostering?
- What is the turnover of foster carers and do you know the reasons why carers leave?



7

How good is the standard of residential care provided or used by your authority?

Policy context

For some children, a placement in a children's home may be more suitable than a foster home. For example, they may find it difficult to cope with family-based life as a result of their experiences, or because of a strong sense of loyalty to their birth family.

DfE has a challenge and improvement programme for children's homes to support good practice. As part of the programme, it produced a data pack to enable local authorities to examine and compare their use of children's homes (DfE 2011)³. Some local authorities operate children's homes themselves but 76 per cent of placements are in the private or voluntary sector. About nine per cent of looked-after children are in residential care and most are over the age of 12. The placements are more likely than foster care to be out of area. Interestingly, some authorities use residential care much more than others.

Councillors have said that taking part in 'Regulation 33' visits or other arranged visits to homes can really bring to life what it is like to live in residential care, although they have to be carried out with sensitivity. Ofsted inspects residential homes and these reports (along with the reports from Regulation 33 visits) should provide a source of information and assurance to scrutiny about the standard of care provided there.

Questions to ask

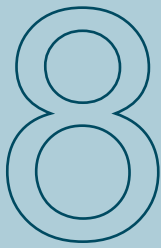
- What is the profile of the children placed in residential care by your authority?
- Who provides the residential placements used by your authority and what is their Ofsted rating?
- What are the outcomes of children in residential care compared to the rest of your looked after children?
- Do you have any children placed in 'secure care'?
- How is the experience of children placed in residential care outside the authority monitored?
- How does your use of residential care compare with other similar authorities?
- If your authority operates its own children's homes, what are the arrangements for undertaking Regulation 33 visit and how effective are these?

³ <http://tinyurl.com/82p2qda>

- What do looked-after children and young people themselves say about their experience of living in residential care?
- How are any complaints about standards of care in residential homes and issues such as bullying dealt with? How many are there and what happens as a result?

In Kirklees, looked-after children can access the Kick (Kids in care Kirklees) website. From here they can go on a virtual tour of all the residential homes by watching a video made and narrated by looked-after young people who live there, to tell them what it's like. The website also enables them to 'rate' their reviews and foster placements online, as well as read, listen to and watch first-hand accounts of children and young people's experiences of care.





What support does your authority provide to young people leaving care and how effective is it?

Policy context

For many young people, leaving care can be daunting: they are expected to be independent at an earlier age than their peers, in spite of the additional difficulties that many face. Care leavers are over-represented in prison populations and the unemployed, demonstrating that the experience of being in – and leaving – care still does not prepare young people well for adult life. If looked-after children followed the same paths as other children into further education, training and jobs, it could save the economy £50 million each year.

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 sets out local authorities' responsibilities to develop a 'pathway plan' within three months of every looked-after child's 16th birthday to help them towards independence, with the support of a personal adviser.

Young people cease to be looked after at the age of 18, although some may choose to leave before this. The local authority continues to have responsibilities towards them at least up to the age of 21 and longer if they are receiving education or training. Young people eligible for adult services, such as those with a disability, are also entitled to extended support as care leavers.

Statutory guidance on local authority responsibilities towards care leavers is contained in Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations: Volume 3: Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers (DCSF 2010). Support may be financial, practical and emotional.

The Staying Put programme enabled children in 11 pilot authorities to remain with their foster carers beyond the age of 18, replicating the experiences of most families. The evaluation was broadly positive⁴, particularly in enabling the young people to remain in education.

In Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, scrutiny called representatives from Job Centre Plus, the council's Revenues and Benefits and Care Leavers Services to a hearing following concerns expressed by care leavers about distress caused by late payments of benefits. The NCH Bridges Project reported that since the intervention of scrutiny, delays in processing benefits for care leavers were much reduced. As well as reducing the further risk of social and financial exclusion to vulnerable care leavers, there was also a reduction in the number of emergency payments to care leavers.

⁴ DfE (2012) Evaluation of the Staying Put: 18 Plus Family Placement Programme: Final report

Questions to ask

- How many care leavers is your authority still in touch with a year after they have left the care of the authority? How many are they in touch with after three years?
- What do you know about the outcomes of the children who were formerly in your authority's care?
- How many formerly looked-after young people are NEETs (not in education, employment and training)?
- What support do young people leaving care receive to access housing, tenancy support, employment, access to benefits, further and higher education and training?
- Do you make any provision for young people to stay in their placement beyond the age of 18?
- What do former looked-after children and young people themselves say about their experience of leaving care and the support that is or was provided?

In one authority a specialist scrutiny group on corporate parenting enabled looked-after young people to feed views directly to scrutiny. As a result of this group, the 'care leavers grant' (given to all young people leaving care to buy things for setting up home when they left care) was increased from £750 to £1000. Young people said £750 wasn't enough, members agreed and although officers were initially reluctant, comparison with other authorities showed that the grant level was low, so it was agreed to increase it.





How effective is your professional workforce of social workers and others responsible for running services for and working with looked-after children?

Policy context

It is essential that each child has an individualised care plan based on a thorough assessment of their needs, and this is the responsibility of their allocated social worker. Many authorities have struggled to recruit and retain sufficient numbers of suitably qualified social workers to do the difficult job of working with vulnerable children. This can be a key cause of poor performance but will also have an adverse effect on the experiences of the children and their carers. Children find it distressing to have frequent changes of worker and can feel uncared for as a result.

The IRO service is important both in terms of its ability to challenge individual instances of poor practice and to have an overview of the effectiveness of care planning across the authority. The IRO may be the most constant figure in some children's lives.

While senior officers are responsible for managing staff and services, members can play an important role in checking that there is a skilled and stable workforce in place. Although social workers are key, other council officers should also be aware of their responsibilities to looked-after children, such as those in housing departments, environment and leisure services, education, legal services and the public health service.

Questions to ask

- What are the levels of social work vacancies, turnover, stress-related sickness, use of agency staff and ratios between newly qualified and experienced social workers and what action are management taking to address these?
- What continuity of social worker support is there for looked-after children and what are the case loads carried by social work staff?
- What proportion of social workers' time is spent doing face-to-face work with looked-after children as opposed to paper work and could this be improved?
- What does the annual IRO report say about the effectiveness of care planning in the authority and is action taken to address any weaknesses that it identifies?
- Are there enough opportunities for social workers to develop their skills and to engage in reflective learning?
- Is there evidence that staff from across the authority and other partners are working together to deliver what looked-after children need?
- What do looked-after children and their carers say about their experience of engaging with social workers and other professionals?
- Are looked-after children and young people involved in recruitment and development of services?

10

What more could be done to fulfil the council's responsibilities as a 'corporate parent'?

Policy context

Although elected members will not all have the same level of involvement with the service for looked after children, they all share responsibility for satisfying themselves that is good enough. As former Secretary of State Frank Dobson MP's original letter to all councillors about their role as corporate parents, launching the Quality Protects Programme said:

"Elected councillors have a crucial role. Only you can carry it out. You can make sure that the interests of the children come first. You bring a fresh look and common sense. As councillors you set the strategic direction of your council's services and determine policy and priorities for your local community within the overall objectives set by government."

This is as valid today as it was then. All councillors should be made aware of their responsibility as a corporate parent, and what this means in practice. As part of this process, it is crucial to ensure that councillors can hear directly from looked-after children about what matters to them. This could be through informal discussions, visits by elected members to children's homes or involving looked-after children when reviewing services.

It is not only councillors who are corporate parents. Council officers across the council (not just in children's services departments) share in the responsibility and other partners also have a duty to cooperate to ensure looked-after children's needs are met.

Questions to ask

- Does your council have an effective structure for the governance of corporate parenting, including councillors?
- Do looked-after children know who their 'corporate parents' are? What do they say about what they expect from local councillors and others acting as their 'corporate parents'?
- Do all members receive mandatory training on their roles and responsibilities as corporate parents when they are elected and is this refreshed during their term of office?

- Are there appropriate opportunities for elected members to meet and listen to looked-after children and young people, and to celebrate and praise their achievements when they do well?
- Is there an active children in care council which regularly meets with elected members and others in authority (across the council and other partners) to express the views and needs of your looked-after children?
- Is the children in care council happy with the way in which its views influence policy and practice?
- How are children and young people's complaints responded to and what is learnt from them?

One authority has encouraged councillors to 'adopt' a residential home in order to encourage greater responsibility for, and interest in, each home by elected members and provide continuity between visits. These members could be important witnesses to any scrutiny inquiry.



Case studies

London Borough of Newham

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission carried out a review of the council's new approach to corporate parenting – in particular its targets to reduce the number of children in its care, and improve provision for those who remain in care. The commission endorsed the families directorate's investment of intensive resources into those families with children on the edge of care, at an early stage alongside the immediate removal of children where there are risks to their safety, followed by a permanent placement wherever possible. The commission made a number of recommendations, including increased support for foster carers, and closer working arrangements with partnership agencies. The report is available in the CfPS library: <http://tinyurl.com/7ko94k2>

Cheshire East Council

The Children and Families Scrutiny committee undertook a review of fostering services. They identified a need to improve systems and recommended a number of measures to improve the experience of foster carers. They also stated that, in line with the corporate parenting strategy, all corporate policies must consider their impact on looked-after children. The review also suggested related topics for review, such as the 16 plus service. The report is available in the CfPS library: <http://tinyurl.com/6v4kr3r>

Buckinghamshire County Council

The Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee undertook a review 'Maximising the potential of looked-after children' – examining issues affecting educational attainment of looked-after children in the county, including post-16 and their ability to participate in other aspects of school life. Recommendations focus on support at transition stages and support for foster carers to enable them to better support the children they look after. The report is available in the CfPS library: <http://tiny.cc/g1dt6>

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

Rotherham Looked-After Children Scrutiny Sub-Panel has undertaken two reviews of corporate parenting. The most recent review made a number of recommendations in three main areas:

- looked-after children council and pledge
- governance arrangements
- training and guidance to elected members.

The report is available in the CfPS library: <http://tiny.cc/6pfck>

Hartlepool Borough Council

The Children's Services Scrutiny Forum undertook an investigation into the provision of support and services to looked-after children and young people. It took evidence from a range of stakeholders including children and young people, frontline staff and carers. It also invited a presentation from a neighbouring authority. A detailed profile of the looked-after population was undertaken to inform the investigation. It arrived at a number of recommendations for improvement. The report is available in the CfPS library: <http://tinyurl.com/7fzanrz>

Bracknell Forest Council

The council has a specific overview and scrutiny panel that regularly monitors the performance of the children, young people and learning department mainly through review of its quarterly service reports (QSRs), inspection reports and the children's social care statutory complaints report. The QSRs enable the panel to question executive members and officers in detail about trends, pressures and priorities. Specific areas considered recently have included the stability of foster care placements. The report is available in the CfPS library: <http://tinyurl.com/6r4dpgr>



References and further information

Key legislation and guidance

Children Act 1989

<http://tiny.cc/qrzro>

Adoption and Children Act 2002

<http://tiny.cc/lf98m>

Children and Young Persons Act 2008

<http://tiny.cc/951i3>

Care planning, placements and case review regulations (England) 2010 and statutory guidance

These documents specify the current requirements for care plans, including health and education plans, placement decisions and monitoring, and case reviews. They consolidate previous regulations and guidance, providing a central source of reference for local authorities' work with looked-after children and can be found on the DfE website: <http://tiny.cc/7xt9g>

Promoting the educational achievement of looked-after children: statutory guidance for local authorities (DCSF 2010)

Statutory guidance setting out the responsibilities of local authorities and their partners in relation to the education of looked-after children. <http://www.torbay.gov.uk/promotingtheeducationalachievement.pdf>

Promoting the health and wellbeing of looked-after children (DCSF 2009)

Statutory guidance setting out the responsibilities of local authorities and their partners in relation to the health of looked-after children. <http://tinyurl.com/yaevzg2>

Resources

Welcome to corporate parenting – a councillor development learning resource

A booklet and audio CD was produced by Kirklees, Bradford and Calderdale Councils working with a group of looked-after young people.

Contact: Angie Aspinall, Councillor Development Officer, Kirklees Council, angie.aspinall@kirklees.gov.uk or 01484 416 930
<http://tinyurl.com/726mylr>

Improving educational outcomes for looked-after children and young people, and improving the emotional and behavioural health of looked-after children and young people

Two useful knowledge reviews containing detailed evidence of what works, produced by the Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children's Services (C4EO), September 2010, available on www.c4eo.org.uk

Putting corporate parenting into practice: developing an effective approach

Materials to support corporate parents, by Hart, D and Williams, A National Children's Bureau and currently being updated.
www.ncb.org.uk

LILAC

LILAC is a project run by a National Voice. It involves care experienced young people in carrying out assessments of how well services involve and consult with their children and young people, and delivering training on participation and the LILAC standards. www.lilacnv.org

What young people from CiCCs say... ten top tips for corporate parents

Suggestions from children in care councils about how corporate parents can work most effectively with them

ANV (forthcoming)

Must knows for lead members in children's services – Local Government Association

<http://tinyurl.com/726mylr>

3. How do you know your council is serving the most vulnerable children and young people well?

Top tip three (PDF, 8 pages, 554 KB)

4. How do you know your council is being effective in keeping children and young people safe?

Top tip four (PDF, 8 pages, 528 KB)

Data profiles for local authorities – LG Inform. Register through the LGA website.

www.local.gov.uk

Improvement support

Information on children's improvement board

<http://tinyurl.com/892zfcmm>

LGA support for members

<http://tinyurl.com/7bzpoxd>

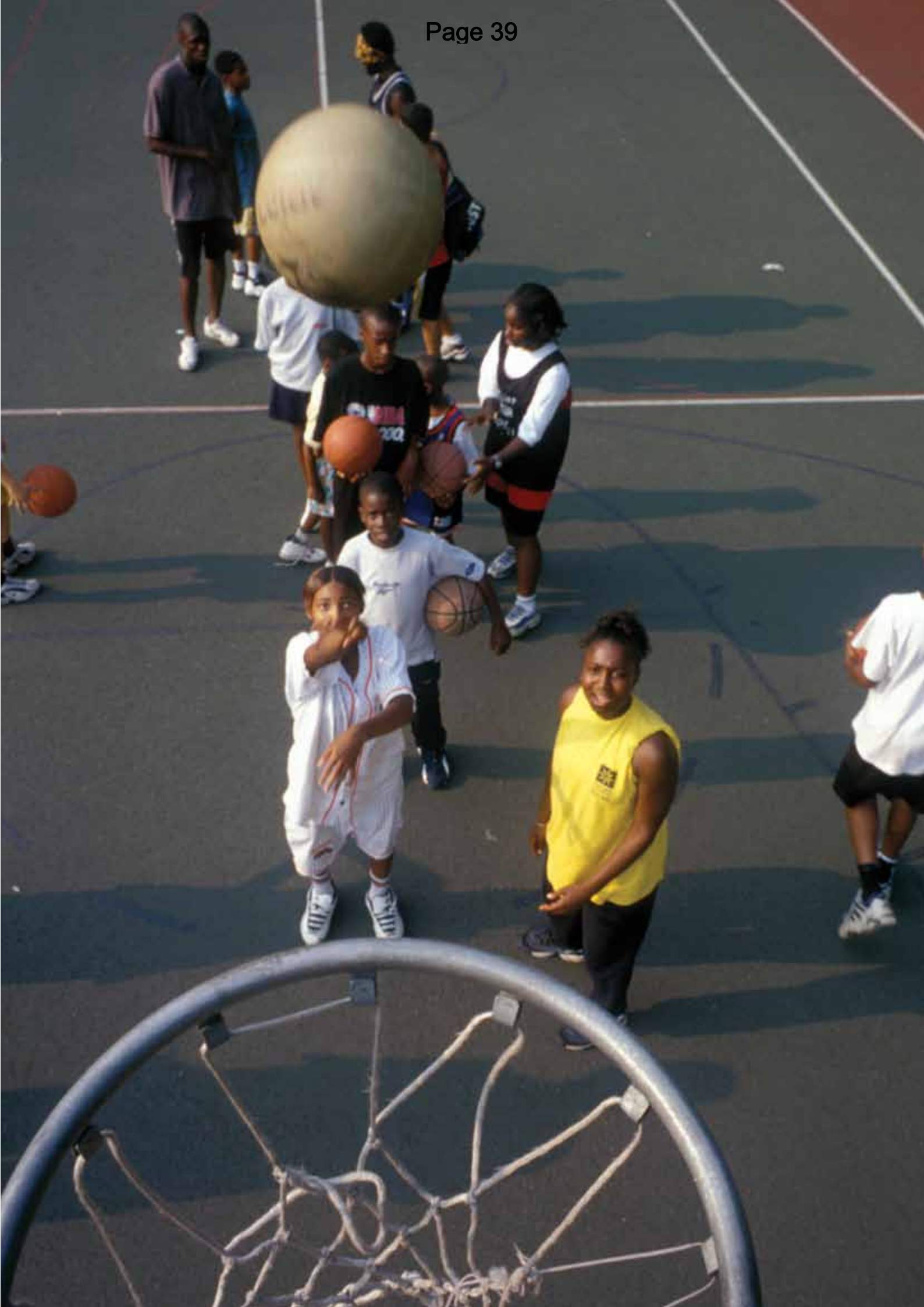
Safeguarding children peer review

<http://www.local.gov.uk/safeguarding-children-peer-reviews>

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Smith Square
London SW1P 3HZ
www.local.gov.uk

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We consider requests on an individual basis.

Cared for Children and Care Leavers

Corporate Parenting Strategy

2015 - 2017



Contents

Page

3	Foreword and Introduction
4	Why we need a strategy
7	Achievements to date
9	Areas to Improve
10	Vital Statistics – 2013/2014
12	Outcome 1 – Involve Me
13	Outcome 2 - Provide Me with a Good, Safe Home
14	Outcome 3 - Keep Me Healthy
15	Outcome 4 - Help Me to Achieve
16	Outcome 5 - Support Me to Move to Adult Life
17	How we will measure success
19	How we will check success
20	Action Plan 2015 – 2017

FOREWORD AND INTRODUCTION



I truly believe that the way we provide services to our Cared for Children and Care Leavers is fundamental to ensuring the shape of their future and their success as adults. The provision of those services relies on strong partnership arrangements and a clear vision of what it is we are striving for on behalf of these children and young people.

Within this strategy, we have identified a number of key priorities which we (and those we care for) believe to be instrumental in improving outcomes for our most vulnerable children.

Our pledge to our Cared for Children, our Care Leavers Charter and our involvement in the national New Belongings pilot, I feel, demonstrates clearly our commitment to driving improvement and delivering on our promises.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Rachel Bailey'.

Cllr Rachel Bailey

Lead Member, Children's Services.

Cheshire East Council and partner agencies are committed to ensuring the very best for those children we care for.

When I meet with our Cared for Children and Care Leavers, they tell me that sometimes it is the smallest things which make the biggest difference.

Our Pledge and Care Leavers Charter identify how we will ensure the very best outcomes for our children/young people and this strategy sets out what we will monitor to tell us how well we are delivering on our promises.

The action plan within this strategy sets out our priorities for the coming year and how we will achieve them, in order to ensure our parenting of our Cared for Children and Care Leavers is of the very best standard.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tony Crane'.

Tony Crane

Director of Children's Services

Why we need a strategy



Cheshire East Council supports most children and young people to live and thrive within their own families and communities. Our services, including our early help offer, in the main are effective in providing support to keep families together. However, there are a small group of children and young people whose families are unable to care for them and so they need to be accommodated by the Local Authority. At any time, there are around 330 children and young people in care and 250 care leavers.

Together we must provide them with the best possible care and support; the purpose of this strategy is to set out what this means and how we will improve outcomes for these children and young people in Cheshire East.

What do we mean by Cared for Children and Care Leavers?

Children and young people in care are those for whom the Local Authority is providing accommodation, either by way of a Court Order or in agreement with the child's parent or guardian. A child or young person may come into care as a result of temporary or permanent problems facing their parents, as a result of abuse or neglect or as a result of a range of difficulties including not having a parent to care for them. In law these children and young people accommodated by the local authority are known as 'looked after'. In Cheshire East, our children and young people have asked to be referred to as 'cared for children' and 'care leavers'. These children and young people range in age from 0 to 21 years (or 25 years if the young person is in full-time education)

Principles

There are a number of principles that underpin this strategy:

- The 'right' children will be in care
- Children and young people have the right to live with their families, wherever possible out of care
- Children will be in care for the shortest possible time
- Children with a Plan of Adoption will be adopted in a timely way
- Young people will be adequately prepared for the time they will cease to be 'Cared for'.
- Learning the skills to successfully live independently will not be a separate process but an integral part of the Cared for process
- Children who need to live in care will live in local placements wherever possible/appropriate.

This strategy is informed by cared for children and care leavers. The outcomes and priorities identified are those which our cared for children and care leavers have said they feel will make the greatest difference to their lives.

‘The Pledge’ and the **‘Care Leavers Charter’** set out the promises that Cheshire East has made to cared for children and care leavers based on what they have told us is important to them. The links below will take you to the [Pledge](#) and [Charter](#) documents.

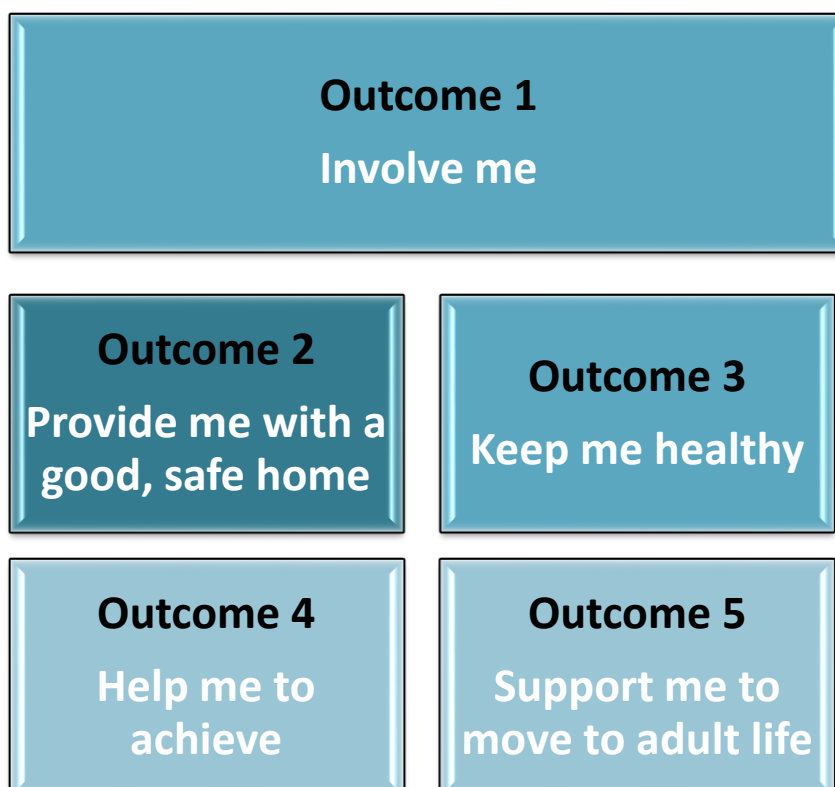
Improving Outcomes for Cared for Children and Care Leavers

The outcomes for children and young people in care are poor, with research indicating that this group is:

- over represented amongst homeless population and prison population
- more likely to be offending
- more likely to experience drug and alcohol misuse
- more likely to have poor mental health

Disabled children and children from ethnic minorities experience further disadvantage.

This strategy sets out 5 outcomes, in the words of cared for children and care leavers, where Cheshire East aims to improve.



The Corporate Parent



Corporate Parenting is the term used for the collective responsibility of the Council and its partners to ensure the care and protection of children and young people looked after by the local authority. All agencies within the Local Authority have a responsibility and role to play in enriching the lives of these children and young people. Corporate Parenting is about all parts of the Council, partner agencies and health service working together to ensure

that services are appropriate to meet the needs of, and improve the outcomes for Cared for Children and Care leavers across a range of services, including housing, health and leisure as well as those specifically for children and young people.

The underlying principle of Corporate Parenting is that the Local Authority will seek the same outcomes for children and young people in care that every good parent would want for their own children or children within their family:

- the chance to have stability and form healthy attachments with their carers;
- good health, safety and emotional wellbeing;
- education and training opportunities;
- opportunities to engage in leisure and community activities;
- being able to celebrate their culture and identity;
- having the right support to move into adult life;
- employment opportunities offered through work experience, trainee posts and apprenticeships within the 'family firm', ring fenced to care leavers.

Councillors as Corporate Parents

'When you became a councillor, you also became responsible for ensuring that the Council acts as 'Corporate Parent' for all the children in its care. The role of the Corporate Parent is to seek for the children in public care the outcomes that every good parent would want for their children'.

Frank Dobson

All elected members have a 'special responsibility' in ensuring outcomes for cared for children and care leavers. There are also specific Councillor roles, such as the Lead Member for Children's Services, who have responsibilities defined in statutory guidance.

Councillors who do not have a direct role with children still exercise this responsibility in their ward work, and will often do so in their role as School Governor.



Achievements – to date we have...

Improved the way we obtain views from children and young people

- ✓ Improved our advocacy and independent visitor service.
- ✓ Re-launched the Pledge for children and young people in the care of the Council
- ✓ Developed our Care Leavers Charter.
- ✓ Involved children and young people in the recruitment of our social workers and managers.
- ✓ Strengthened the role of the Children In Care Council in policy making and review

Improved the sufficiency and quality of our placements

- ✓ Reduced the number of children becoming cared for.
- ✓ Reduced the number of Cared for Children living outside of the borough.
- ✓ Increased the number of children being adopted and the number of adults approved as adoptive carers.
- ✓ Invested to increase the number of carers who foster for the council.
- ✓ Developed the quality of our residential provision
- ✓ Strengthened relationships with our private sector partners
- ✓ Increased the number of good or outstanding private sector placements being used



Invested in resources for our cared for children and care leavers

- ✓ Expanded our Cared for Children's health team and co-located it within Cared for Children's Health Services. This has allowed increased overall nursing capacity; a Nurse specifically for the 16+ young people and much improved administrative support. Provided training to residential staff, Foster Carer's and 16 Plus staff.
- ✓ Increased the number of Personal Advisers supporting Care Leavers.
- ✓ Increased resources within the Virtual School Team.

Improved the education and life skills of our cared for children and care leavers

- ✓ Improved the way we allocate support to schools.
- ✓ Made sure that all those involved with your education are aware of how important it is that you attend school and make full use of the support available to you so that you achieve the very best you can. We will continue to give this message whenever we can

- ✓ Celebrated the rise in the number of young people who gained five or more A*-C including English and Maths.



Worked with schools to reduce the number of children who have any period of exclusion and have had no permanent exclusions of cared for children for the last three years.

Compared to national and statistical neighbours, the attainment of our children at the end of Key Stage 1 (age 7) is close to the average for Reading and Maths and is above the national and statistical neighbour average for writing.

- ✓ At Key Stage 2 (age 11) the attainment of our children is significantly above that of statistical neighbours for maths and is above the national and statistical neighbour average for maths, reading and writing.

Improved the transition into adulthood for our cared for and care leavers

- ✓ Organised Apprentice Taster sessions and offer follow up contact for any young people who feel this is the right post-16 path for them.
- ✓ Organised special events for young people to find out more about University Education and what support would be received.
- ✓ Reduced the number of young people who do not remain in education or training after Y11.
- ✓ Organised activities out of school such as singing in a choir or working as a journalist at national events to give opportunities to develop skills and talents.
- ✓ Maintained the 19th Birthday Cohort at 68% for Education, Training and Employment;
- ✓ The 19 year old cohort remains consistently high at 98% in suitable accommodation.
- ✓ Extended our reporting to include 20 and 21st Birthday cohorts who are monitored on a quarterly basis to ensure they remain in suitable accommodation.
- ✓ Undertaken a specific exercise to ensure all Care Leavers have an up to date Pathway Plan that are regularly reviewed by Independent Safeguarding Chairs.
- ✓ Celebrated and embraced joining New Belongings to work in Partnership with our colleagues in Wirral, Stockport and Trafford Care Leaver services working together to achieve a Gold Standard in Care Leaver services.
- ✓ Increased our Setting Up Allowance for all Care Leavers to £3000
- ✓ Increased our Higher Education Bursary to £2000 per annum + £500 for books and materials per year.
- ✓ Had 7 Care Leavers identified for Apprenticeship placements within Cheshire East Council for 2013. 1 has successfully moved on into employment, 3 remain in post, 1 has moved to a different course and 2 are being supported to identify suitable placements.

- ✓ Celebrated the recruitment of a dedicated 16+ Cared For Children's Nurse who is able to provide advice and assistance and signpost services to all Care Leavers with issues relating to their health.
- ✓ Promoted the shared lives scheme to enable Care Leavers to remain staying put in their foster placement beyond 18 and up until 21.
- ✓ As of March 2013, 66.7% of the 19th Birthday cohort were in Education, Training or Employment (EET). This compared favourably with our statistical neighbour average of 52%.
- ✓ 100% of 19th Birthday cohort were reported to be in suitable accommodation.



But we still need to improve further...

- We are still working to reduce the age that children enter care.
- We continue to work to prevent children coming into care.
- We need to prioritise support to improve attainment. Data tells us that Cheshire East Cared For Children achieved slightly below the national average at GCSE grade A* to C including English and Maths. Overall, 35.3% achieved 5A* - C Grades.
- Too many young people leave college during their first few months – levels of NEET rose from 3% to 15% during the first term of post-16 education in 2013-14.
- We currently support 12 Care Leavers in Higher Education, but this needs to be more.
- The attainment of children completing Key Stage 4 (age 16) is close to the national and statistical average for the percentage gaining 5 or more A*-C grades (or equivalent) but is slightly below for the percentage including English and maths in these qualifications.
- The number of young people progressing to University has increased each year, with 10 new entrants in 2013, but we know that more of our young people can make it to University.
- 64% of young people cared for 2.5 years or more have been in the same placement for 2 years or more.

- The gap between cared for children and their peers is too big and increases through school. This means that children not cared for are almost four times as likely to gain five good GCSEs including English and maths than those cared for which affects the opportunities for post-16 education and training.



- New measures have been introduced in 2013 which assess the level of development across twelve key areas of children starting school for the first time. In 2013, cared for children starting school achieved the expected level in some of these areas but none reached the expected level in all twelve areas.

- Strengthen our partnership with Adult Services to ensure

smoother transitions for those young people who have adult supported needs.

- Achieve a Gold Standard service for young people leaving care through the development of the 'New Belongings' initiative.

Vital Statistics 2013-14

Cheshire East Council has around **330** children and young people in care. The majority are being looked after because they have experienced significant abuse or neglect, and most are subject to Care Orders made by the courts under the Children Act 1989. These orders confer Parental Responsibility on the council (shared with their parents or anyone else who has Parental Responsibility). A smaller group are cared for under a voluntary agreement with their parents where the Council acts in loco parentis.

150 children entered care during the year **58%** in the category of abuse and neglect.

In 2013-14 **190** children left care **38** of these returning home

Most children and young people cared for by Cheshire East Council are living in foster care provided predominantly by our own foster carers and also by Independent Fostering Agencies (**73%**).

We approved **20** new fostering households in 2013-14.

Some children and young people are placed in residential care (**5%**) or schools (**1%**), and some with family members, including parents or friends. There are a number of children who have to reside outside of the Cheshire East area, and we continue to be responsible for these children regardless of their location. These children are even more vulnerable as they lose their local networks, resulting in the loss of school and friends, and difficulty in maintaining family relationships.

The long term placement stability of our cared for children increased to **67%** (60% the previous year)

The percentage of cared for children experiencing 3 or more moves rose to **12%** (9% the previous year).

12 young people being supported in University placements this year- up from 1 last year.

The past year (2013/14) has seen **32** Cheshire East children adopted and **31** families approved as adopters.

We also support about **250** care leavers who have spent varying lengths of time in our care. Around **141** of them are over 18.

A regular monthly performance report provides officers with detailed information about our Cared for Children and Care Leaver cohort.

Outcome 1 - Involve me

We will make sure that every Cared For Child and Young Person has a right to say what they think should happen when adults are making decisions that affect them and to have their opinions taken into account. Cheshire East will promote children's active engagement in decision making and ensure that feedback from children, young people and parents is effectively incorporated into service planning and delivery. Service developments will actively take account of the views of children and young people, their parents and carers.

Priority 1 Ensure children and young people are involved in decisions about their health needs.

Priority 2 Ensure children and young people are involved in decisions about their care.

Priority 3 Ensure feedback from children and young people is effectively incorporated into service planning and delivery

Our children and young people have told us to...



"Keep us safe"

"Support us in our hobbies and interests"

"Help us to achieve"

"Listen to us"

"Be honest with us"

"Respect our right to confidentiality!"

"Do not judge or patronise us"

What we plan to do.....

- Establish new arrangements for the Care Leavers and the Children in Care Council.
- Continue to involve children and young people in the recruitment and retention of staff.
- Continue to involve children and young people in the development of 'New Belongings'.
- Deliver the 'New Belongings' action plan.
- Establish the Care Leaver Ambassador Apprenticeship.
- Continue to involve children and young people in further development of services, including delivery of appropriate supported accommodation for Care Leavers.
- Ensure items from the Children's Society report are regularly reported and acted upon.

Outcome 2 - Provide me with a good, safe home

We will ensure that you are in a good, safe placement where you feel happy, settled and secure, and where you can remain for as long as you need to. It will feel like home to you and provide you with a good experience. You will receive the information you need before your placement and we will listen to you if you have concerns at any time. We will ensure that you only remain a Cared For Child if there is no possibility of securing a placement for you by another means i.e. adoption/special guardianship.

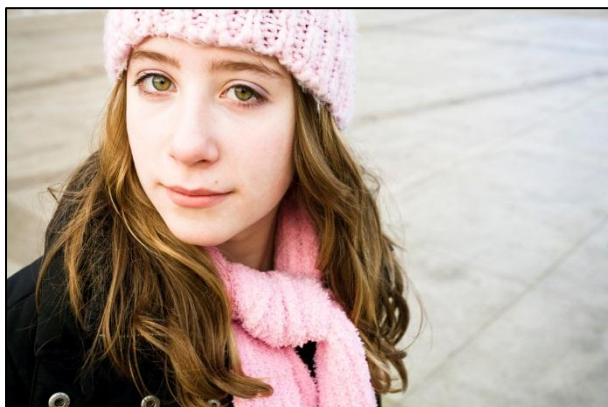
Priority 1 Improve the availability, quality and stability of local placements

Priority 2 Further develop the quality assurance arrangements in relation to all placements including those we provide in house.

Priority 3 Ensure that children and young people are fully engaged in decisions relating to their placement choice

Priority 4 We will make sure that only those children who have no alternative placement will reside in care.

Our children and young people have told us...



"We want to stay living in our communities."

"We want to be consulted on where we live."

"When we leave care, we want a choice of where we live".

"We want to stay living in our communities".

"We want to keep our links with family and friends".

What we plan to do.....

- Develop a quality assurance framework for external provision.
- Ensure we hold providers accountable for the service they are being commissioned to deliver.
- Further develop profiles of Foster Carers to enhance placement choice for children and young people.
- Strengthen the Regulation 33 monitoring process
- Continue to increase the number of local Foster Carers
- Ensure our residential provision is of high quality and cost effective.
- Establish an Intensive Support Team (IST) to work with children on the edge of care in order that, wherever possible, they can remain with their families.

Outcome 3 – Keep me healthy

You will be well and happy and choose healthy and active lifestyles. We will make sure that your health needs are assessed and planned for and that you have access to health services when and where you need them. Any need for additional emotional support will be recognised and addressed to ensure that you have emotional stability, resilience and confidence. We will ensure that all partner Agencies understand our commitment to this, and the part they can play in helping to achieve it.

Priority 1 Improve the emotional health and wellbeing of cared for children and young people and care leavers

Priority 2 Increase access to leisure facilities

Priority 3 Improve support packages to children with disabilities

Our children and young people have told us...

“We want sexual health information, advice and support to be available when needed.”

“We want a greater focus on relationship education not just on sex and contraception.”

“We want to see health professionals (particularly mental health) at a venue of our choosing”



What we plan to do.....

- Improve access to mental health services for Cared For Children and young people and care leavers.
- Continue to develop and improve training for foster carers and health staff in relation to emotional support needs to include young people.
- Consult with young people in order to develop an effective method of providing them with their own health information and transition as they leave care.
- Promote awareness and take up of both the SDQ process and the process for leisure pass application.
- Consider whether the current leisure pass could be expanded to include care leavers and reciprocal arrangements with our “New Belongings” neighbours.
- Increase awareness amongst staff regarding the process for Continuing Healthcare Assessments to ensure that all eligible children are referred for further assessment.
- The Healthy Care Partnership will consider the NICE/SCIE Public Health Guidance 31 (2013) initially focusing on audit of the eight quality standards.
- Improve arrangements for health data collection and information sharing.

Outcome 4 – Help me to achieve

You will receive a planned and stable education which will enable you to fulfil your educational, social and emotional potential and give you high aspirations for your future. You will have a Personal Education Plan which outlines your strengths and areas for development. It will also say what help the school will give to support these developments, including how funding will be allocated and used. Your voice is very important in this process and you will be invited to give your views before the meeting as well as attending it.

Priority 1 Improve educational attainment for pupils age 5, 7, 11 and 16 year olds.

Priority 2 Improve attendance and attainment for pupils age 17 and 18 years old.

Priority 3 Increase take up of apprenticeships



Our children and young people have told us...

“We value our education and want to do well in school”.

We like having a person in school who we can talk to and who knows what we need”.

“We want someone to keep telling us how important education is and to help us keep going to school and to do our best”.

Why this is a priority

- Children and young people have told us that too often they feel that those working with them have low expectations of their ability and that they want to be supported and encouraged to do well in education and show just how much they are able to achieve.

What we plan to do.....

- Ensure that pre-school children are able to get into a good nursery and that extra help is available to help them with their development.
- Track the progress of children so that we can act quickly when progress is not being made.
- Make sure the Personal Education Plan contains very clear development targets and a way to monitor the impact of any intervention work done.
- Ensure that staff working in school know the best ways to support cared for children, including having a named key worker.
- Ensure that staff working with cared for children at risk of becoming involved in Anti-Social Behaviour/offending know the best ways to prevent this escalating

Outcome 5 – Support me to move to adult life

You will only move into independent living when you are ready to do so and we will support you in this transition. We will help find the right accommodation for you. We will make sure you have the right skills before you move into independent living, such as cooking, finance and practical skills. We will inform you of your entitlements and do our best to make sure you receive them. We will work together with services, including housing, benefits, colleges and universities, employment providers and health services to help you to establish yourself as an independent individual.

Priority 1 Improve the support available to young people in the transition to independent living

Priority 2 Improve 16+ attainment

Priority 3 New belongings collaboration

Priority 4 Improve the range of accommodation options available to care leavers

Our Care Leavers have told us they want us to...

“Respect and honour their identity”

“Believe in them”

“Listen to them”

“Keep them informed”

“Support them”

“Find them a home”

“Be their lifelong champion”

What we plan to do.....

- Further develop the work we are progressing under the ‘New Belongings’ initiative
- Work in partnership with Youth Support Services to track all EET destinations for our Care Leaver population.
- Work with the Virtual School Team to track all Yr 12 and 13 Care Leavers entering Further Education, utilising Specialist Company Welfare Call, to inform us of any absence issues.
- Work with education providers to improve the offer to Care Leavers by working towards the Buttle Quality Award.
- Identify and support potential candidates for Higher Education commencing September 2014.
- Target support to increase Care Leavers choosing to progress into Higher Education.
- Target support to reduce our NEET population.
- Work closely with Catch 22 and the Independent Safeguarding Chair with lead for child sexual exploitation to monitor/address those most at risk of engaging in risky behaviour or vulnerable to exploitation
- Develop a range of accommodation and support options that support independence and tenancy readiness
- Develop priority housing for care leavers
- Increase work experience for care leavers within the council

How we will measure success

A scorecard will be developed, monitored and reviewed based on the following measures:

Involve me	Children and young people report that they feel safe
	Feedback from children, young people and parents is effectively incorporated into service planning and delivery
	% of eligible C&YP accessing advocacy services?
	Number of children and young people involved in Children in Care Council?
Provide me with a good, safe home	The number of children who experience three moves or more within a year is less than 10% (currently 12%)
	The number of young people looked after for 2.5 years who have been in the same placement for 2 years should be higher than 70%
	The number of C&YP placed within 20 miles of their home.
	All Individual Placement Agreements to include outcomes that are bespoke to individual C&YP.
	Apply a new quality assurance framework to all placements at least once a year.
	Increase the level of good or outstanding placements utilised from 87 % to 100%
	An increase in the number of local foster carers (currently 149).
	Increase in the number of Care leavers in suitable accommodation aged 19, 20 and 21.
	A reduction in the time it takes for children to be adopted from care.
	Increase in the % of children waiting less than 18 months to be adopted (currently 53% in 2013).
Keep me healthy	% with immunisations up to date.
	% had teeth checked by a dentist.
	% had an annual health assessment (this figure should improve in the forthcoming year as a result of increased capacity within the Cared for Team).
	% had a developmental assessment.
Help me to achieve	% of children taking up their early years entitlement – 2, 3, 4 year old offer.
	Achievement Good Level of Development at the end of Foundation Stage.
	Increased attendance at school.
	Reduction of persistent absence.
	Reduction in days lost through exclusion and the number of young people who experience fixed term exclusion.
	Increase in primary children achieving Level 4+ in reading, writing and maths.
	Increase in secondary C&YP achieving 5+ A*-C grades including English/Maths.
	Number of number of cared for children taking up apprenticeships.

	Increase in Year 11 with guaranteed offer of employment or training.
	10% Less cared for children offend compared with 2013/14
	Reduction in number of NEETs.
Support me to move to adult life	Care leavers in suitable accommodation aged 19, 20 and 21 remains high between 95 and 100%
	Increase the number of Care Leavers in Education, Training and Employment.
	Improve the attendance of Care Leavers in school or college and reduce the number who drop out
	Increase the number of Care Leavers accessing Further Education
	Maintain the rolling programme of Cheshire East Care Leaver Apprenticeships with at least 5 in placement at any time.
	Increase in Care Leavers engaged with an annual health review (16-18)
	Reduction in the Care Leavers pregnancy rate.
	Any young person vulnerable to CSE has a plan and is supported.

How we will check success

Involve me	Attendance at Children in Care Council.
	Cared For Children's involvement in service development.
	Cared For Children and Care Leavers involvement in recruitment.
	Annual survey of Cared for Children.
Provide me with a good, safe home	Audits of pathway plans
	Calendar of visits done to ensure each residential provision is visited once every 12 months as a minimum or sooner if receives an inadequate Ofsted report.
	Benchmarking with other Local Authorities
	Regular performance reports to Early Help and Protection Leadership Team
	Scrutiny reports to Senior Management Team and Corporate Parenting Board.
Keep me healthy	Individual health assessments will be quality assured via the Cared For Children's Nurse and Designated Doctor.
	Audit of initial health assessments will be undertaken via Paediatric services results planned in training sessions.
	Reporting to Eastern and South Cheshire Clinical Commissioning Groups on month by month basis in relation to arrangements for initial and review health assessments. The Dashboard used to report this data has been refined recently and will be used in the year 2014-2015 onwards.
	Arrangements to share information between Cheshire East Council and East Cheshire NHS Trust are improving and will result in improved reporting of data in relation to health assessments.
	Scrutiny arrangements – Eastern and South Cheshire Clinical Commissioning Groups and East Cheshire Corporate Parenting Board.
	Mental health assessments are audited by the mental health worker within the Children and Families support team. This worker receives supervision via Cheshire and Wirral Partnership Trust.
	The Healthy Care Partnership will report to corporate parenting board.
Help me to achieve	Regular monitoring of the progress made by each child.
	Quality assurance of the Personal Education Plan and reports to schools and social workers about ways to improve.
	Presentation and discussion to Corporate Parenting Board.
	Independent Safeguarding Chairs will monitor the appropriateness, quality and impact of support offered to each child.
Support me to move to adult life	Improved completion rates and quality of Pathway Plans.
	Improved placement choice for care leavers
	Increased no's of care leavers accessing university
	Reduction in complaints from care leavers
	Tracking progress of transition through a Transition Operational Group

Cared for Children and Care Leavers – Activities to Support Strategy Implementation

Ref	Action	Who
Outcome 1 – Involve me		
1a	Promote membership of the CiCC and Care Leavers Council	All Group Managers
1b	Develop experiences for C4C to be involved in recruitment of workers.	Group Manager transforming Practice
Outcome 2 – Provide me with a good, safe home		
2a	Develop a quality assurance framework for external provision.	Corporate Commissioning Manager
2b	Ensure we hold providers accountable for the service they are being commissioned to deliver	Corporate Commissioning Manager
2c	Further develop profiles of Foster Carers to enhance placement choice for children and young people.	Group Manager - Fostering
2d	Strengthen the Regulation 33 monitoring process	Head of Safeguarding
2e	Continue to increase the number of local Foster Carers	Principal Manager Cared For Children and Care Leavers
2f	Ensure our residential provision is of high quality and cost effective.	Principal Manager Cared For Children and Care Leavers
Outcome 3 – Keep me healthy		
3a	Improve access to mental health services for cared for C&YP and care leavers.	Principal Manager Cared For Children and Care Leavers
3b	Continue to develop and improve training for foster carers and health staff in relation to emotional support needs.	Group Manager - Fostering
3c	Consult with young people in order to develop an effective method of providing them with their own health information and transition as they leave care.	Cared For Nurse
3d	Ensure that all social workers are aware of both the SDQ process and the process for leisure pass application.	Principal Manager Cared For Children and Care Leavers
3e	Consider whether the current leisure pass could be expanded to include care	Principal Manager Cared For Children

	leavers and reciprocal arrangements with our “New Belongings” neighbours.	and Care Leavers
3f	Increase awareness amongst staff regarding the process for Continuing Healthcare Assessments to ensure that all eligible children are referred for further assessment.	All Group Managers
3g	The Healthy Care Partnership will consider the NICE/SCIE Public Health Guidance 31 (2013) initially focusing on audit of the eight quality standards.	Cared For Nurse
3h	Improve arrangements for health data collection and information sharing.	Cared For Nurse
Outcome 4 - Help Me to Achieve		
4a	Ensure that pre-school children are able to get into a good nursery and that extra help is available to help them with their development.	Head of the Virtual School
4b	Track the progress of children so that we can act quickly when progress is not being made.	Head of the Virtual School
4c	Make sure the Personal Education Plan contains very clear development targets and a way to monitor the impact of any intervention work done.	Head of the Virtual School
4d	Ensure that staff working in school know the best ways to support cared for children, including having a named key worker.	Head of the Virtual School
Outcome 5 - Support Me to Move to Adult Life		
5a	Work in partnership with Youth Support Services to track all EET destinations for our Care Leaver population.	Group Manager – Permanence & Through Care, Head of the Virtual School & Youth Support Area Delivery Manager South
5b	Work with the Virtual School Team to track all Yr 12 and 13 Care Leavers entering Further Education, utilising Specialist Company Welfare Call, to inform us of any absence issues.	
5c	Work with education providers to improve the offer to Care Leavers by working towards the Buttle Quality Award.	
5d	Identify and support potential candidates for Higher Education commencing September 2014.	Group Manager - Permanence &

5e	Target support to increase Care Leavers choosing to progress into Higher Education.	Through Care and Head of the Virtual School
5f	Target support to reduce NEET population.	
5g	Work closely with Catch 22 and the Independent Safeguarding Chair with lead for child sexual exploitation to monitor and address those most at risk of engaging in risky behaviour or vulnerable to exploitation.	Group Manager – Permanence & Through Care
5h	Develop priority housing for care leavers	Principal Manager Cared For Children and Care Leavers & Corporate Commissioning Manager
5i	Increase work experience for care leavers within the council	Group Manager – Permanence & Through Care and Workforce Development Manager
5j	Develop a range of accommodation and support options that support independence and tenancy readiness	Principal Manager Cared For Children and Care Leavers & Corporate Commissioning Manager
5j	Improve employment opportunities via apprenticeships and traineeships	Group Manager – Permanence & Through Care and Workforce Development Manager