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**Service Director – Legal, Governance and
Commissioning**

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Friday 29 June 2018

Notice of Meeting

Dear Member

Corporate Parenting Board

The **Corporate Parenting Board** will meet in the **Meeting Room 1 - Town Hall, Huddersfield** at **10.30 am** on **Monday 9 July 2018**.

The items which will be discussed are described in the agenda and there are reports attached which give more details.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Julie Muscroft".

Julie Muscroft

Service Director – Legal, Governance and Commissioning

Kirklees Council advocates openness and transparency as part of its democratic processes. Anyone wishing to record (film or audio) the public parts of the meeting should inform the Chair/Clerk of their intentions prior to the meeting.

The Corporate Parenting Board members are:-

Member

Councillor Viv Kendrick (Chair)

Councillor Erin Hill (Currently on Maternity Leave) Family Support & Child Protection

Councillor Karen Allison

Councillor Fazila Loonat

Councillor John Lawson

Councillor Donna Bellamy

Jo-Anne Sanders

Interim Service Director for Early Help and Learning

Martin Green

Deputy Assistant Director

Janet Tolley

Virtual School Headteacher

Tom Brailsford

Head of Joint Commissioning

Elaine McShane

Head of Children's Social Work - Leeds

Steve Comb

Interim Head of Corporate Parenting

Melanie Tiernan

Service Manager, Family Support and Child Protection

Ophelia Rix

Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance

Sanna Mahmood

Looked after Children and Leaving Care

Agenda

Reports or Explanatory Notes Attached

Pages

1: Introductions and Apologies

The Chair will welcome everyone to the meeting and announce any apologies received.

2: Minutes of previous meeting

1 - 10

To approve the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 30th April 2018.

3: Interests

11 - 12

The Board Members will be asked to say if there are any items on the Agenda in which they have disclosable pecuniary interests, which would prevent them from participating in any discussion of the items or participating in any vote upon the items, or any other interest.

4: Admission of the Public

Most debates take place in public. This only changes when there is a need to consider certain issues, for instance, commercially sensitive information or details concerning an individual. You will be told at this point whether there are any items on the Agenda which are to be discussed in private.

5: Deputations/Petitions

The Board will receive any petitions and hear any deputations from members of the public. A deputation is where up to five people can attend the meeting and make a presentation on some particular issue of concern. A member of the public can also hand in a petition at the meeting but that petition should relate to something on which the body has powers and responsibilities.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 10 (2), Members of the Public should provide at least 24 hours' notice of presenting a deputation.

6: Public Question Time

The Board will hear any questions from the general public.

7: One Adoption West Yorkshire Annual Report

13 - 66

The Board will consider an Annual Report from One Adoption West Yorkshire.

Contact: Mandy Prout (One Adoption West Yorkshire)

8: Performance Monitoring update

The Board will consider a verbal update giving key highlights on Performance Monitoring data for the Children's Service.

Contact: Steve Comb, Interim Head of Corporate Parenting
Janet Tolley, Virtual School Head Teacher

9: Ofsted and Improvement Board update

The Board will consider a verbal update on key issues from Ofsted and the Improvement Board.

Contact: Steve Comb, Interim Head of Corporate Parenting

10: Recruitment of foster carers and future membership of Fostering Panels

The Board will consider a report presented at the meeting on the recruitment of Foster Carers and the future membership of Fostering Panels.

Contact: Steve Comb, Interim Head of Corporate Parenting

- 11: Care Leavers - Local Offer Keep on Caring** 67 - 88
- The Board will consider a report outlining the development of the Kirklees Local Offer for Care Leavers and extending Personal Advisor support to care leavers to the age of 25. The Board will be asked to comment on the action plan in relation to these developments.
- Contact: Julie Bragg, Service Manager (Looked after children and leaving care)
-
- 12: Draft Children's Interim Sufficiency Strategy & Action Plan (2018-19)** 89 - 128
- The Board will consider a report on the draft Children's Interim Sufficiency Strategy and Action Plan for 2018-2019.
- Contact: Steve Comb, Interim Head of Corporate Parenting
Stephen Bonnell, Strategy and Policy Assistant
-
- 13: Training for Members of Corporate Parenting Board** 129 - 200
- The Board will consider an update on the proposed LGA Corporate Parenting and Total Respect training for Members of the Corporate Parenting Board.
- Contact: Steve Comb, Interim Head of Corporate Parenting
-
- 14: Updates from Board Members on interaction with Services**
- The Board will consider verbal updates from Board Members on interaction with Services.
- Contact: Helen Kilroy, Principal Governance and Democratic Engagement Officer
-
- 15: Corporate Parenting Board Agenda Plan** 201 - 206
- The Panel will consider the agenda plan for the Corporate Parenting Board for the 2018/19 municipal year.
- Contact: Helen Kilroy, Principal Governance & Democratic Engagement Officer
-

16: Dates of Future Meetings

To note future meeting dates of the Board during the 2018/19 municipal year:

- Monday 24th September 2018, 10 am
 - Monday 19th November 2018, 10 am
 - Monday 21st January 2019, 10 am
 - Monday 11th March 2019, 10 am
 - Monday 15th April 2019, 10am
-

Contact officer: Helen Kilroy – Tel. 01484 221000

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

Monday 30th April 2018

Present: Councillor Viv Kendrick (Chair)
Councillors Loonat, Marchington
Ophelia Rix, Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance
Melanie Tiernan, Service Manager
Steve Comb, Interim Head of Corporate Parenting
Tom Brailsford, Head of Joint Commissioning

In attendance: Helen Kilroy, Principal Governance & Democratic Engagement Officer
Joanna Pritchard (Observer)
Kevin Larkin, Radio Leeds
Laura Counce, Residential Service Manager

Apologies: Cllrs Hill, Allison and Watson
E Mc Shane, J Sanders, J Tolley and J Walsh

1 Introductions and Apologies

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Hill, Allison and Watson, Elaine McShane, Jo-Anne Sanders, Janet Tolley and John Walsh.

2 Minutes of previous meeting

The Board considered the minutes of the meeting held on 12th March 2018.

RESOLVED –

1. That the minutes of the meeting held on 12th March 2018 be approved as a correct record.

3 Interests

No interests were declared.

4 Admission of the public

All items were considered in public session.

5 Deputations/Petitions

No deputations or petitions were received.

6 Presentation by Children in Care Council (CICC) and Care Leavers Forum (CL Forum)

The Board considered a verbal presentation from Sanna Mahmood, Care Leavers Advocate, on behalf of the Children in Care Council (CICC) and the Care Leavers Forum (CL Forum).

Sanna Mahmood highlighted the following key issues:-

- One of the purposes of the CICC and CL Forum was to enable young people in care to build friendship groups with other young people with whom they have common interests;
- The CICC and CL Forum had created a logo and were working on a pledge;
- Members of the groups were made up of school age children between 7 to 13 years old and care leavers and dates of meetings had been arranged;
- an area of focus for the groups was accessing suitable housing, financial budgeting and housekeeping and helping to prepare the young people for living in and managing their own homes.

Sanna Mahmood advised the Board that one of the main issues for the young people was being able to access the right type of housing in Kirklees. The Board noted that there were some barriers to young people getting access to some types of housing. The Board agreed that it would be helpful if the Council could try and help young people to access suitable housing and build relationships with KNH and Housing Associations. Cllr Marchington advised that he was on the KNH Board and suggested that he could raise this issue at a future meeting. The Board also recognised that providers of affordable electrical goods and services was important.

The Board noted that some Members had visited the No 11 drop-in facility for young people in care and had noted the facilities available, such as cooking a meal, accessing computers and a chance to meet other young people.

Sanna Mahmood informed the Board that a report on the outcomes and progress of the CICC and CL Forum meetings would be drafted and shared in due course with the Corporate Parenting Board – date to be determined.

Resolved –

1. That the verbal presentation on the Children in Care Council and the Care Leavers Forum be noted and that Sanna Mahmood, Care Leavers Advocate, be thanked for attending the meeting.
2. That the Board agreed to update their Membership to include representatives from the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum.
3. That the Board consider a progress report from the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum at a future meeting – date to be determined.

7. Review of Membership and Terms of Reference of the Corporate Parenting Board

The Board considered a review of the Terms of Reference and the Membership of the Board prior to Council Annual General Meeting on the 23rd May.

The Board agreed that the Chairs of the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum, the Designated Nurse for Looked after Children and a representative from the Kirklees Fostering Network should be included on the Membership of the Board and be invited to attend future meetings.

The Board agreed it was important not to duplicate the work of the Children's Partnership Board, but that the Corporate Parenting Board should challenge performance, achievement and progress within the Children's Service.

Councillor Kendrick advised the Board that she had recently met with the Kirklees Fostering Network Chair and Deputy and suggested that could be invited to a future meeting of the Board.

The Board noted that a report on progress of the Board would be submitted to a future meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board and Council in the 2018/19 municipal year – date to be determined.

The Board agreed that reference should be made within the Terms of Reference to the statutory responsibility for the health of looked after children.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Terms of Reference be amended to make reference to the statutory responsibility for the health of Looked after Children.
2. That the Board's Membership be updated as agreed.
3. That the revised Terms of Reference be agreed.
4. That a report be considered by Council AGM on the 23rd May to request approval to re-establish the Corporate Parenting Board and note the revised Terms of Reference.
5. That a progress report on the work of the Board be submitted to a future meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board and Council in the 2018/19 municipal year – date to be determined.

8 Ofsted Update

The Board considered a verbal update on Ofsted by Steve Comb, Interim Head of Corporate Parenting.

Steve Comb advised the Board that a 2 day monitoring visit by Ofsted had taken place on the 13th and 14th March 2018 and that Ofsted had focussed on the experiences of looked after children who were placed with their parents.

The Board noted a letter from Ofsted which was attached to the agenda and Steve Comb highlighted the key findings and comments, as follows:-

- Strong support and high level challenge being modelled by senior managers was starting to have a positive impact on staff morale;

- A comprehensive professional development framework was better supporting staff to access learning and training opportunities;
- Reports being developed were more robust and were being used more confidently by frontline managers to support their oversight of practice;
- No children had been found in situations of unassessed risk in the cases seen;
- Children were being seen regularly whilst placed at home, and where appropriate their views were acted upon;
- The quality assurance framework was being embedded;
- The Corporate Parenting Board was not providing sufficiently robust oversight or challenge about the quality of practice and the pace of change needed in this area had been slow;
- Inspectors spoke to staff who said they felt they were receiving better support from their managers and that they felt more confident to ask for advice and guidance;
- Supervision of staff was now more regular and managers were more accessible.

Cllr Kendrick advised the Board that she had been interviewed by Ofsted, as Cabinet Member with responsibility for Children and Chair of the Board. Cllr Kendrick further explained that not having a young person's voice on the Board made it less effective. The Board noted that the Corporate Parenting Strategy was being updated and agreed that the evidence that staff were starting to feel safer and more supported in the Children's Service was very positive.

The Board agreed that even though there was still a lot of work to do, the report from Ofsted was more positive in terms of progress made.

Steve Comb advised the Board that Liquid Logic would be implemented later in 2018 and that training was ongoing and migration testing was being undertaken. The Board was informed that workshops were being held on the implementation of Liquid Logic.

Ophelia Rix advised the Board that as part of the Children's Framework, there was a more streamlined process for scrutinising case files and that conversations with social workers, managers and voice of the child was informing good practice.

Steve Comb advised the Board that the Children's Scrutiny Panel had visited one of the Children's Homes and had fed back their comments which had been followed up. Cllr Kendrick advised that she had visited a Children's Home in Kirklees and met with staff.

Councillor Kendrick advised the Board that she had visited the Fostering, Children in Care Teams and Social Worker Service to meet staff and was starting to make the relevant links to the work of the Corporate Parenting Board.

Steve Comb advised the Board that the following figures were sent to Cllr Kendrick on a weekly basis:-

- Number of children in care
- Number of children in need
- Number of children with a child protection plan

The Board agreed to discuss its work programme for the 2018/19 municipal year at the first meeting on the 9th July 2018 and agree what information should be considered and how that information should be presented to the Board.

Councillor Kendrick advised that there were currently 2 places for Kirklees Councillors on the Kirklees Fostering Panels, but that the Panels were struggling to be quorate due to the time commitment required from Councillors. The Board was informed that Kirklees was currently considering whether to have a pool of Councillors to sit on the Fostering Panels, which would allow other elected members to get an in-depth knowledge of some of the issues involved in the corporate parenting role.

RESOLVED –

1. That the verbal update on Ofsted, following the monitoring visit on the 13 and 14 March, be noted.

9 CSE and Missing Provision

The Board considered a report on CSE and Missing Provision presented by Ophelia Rix, Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance.

The Board noted that the overall vision of the service was to reduce the risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) and episodes of children missing from home and care.

Ophelia Rix highlighted the following key issues:-

- In the month of February 2018, 125 children were referred to social care due to missing episodes, all of which would have been offered a missing return interview;
- The Team were proposing to strengthen links with Licensing and the Police and were looking at the safeguarding practices of the night time economy and visiting businesses;
- The data from return interviews would be scrutinised to look at the areas where children go missing to;
- The team were working with schools regarding children who go missing during the school day.

The Board agreed that future reports on CSE and Missing should include the numbers of missing episodes, numbers of interviews held and outcomes.

Ophelia Rix advised the Board that staff in the team were working with the Police and sharing information on missing children on a daily basis. The Board was informed that real efforts were being made to have consistent independent persons undertaking the return interviews to build relationships

with children who go missing and there had therefore been an increase in the take up of interviews and better outcomes for children. Ophelia Rix further explained that the number of missing episodes in Children's Homes had seen a significant reduction and that the Police had better relationships with Children's Homes and were visiting them regularly.

The Board noted that a Partnership day would be held in July and suggested that Members of the Board could be invited to have some input.

The Board agreed to receive regular updates on the progress of the CSE and Missing provision – dates to be determined.

The Board agreed that the work with the night time economy and engaging with businesses was a priority.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report on CSE and Missing Provision and proposal of the development of a Risk and Vulnerability Team be noted.
2. That future progress reports on CSE and Missing Provision be considered by the Board, that included numbers of missing episodes, numbers of interviews held and outcomes.

10 Statement of Purpose for Registered Children's Homes (Annual Report)

The Board considered an Annual Report on the Statement of Purpose for three mainstream residential Children's Homes in Kirklees presented by Laura Counce, Residential Service Manager.

Laura Counce advised the Board that there were three mainstream residential homes in Kirklees that were inspected by Ofsted once a year. The Board noted that all three homes cared for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties between the ages of 13 and 16 years old on admission. Laura Counce further explained that the Statement of Purpose set out important factors in the care of a young person, as outlined in the report.

Laura Counce advised the Board of a model called "Pillars of Parenting" used in all three homes, which was an emotional warmth model of caring for young people which drew from the knowledge base of applied psychology, theory and research and was designed to empower the main carers of young people in care. The Board was informed that the main focus of the model was to focus on matching the children to the right home, whilst taking account of the impact on the child and other children in the home.

Steve Comb advised the Board that Copthorne Children's Home had its Ofsted registration suspended in November 2017 and that this was due to safeguarding and fire safety concerns. The Board was informed that Kirklees had been working with Ofsted to meet the requirements of the compliance notices for Copthorne Children's Home and that it would re-open in May 2018 as a 4 bedded home. Steve Comb explained that the Statement of Purpose for the Copthorne Children's Home was being reviewed.

The Board was informed that six bedded Children's Homes were complex to manage and that the Council would be looking at the make-up and offer of its in-house provision to ensure it met with the Service's sufficiency needs for the future.

The Board suggested that it would be useful to see examples of best practice for standards of children's homes. Laura Counce advised that monthly meetings took place with semi-independent private residential home providers and suggested that representatives of the Board could be invited to attend these meetings.

Laura Counce advised that the Statement of Purpose for Healds Road and Woodlands Children's Homes were being reviewed and would be submitted to Ofsted shortly.

The Board noted that a Sufficiency Strategy for looked after children resources was currently in the approval pathway and had recently been presented to the Chief Executive and Executive Team.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Annual Report on the Statement of Purpose for Children's Homes in Kirklees be noted.

11 Statement of Purpose for the Fostering Service (Annual report)

The Board considered an Annual Report on the Statement of Purpose for the Fostering Service presented by Steve Comb, Interim Head of Corporate Parenting.

The Board noted that the three main aims of the Fostering Service was to:-

- Provide continuously improving quality placements with foster carers for all children and young people where it was assessed as being in their best interests to be cared for in a family setting;
- To recruit foster carers who could meet the assessed needs of children;
- To assist looked after children and care leaving young people within Kirklees to improve and drive up their life chances and outcomes.

Steve Comb advised that the Statement of Purpose for the Fostering Service would be submitted to Ofsted. The Board was informed that the biggest challenge for Kirklees was the recruitment of foster carers and that Kirklees would be holding a Fostering Fortnight event in May 2017 to try and recruit more foster carers.

The Board agreed to receive further details regarding the Fostering Fortnight and any other events relevant to the role of Corporate Parenting.

Steve Comb further explained that Fostering Network meetings had been arranged for the rest of 2018. The Board was informed that a new Acting Service Manager, Andy Quinlan, had recently been appointed in the Fostering Service.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Annual Report on the Statement of Purpose for the Fostering Service be noted.
2. That the Board receive information regarding the Foster Fortnight event taking place in May 2018 and other future events relevant to the role of Corporate Parenting.

12 Corporate Parenting Strategy for Kirklees 2018-2020 – Corporate Parenting Function and the seven principles of Corporate Parenting

The Board considered a report on the Corporate Parenting Strategy for Kirklees 2018-2020 and a report outlining the Corporate Parenting Function and the seven principles of Corporate Parenting presented by Steve Comb, Interim Head of Corporate Parenting.

The Board agreed that any elected members who were involved in the Corporate Parenting Board or other Children's Panels should receive more detailed training that was tailored to be fit for purpose for the role of Corporate Parenting.

Steve Comb advised the Board that following the elections, training would be arranged for Members of the Board and other elected members as appropriate on the Corporate Parenting Principles.

The Board agreed that a working group be established to revise the Corporate Parenting Strategy, which would include the Chair and other elected Members of the Board.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report on the Corporate Parenting Strategy for Kirklees 2018-20 Corporate Parenting Function and the seven principles of Corporate Parenting be noted.
2. That a working group be established to revise the Corporate Parenting Strategy, which would include the Chair and other elected Members of the Board.
3. That Members of the Board have access to and be invited to training as required on the role of Corporate Parenting.

13 Corporate Parenting Board Agenda Plan for 2017/18 and looking forward to 2018/19

The Board considered the progress of the Board during the 2017/18 municipal year and identified issues to put forward for consideration during 2018/19.

The Board agreed that the Chair and key Officers should work with the Governance Officer to agree dates for submission of key reports to the Corporate Parenting Board during the 2018/19 municipal year and finalise the Board's agenda plan for consideration by the Board in July 2018.

RESOLVED -

1. That the progress of the Board during the 2017/18 municipal year be noted.

2. That the Work Programme and Agenda Plan of the Corporate Parenting Board for 2018/19 be reviewed at the first meeting of the Board in July 2018.
3. That the Board's supporting officer be authorised to liaise with attendees to address the agreed actions.

11 Dates of Future Meetings

That the Board noted the future meeting dates of the Board during the 2018/19 municipal year:

- Monday 9th July 2018, 10 am
- Monday 24th September 2018, 10 am
- Monday 19th November 2018, 10 am
- Monday 21st January 2019, 10 am
- Monday 11th March 2019, 10 am
- Monday 15th April 2019, 10 am

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KIRKLEES COUNCIL

COUNCIL/CABINET/COMMITTEE MEETINGS ETC

DECLARATION

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

Name of Councillor

Item in which you have an interest	Type of interest (eg a disclosable pecuniary interest or an "Other Interest")	Does the nature of the interest require you to withdraw from the meeting while the item in which you have an interest is under consideration? [Y/N]	Brief description of your interest

Signed:

Dated:

NOTES

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

If you have any of the following pecuniary interests, they are your disclosable pecuniary interests under the new national rules. Any reference to spouse or civil partner includes any person with whom you are living as husband or wife, or as if they were your civil partner.

Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain, which you, or your spouse or civil partner, undertakes.

Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from your council or authority) made or provided within the relevant period in respect of any expenses incurred by you in carrying out duties as a member, or towards your election expenses.

Any contract which is made between you, or your spouse or your civil partner (or a body in which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, has a beneficial interest) and your council or authority -

- under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and
- which has not been fully discharged.

Any beneficial interest in land which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, have and which is within the area of your council or authority.

Any licence (alone or jointly with others) which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, holds to occupy land in the area of your council or authority for a month or longer.

Any tenancy where (to your knowledge) - the landlord is your council or authority; and the tenant is a body in which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, has a beneficial interest.

Any beneficial interest which you, or your spouse or your civil partner has in securities of a body where -

(a) that body (to your knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of your council or authority; and

(b) either -

the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or

if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.

Name of meeting: Corporate Parenting Board

Date: 9th July 2018

Title of report: One Adoption West Yorkshire Annual Report

Report by: Sarah Johal, One Adoption West Yorkshire

Purpose of report

Elected Members in Kirklees recognise the importance of adoption and want to be updated about the management and outcomes of the adoption service. The report provides an overview of adoption service activity from April 2017 to March 2018. The report is attached at Appendix A.

1. Summary

Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees and Wakefield adoption functions as specified in the partnership agreement were delegated on the 1st April 2017 to Leeds City Council and One Adoption West Yorkshire (OAWY) formally opened. OAWY was the first Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) to open in the country as part of the Governments national reform agenda.

2. Implications for the Council

This report provides a summary on the developments of the service since it's opening on the 1st April 2017 to March 2018 and is the first annual report of the RAA.

2.1 Early Intervention and Prevention (EIP)

Partnership working with Kirklees elected members, senior leaders, social work staff from all levels of the organisation and related professionals is given a high priority within the delivery of the adoption service. This links into early planning and intervention with regards to children's permanence arrangements and early tracking of children's cases. Working in this joined up manner will prevent drift for children and enable Kirklees to see improved timeliness with regard to Childrens' adoption plans.

The coming year will see further improvements made in our partnership working as we launch the plans for One Adoption to attend more key meetings with Kirklees colleagues such as the senior leadership team, managers meetings , IRO meetings and meetings with our fostering colleagues. In addition we are implementing a new joint process of data checking to ensure the data is clean and will soon start our joint tracking meeting for children pre adoption decision.

We were very pleased to show case our work with Kirklees to the Adoption Leadership Board (DFE) in a recent day long visit to One Adoption West Yorkshire. A Kirklees case/case study was jointly presented to DFE staff by one of Kirklees social workers and an OAWY family finder, this was a very good piece of work which clearly evidenced the benefits of early intervention and planning, it received positive feedback on the day.

Please see the report attached for full details.

2.2 Economic Resilience (ER)

One Adoption West Yorkshire is resourced through a joint pooled budget and underpinned by a partnership agreement. This is discussed more fully in the main body of the annual report at appendix A.

2.3 Improving Outcomes for Children

Performance data is contained within the report and shows how the work of OAWY impacts on outcomes for children.

The data below shows the year's data specifically relating to Kirklees children, for 2017/18.

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
Number of ADM Decisions	12	13	5	21
Number of Placement Orders Granted	10	10	5	4
Number of children matched	4	9	7	7
Number of children placed	6	10	6	7
Number of children adopted	2	8	4	5
Number of disruptions	2	0	0	0

The totals for the year show that there has been 33 ADM decisions, 29 placement orders granted, 27 children have been matched with adopters, 29 children placed for adoption, 19 adoption orders granted and 2 disruptions for Kirklees children.

The reported number of Kirklees children adopted appears to be particularly low and on further exploration it appears that this is probable not accurate, during the changeover to One Adoption West Yorkshire an issue has occurred with regard to the collection of adoption order dates in Kirklees Childrens' case record system. Work is being undertaken to rectify this error.

The OAWY annual report shows how Kirklees compares to other RAA local Authorities and evidences how this compares to previous years data. Kirklees has seen an increase in the ADM decisions in the last quarter, although early indications is that this is levelling off and we may see a decrease in the first quarter of next year. Further analysis and consideration will need to be given to the low number of placement orders granted, this is an issue for all One Adoption West Yorkshire's LA'S, and may be a short term consequence of new reporting systems.

With regard to placement provision Kirklees figures appears to have remained stable against last year and have fared well against the other LA's of the RAA. In addition the timeliness data shows that Kirklees children have waited less time from coming into care to being placed with a family and less time from receiving the court authority to place and the LA deciding on a match to an adoptive family. While this has also been the case for other LA'S of the RAA, Kirklees have seen a greater improvement in this regard.

2.4 Reducing demand of services

A successful adoption service working hand in hand with fostering services and children's social work teams should help to reduce the numbers of children in care. OAWY monitors the numbers of children leaving care via adoption and tracks the timeliness of children's planning and placement. Full information regarding this is contained within the body of the annual report under Adoption scoreboard data (paragraph 3.3.18).

3. Next steps

The half yearly report will be available for the Corporate Parenting Board on the 21st January 2018.

4. Contact officer

Steve Comb (Head of Corporate Parenting)

steve.comb@kirklees.gov.uk

01484 221000

Sarah Johal, Head of Service and Mandy Prout Servicer Delivery Manager, One Adoption West Yorkshire.

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Report of the Director of Children & Families

Report to Executive Board

Date: 27th June 2018

Subject: One Adoption West Yorkshire Annual Report



Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

1. Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees and Wakefield adoption functions as specified in the partnership agreement were delegated on the 1st April 2017 to Leeds City Council and One Adoption West Yorkshire (OAWY) formally opened. OAWY was the first Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) to open in the country.
2. This report provides a summary on the developments of the service since the opening on the 1st April 2017 to March 2018 and is the first annual report of the RAA.

Recommendations

1. That the Executive Board receive this annual report and continues to support the work of One adoption West Yorkshire to ensure our adopted children receive the best possible outcomes and support.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report sets out the developments within One Adoption West Yorkshire since April 2017.

2 Background information

- 2.1 Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees and Wakefield adoption functions as specified in the partnership agreement were delegated on the 1st April 2017 to Leeds City Council. One Adoption West Yorkshire formally opened on this date.
- 2.2 The government continues to drive forward with the structural reform programme regarding regionalising adoption and 141 authorities are either in a live RAA or working towards one. The government have noted the significant progress in cutting the time children waiting to be placed with their adoptive parents and this is a positive outcome for children. However, both the number of registrations of interest and approved adopters nationally, regionally and locally within the West Yorkshire area have fallen in recent years. This occurred at the same time as West Yorkshire planned a move to a regionalised arrangement and therefore has to be taken into account when looking at mismatch between the children requiring adoption and adopter sufficiency in the region since becoming a regional adoption agency.

3 Main issues

3.1 Use of Resources

Staffing

- 3.1.1 The senior leadership team and team managers came into position at the opening of the new agency and all the staff were Tupeed across to Leeds City Council from the 4 other local authorities. The majority of staff moved onto the Leeds City Council terms and conditions on the 1st December 2017.
- 3.1.2 Work has been undertaken with the senior leadership team, the management team and with all staff to establish the vision and values of One Adoption West Yorkshire “to be a flagship Adoption Agency that develops & promotes best practice, improving adoption standards nationally.” Ongoing development work continues with all staff regarding the importance of relationships as we build the One Adoption West Yorkshire identity with the teams, working in a culture of high support and high challenge.
- 3.1.3 During the first year of operation the agency started off with a high number of vacancies particularly across business support and some other key roles however the staffing structure is now fully in place. A number of staff have retired over the year and there is a high level of maternity leave and some long term sickness, with additional social work staff recruited in some key areas of the service to ensure that the needs of the service can be met.

- 3.1.4 Working across a wide geographical area has presented challenges for staff with office bases remaining in each local authority area. There has been a need for staff to come together for meetings to develop practice and to ensure that there is good communication between local authorities and the different parts of the service to provide a joined up approach. The amount of time taken travelling and the costs of mileage remain an issue and the service is exploring the alternative options regarding accommodation and structure of the organisation to enable a more efficient and effective use of resources as the service develops.
- 3.1.5 The use of Information Technology to support the staff and the service has been problematic in the first year due to a number of complex and technical reasons. However, these have improved with all staff now having use of a Leeds laptop and mobile phone. The difficulties for staff working across offices regarding connectivity has also improved although access to the other local authority systems remains an issue with work ongoing to progress access to these via a portal from the Leeds laptops. Staff are now able to print in their office locations.
- 3.1.6 The migration of casework data onto Mosaic and the Leeds networks is almost complete and this has been a time consuming and manual task. The target to move all records has largely been achieved with a small number of cases requiring documents uploading on to the system before closing down the local authority file. Once the work is migrated the requirement for access to the local authority systems will be read only and this will ease the burden for staff needing to use more than one system.
- 3.1.7 Mosaic has been developed to support the case recording of all of the work the agency undertake. The family finding workflow is in the early stages of implementation and work is being developed to support the letterbox work and improve reporting and management information over the next 9 months.

Duty System

- 3.1.8 A central duty system was implemented in July. This has been very effective and this service operates from 10am- 4pm each day (3.30pm on Friday). The majority of calls on duty relate to adoption support, enquiries from professionals about staff across the region and recruitment enquiries. There are qualified social workers, adoption advisors and business support staff operating duty with a team manager and service manager on a rota basis to ensure the service is effective.

Business Support

- 3.1.9 The business support functions of One Adoption West Yorkshire have now been agreed and progress has been made in setting up systems to support the work of the agency with key processes around the panel work, children's planning and children's tracking and administering the adoption support fund developing well. Business support is a key integrated part of the agency and aims to ensure an effective and efficient service can be provided.

Adoption Panel

- 3.1.10 Prior to OAWY there were 11 monthly panels held across the West Yorkshire and this has reduced to 7 per month. Despite initial difficulties in merging the panels the panel members have come together and worked well with an increasing number of members made up of adopted adults, adopters and birth parents. There are 9 medical advisers that sit as panel members with 2 independent chairs to provide consistency across the seven panels. The panel work is now electronic throughout the region creating efficiencies and data security in this area of work.
- 3.1.11 Six monthly meetings continue to be held between the agency and panel chairs with the aim of ensuring good communication regarding the development of the service. Panel chairs are encouraged to raise any issues as they arise and panel chairs also have the opportunity of an annual appraisal with the agency decision maker. Future details regarding the use of resources is addressed in section 4.4.

3.2 Partnership working

- 3.2.1 The links with the local authority are key in the development and delivery of services. The management board, made up of assistant directors of each local authority meet quarterly to oversee the work of the agency and the Joint Committee of elected members also meet regularly to receive reports and scrutinise the work of the agency.
- 3.2.2 An operational leads group was also set up in the first quarter of the year between the responsible officers in each Local Authority for adoption and the senior leadership team within OAWY. This is particularly to discuss the interface between the local authority and one adoption regarding children's planning and family finding and adoption support and provide peer support and challenge in developing good practice across the region.
- 3.2.3 There are close partnerships between team managers within OAWY and the local authority providing advice and support regarding adoption practice and care planning with workshops, briefings and surgeries for social workers in the region.
- 3.2.4 Discussions with health commissioners and providers in each local authority are ongoing regarding improving the quality of the written information provided by medical advisors. The development of quality standards are underway with the aim to achieve consistency of practice across the region. Work with CAMHS commissioners and providers in each area and the Adoption Support Fund continues to be developed to ensure that children in adoptive families are able to access effective support.
- 3.2.5 The Voluntary Adoption Agencies and Adoption Support Agencies in the region have come together as a body working collectively in the region to develop and deliver services as an alliance. OAWY work closely with the Voluntary Agency Alliance (VAA) in order to identify placements for children and we also have links with Adoption Match (previously the Adoption Register)

and Link Maker to achieve a more effective regional view of all the children and families across the region. The Voluntary Adoption Alliance have been successful with receiving a practice improvement bid from the Department of Education (DfE) to develop early permanence placements across the Yorkshire & Humber region and to look at a fostering to permanence concurrency service within the West Yorkshire area. This will help us improve our ability to place children earlier for permanence.

- 3.2.6 Regular meetings with virtual heads across the region have continued and we are working in partnership to develop and support the new duties of the virtual school and designated teachers for children who cease to be looked after across the region in September.
- 3.2.7 The Yorkshire Adoption Agency provides expert inter-country services to all adopters on behalf of the Local Authority consortium agencies. This value for money contract saves OAWY time and money as inter-country work is very specialist, complex and time consuming.
- 3.2.8 We are working in partnership with colleagues across the wider Yorkshire and Humber region regarding the re-commissioning of independent adoption support services for birth parents, adoptive families and adopted adults, and young people with a view to a new contract being in place for October 2018.

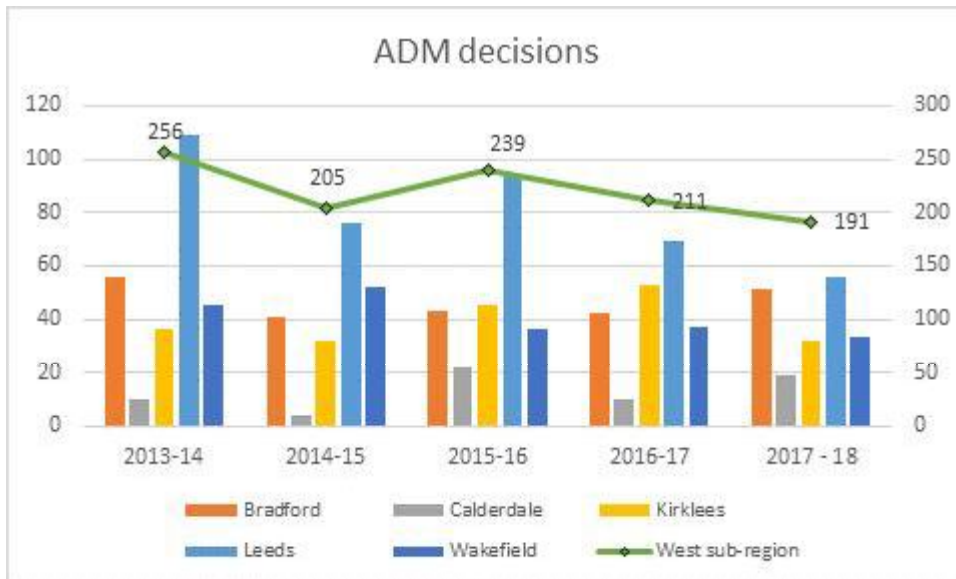
3.3 Performance Management

- 3.3.1 During the first quarter of the year the agency developed a practice improvement framework and provides quarterly reports to the management board. This data has developed over the year and range of data is gathered to ensure that performance is captured to ensure that we are aware of how much work is undertaken, how well was it undertaken and is anyone better off?

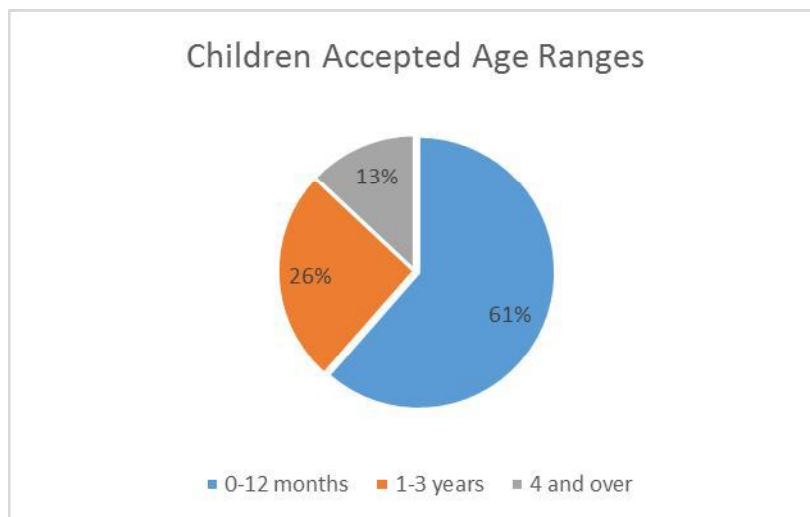
a) Sufficiency: Are enough of the right kind of adopters being recruited and approved to meet the needs of the children waiting:

The children with a plan for adoption during 2017/18

- 3.3.2 Between April 2017 and March 2018, 191 children had a plan for adoption ratified by the 5 West Yorkshire local authorities Agency Decision Makers. Of the 191 children with a plan for adoption, there were 79 female and 112 male children.
- 3.3.3 In total, this is a 9% decrease on the last year's full year figure of 211 children from across the 5 West Yorkshire local authorities. This picture is also reflected as a national level.



Age profile



Ethnicity

3.3.4 Of the 191 children with a plan for adoption this year, 124 (65%) children were from white British backgrounds and 67 children (35%) were from Black and Minority Ethnic groups, including children from eastern European, Gypsy Roma, Black African and Black Caribbean backgrounds.

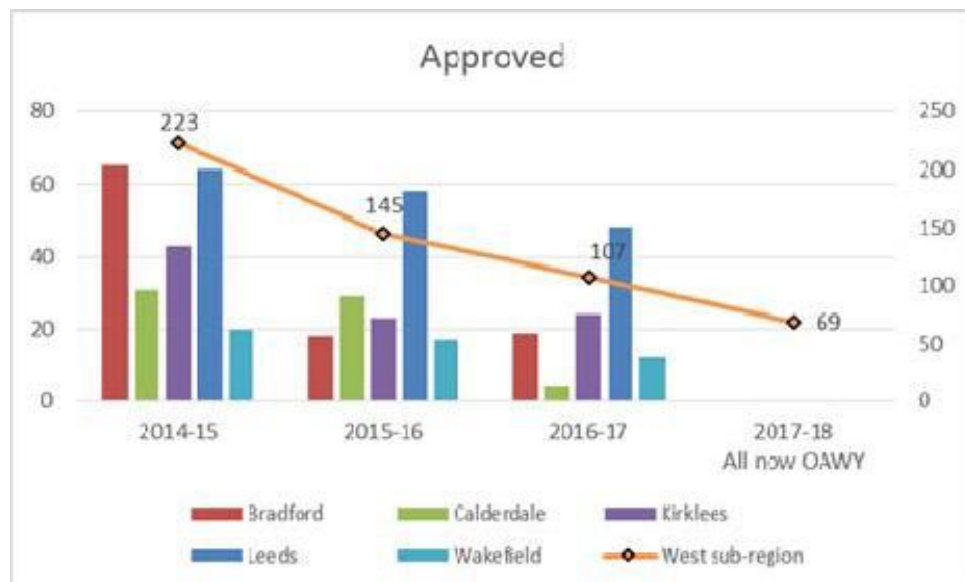
Placement with Siblings

3.3.5 As a general principle, siblings will be placed together; however, due to the individual needs of children, this is not always appropriate and cannot always be achieved. It is essential that sibling assessments are carried out to ensure good quality decision making and support plans are evidence based if children are placed together or apart. The numbers of children requiring adoption in sibling groups during the year is 93 children (this includes those with a match and/ or placement). Of the 29 children placed from this cohort during the year

none of these were placed apart. A breakdown of the size of the sibling groups is not available as some LAs do not provide a unique reference number for this. This will be captured on Mosaic for 2018/19.

Adopter recruitment

3.3.6 69 adoptive households were approved during the year and you will note from the table below that the numbers of adopters has declined locally, regionally and nationally over the last four years and since 2014/15 there has been a 70% decrease in adopter approvals. This is a complex picture and is partly due to agencies responding to a reduction in the children with a plan for adoption during that period with agencies undertaking more targeted recruitment for specific children and sibling groups. It is likely that the last year this has also been exacerbated by staff vacancies leading up to regionalisation.



3.3.7 Although adopters are approved as suitable to adopt OAWY has the ability to capture the preferences of adopters in terms of age range, gender and number of children to be considered. However, this is not available for the full year of operation and will be provided as a summary for next year’s report.

3.3.8 Within the 69 households, 131 individuals were approved throughout 2017/18. Of these 11 (8%) are from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) backgrounds. We need to improve our percentage of BME carers and keep a focus on ensuring that we approve a full range of adoptive families to meet the range of children requiring placement, while at the same time not relying on matching children with regard to ethnic identity as an overriding factor.

Children with an adoption plan, currently waiting

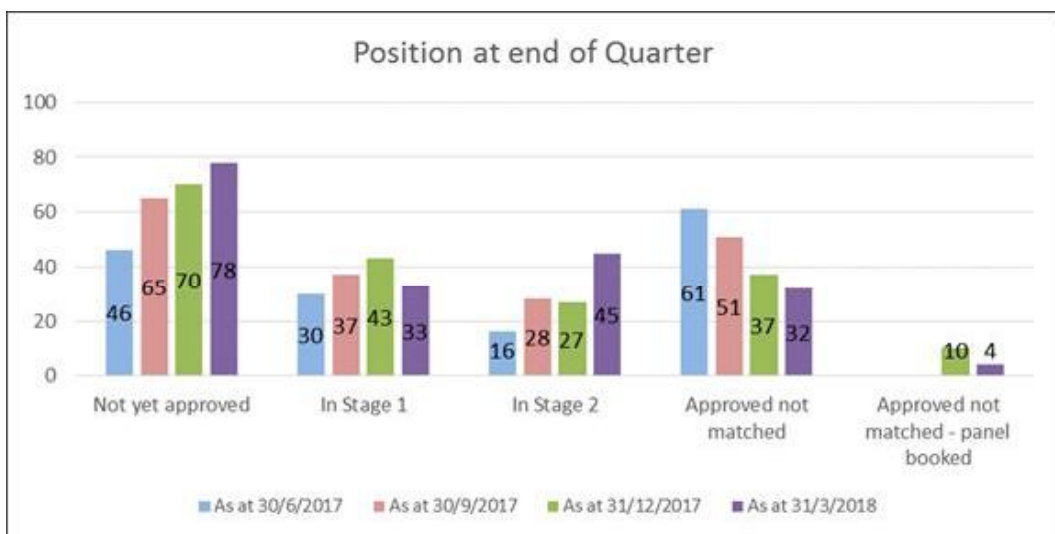
3.3.9 As of end of March 2018 there are 143 children with a plan for adoption from the 5 west Yorkshire local authorities not currently placed and requiring adopters.

3.3.10 38 children out of the 143 are 0-1yrs, 70 are between 1 and 4yrs and 35 children are over 4 years of age. 15 children have potential “matches” identified and 27 of these have a date booked at adoption panel for the “match” to be formally considered.

3.3.11 From the children waiting for a placement there are 66 girls and 77 boys, and 43 per cent are children from BME backgrounds. There are 22 sibling groups of 2 and 2 sibling groups of 3. The plans for these children are actively reviewed with clear monitoring and tracking systems to understand the range of family finding activity going on for these children and whether adoption remains the right plan for each child. The delays for these children are related primarily to the needs of the children; the need to place siblings together, the age of the children or their particular special needs or complexity.

Adopters available

3.3.12 As of the end of March 2018, there are 32 approved adoptive households. 22 are available to consider placements, 4 have a panel date booked for a match and 6 are considering potential matches. There is a mismatch between the 100 children without a potential link and the number of prospective adopters available. The children’s minister highlighted this issue with local authorities and the plan with OAWY is to recruit 120 households in the coming year to meet the needs of many of the children requiring adoption.

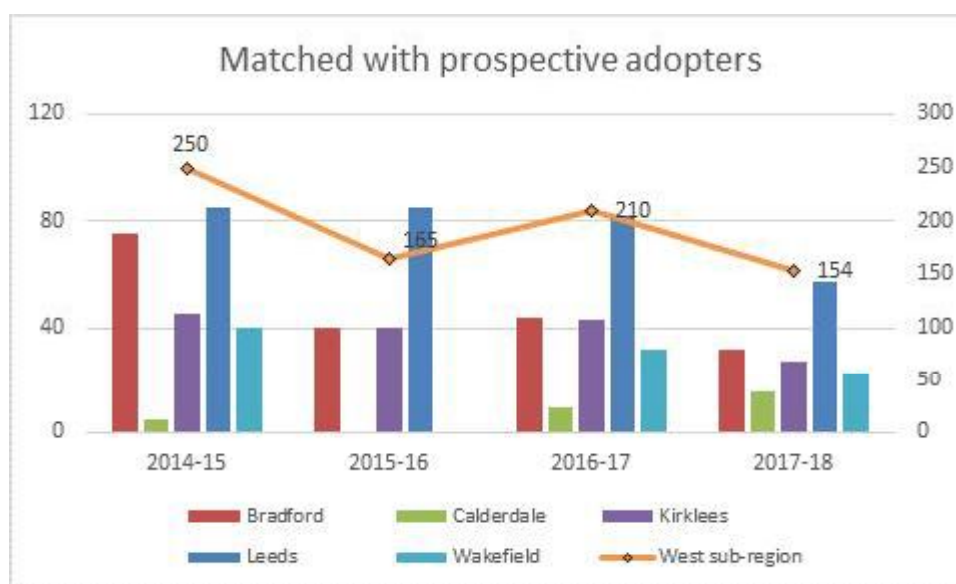


3.3.13 On the 31st March 2018 78 adopters are in the process of assessment although these will take a number of months to become approved. However, the signs are encouraging as the numbers are increasing each quarter as the brand becomes more familiar. Alongside the families we recruit within the region we also access approved adopters from other agencies and the search for prospective adopters regularly extends across the country using the National Adoption Register and at National Exchange days across the country. Family finding work is time consuming and social workers spend time travelling across the country to locate potential families once links have been made and to offer support post-placement. It is therefore important to continue to ensure that there are no delays in progressing the assessments of adopters who have applied to adopt with OAWY within the region and this will remain under close scrutiny.

b) **Timeliness:** Are children being matched and placed without delay including those children who wait longer?

Children matched in the year for adoption

3.3.14 Between April 2017 and March 2018, 154 children from the 5 West Yorkshire local authorities were matched with families at adoption panels; this is a 27% decrease on the number of children matched between April 2016 and March 2017 from across the 5 West Yorkshire local authorities.



3.3.15 From April 2017 to March 2018, 25% of the children matched were from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities. This is higher than the national average and can be seen as a positive for children from BME communities who often take longer to place for adoption.

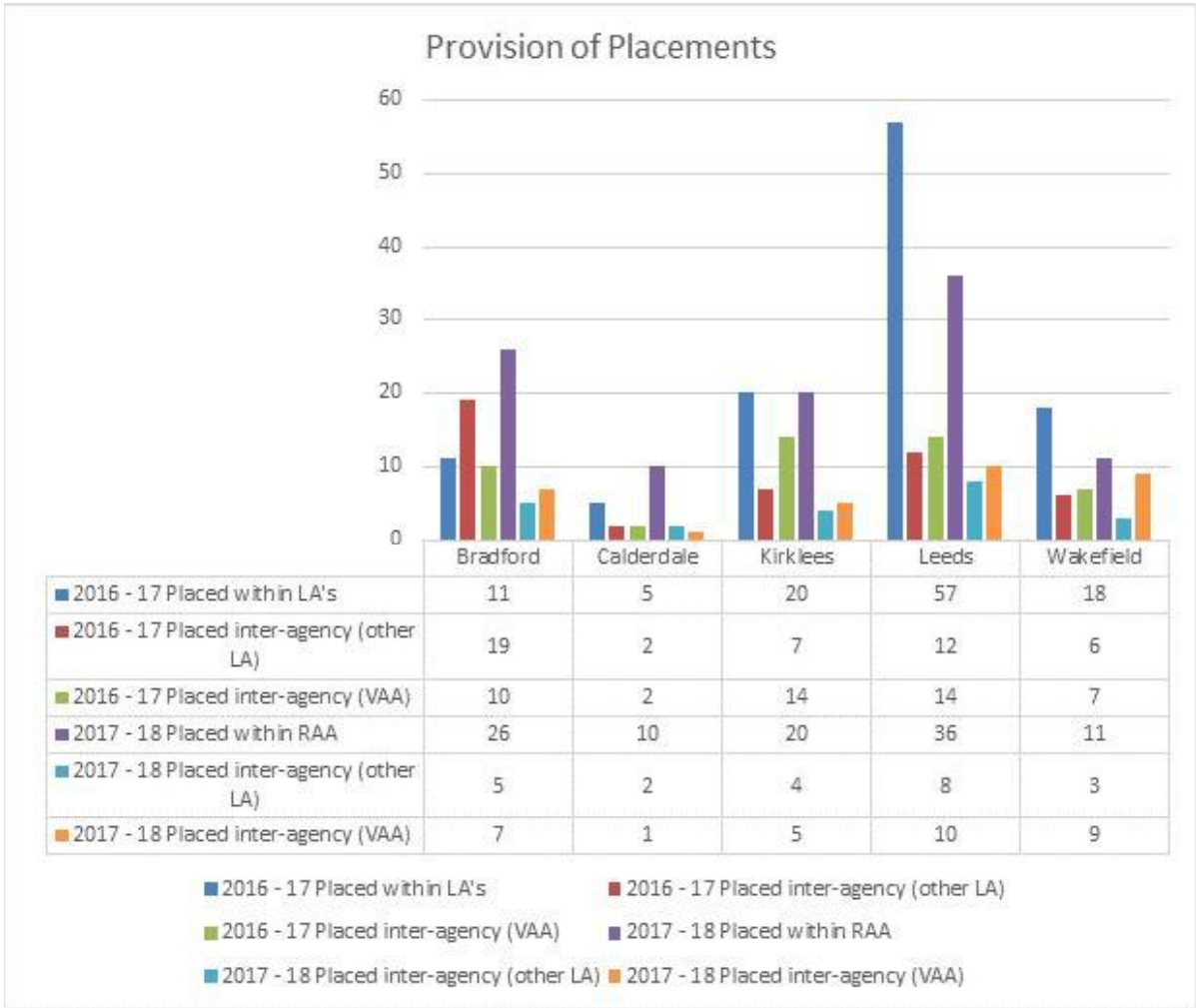
- 81 of the children matched were babies (up to 12 months);
- 60 children were of pre-school age (13 months to 4 years);
- 13 children were aged over 4 years;
- 42 children were part of a sibling group (of the 154 matched);
- 37 children were placed who are part of a sibling group of which 6 were placed apart; as part of a plan due to their individual needs;
- 24 children were placed in EPP of which 7 have since been adopted.

Provision of Placements

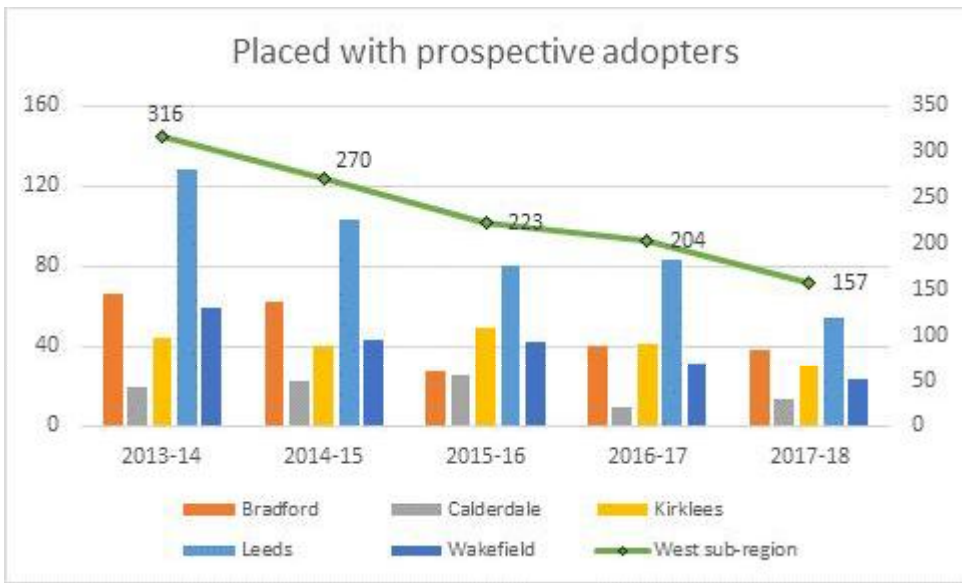
3.3.16 The number of placements provided in-house within the region has increased this year.

- 103 children within RAA;
- 22 children with other local authorities;
- 32 children with VAA.

The percentage this year was 66% in house and 34% interagency. Last year it was 54% in house and 46% interagency. This provides good evidence of the value in pooling adopters across a wide area to provide placements. It is likely with the sufficiency issue that there will be an increase in interagency placements in the next year.



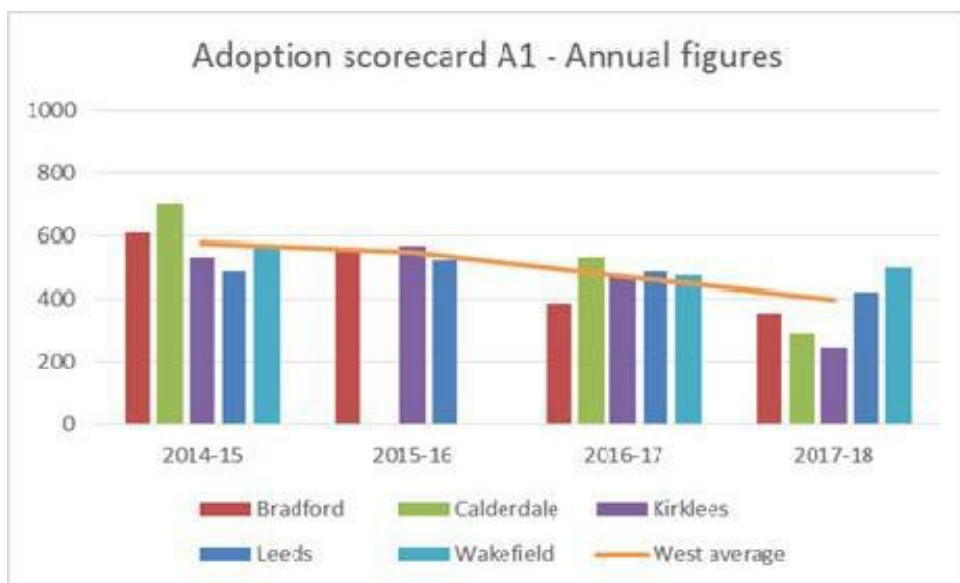
The following children were placed with adopters in the year. This is a slightly different figure from those matched as there is always a gap to allow time for preparation and introductions to the new family.



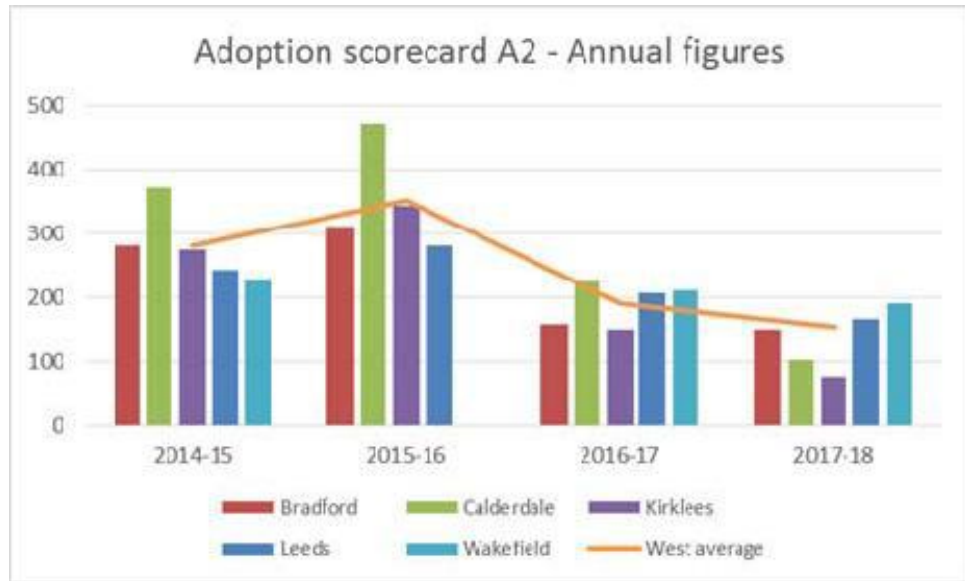
3.3.17 We can see from the data above that children in the region, including those children who often wait longer due to their individual needs, age or ethnicity or being part of a sibling group are being found families to meet their needs. Despite the falling numbers in the last few years. The data below looks at how timely these placements are being made.

Adoption Scorecards

3.3.18 The average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family (indicator A1) for children in West Yorkshire is 397 days, gradually declining which is better for children in reducing delay (National Indicator is 426 days) (England Average is 593).

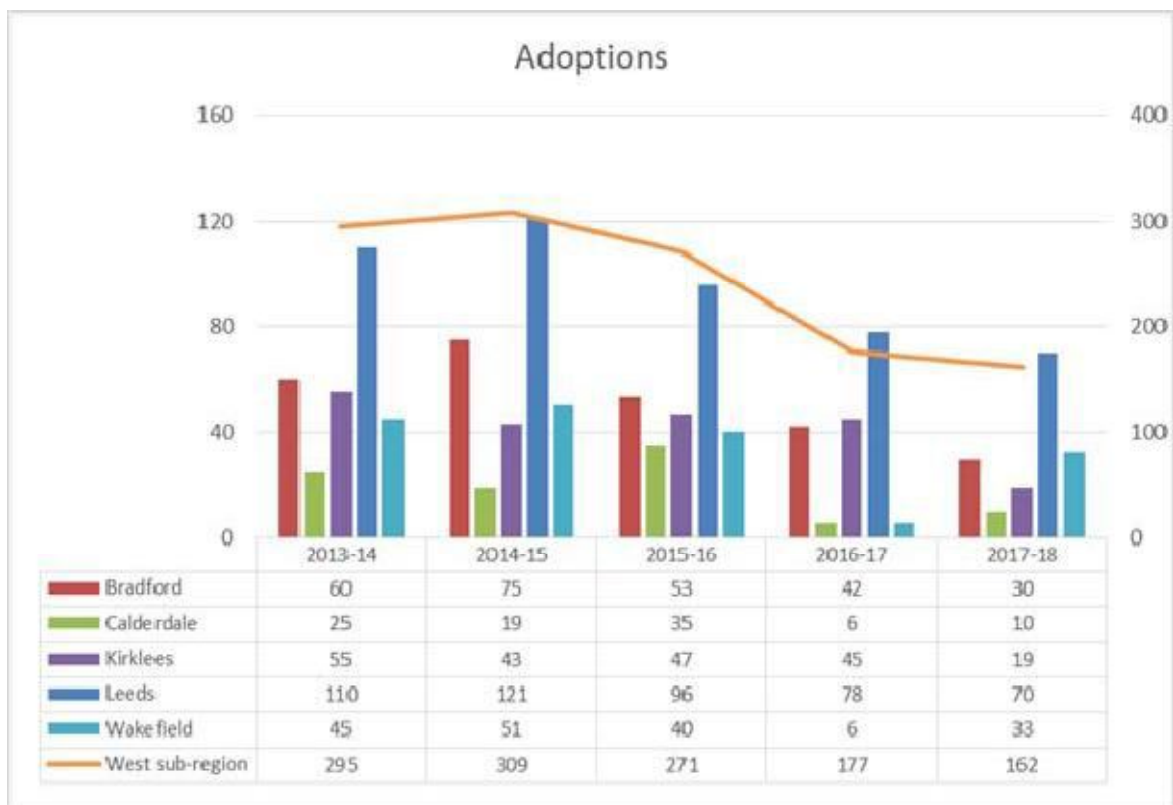


3.3.19 The average time between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family (Indicator A2) for children in West Yorkshire is 154 days, gradually declining which is better for children in reducing delay (National indicator is 121 days) (England average is 223), This is still above the national indicator but it is important to note that a number of older children and sibling groups who generally wait longer have successfully been placed for adoption and it has been key to ensure that the preparation and planning required has taken place to ensure a positive match can be agreed.



Children adopted from care

3.3.20 Although the number of children who have been adopted has fallen 14% of children leaving care are adopted. This is in line with the national average.



3.4 Practice, quality of provision and management oversight

Recruitment and Assessment

3.4.1 The One Adoption brand and website was launched on the 1st April 2017. Adopter recruitment marketing has faced a challenging year as prior to

regionalisation a number of agencies had reduced their marketing and recruitment activity. Additionally the move to a regional approach meant launching a new brand into the market place and having to establish that brand at pace across the region. Despite these challenges over 175,000 people visited our website throughout the year, leading to over 750 people completing the online form requesting more information and 378 households attending 24 information events in West Yorkshire. The information meetings continue to be held in alternating venues across the West Yorkshire region with the aim of increasing accessibility for prospective adoptive families.

- 3.4.2 The 3 recruitment and assessment teams have made real progress in agreeing the practice across the service and we now have standardised information sessions & pre-approval training; a clear stage one process with all new applications; agreed criteria for recruitment of adopters, templates agreed for case work and a system for the allocation of assessments with booklets produced for adopters. Further twilight training sessions are being planned to expand the preparation for adopters regarding supporting children's identity needs regarding relationships with birth families and exploring more practical parenting regarding babies' brains and bonding.
- 3.4.3 A new Peer Mentoring scheme has been launched with our adoptive parents with 38 potential peer mentors identified and training due to take place in the coming months. The team have also signed up to a National Pilot Project, using Virtual Realty technology in adopter recruitment, training and assessment. Both these developments are in partnership with the Cornerstone Partnership, an organisation set up and delivered by adoptive parents.

Family Finding

- 3.4.4 The 3 family finding teams work closely with the local authority children's teams and identified a significant number of children requiring placements at the outset of the agency and a great deal of activity has been focussed on ensuring effective plans are in place for each child waiting for adoption.
- 3.4.5 One adoption attends the legal gateway meetings in each local authority and provides support to the agency decision making (ADM) process regarding adoption plans for children. This is to ensure that children are identified as early as possible for adoption in order to avoid delay in their care planning and to identify possible early placements of children where appropriate.
- 3.4.6 In November 2017 OAWY held the first Children's Profiling Event, inviting adoptive families from across the Yorkshire and Humberside and the North West to consider a selection of children awaiting adoption who were featured with high quality photos, DVDs and personalised displays. This was repeated in March and has been very successful in finding families for children. These are booked for the year ahead.
- 3.4.7 The use of Adoption Match and Linkmaker are embedded in practice. The Agency is continuing to look at maximising opportunities to find families for the

children coming through and are actively involved in the full range of activities including national exchange Days, Activity Days etc. to support this.

- 3.4.8 There are a significant group of children who wait longer for adoption because of the complexity of their needs and the Agency is exploring with local the VAA a more bespoke model of family finding to try to increase the opportunities for these children to find adoptive families. In addition, the team are exploring working with CoramBAAF to pilot their new tool aimed at making the most of families available through a “collective matching” approach.
- 3.4.9 A number of working groups are ongoing looking at further development of the Family Finding role and the development of the interface between OAWY and the 5 Local Authorities it works with to ensure greater consistency in practice but which acknowledges local differences.

Adoption Support

- a) **Adoption support:** Do children and families have timely access to high quality support services?
- 3.4.10 Adoption Support continues to remain an area of considerable growth and considerable need within the service. The Adoption Support Fund has increased expectations of adopters and consequently added a layer of complexity to the work undertaken by the team, including the administrative burden that the process brings.
- 3.4.11 The nature of support requested varies, but frequently includes requests from adoptive parents for advice on strategies for integrating children into families, managing challenging behaviour and support with telling difficult life story information, as well as requests for professional advice and help for children in school where early developmental trauma has led to difficulties. There have been 410 referrals for adoption support into the service this year, including new families and families who have previously received services.
- 3.4.12 OAWY is working to develop a core and consistent adoption support offer across the region ensuring that a range of services are available to everyone. These include a range of regional groups that have been expanded to support adopters, children and young people across the region, now available and accessible in all parts of west Yorkshire. These including stay and play groups, adopter support groups, family activity days and young people’s groups.
- 3.4.13 The OAWY’s newsletter lists all the groups and developments occurring in the West Yorkshire region including a rolling programme of workshops and training for adoptive parents. Topics such as brain based parenting, foetal alcohol syndrome, foundations for attachment, non-violent resistance, therapy, Safe Base and ADOPT training meeting the needs of parents who have children with differing needs and are also available to all adopters in West Yorkshire improving the support to adopters.
- 3.4.14 At the end of March 2018 the OAWY had 701 open cases with a waiting list of 91 children requiring allocation for adoption support assessments. At the

opening of the agency there was a waiting list of 65 cases. This waiting list did reduce during the year but has increased again as the year has progressed resulting in adoptive families not accessing therapeutic support in a timely manner. We have a prioritisation system in place and are trialling a triage system offering an initial visit to see if this assists in addressing concerns at an early stage and signposting where appropriate. Staff numbers in two of the adoption support teams are high and staff across the service have high caseloads in this area of work. The ability of the managers to provide effective management oversight of the work is currently under review given the volume and complexity of the work.

Practice Improvement Grants

- 3.4.15 One Adoption West Yorkshire has received funding to pilot a regional adoption support fund. The Adoption Support Fund was set up in 2015 to reduce the gap between adoptive children needing therapeutic services and receiving them, ultimately to improve outcomes for young people and families. The aim of the pilot is to improve adoption support across an RAA by: regional commissioning of the ASF and engaging users in the development and testing of regionalised support services; test out how the ASF could be managed in a regionalised structure including how human and financial resources for adoption support will be deployed and to inform future national policy and delivery of ASF and share emerging practice with other Regional Adoption Agencies. From August 2017 One Adoption West Yorkshire received over £656,525.51 from the adoption support fund to support adoptive families in west Yorkshire. This work is ongoing.
- 3.4.16 One Adoption West Yorkshire also received funding from the DFE to develop a Centre of excellence for Adoption Support with a view to rolling this out across the wider Yorkshire & Humber region. The objectives of this are to look at a framework for assessment of support needs; to develop multi- disciplinary support for adoptive families and to develop a training and development programme for professionals in the sector. This work is developing and 3 sector specialists across health, education and social care are working with the service partners to shape and develop this work.

Disruptions

- 3.4.17 In the last year, 6 adoption placements have disrupted prior to the adoption order being made. Disruption is a cause for concern and OAWY is working closely with the local authorities to ensure that a full understanding of the issues leading to the breakdown are fully understood to inform future planning for the child and the adoptive parents as well as themes for learning for future practice.

3.4.18 Quality Assurance

One Adoption West Yorkshire has developed a practice improvement framework and is committed to an improvement culture of learning. The principal sources of feedback are:

- Views of Children and Families: The views and experiences of children & young people, adoptive parents, birth parents, adopted adults.
- Performance Data: Any statistical data that helps us judge the quality and effectiveness of our professional practice.
- Practice Wisdom and Knowledge: The practice wisdom of those staff who work with children young people and families, adoption panels & learning from disruptions.
- The findings of external and internal inspections, audits and evaluations of our practice.

3.4.19 The work to ensure this framework is fully established is well underway with further developments over the next year regarding case file audits, adoption support performance data and service user feedback mechanisms awaiting completion.

3.4.20 A Quality Assurance (QA) mechanism for panel work is used as a matter of course and all the feedback since June has been generally positive. The quality assurance process found that the majority of prospective adopter reports (PARS) were of a good standard (78% 'good, 15% 'satisfactory' and 7% requiring improvement) and with Child Permanence Reports provided by local authority social workers over half were considered good. (56%, 22% 'satisfactory' and 22% required improvement). OAWY are working with the 5 LA's to jointly commission training and development work regarding this area of practice.

3.4.21 With regard to feedback from service users at adoption panel, 26 questionnaires were received from attendees at panel who rated the experience at panel out of a possible score of 10:

- 21 (81%) respondents rated the experience at 9 or higher;
- 4 (15%) respondents rated the experience at 8;
- 1(4%) respondent rated the experience at 7.

3.4.22 There were 7 complaints made regarding the Adoption Service during the year. All complaints were resolved at stage one. 1 complaint was upheld, 3 were partially upheld, 2 were not upheld and in the case of 1 complaint we didn't receive a copy of the response. In addition, there were 3 representations: these are requests for information or complaints where they are outside the timeframe where we would accept a complaint.

Voice and Influence of Children, Young People and Adopters

3.4.23 Appendix 1 provides the Voice and Influence of Children, Young People and Adopters report card. This highlights the work undertaken to capture the views of service users to help develop and shape the service.

3.5 Continuous Professional and Service Development

Staff development and support

3.5.1 All of the staff receive regular monthly supervision and have an appraisal. In the first year this fell out of the cycle of the council's appraisal system due to new managers taking over line management responsibility and needing enough time before setting objectives with staff. This is an opportunity for staff to ensure that there is reflection regarding their work and addresses their own personal and professional development and practice.

Training

3.5.2 During the first year of operation all staff have had basic training in the IT systems being used. All recruitment staff have now been trained to use the Attachment Style Interview tool. It will take time to embed the learning from this into the assessment work undertaken but it will assist staff in being clear about how we effectively support adopters moving forward.

3.5.3 The service and team managers, advanced practitioners and senior business support managers have been involved in a programme of learning around developing their leadership role in the organisation within a restorative framework. This has assisted in developing relationships across the service and has given some practical strategies to ensure that managers are equipped for leading the teams through a period of considerable change.

3.5.4 There has been a range of training for all staff around parenting adopted children in terms of adopting a trauma informed approach regarding brain development and sensory integration. In addition there has been training around the adoption support fund and early permanence

3.5.6 Adoption panel training has been undertaken for all panel members across the region.

3.5.7 Each practice area has had development days to share good practice and consider new ways of working in the new arrangements. This will be part of our development as an agency with at least two development days planned in each discipline with business support staff to ensure that opportunities for reflection and involvement in service development are provided for staff.

- 3.5.8 A skills gap analysis is currently underway with staff to assist in developing a workforce development plan over the coming year.

Strategic issues and forward plans

- 3.5.9 The service has spent time considering the OAWY vision, mission, outcomes and priorities for the next 3 years and a plan on a page has been developed (see Appendix 2). This outlines the priorities within the plan and are tracked through the OAWY Service Improvement Plan.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.1 There has been ongoing engagement with staff over the year who transferred in to the agency as well as formal consultation with the trade unions regarding the changes. Consultation with adopters, birth parents and adopted young people is ongoing to inform the development of the service design and delivery of the agency.

4.2 Equality and Diversity/ Cohesion and Integration

- 4.2.1 OAWY completed an equality Impact assessment this year and a clear action plan has emerged from this to ensure that we are able to provide a comprehensive service to all communities. The Equality & Diversity, Cohesion and Integration Impact assessment is attached as Appendix 3.

4.3 Council Policies and Best Council Plan

- 4.3.1 The activities in this report contribute to the Best Council Plan outcome for everyone in Leeds to have Safe, Strong Communities with specific priorities to 'keep people safe from harm' and 'support children to have the best start in life'. In addition, the supporting Children and Young People's Plan identifies Looked after Children as one of three priority 'obsessions'. The adoption service is integral to our plan to safely and appropriately reduce the numbers of Children Looked After through ensuring all our children are placed in a permanent family outside the care system as soon as possible.

4.4 Resources and value for money

- 4.4.1 The Budget for One Adoption West Yorkshire is set by the 5 local authorities in line with the partnership agreement. The budget has been agreed for the coming year. The final overall outturn position for OAWY was a small underspend this first year. The overall staffing budget was slightly overspent although initially there were a high number of vacancies against the budgeted structure. However, due to increased demands in adoption support and the impact of the pay harmonisation these contributed to the financial pressure in this area of the budget. The interagency budget was slightly underspent this

year, even though 64 placements were paid for during the year. However, the income target in this area was not fully achieved. Efficiencies were made across the running costs elements of the budget around adoption panels and savings achieved through streamlining business processes which helped mitigate against the pressures in staffing.”

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information Call In

4.5.1 This report is subject to Call In.

4.6 Risk Management

4.6.1 It is a regulatory requirement on the Local Authority that this report is prepared and presented to the Executive Board of the Council. The report is linked to the corporate risk on Safeguarding Children.

5 Conclusions

5.1 The Regionalisation of Adoption Services is part of a structural reform programme set out by the government. One Adoption West Yorkshire was the first regional agency in the country to be set up and has had the opportunity to help shape and develop adoption practice locally, regionally and nationally. The first year of operation has been challenging for all the staff and the scale and complexities of some of the practicalities of such a change cannot be underestimated. However, the commitment, dedication and motivation of the staff to ensure that children and families have remained their key priority has been impressive in such challenging circumstances. The performance of the service over the last year provides evidence that we have established a firm foundation on which to build a flagship adoption service.

6 Recommendations

6.1 That the Executive Board receives this report and continues to support the work of One Adoption West Yorkshire to ensure our adopted children receive the best possible support.

7 Background documents¹

7.1 None

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.



Voice and Influence of Children, Young People and Adopters Report Card April 2017 to March 2018

Outcome: Children and adoptive families to have an influence over decisions affecting their families' lives and the services we provide.

Best ideas - what has worked?

adoptervoice

We provide a range of different opportunities and levels of involvement to enable adoptive parents to have a voice and influence in OAWY. Opportunities range from a paid role in the organisation to volunteering at events. We also pay an hourly rate for adoptive parents to deliver training. We have established an Adopter Voice Forum and work with Adoption UK to employ an Adopter coordinator.

The Adopter coordinator is an adopter themselves and their role is to capture the voice of adopters and use them to influence the development of adoption services. So far they have helped shape:

- information events – we now co deliver;
- assessment – peer mentoring will be introduced;
- prep training – co delivery and content influenced;
- support – development of a website, support menu.

An Adoption Charter has been produced by Adopter Voice. This outlines partnership working with One Adoption to ensure 'the best possible future for families across the region'. The aims of this charter have been added to the OAWY 2018/19 Service Improvement Plan to ensure a partnership approach to delivering service improvements.

Members of Adopter Voice have been involved in the recruitment of all managers, staff and panel chairs within OAWY.

AT-iD



AT-iD (Adopted Teens Identity) is a project set up by the Yorkshire & Humber adoption consortium with a vision of offering adopted teenagers a space they can call their own. West Yorkshire teens are well represented in this group we have; 33/ 61 project members, 9/ 22 chat forum members and 7/ 14 Youth Council members. 7 activity days have been held with 46 young people attending from our region.

A 20 minute short film 'Voices' which talks about young people's experiences and feelings on adoption was created by AT-iD. This film is used by OAWY when training prospective adopters.

Young people from this group have also been involved in the recruitment process for staff at OAWY.

Feedback following an activity day from AT-ID members:

How has AT-iD made a difference to you?

- *Attending AT-iD activity days has made me more confident;*
- *AT-iD activity day made me feel stronger;*
- *I like meeting different people at AT-iD activity days;*
- *I have made friends with new people;*
- *I had fun;*
- *I pushed myself;*
- *I had fun and met new people;*
- *I made 2 new friends;*
- *It was fun and got me out of the house.*

Feedback from Youth Council Members

- *AT-iD has been life changing and it has changed my life for the better;*
- *AT-iD has made me a lot happier and I now have long term friends;*
- *I felt such a sense of belonging after going to my first AT-iD activity day. I carried on attending them and I met one of my best friends there, we have developed a special bond;*
- *I really enjoy AT-iD, I have done since it started. I find talking to others online stress relieving too and I enjoy the fact that everyone understands what it feels like to be adopted and that they can relate;*
- *AT-iD is my family;*
- *AT ID has been important to me and I have loved meeting other adopted people with similar experiences and I have found it very helpful. Also the fun days doing stuff. Also sharing my thoughts and opinions;*
- *My life has been transformed. AT-iD is my family. It's like soaring through happiness. Express yourself and let go;*
- *AT-iD is very important as it gives me somewhere that I belong and other people understand me in a way that others don't.*

Young people have also been involved in recruitment of all managers in OAWY.

A Survey of Adoptive Families: Following up Children Adopted in the Yorkshire and Humberside Region

The above mentioned survey was delivered in our region by a project team from the University of East Anglia and the University Loughborough. Information was gathered from a range of Adopters via an anonymous, on-line survey about how they and their child were getting on. 319 adoptive parents filled in the survey but only 2017 completed it all. 79% of parents stated that their adoption was 'going really well' or they were 'managing', with 21% were experiencing difficulties or struggling to manage.



Parents of older children experienced more problems: 70% with a child under 6 years old stated the adoption was going really well compared to 31% with a 6-9 years old and 24% of adopters with children aged 12-17. Key recommendations from the findings included; the need for ongoing support, preparing adoptive parents with full and detailed information, careful planning of the transition from foster to adoptive families and a proactive approach to birth family contact.



Foundations for Attachment

Written by Kim S. Golding: Foundations for Attachment 8 week course is a programme to help adopters to nurture attachments with their child. The course is aimed at adoptive families who are experiencing difficulties due to their child's early life experiences.

This course has been delivered by OAWY to 15 adoptive families. Feedback from the programme has been very positive, see comments from adopters below:

- *Didn't really understand any alternative to traditional parenting but after this course appreciate the benefits of PACE and putting myself in my child's shoes;*
- *Really makes me think about why some behaviours are present & that issues are common, good to feel not alone;*
- *This course has made me realise I am not going 'Bonkers';*
- *Really useful & some life changing moments for me as a parent;*
- *Should be part of the Adoption Process;*
- *It's got to be a way of life and not just a technique.*

The next Foundations for Attachment programme will be run again in the Autumn.

OAWY Non-Violent Resistance (NVR)

Child (or adolescent) to parent violence is becoming an increasing concern within the adoption community. OAWY ran a 12 week course with adoptive parents to address violent, destructive and harmful behaviours. NVR helps parents to break the silence, regain their parental presence and make positive changes to their family life.

Below are examples of feedback from parents about the programme we ran in the Autumn 2017 for 12 families:

- *As parents we communicate better/work together more, approaching situations from same page. This has created a calmer atmosphere at home. The future is not as daunting even though we will have tough times."*
- *"NVR made me realise what we had been doing was not working and there are ways to change the way we do parenting which will improve all our lives"*
- *"Our previous parenting approach was making matters worse and not working with our son. We had to do something to break the cycle of his controlling and destructive behaviour. NVR has been a godsend we were told that it is life changing and it certainly is. We have become stronger as a team and NVR is making a big difference to the atmosphere and happiness within our home."*

How NVR has helped your family?

- *"To become stronger, clearer and more concise. Kids responding brilliantly when we do it well. Calmer, more relaxed, less aggressive."*
- *"As always, it is very helpful to be able to hear from and talk to others in a similar situation - not only do we learn from each other, we feel comforted that we are not alone in our experiences."*



Our family is unrecognisable to how it was 12 weeks ago. The changes are remarkable. I still realise we still have a long way to go and we will continue to work hard improving our family life."

This is a targeted and specific training and was well received and will be run again later in the year.



Safe Base is a therapeutic parenting programme for adoptive parents that One Adoption West Yorkshire commissions from After Adoption.

24 families have attended this course in the last year. It creates a strong foundation for loving and lasting relationships within the family, giving children the confidence to feel safe and secure with their parents or carers.

SafeBase provides a bespoke family session and feedback as part of the programme and is effective in:

- Providing practical strategies tailored to the family
- Strengthening family wellbeing and hope for the future
- Putting attachment and child development into context for the family
- Explaining the impact of early adversity on brain development
- Building secure attachments

Safebase has given us some invaluable information, which has already worked well in many situations and made an immediate, positive difference. Feeling much more positive, reassured and confident. (August 2017)

I feel more confident with techniques to help my children feel secure in our family. I feel more confident of my understanding of my children's behaviours and why they behave in certain ways. I am more accepting of my children's behaviours. (August 2017)

Safebase has made a huge difference in how I regard parenting and the mindset of my child. (October 2017)

Extremely helpful, relevant and useful - giving an easy to understand explanation of early trauma and attachment issues with real strategies in a supportive environment. (November 2017)

Lots of great techniques to use at home, better understanding of issues and attachment relating to my son. (Feb 2018)

Really good course. The teachers were very good and made it enjoyable and fun. A great way to learn for all of us. (May 2017)

Safe base is to be run again in August following positive feedback from adopters

Profiling Events

.The 2 profiling events held in 2017/18 have resulted in 5 matches and 1 still being explored. Approved and stage 2 adopters from OAWY and other agencies across the North of England were invited .The success of these events and the positive feedback from those who attended has resulted in plans for 4 profiling event to be held each year.

Feedback from those who attended has been positive, see comments below:

- *We were very happy with the event. We had very good discussions with social workers about specific cases and had very good advice and suggestions. As a result of this event we have expressed interest in 2 children;*
- *It has reminded us of what we are doing this for;*
- *We were considering a very young baby but seeing items of a slightly older child has reminded us that they are still very small;*
- *The displays were very informative and having items from the children and letters and paintings they'd made was very engaging;*
- *We did find the morning emotional, but hopefully it's set us on the road to find our child. Everyone was so lovely, we really appreciated it.*
- *Loved it was on a weekend so we could both attend. Staff/S/W all very approachable and shared appropriate info;*
- *Everyone was very welcoming and helped to put me at my ease. Found it emotional but very useful;*

Best ideas - what next?

Adopter Survey

An on-line survey to all OAWY adopters will be sent out in May 2018. The aim is to capture views on the services we provide so we can identify areas that may require improvement. Additional, more specific, on-line surveys will also be produced to gather feedback on areas such as interventions, adopter preparation training and 'bump into' meetings.



adoptervoice

Adopter Voice have created an Adoption Charter. The charter expresses the support benefits of peer mentors. Therefore, working closely with Adopter Voice and Cornerstone (see below) to provide a peer mentoring service that will be launched in 2018/19. This service will offer bespoke mentoring that adopters can access for one to one support at any stage of the adoption journey – 30 peer mentors will be recruited and trained.

Peer Mentoring Scheme

OAWY has partnered with The Cornerstone Partnership to provide a Peer Mentoring Scheme to all OAWY prospective and experienced adopters. We know how challenging and, at times, stressful the process of adopting and being an adoptive parent can be. Our mentoring scheme relies on volunteer mentors who have the experience and desire to help others through what is often a challenging time.



What is the Cornerstone mentoring programme?

The aim of the Cornerstone peer mentoring programme for prospective and experienced adopters is to:

- to provide emotional support and encouragement for families;
- to sign-post to local support;
- to share experiences and successes of parenting adopted children as they deal with transitions, contact issues, challenging behaviours etc.

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ONE ADOPTION WEST YORKSHIRE'S PLAN: 2018/19 - 2020/21



Our Vision: To be a flagship Adoption Agency that develops & promotes best practice, improving adoption standards nationally.

Our Mission: To find loving families who can meet the needs of children & offer an innovative & supportive approach to all those affected by adoption.

What we'll do:

- 1.** Children move into their adoptive family without delay;
- 2.** Families get help and support at every stage of the adoption journey;
- 3.** Children have good quality care, a sense of belonging and stability within their adoptive family;
- 4.** Children, adoptive and birth parents and adopted adults are listened to and have an influence in decisions that affect them and service development;

4 Outcomes:

- 1.** Children move into their adoptive family without delay;
- 2.** Families get help and support at every stage of the adoption journey;
- 3.** Children have good quality care, a sense of belonging and stability within their adoptive family;
- 4.** Children, adoptive and birth parents and adopted adults are listened to and have an influence in decisions that affect them and service development;

8 Priorities:

- 1.** Recruit & assess sufficient numbers of adopters to meet the needs of our children;
- 2.** Work with Local Authorities & partners to:
 - Improve early identification of children and further develop the use of EPP across the region;
 - Develop practice around identity (relationships with birth families & life story work);
 - Develop knowledge and understanding about matching with adopters who are committed, flexible, open communicators and are willing to access support;
- 3.** Develop our staff team & panel members to ensure all our children & families receive consistently excellent service & support;
- 4.** Implement a consistent offer of adoption support across OAWY;
- 5.** Develop a Centre of Excellence for Adoption Support;
- 6.** Create new partnerships with organisations that will help us achieve our outcomes;
- 7.** Establish & promote a peer mentoring scheme;
- 8.** Continue to work with Adopter Voice, AFD & birth families;

3 Obsessions:

- 1.** Increase the number of adopters recruited
- 2.** Timely placement of children with families
- 3.** Quality of support provided

How we'll do it:



A Regional Service with local delivery – we'll make the most of opportunities for regional efficiency & maintain strong local relationships

Monitor, Evaluate & Respond to service user feedback & performance data to continually improve our services

A Restorative Approach underpinning everything we do, inclusive & fair processes, working with & alongside all our partner agencies & families

A clear budget strategy that provides value for money

Look at ways to become more efficient and generate income

Motivated, Knowledgeable & Skilled Business Support that enable adoption services to thrive

Outstanding Social Work Practice – we will continue to invest in the development of our staff, ensuring confident & knowledgeable professionals

Engage with Children, Young People & Families – we will enhance our groups and continue to empower them to shape services

Do the basics Right – know your child and family, analytical assessments & SMART outcome focussed plans

3 behaviours that underpin everything:

- 1.** Listening & responding to the voice of the child;
- 2.** Restorative Practice: doing with not for or to;
- 3.** Outcomes based accountability: is anyone any better off?

How we'll know if we've made a difference:

- Increased the numbers of adopters recruited & approved
- Reduced timescale in which Children are placed with adoptive parent(s)
- High level of family stability maintained
- Positive service user feedback
- Evaluation from Adoption Support Fund
- A range of established service user groups that feed directly into our business planning.

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Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration

As a public authority we need to ensure that all our strategies, policies, service and functions, both current and proposed have given proper consideration to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration. In all appropriate instances we will need to carry out an equality, diversity, cohesion and integration impact assessment.

This form:

- can be used to prompt discussion when carrying out your impact assessment
- should be completed either during the assessment process or following completion of the assessment
- should include a brief explanation where a section is not applicable

Directorate: Children & Families	Service area: One Adoption West Yorkshire
Lead person: Sarah Johal	Contact number: 07891277316
Date of the equality, diversity, cohesion and integration impact assessment: February 2018	

1. Title: One Adoption West Yorkshire
Is this a:
<input type="checkbox"/> Strategy /Policy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Service / Function <input type="checkbox"/> Other
If other, please specify

2. Members of the assessment team:

Name	Organisation	Role on assessment team e.g. service user, manager of service, specialist
Sarah Johal	One Adoption West Yorkshire	Head of One Adoption West Yorkshire
Mary Brudenell	One Adoption West Yorkshire	Service Delivery Manager, One Adoption West Yorkshire
Julie Chew	One Adoption West Yorkshire	Service Delivery Manager, One Adoption West Yorkshire
Mandy Prout	One Adoption West Yorkshire	Service Delivery Manager, One Adoption West Yorkshire
Aretha Hanson	One Adoption West Yorkshire	Business Support Manager, One Adoption West Yorkshire
Richard Stevenson	One Adoption West Yorkshire	Practice Improvement & Development Manager, One Adoption West Yorkshire

3. Summary of strategy, policy, service or function that was assessed:

In 'Regionalising adoption' in June 2015 the Government set out its commitment to markedly improve outcomes for children through the delivery of a regional adoption system where:

- children are matched with the most suitable adopter as quickly as possible;
- recruitment takes place at an efficient scale to provide a pool of 'adoption ready' adopters large enough and well enough matched to the needs of children waiting and;
- enough high quality adoption support services are available nationwide.

One Adoption West Yorkshire (OAWY) was the first Regional Adoption Agency to go-live on the 1st of April 2017. OAWY is made up of the 5 separate Local Authority adoption agencies which provided adoption services for West Yorkshire; Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield and is the largest adoption agency in the North of England.

This new agency is designed to offer an innovative and adopter friendly approach to adoption recruitment, adoption support, and family finding for children and prospective adopters as well as high quality training.

By working together we will provide even higher levels of expertise and support to our adoptive families at all stages of the adoption process and with the inspiration and direction provided by our adoptive parents we will ensure that we provide the kind of support that families want and need.

We want every child to have a family to grow up in and we need more adoptive parents to play a vital role in fulfilling this vision. Adoption is an exciting and challenging experience for everyone involved. We are seeking adoptive parents from all walks of life to reflect the range of children we have who are looking for a secure home with patience, understanding and loving kindness.

This Assessment looks at how OAWY considers Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration throughout the adoption process. It will also highlight areas that need to be improved and the actions that will be taken to address them.

4. Scope of the equality, diversity, cohesion and integration impact assessment

(complete - 4a. if you are assessing a strategy, policy or plan and 4b. if you are assessing a service, function or event)

4a. Strategy, policy or plan

(please tick the appropriate box below)

The vision and themes, objectives or outcomes	<input type="checkbox"/>
The vision and themes, objectives or outcomes and the supporting guidance	<input type="checkbox"/>

A specific section within the strategy, policy or plan	<input type="checkbox"/>
Please provide detail:	

4b. Service, function, event please tick the appropriate box below	
The whole service (including service provision and employment)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
A specific part of the service (including service provision or employment or a specific section of the service)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Procuring of a service (by contract or grant)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Please provide detail: This assessment will cover the three core elements of service delivery; Recruitment and Assessment, Family Finding and Adoption Support and the services users; the child/ adopted person, people wishing to adopt, adopters, birth parent and staff.	

5. Fact finding – what do we already know Make a note here of all information you will be using to carry out this assessment. This could include: previous consultation, involvement, research, results from perception surveys, equality monitoring and customer/ staff feedback. (priority should be given to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration related information)

There are no restrictions to adoptive applicants regardless of age, religion/ belief/ faith, disability, gender, sexual orientation, race or if they are a trans person, provided they are deemed to be able to meet the needs of the child/ children they wish to adopt.

Children who wait longer to be adopted generally have one of more of the following characteristics; they are older, BME, have a disability or are part of a sibling group.

	Strengths	Weaknesses
Age	Age restrictions for adopting applicants are flexible and OAWY recognise that more people are having children at an older age.	There is a shortage of adopters for older children. The lack of placements could have a negative impact on this group as these children may be placed out of their local area which in turn may impact on their continued contact with their family and local support structures. Specific targeting of older adopters has not been carried out to date.
Religion/ Belief / Faith	OAWY accepts adoption applications from applicants of all religions/ beliefs/ faiths. This ensures there is potential for a wide range of potential adopters recruited to meet the range of children needing placement.	There are not always adequate numbers of potential adopters or children to meet the religious/ belief/ faith needs of either party. Adopters from faith backgrounds often adopt for altruistic reasons and tend to consider taking older children and sibling groups. There is not enough adopters for this group of children so a more targeted approach is required.
Disability	Adopters with a disability are able to adopt. The services of the medical advisor are used to ensure decision making is always done to prevent discrimination, whilst ensuring the needs of the child are paramount.	Some potential adoptive applicants who have a disability may view this as negatively impacting upon their right to adopt. For example, the issue of mental health or a life limiting health issue/disability can be a limiting factor when deciding someone is suitable to adopt a child. However the needs of the children to have stability and care throughout their childhood must remain the primary focus and therefore some applicants may feel they have been discriminated against. Some children, because of their complex needs, often wait longer for permanent placements. There is a need for more Adopters to offer a permanent home for disabled children. In particular children with Asperger's or those on the Autistic spectrum are particularly hard to place and consideration needs to be given to recruiting and supporting adopters who have the skills to look after these

		children.
Gender	Female and male adopters are able to adopt.	Single males and single female adopters at times are not aware they can adopt on their own and applicants from single males are small. Although there are no gender considerations in recruiting Adopters and the service operates according to our own anti-discriminatory practice the main carer within the household within adoption is usually female. A negative impact of this may be that there is a potential for male adopters to become isolated and in these instances they should be encouraged to attend support groups (see Action Plan).
Sexual Orientation	OAWY recruitment procedures are anti-discriminatory and welcome applicants who are LGBT. The assessment process conforms to British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) guidance on assessment and workers have been trained in assessment, including assessing gay and lesbian adopters.	We are not aware of any barriers to LGBT groups being recruited to adoption. However, refresher training would be useful to staff in matters of recruitment and assessment of LGBT applicants.
Race	Adopting applicants from any racial background are recruited to OAWY, if they meet all the relevant criteria and are able to meet the needs of the children.	Recruiting adopters for children from BME backgrounds particularly children with mixed heritage remains a challenge. Resources are available to purchase appropriate adoptive placements for children and we have a growing number of out of authority placements that reflect this.
Trans People	OAWY policies do not discriminate against trans-gender adopters.	Of all the diversity strands OAWY has the least knowledge and experience in working with Trans People. Staff training and development needs to be undertaken to ensure Trans People who wish to adopt have fair access to the process and feel confident to adopt.
<p>Are there any gaps in equality and diversity information Please provide detail:</p> <p>N/A.</p>		
<p>Action required: Action 1 - Develop an innovative & bespoke family finding/ matching process for children who wait longer.</p>		

Action 2 - Ensure marketing campaigns are inclusive of older adopters.

Action 3 - Specific marketing campaign target at adopters from faith backgrounds.

Action 4 - Implement a service user feedback mechanism that allows analysis by diversity strand. This will enable OAWY to identify areas where action is required.

Action 5 – Provide refresher LGBT Training.

6. Wider involvement – have you involved groups of people who are most likely to be affected or interested

Yes **No**

Please provide detail:

In order to gather a perspective of the main service users the following groups who represent adopted teenagers, adoptive parents and birth parents were consulted.

- Adopters via Adopter Voice.

Action required:
 Action 6 - Maintain active contact with service user groups and work with them to identify and implement service improvements.

7. Who may be affected by this activity?
 please tick all relevant and significant equality characteristics, stakeholders and barriers that apply to your strategy, policy, service or function

Equality characteristics

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Age	<input type="checkbox"/> Carers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Disability
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gender reassignment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Race	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religion or Belief
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sex (male or female)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sexual orientation	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other		

(Other can include – marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, and those areas that impact on or relate to equality: tackling poverty and improving health and well-being)
Please specify: n/a

Stakeholders

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Services users	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Employees	<input type="checkbox"/> Trade Unions
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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partners	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Members	<input type="checkbox"/> Suppliers
<input type="checkbox"/> Other please specify		

Potential barriers.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Built environment | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Location of premises and services |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information and communication | <input type="checkbox"/> Customer care |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Timing | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Stereotypes and assumptions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cost | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consultation and involvement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Financial exclusion | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Employment and training |
| <input type="checkbox"/> specific barriers to the strategy, policy, services or function | |

Please specify

The above are noted as potential barriers but are not known to be. Action 4, section 12 will seek to evidence if there are any such barriers which OAWY will then plan to address.

8. Positive and negative impact

Think about what you are assessing (scope), the fact finding information, the potential positive and negative impact on equality characteristics, stakeholders and the effect of the barriers

8a. Positive impact:

Recruitment & Assessment of Adopters

1. The OAWY website signposts potential adopters to Information Events which are held across the region, so there are always local events. Generally the events are held at venues that ensure they are physically accessible for people who wish to attend who have a disability;
2. OAWY has a clear statement in its' policy that we accept and actively recruit adopters regardless of age, religion/ belief/ faith, disability, gender, sexual orientation, race or if they are a Trans Person provided they are deemed to be able to meet the needs of the child/ children they wish to adopt;
3. The service focuses on effective partnership working to continue the improvement of services to children affected by adoption irrespective of age, religion/ belief/ faith, disability, gender, sexual orientation, race or if they are a Trans Person. Our marketing and publicity material uses positive images to promote our approach to equality within our advertising, see Appendix A;
4. OAWY have approved a diverse range of people, including same gender couples

- and single people. We have undertaken specific LGBT recruitment for adoption families and have been actively involved in the LGBT Challenge group;
5. We have a planned process of continual training for adoption Social Workers around LGBT;
 6. Constructive use of targeted recruitment activity has increased our ability to secure placements for children with specific needs arising from cultural background or developmental issues and disability;
 7. Information events and preparation events are held at venues to meet the needs of adopters with a disability;

Family Finding for Children

8. Profiling Events are held in accessible buildings quarterly which are aimed at adopters in assessment as well as approved. This enables people to get information early about the reality of the children OAWY are seeking to place;
9. OAWY has a robust approach to ensuring that children's religious and cultural needs are met through effective matching meetings identifying need and support plans;
10. OAWY seeks to identify and meet any additional support needs Adopters may have in order to care for children from different ethnic, cultural and religious groups and children with disabilities;
11. OAWY uses Adoption Match and Link Maker to identify placements for those children who wait longer. This includes regularly attending national exchange days and activity days – allowing OAWY to identify adopters who can meet the specific needs of the child;

Adoption Support

12. OAWY provides generic support services to all affected by adoption (birth relations, adopters and adoptees);
13. Adoption Support Assessments are based upon the needs of the person/ people;
14. Initial advice and information is free and the majority of services are free to access;
15. Adoption Support is provided at a range of accessible locations;

Adopter Voice

16. Adopter Voice are an adopter led group that work with OAWY to 'challenge, support and input into the development of adoption services at local, regional and national levels so that they are adopter led'. Adopter Voice is available to all adopters and encourages adopters to become involved and/ or access support on-line;
17. All 15 Yorkshire LAs sent a survey to all registered adopters inviting them to join Adopter Voice;
18. Adopter Voice provides an arena for all adopters to access information and advice;

Birth Parent Groups

19. OAWY work with PAC-UK (the country's largest independent Adoption Support Agency) to learn from feedback from birth parents;
<http://www.pac-uk.org/>

AT-ID

20. OAWY work with AT-ID (adopted teens identity) to learn from feedback from adopted teenagers;
<http://www.at-id.org.uk/>

Staffing

21. Diversity issues are addressed during supervision to ensure that the needs of children are met and that service users are being treated fairly;

22. We are members of New Family social, a LGBT group who offer specific support to the LGBT community of adopters. There are support groups across the region for single adopters;

Training

23. Social workers are trained regarding equality and diversity issues in their degree in social work. All the managers have had recent training regarding unconscious bias within OAWY;

Specialist Advice

24. We commission a service for Inter Country Adoption from the Yorkshire adoption agency. All inter country adopters attend specialist training specific to adopting from overseas provided by this agency.

Action required:

None.

8b. Negative impact:

Recruitment and Assessment of Adopters

1. There are insufficient adopters with a diverse background coming forward to adopt;
2. OAWY have a high level of interest from the south Asian communities to adopt full Asian babies rather than older children of mixed ethnicity;

Family Finding for Children

3. There can be unconscious bias from Children's Social Workers regarding considering single females and males for the children they have waiting;
4. Children cannot always be matched with families that meet their own cultural heritage and social workers are not always willing to consider families with a different heritage from the child's;

Adoption Support

5. We do not know if there are any groups of people who struggle to obtain the adoption support we offer;

Training

6. Of all the diversity stands Trans People is the area we have the least knowledge of, training is needed in this area.

Action Required

Action 7 - Link with BME communities to promote and educate in terms of the children we have available for adoption (work with Leeds City Council's Communities Teams for advice and support).

Action 8 - Continue to challenge unconscious bias from children's social workers in a restorative way and provide training and support as required.

Action 9 - Conduct Analytical work to establish if OAWY can better target adopters that meet the cultural needs of our children.

Action 10 - Work needs to be conducted to identify groups that may benefit from more specific adoption support i.e. Dad's group, same sex parents as there may be gaps in the support we offer.

Action 11 – Training delivered to enhance organisational understanding of Trans People and to harness their ability to become adoptive parents.

9. Will this activity promote strong and positive relationships between the groups/communities identified?

Yes

No

Please provide detail:

OAWY will always try to build and maintain positive and open relationships for people aiming to or being involved in the adoption process.

Action required:

See actions 1 – 11, section 12.

10. Does this activity bring groups/communities into increased contact with each other? (e.g. in schools, neighbourhood, workplace)

Yes

No

Please provide detail:

Action required:

None.

11. Could this activity be perceived as benefiting one group at the expense of another? (e.g. where your activity/decision is aimed at adults could it have an impact on children and young people)

Yes

No

Please provide detail:

There could be the perception that certain groups are less likely to adopt than others. The primary focus of OAWY will always be the child. The decision to place a child will be based upon the individual(s) ability to meet the child's ongoing needs and not their individual(s) diverse group. Therefore, prospective adopters who are not matched with a child may feel they are at a disadvantage.

Action required:
See Action 3, section 12.

12. Equality, diversity, cohesion and integration action plan
(insert all your actions from your assessment here, set timescales, measures and identify a lead person for each action)

Action	Timescale	Measure	Lead person
Action 1: Develop an innovative & bespoke family finding/ matching process for children who wait longer.	31/03/2019	A new approach to reduce waiting time for children who wait longer piloted.	Mary Brudenell
Action 2: Ensure marketing campaigns are inclusive of older adopters.	31/03/2019	Campaign delivered.	Mandy Prout/ Dave Glanville
Action 3: Specific marketing campaign target at adopters from faith backgrounds.	31/03/2019	Campaign delivered.	Mandy Prout/ Dave Glanville
Action 4: Implement a service user feedback mechanism that allows analysis by diversity strand.	31/12/2018	Service user satisfaction results reportable by diversity strand. This will enable planned action to be taken to make improvements as required.	Richard Stevenson/ Aretha Hanson
Action 5: Provide refresher LGBT Training.	31/12/2018		Mandy Prout/ Mary Brudenell/ Julie Chew
Action 6: Maintain active contact with service user groups and work with them to identify and implement service improvements.	31/06/2018	Service user groups improvement actions added to OAWY service improvement plans.	Richard Stevenson
Action 7: Link with BME communities to promote and educate in terms of the children we have available for adoption (work with Leeds City Council's Communities Teams for advice and support).	31/03/2019	Outcomes based accountability workshop held with community leaders across the West Yorkshire Region.	Sarah Johal/ Mandy Prout/ Mary Brudenell
Action 8: Continue to challenge unconscious bias from children's social workers in a restorative way and provide training and support as required.	31/03/2019	Set-up training/ support group and deliver bespoke training session(s) as required to children's social workers.	Mandy Prout/ Mary Brudenell/ Julie Chew

<p>Action 9: Conduct Analytical work to establish if OAWY can better target adopters that meet the cultural needs of our children.</p>	<p>31/06/2018</p>	<p>Produce map that shows the demographic geography of our region and highlights where there are recruiting gaps. Recruitment & Assessment to plan based upon results.</p>	<p>Richard Stevenson</p>
<p>Action 10: Work needs to be conducted to identify groups that may benefit from more specific adoption support i.e. Dad's group, same sex parents as there may be gaps in the support we offer.</p>	<p>31/12/2019</p>	<p>Needs analysis that details gaps in adoption support provision and a plan to reach people who may have found barriers previously.</p>	<p>Julie Chew</p>
<p>Action 11: Training delivered to enhance organisational understanding of Trans People and to harness their ability to become adoptive parents.</p>	<p>31/03/2019</p>	<p>Relevant training sought and delivered to required staff.</p>	<p>Mandy Prout</p>

13. Governance, ownership and approval

State here who has approved the actions and outcomes from the equality, diversity, cohesion and integration impact assessment

Name	Job Title	Date
Sarah Johal	Head of OAWY	
Date impact assessment completed		

14. Monitoring progress for equality, diversity, cohesion and integration actions (please tick)

- As part of Service Planning performance monitoring
- As part of Project monitoring
- Update report will be agreed and provided to the appropriate board
Please specify which board
- Other (please specify)

15. Publishing

Though **all** key decisions are required to give due regard to equality the council **only** publishes those related to **Executive Board, Full Council, Key Delegated Decisions** or a **Significant Operational Decision**.

A copy of this equality impact assessment should be attached as an appendix to the decision making report:

- Governance Services will publish those relating to Executive Board and Full Council.
- The appropriate directorate will publish those relating to Delegated Decisions and Significant Operational Decisions.
- A copy of all other equality impact assessments that are not to be published should be sent to equalityteam@leeds.gov.uk for record.

Complete the appropriate section below with the date the report and attached assessment was sent:

For Executive Board or Full Council – sent to Governance Services	Date sent:
For Delegated Decisions or Significant Operational Decisions – sent to appropriate Directorate	Date sent:
All other decisions – sent to equalityteam@leeds.gov.uk	Date sent:

**You learn a lot when
you adopt, Liam and
Nick learned it really
is good to talk.**



One
Adoption

YOUR REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY

**Hear more about their adoption story at
www.oneadoption.co.uk/liam**



**You learn a lot when
you adopt, Alice and
Ben learned that
honesty really is the
best policy.**



One
Adoption

YOUR REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY

**Hear more about their adoption story at
www.oneadoption.co.uk/alice**



**You learn a lot
when you adopt,
Nicola learned that
two can be family.**



One
Adoption

YOUR REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY

**Hear more about her adoption story at
www.oneadoption.co.uk/nicola**





For Megan and Angie, starting a family was a little more complicated than for some couples

We thought about all the alternatives - and explored some a little more than others - and although in the beginning I was keener than Angie to consider adoption that was the path we decided to follow.

[Read Megan and Angie's story](#)



Matt and James wanted to adopt a very young child so Early Permanence Placement (EPP) seemed like the natural choice

'We started talking about adoption with friends, family and work colleagues, and it became clear that many people had some knowledge of, or had their lives touched by adoption,' says James. 'So, armed with encouragement and reassurance, we began researching online to learn more about opportunities for adoption and the processes involved.'

[Read Matt and James' story](#)



'You learn a lot when you adopt. Jane and Simon learned how many toys fill a house'

Jane and Simon made the decision to adopt, rather than pursue fertility treatment, after trying for a baby for over five years. They felt that they could provide a loving, stable family home for a child that needed one.

Read Jane and Simon's story



'You learn a lot when you adopt. Alice and Ben learned that honesty really is the best policy'

Alice and Ben adopted James and his disabled brother Luke, when they were four and three years old respectively, and their four birth children were in their teens.

Read Alice and Ben's story

Name of meeting: Corporate Parenting Board
Date: 9th July 2019
Title of report: Care Leavers – Local Offer Keep on Caring

Purpose of report.

To ensure that members of the Corporate Parenting Board are informed of the development of the Kirklees Local Offer and extending Personal Advisor support to care leavers to the age of 25.

To ask members of the Corporate Parenting Board to comment on the action plan in relation to these developments.

Key Decision - Is it likely to result in spending or saving £250k or more, or to have a significant effect on two or more electoral wards?	N/A (not a commissioning proposal)
Key Decision - Is it in the Council's Forward Plan (key decisions and private reports?)	No
The Decision - Is it eligible for call in by Scrutiny?	Yes
Date signed off by Service Director & name	Yes - Elaine McShane (27/6/18)
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance IT and Transactional Services?	N/A
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning Support?	N/A
Cabinet member portfolio	Cllr Viv Kendrick

Electoral wards affected: N/A

Ward councillors consulted: N/A

Public or private: Public

1. Background

The local offer

Section 2 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 requires each local authority to consult on and publish a local offer for its care leavers. The local offer should provide information about all the services and support that is available to care leavers from the local authority and partner agencies including information about both their statutory entitlements as well as any discretionary support that a local authority chooses to provide.

Section 1 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 requires local authorities to have regard to seven corporate parenting principles when discharging their functions in relation to looked-after children and care leavers. The local offer should set out what support all local authority departments will provide (not just Children's Services), having regard to the corporate parenting principles

Details of the services and support that should be included

The local offer should include details of the services and support that may assist care leavers in, or moving to, adulthood and independent living that the local authority provides in relation to:

- **Health and wellbeing:** This will include services that teach about, support and enable good health and wellbeing. It should include links to, or information about, universal health services that might be particularly relevant to care leavers, as well as specific health and wellbeing services targeted at them.
- **Relationships:** having strong and supportive relationships is crucially important for care leavers as they move to independent adult life. Local authorities will want to consider the services and/ or support that is available to help care leavers develop and maintain positive social networks and to understand what positive relationships look like.
- **Education and training:** Care leavers should be supported to access appropriate education or training that will enable them to fulfil their goals. This will include the statutory support available to care leavers, such as the £2,000 bursary for care leavers in Higher Education, as well as any other support from the local authority; and signpost to universal information such as careers advice and financial support for young people.
- **Employment:** this will include information to care leavers about general employment support, such as careers support and links to local Job Centre Plus. Local authorities should also include any other employment support that they or partners deliver that is specifically available to care leavers, for example, any apprenticeships that the local authority offers, in particular where such opportunities are ring-fenced for care leavers.
- **Accommodation:** care leavers should be supported to access appropriate and suitable accommodation. The local authority should include relevant information about their Staying Put policy, the support available from Housing Services and any other assistance that is available to care leavers, such as advice on maintaining a tenancy.
- **Participation in society:** this will include links to and information about activities, events or volunteering opportunities available in the local area that care leavers can get involved in.

**Local offer guidance, Guidance for local authorities
February 2018 (Appendix 1).**

2. Summary

In October 2017 no 11 was opened as a drop in centre for Children in Care and Care Leavers to access support from a variety of professionals. There are currently a number of services available from a number of partner agencies including housing, health, education, employment and training and local services providing support with drugs and alcohol misuse. It has been identified that there are a number of services available however there is further need for development in relation to providing a more effective service for our Young People.

As a service we have a steering group in place where we have been reviewing our service provision whilst developing our Local Offer. During this process we have considered what we already have in place along with what we are doing well and with this information we have been able to identify the areas for improvement. Due to some enquires made by Care Leavers over the age of 21 and. as part of the process we have also identified the need for further consultation and development in extending Personal Advisor to all care leavers age to 25.

In order to progress these developments we currently have an action plan in place please refer to Action Plan Appendix 2.

3. Consultations.

In July 2018 members of the steering group will attend the Children in Care Council and the Care Leavers Forum in order to discuss the draft proposed Local Offer and to seek their views as part of the consultation process.

In July 2018 a meeting will be held to include partner agencies who are currently involved with service provision for our Young People along with other partner agencies who have shown a keen interest and made enquires in relation to providing support to meet the gaps in service provision. At a result of these consultations the Local Offer will be reviewed.

4. Next steps

To continue to develop the draft action plan in line with the comments from the Corporate Parenting Board members and further consultations.

5. Contact officers

Steve Comb (Head of Corporate Parenting)
steve.comb@kirklees.gov.uk
01484 221000

6. Background Papers and History of Decisions

N/A

7. Service Director responsible

Elaine McShane, Service Director (Family Support and Child Protection)

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Department
for Education

Local offer guidance

Guidance for local authorities

February 2018

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Summary

About this guidance

This guidance is about Section 2 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 which requires each local authority to consult on and publish a local offer for its care leavers. The local offer should provide information about all the services and support that is available to care leavers from the local authority (see further information on partner agencies below), including information about both their statutory entitlements as well as any discretionary support that a local authority chooses to provide.

Section 1 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 requires local authorities to have regard to seven corporate parenting principles when discharging their functions in relation to looked-after children and care leavers. The local offer should set out what support all local authority departments will provide (not just Children's Services), having regard to the corporate parenting principles.

Expiry or review date

The guidance will be reviewed on an annual basis but will not be revised unless it is considered that it requires amendment.

What legislation does this guidance refer to?

This guidance refers to:

- Sections 1 to 3 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017

Who is this guidance for?

This guidance is for local authorities and others who contribute to services provided to care leavers.

The publication of a local offer is a requirement for all local authorities in England.

For the purpose of this guidance, a local authority in England means:

- A county council in England
- A district council
- A London borough council
- The Common Council, of the City of London (in their capacity as a local authority)

- The Council of the Isles of Scilly; and
- A combined authority established under section 103 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009

Main points

Section 2 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 requires each local authority to consult on and publish a local offer for its care leavers. The local offer should provide information about all the services and support that is available to care leavers from the local authority (see further information on partner agencies below), including information about both their statutory entitlements as well as any discretionary support that a local authority chooses to provide.

Section 1 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 requires local authorities to have regard to seven corporate parenting principles when discharging their functions in relation to looked-after children and care leavers. The local offer should set out what support all local authority departments will provide (not just Children's Services), having regard to the corporate parenting principles

The local offer

Section 2 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 requires each local authority to consult on and publish a local offer for its care leavers. The local offer should provide information about all the services and support that is available to care leavers from the local authority (see further information on partner agencies below), including information about both their statutory entitlements as well as any discretionary support that a local authority chooses to provide.

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Details of the services and support that should be included

The local offer should include details of the services and support that may assist care leavers in, or moving to, adulthood and independent living that the local authority provides in relation to:

- **Health and wellbeing:** This will include services that teach about, support and enable good health and wellbeing. It should include links to, or information about, universal health services that might be particularly relevant to care leavers, as well as specific health and wellbeing services targeted at them.
- **Relationships:** having strong and supportive relationships is crucially important for care leavers as they move to independent adult life. Local authorities will want to consider the services and/ or support that is available to help care leavers develop and maintain positive social networks and to understand what positive relationships look like.
- **Education and training:** Care leavers should be supported to access appropriate education or training that will enable them to fulfil their goals. This will include the statutory support available to care leavers, such as the £2,000 bursary for care leavers in Higher Education, as well as any other support from the local authority; and signpost to universal information such as careers advice and financial support for young people.

- **Employment:** this will include information to care leavers about general employment support, such as careers support and links to local Job Centre Plus. Local authorities should also include any other employment support that they or partners deliver that is specifically available to care leavers, for example, any apprenticeships that the local authority offers, in particular where such opportunities are ring-fenced for care leavers.
- **Accommodation:** care leavers should be supported to access appropriate and suitable accommodation. The local authority should include relevant information about their Staying Put policy, the support available from Housing Services and any other assistance that is available to care leavers, such as advice on maintaining a tenancy.
- **Participation in society:** this will include links to and information about activities, events or volunteering opportunities available in the local area that care leavers can get involved in.

Appendix 1 provides an illustrative local offer, designed to support local authorities when developing their own. It provides examples of the types of support that local authorities may wish to provide to care leavers.

Further guide on what could be included

Each local authority (LA) will choose to prioritise different types of non-statutory support, so each local offer will be unique. The following bullet points provide a guide to what could be included:

- The local offer should include the support LAs will provide across all of its departments/services (for example, Housing and Leisure Services), not just the support provided by the Children's Services Department.
- The local offer should include – and differentiate between - both care leavers' statutory entitlements (which all care leavers in England are entitled to) and other additional support that LAs choose to provide to demonstrate their commitment to being the young person's 'corporate parent'.
- Where a partner organisation provides a discrete service for care leavers – such as a health drop-in exclusively for care leavers – and the LA is confident that there is an ongoing commitment from the partner organisation to provide that service/support, it should be included as part of the local offer.

- However, where a partner organisation is offering a service that is available to all young people, but there is no bespoke service for care leavers – such as a young people’s sexual health clinic, or a careers advice service for all 16-25 year olds – it may be more appropriate to signpost/provide a link to that service, rather than to include it as part of the local offer.

Organisations other than the LA, will be encouraged to use the care leaver covenant to set out their offer to care leavers.

Developing the local offer with relevant persons

When developing their local offer, local authorities are required to consult with relevant persons, which means care leavers and organisations or people that represent care leavers. Local authorities should consider how best to engage and consult with as many of their care leavers as possible. We expect local authorities to work with their care leavers to co-produce a local offer that is meaningful and reflects the needs, views and wishes of the care leavers they are responsible for. It may also be useful for Personal Advisers to seek the views and ideas of the care leavers that they support and work with on a regular basis.

Publishing and updating the local offer

The Children and Social Work Act does not specify how soon after commencement of the duty the local offer should be published. However, the Government’s expectation is that the local offer should be available within six to nine months of commencement of the duty. This will allow time for LAs to consult care leavers before publishing their local offer. Once local authorities have consulted on and published their local offer it should be reviewed regularly to ensure that the services on offer reflect what care leavers need most. Local authorities can choose how regularly they review their local offer, but we would expect local authorities to update it at least every two to three years, following further consultation with care leavers.

Format of the local offer

The local offer should be easily available and accessible to all care leavers in the local authority area. This may mean that it is made available in a number of formats including printed hard copies, online digital copies and in different languages as appropriate. We would also expect Personal Advisers to share and promote the local offer with the care leavers they work with and to make sure they are aware of it and the services they are entitled to. Local authorities will want to consider how the local offer is made available to, and is easily understood by, care leavers with additional needs.

The precise arrangements for consulting care leavers and the format(s) that the local offer is available in are for local authorities to determine. Local authorities are best placed to decide: how to consult care leavers in a way that is meaningful; and to decide in which formats the local offer should be available.

Care leavers living or placed outside of their local authority

Some young people who were placed out of area while they were looked-after may wish to remain in that area once they leave care – for example, if they want to Stay Put with their former foster carer. In these circumstances, the well-established convention is that the ‘placing’ LA continues to meet any costs associated with their on-going support. The requirement to produce a local offer does not alter that long-standing approach and we would expect the local offer to apply equally to those young people.

We think there may also be situations where LAs could consider opening up some elements of their local offer to care leavers who are living in their area but who have been placed there, and are supported, by another LA. For example, LAs may allow care leavers to take advantage of some of the discretionary support they provide, such as giving care leavers free access to their leisure services, or allowing them to attend healthy cooking classes that are available to local care leavers.

Appendix 1

Illustrative local offer

This document illustrates the kinds of services and support that local authorities may include in their local offer to care leavers. It includes both the statutory entitlements that a local authority must provide, as well as examples of the additional discretionary support that a local authority may choose to provide.

The local offer should reflect the local authority's commitment to the corporate parenting principles and include support available from all local authority Departments, not just Children's Services.

Local offers should be written in a way that is easy to understand and be provided in a variety of formats.

1. Purpose of the local offer

This leaflet tells you about all the support that we have in **[name of place]** for you as a care leaver. We know that it is a big step when you move out of care and start living on your own or with friends.

Just because you are leaving care, or have already left care, we haven't stopped caring about you. We want to make sure that you feel safe and supported and know where and who to go to for advice and help.

Local care leavers have helped make this leaflet. We will continue to listen to your views to make sure the services we offer are what you need. We have written this leaflet with the help of the care leavers' forum.

To be able to get the support set out in this leaflet, you must have been in care for a period of at least 13 weeks (or periods amounting to 13 weeks) which began after age 14 and included some time after your 16th birthday. If you are not sure whether you qualify for support, then ask your Personal Adviser.

This leaflet is available online at *[website]*, you can email *[contact]* to request more copies.

Your Personal Adviser will talk with you about the information in this leaflet.

2. The support we must give you by law

Advice and Support from a Personal Adviser

Following changes introduced through the Children & Social Work Act 2017, you will be able to ask for support from your Personal Adviser up to the age of 25, whether you are in education or training or not.

Your Personal Adviser is there to help you to prepare to live independently and to offer advice and support after you leave care. Personal Advisers should talk to you about what support you need and record this information in your pathway plan.

Your pathway plan is written by the local authority after consultation with you and important people in your life. It sets out your needs, views and future goals, and identifies exactly what support you will receive from us. We will review your pathway plan with you regularly so that it is kept up-to-date.

We will try to enable you to keep the same Personal Adviser, though this will not always be possible. The amount of support that you receive from your Personal Adviser will depend on what you want and your circumstances.

Your leaving care team will consider with you what extra support you may need. You might, for example, need extra support because:

- You have special educational needs or a disability.
- You are an unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child (UASC) and your immigration status is unclear.
- You are in or leaving custody or you have had contact with the criminal justice system;
- You are a young parent; or
- You are going through a difficult time in your personal life.

Your right to be heard and taken seriously

You have a right to be involved in all decisions about your plans for leaving care. You have a right to support from an independent advocate if you want to challenge decisions about the support we give you.

Independent advocates can inform you about your rights and help you to be heard in meetings. They are separate from Children's Services.

[Local authorities should set out how young people can access advocacy support].

You have a right to see the information we keep about you, including the files and records written about you when you were in care.

Leaving care before turning 18

We will encourage you to stay in care until you are 18. Most young people still live at home with their families at this age.

If you choose to leave care before age 18, the law says we must provide you with suitable accommodation.

Support to engage in education, employment or training

We want to make sure every young person leaving care has the support to achieve their goals in life.

The law says we must provide you with assistance with expenses linked with employment, education and training. In particular:

- We will provide you with a Higher Education (HE) bursary of at least £2,000 if you go to University.
- We will provide somewhere for you to stay during University holidays (or funding for this if you would prefer to make your own arrangements) if you are in full time HE or full time residential further education and your term time accommodation is not available.

Staying Put with your former foster carer

- If this is what you and your foster carer(s) want, we will support you to remain with your foster carers under what is called a 'Staying Put' arrangement. This can last until you are age 21 **[Add link to Staying Put policy]**.

3. Examples of other support we offer [LAs should customise this section to reflect what discretionary support they provide]

Accommodation

If you are aged over 18, your personal adviser will help you to find suitable accommodation. This might involve:-

- Working with Housing Services to come up with suitable housing options for you, including supported accommodation if you are not ready or don't want to have your own tenancy.
- Support to access different independent housing options including social housing (this is accommodation managed by us or a housing association)
- Advice about holding down a tenancy, including avoiding rent or Council Tax arrears, paying bills and budgeting. We know it can be very hard having your own place for the first time. We will do whatever we can to ease the pressures on you **[NB: insert information if the council exempts care leavers from council tax]**
- Helping you to claim housing benefit/universal credit.
- Practical support with moving into and furnishing your new home.
- Supporting you if you have a housing crisis, including helping if you are threatened with or lose a tenancy **[NB: care leavers aged 18-20 have a priority need in homelessness legislation].**

Education, training and employment

We want you to succeed in your education, training and employment. We will ask you how you are doing and be ready to celebrate your achievements with you.

We will offer you:

- Careers information and advice, such as help to develop your CV, advice about job interviews, including what you might wear.

[NB: Care leavers are a priority group for the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund administered by FE colleges, which pays a bursary of up to £1,200 a year to support vulnerable young people to participate in education]

- Support to meet your transport costs when travelling to training, school/college, apprenticeships or job interviews.
- Support to buy tools, equipment, essential clothing, and books.
- Support if you choose to go to university, such as helping you obtain tuition fees and maintenance loans, travel costs at the start and end of term, and making sure you have somewhere to live during the holidays. We will help you choose the right course and university that matches your talents and interests.
- Opportunities for work experience, apprenticeships and employment within the council.
- The chance to attend and help organise celebration events when young people achieve education, training and employment milestones.

Health and wellbeing

Below are some of the ways our care leaving team and your personal adviser can support you to stay healthy and look after your physical and mental health. We can:

- Give you information on healthy living
- Give you information on getting help to pay for prescriptions
- Support you to register with a GP
- Support you to move from CAMHS to adult services
- Give you information about counselling services that are available locally
- Give you help with transport costs when attending health appointments
- If you are a young parent, we will support you to do the best for them. We will help you arrange childcare, if this is what you want.
- Offer free or subsidised access to the leisure centres we run
- Give you information about health drop-in centres
- Work with you to develop a 'health passport' containing key information from your childhood (for example, when and if you have had immunisations) and your current health needs.

Finances

We will try to help you financially, including:

- Providing a leaving care grant to help you buy essential things when moving into your own home **[The government recommends this should be a minimum of £2,000]**
- Giving you exemptions to or discounts on paying Council Tax
- Providing or telling you about relevant money management courses
- Information on how to access your Junior ISA or Child Trust Fund
- Support to open a bank account.
- Support to gain important identification documents, such as a passport and/or provisional driving licence, before your 18th birthday
- Support to get your National Insurance number.
- Exceptional financial support in emergencies
- Providing a financial gift at birthdays and Christmas or other celebrations.

Relationships

As well as support from a Personal Adviser, we may be able to offer you additional practical and emotional support, such as through:

- Providing you with a mentor/peer mentor;
- Help to maintain or regain contact with people special to you or who cared for you in the past, like former foster carers, Independent Visitors or social workers.
- Support to re-connect with family where it is in your best interests.

Participation in Society

We want our care leavers to be active members of society, and to have all the chances in life that other young adults have. We can help you participate in society in the following ways:

- Providing information on groups and clubs you may wish to join

- Informing you about relevant awards, schemes and competitions you can enter, in line with your talents and interests
- Encouraging and helping you to enrol on the Electoral Register, so you can vote in elections
- Offering work experience with our councillors
- Informing you about voluntary work that we think you may be interested in
- Informing and possibly helping with the cost of leisure activities
- Giving you advice and helping you to challenge any discrimination you face as a care leaver.

4. Who can help?

Key contact numbers for:

- Personal adviser
- Care leaving team
- Housing advice
- Designated doctors/nurses
- Education, employment or training support
- Local authority leadership e.g. the Director of Children's Services, Lead Member
- Care leavers' forum

Other places you can go for help:

- Princes Trust
- The Rees Foundation
- Rees Care Leavers' Foundation

Relevant universal services. This might include links to or contacts for:

- Health services such as sexual health clinics and drug/alcohol support
- Information about further or higher education
- Relevant youth clubs/groups/activities
- Parenting support groups
- Youth Offending Team
- Citizenship Advice Bureau



Department
for Education

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Name of meeting: Corporate Parenting Board
Date: 9th July 2019
Title of report: Draft Children’s Interim Sufficiency Strategy & Action Plan (2018-19)

Purpose of report

1. That members of Corporate Parenting Board note the content of this report and the draft Children’s Interim Sufficiency Strategy and Action Plan (2018-19) (Appendix 1); and
2. To ask Corporate Parenting Board to comment on the draft Strategy and Action Plan during and after the session to contribute towards its further development (Appendix 1).

Key Decision - Is it likely to result in spending or saving £250k or more, or to have a significant effect on two or more electoral wards?	N/A (not a commissioning proposal)
Key Decision - Is it in the Council’s Forward Plan (key decisions and private reports?)	No
The Decision - Is it eligible for call in by Scrutiny?	Yes
Date signed off by Service Director & name	Elaine McShane (27/6/18)
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance IT and Transactional Services?	N/A
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning Support?	N/A
Cabinet member portfolio	Cllr Viv Kendrick

Electoral wards affected: N/A

Ward councillors consulted: N/A

Public or private: Public

1. **Summary**

As part of our Improvement Plan, we committed to producing a Sufficiency Strategy and Action Plan setting out how we will increase the availability of local placements to ensure that children and young people do not need to be placed at a distance from their communities. This draft Interim Strategy and Action Plan sets out our approach until the end of calendar year 2019. Its key outcomes are children feeling confident our decisions more clearly reflect their needs and views, more children and young people able to stay at home and leave care early, and more placements of the right kind for children and young people in need (especially family-setting placements).

By increasing placement stability, increasing the number of foster placements, and reserving specialist residential placements for those that need them the most, we believe we will see less of our children and young people placed outside of the District (when appropriate). In the next 18-months, we will fill our new Head of Service for Sufficiency post. We will also improve our understanding of children and young people's needs, foster carers' needs (to improve recruitment and retention of carers), and local sites that could be developed (including through adaptations) into more residential care. This includes sites for specialist accommodation for those with the most complex health, educational, and emotional and behavioural needs. We will also have a detailed understanding of the impact of keeping children in the District on local education placements and health care services and the investment and approach needed to manage this. This work will inform the next, longer-term Sufficiency Strategy (2020-25).

2. **Background**

Following the September-October 2016 Ofsted inspection, Ofsted recommended Kirklees 'increase the availability of local placements to ensure that children and young people do not need to be placed at a distance from their communities' (recommendation 20 - [link](#)). This is a challenge for local authorities nationally. As of 31 March 2017, 40% of looked after children in England were placed out of their home area ([link](#)). This continues to be a challenge as the number of children in care nationally continues to rise ([link](#)). In the Improvement Plan, we committed to deliver this outcome through a Sufficiency Strategy and Action Plan. The Strategy was submitted to Improvement Board on the 10th May, to inform them of progress.

The Council has a statutory duty to take steps to provide sufficient accommodation within the District to meet the needs of our local children and young people, as far as reasonably practicable (Children Act 1989, Section 22G - [link](#)). This draft Strategy and Action Plan shows how the Council is meeting this statutory responsibility. It has been produced with the Government's guidance in mind, 'Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked after Children' (2010) ([link](#)).

The draft Strategy and Action Plan have been produced in line with the Shared Outcomes set out in the Corporate Plan. The current draft sets out how the Council aims to help give children the best start in life by improving early help and intervention and support to leave care early, improving placement stability, and increasing small residential homes and foster placements. It also sets out how we will improve our understanding of the accommodation, education, and health needs of our looked after children so we can produce an intelligence-led 5-year Sufficiency Strategy (2020-25).

The core indicator of its success will be that a smaller proportion of looked after children and young people are placed more than 20 miles outside of the District.

The draft has had significant contributions from teams across the Council, including the Children's Rights Team, Corporate Parenting, Commissioning, and the Corporate Strategy and Policy Team. We are continuing and extending these discussions in recognition of the impact of placement decisions on outcomes and activities across the Council. Recognising the centrality of partnership work in our new ways of working, we have also shared the draft with health and education stakeholders, including the Head of Joint Commissioning from the local CCGs. True to our commitment to strengthening the voice of the child in our decisions, we have also discussed the approach with some of our children at the Children in Care Council and the Care Leavers Forum. Those we have engaged with have voiced support for the Strategy's approach, whilst emphasising that specific placement targets require corresponding education and healthcare provision. We are looking into specific numbers and total financial implications over the next months in partnership with the Specialist Accommodation Board. Recognising the importance of political oversight and accountability in this issue, we took a previous draft and action plan to Children's Scrutiny Panel on the 11th July. Their feedback is summarised below.

We will continue to engage as we develop the draft Strategy and Action Plan further. This will help to ensure our efforts are coordinated.

Progress on delivering the outcomes in this Strategy will be monitored 6-monthly at Corporate Parenting Board. This will be against the indicators and performance measures and specific outputs in the finalised Action Plan. A key output is the next, 5-year Sufficiency Strategy, which will run from 2020-25.

3. Implications for the Council

3.1 Early Intervention and Prevention (EIP)

Improved sufficiency will require improving our early intervention and prevention, including ongoing support for children and young people at risk of being taken into care. This will help children and young people safely stay at home rather than being taken into care, which should leave residential and family-setting placements (such as foster) for those that need them most (because they can't safely stay at home).

3.2 Economic Resilience (ER)

We are looking at the possibility of more in-house residential provision for those who can't safely stay at home. If found to be viable, this could protect the Council from price-rises when demand rises.

3.3 Improving Outcomes for Children

Getting used to a new placement takes time and energy and so changing placements can be disruptive. It can also mean losing vital friends and support networks. Ongoing placement instability makes it more likely that a child or young person will have to move out-of-area if that child or young person has specific educational, health, or emotional and behavioural needs. Placement stability is supported by involving children and young people in decisions about their placements and care. A key part of the current draft Sufficiency Strategy and Action Plan is strengthening the voice of our children and young people.

It is better for our children and young people to live locally where they can retain friends, support networks, and their educational setting and where we can provide higher quality support. With more children and young people supported to stay at home, there will be more local placements for those that need them most.

Family-setting placements such as foster care tend to produce better outcomes for children and young people than residential care. They aim to replicate, as close as possible, a loving and attentive family life. The draft Strategy aims to have a higher proportion of children and young people in family-setting placements such as foster placements. This should be better for our children and young people, as well as keeping local residential placements allocated to those of our children and young people for whom foster placements are not appropriate or have not been producing good outcomes.

3.4 Reducing demand on services

Through better early support and improved consideration of educational, health, and emotional and behavioural needs in placement decisions, this Strategy could increase demand on Early Help. It will also mean more demand for school places, including for specialist placements for those of our children and young people with complex needs, and local health services. However:

1. It will reduce financial demand on services through reduced expenditure on costly out-of-area residential placements; and
2. Supporting children and young people placed out of Kirklees, especially those placed more than 20 miles out of the District, requires additional resources to supporting those within Kirklees.

3.5 Other (e.g. Legal/Financial or Human Resources)

The Strategy will help us meet our sufficiency duty (as outlined in Section 2).

4. Consultees and their opinions

There is no statutory requirement to consult and no formal consultation has taken place. However, we have contacted key internal and external stakeholders for comment. Feedback received so far is summarised below. We are continuing to consider education, health, and specialist accommodation needs in developing the Strategy, as suggested by the Head of Joint Commissioning for Children. Scrutiny's comments have led to a reformatting of the Action Plan, an addition of a Voice of the Child Action Plan, and more detail on the feedback that the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum gave us. Feedback from the Virtual Head Teacher has led to a clear statement of our statutory duties with regard to education placements being included in the Strategy, as set out in the new statutory guidance. Discussions with The Head of Service for Education Safeguarding and Inclusion has led to more emphasis being put on the importance of the High Needs Review. Further work is ongoing to ensure we have responded to all this feedback effectively.

Children's Scrutiny Panel: Panel members voiced approval for the broad principals of the Strategy and that it was taken to them in draft form so they had chance to provide input. Panel members noted the need to prioritise the baselines and targets in the Action Plan and questioned some of the targets. They asked for clearer presentation of key figures to make it easier to hold delivery of its ambitions to account. They asked for clearer evidence that our engagement with the Voice of the Child has informed the Strategy. They also recommended sharing the Strategy with third-sector support services for comment and feedback.

Children in Care Council: Children told us they find smaller placements better and that they would like to be more involved in training foster carers and choosing placements. They emphasised the importance of treating every child on their own terms.

Care Leavers Forum: Young people told us the location of their placement is key to their success. They also said it would be good to be involved in foster carer training.

The Head of Joint Commissioning – Children - NHS Greater Huddersfield and NHS North Kirklees CCGs supports the outcomes and principles of the Strategy. The detailed commissioning plans that will sit under these must approach sufficiency in terms of education, health needs, and specialist accommodation needs. A number of Kirklees' children need highly specialist placements and education settings. These are currently only found out of area and the quality of these placements is questionable and the cost high. Local specialist provision would keep these children in Kirklees, improve the quality of their care, and keep the costs lower.

Virtual School Headteacher: The Strategy needs more links to the High Needs Review and a clearer statement of our legal responsibilities around educational placements for looked after children, as stated in the new statutory guidance.

Head of Service, Education Safeguarding and Inclusion: Agrees with the above and suggests work through the High Needs Review and this Strategy should be aligned.

Independent Chair, Kirklees Safeguarding Children's Board): Approves of the Strategy, but would recommend further emphasis on community resources and the new local provider network (which will improve quality, skill exchange, and local relationships).

Commissioning Manager: Fully agrees that we need to develop local provision but we need to look at all options for local provision on a case-by-case basis (not focus exclusively on in-house provision), with clear costings. Reducing the number of beds in residences might not be effective, according to the 2016 Narey report, and avoiding institutionalisation is more important. Training and staff culture in residential homes should be addressed.

5. **Next steps**

- Continue to develop the draft in line with the comments above and from Corporate Parenting Board;
- Fill in baseline and target information in collaboration with the Performance team;
- In collaboration with the Specialist Accommodation Board and education and health colleagues, develop a more detailed understanding of the numbers that could stay in or return to Kirklees and the specialist accommodation, education placements, and health service requirements for this; and
- Present financial implications to Executive Team.

6. **Officer recommendations and reasons**

1. That members of Corporate Parenting Board note the content of this report and the draft Children's Interim Sufficiency Strategy and Action Plan (2018-19) (Appendix 1);
2. To ask Corporate Parenting Board to comment on the draft Strategy and Action Plan during and after the session to contribute towards its further development (Appendix 1).

7. **Cabinet portfolio holder's recommendations**

N/A

8. **Contact officers**

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9. **Background Papers and History of Decisions**
N/A
10. **Service Director responsible**
Elaine McShane (Family Support and Child Protection)

[PICTURE OF CHILDREN]

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Children and Young People's
Interim Sufficiency Strategy:
Improving local placements for our looked after children

2018-2019



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Introduction: Kirklees, the challenge, and our approach

The Council is working to constantly improve the lives of children and young people in Kirklees so they can have the best start in life possible. This includes ensuring each child and young person in our care has safe and secure relationships in a good home, a good education that helps them achieve their potential, and the right health support when they need it. Since 2005, the number of looked after children in Kirklees has increased from 312 to 656 (November 2017). The local market has been unable to meet demand because of the speed and size of this demand shift, so more of our children and young people have moved outside Kirklees.

Moving into care is usually a difficult experience. It can bring with it a significant sense of loss. Older children may experience significant problems at school not just due to the earlier problems that led them into care, but also from other factors such as having to travel to maintain a stable school placement and losing friends and support networks, which are crucial for our children and young people's wellbeing. Being placed out of area exacerbates these challenges and makes it harder for us as Corporate Parents to quickly and effectively respond to the child or young person's needs.

This is one of the major challenges in the District and nationally. As of 31 March 2017, 40% of looked after children in England were placed outside their home area ([link](#)). This will continue to be a challenge as the number of children in care nationally continues to rise ([link](#)). In Kirklees, 23% of Kirklees foster carers are aged 56 and above, meaning they may retire soon, and we do not have enough new foster placements to offset these retirements. We also already have an above average number of children and young people in residential care, which is expensive and will become more so without the right plan. Without the right strategy and partnerships, this will impact on the long-term sustainability of our local offer, meaning the District will not have enough placements to cope with local future need.

This is our strategy to improve the availability of local placements and supporting services for our looked after children and young people: ensuring we have enough ('sufficient') placements and supporting services (like education and health) to meet local demand. Our ultimate aim is to improve the wellbeing of those of our children and young people currently placed out of area by securing enough placements for them to move back, when it's in their best interest, and preventing future children and young people facing the challenges and disruption of being moved out of area in the first place. We will do this in three ways.

We will improve early intervention to help children and young people stay with their families when safe and we will support our children and young people leaving care so they do not need to come back into care. This will mean more local placements are reserved for those that need them most.

We will increase the number of local family-setting (especially foster) placements. Family-setting placements emulate a healthy home life, providing secure relationships that make it

easier for our children and young people to achieve their potential and live happy lives. More local foster placements will also mean our residential care is reserved for those in need of more specialised support.

We will improve placement stability. Moving placements can be extremely disruptive, especially when they involve moving area, which can mean losing important support networks that the child is developing or losing an educational placement if the child moves far enough. Children and young people only move placements when they absolutely have to, which means that when they need to move either their needs have changed or the placement was not the right match in the first place. We will strengthen the involvement of education and health partners in placement decisions, so that a child doesn't lose their placement because they don't have the right education or health support. We will also ensure that we act on information from in-depth return home interviews when a child goes missing from care, since this is often a sign they are struggling to cope with something that may escalate further.

We will increase the number of in-house residential placements with four or less beds either by reducing the beds in existing children's homes or purchasing properties and converting them into small residential homes. Our children and young people have complex needs and placing large numbers of them together can create complications that are difficult for our staff and for our children and young people to manage. This strategy was discussed with our Children in Care Council and our Care Leavers Forum, and the children who were in smaller residential placements said they were a lot happier since moving.

In all of our efforts, the voice of our children and young people will be central. This Strategy's details have been informed by engagement with our children and young people. The key messages we have received from our children and young people are that they want smaller residential homes and that they want to be involved in the recruitment and training of foster carers and other carers. Efforts are ongoing to strengthen the voice of the child in our decision-making and not every element is addressed in this Strategy. The Improvement Plan sets out further steps. However, to make it clear that we take the voice of the child seriously, our actions are set out concretely in our Voice of the Child Sufficiency Action Plan, appended to the Strategy.

In the course of the next year and a half, we will be prioritising the development of our understanding of local need. The High Needs Review will report in 2018 and we will use its findings in the preparation of our commissioning plans for the specialised residential accommodation that some of our children and young people need and communicate its findings to local education and health partners as well as external placement providers to extend and improve the District's offer to our looked after children and young people. When we have filled our new Head of Sufficiency post, they will build on this in producing and delivering a five-year Sufficiency Strategy.

Appended to this document alongside the Voice of the Child Sufficiency Action Plan, there is a Service Action Plan based on our professionals' and practitioners' expertise in addressing sufficiency issues.

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Ofsted's recommendations and the Improvement Plan

In June 2017, Kirklees entered into an Improvement Partnership with Leeds City Council. This Strategy forms part of Kirklees Council's efforts to deliver the outcomes stated in the Improvement Plan, which are, in turn, our response to Ofsted's recommendations following their September-October 2016 inspection ([link](#)).

Following the inspection, Ofsted recommended that Kirklees 'increase the availability of local placements to ensure that children and young people do not need to be placed at a distance from their communities' (recommendation 20) ([link](#)). In the Improvement Plan, we committed to deliver this outcome through a Sufficiency Strategy and accompanying Action Plan.

Other documents

This Strategy's scope is limited to managing and meeting accommodation need for our looked after children in a way that is sensitive to local education and health support provision. It is part of a wider strategic framework, aiming to improve the lives of all children and young people and their families living in Kirklees:

- Our Corporate Plan sets the context for everything we do. In our new Plan, we have committed to do better at enabling people and communities to address problems independently, share more knowledge, information, and resources with local partners, and adapt our work to the different communities and places we work in: recognising and starting from their unique, different strengths.
- This Sufficiency Strategy sets out ways of improving children's wellbeing. With partners from across the health sector, we are aiming to deliver the health and wellbeing outcomes agreed in the [Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy \(2014-2020\)](#) ([link](#)). The [Economic Strategy \(2014-2020\)](#) ([link](#)) sets out priorities complimentary to those in the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, recognising the role of inequality in the health and wellbeing of all Kirklees' residents, and its implementation will support this Strategy. These strategies are currently being updated.
- We are developing a Children and Young People's Plan, setting out our overall approach to improving children and young people's lives in Kirklees and we are looking at developing a distinct strategy regarding children subject to safeguarding activity.
- We are developing a new Corporate Parenting Strategy, which sets out how we plan to ensure we deliver on our responsibilities as corporate parents.
- The Early Help Strategy will help families stay together and ensure our children and young people only come into care when they need to.
- Future in Mind: Transformation Plan 2015-2020 ([link](#)) sets out how Kirklees is working together with the NHS to provide better outcomes for children and young people's mental health and this strategy will help deliver its commitment to protect those at

risk of serious mental health problems through its emphasis on early intervention services.

- Ensuring we have the right offer is particularly important for children and young people living with special educational needs or disabilities. This Strategy compliments the outcomes stated in the Joint Strategy for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities ([link](#)).

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The statutory duty to secure sufficient placements and supporting services

The Strategy sets out our approach for 2018-19 on meeting the requirements of section 22G of the Children Act 1989 in line with the statutory guidance 'Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked after Children' (2010).

Section 22G ([link](#)) applies to all children looked after under the Children Act. It requires local authorities to secure, as far as practicable, enough accommodation to meet the needs of any children whose circumstances are such that living within the local authority's area would be consistent with their welfare.

The UK Government guidance 'Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked after Children' sets out a check-list for what counts as meeting the sufficiency duty:

1. The right placement is available at the right time.
2. There is a range of local placements and supporting services that are sufficient to meet the needs of all Looked after Children or a plan to move towards that position.
3. There is consideration of the service requirements of children that are looked after, on the edge of care, at risk of custody, and/or leaving care.
4. Working with local partner agencies and neighbouring authorities to ensure this need will be met and that young people with this need receive the support they need.¹

The guidance also sets out the building blocks of effective commissioning for children and young people in care: high quality assessments, care planning, and placement decisions.

This Strategy's approach has been developed in line with that guidance. Given that we do not have enough local placements for our looked after children and young people, this is the plan to move towards that position as referenced under (2) of the check-list.

The Corporate Parenting Board will review our progress against the Service Action Plan appended to the Strategy. Progress against our key indicators will be presented to Corporate Parenting Board every six months.

¹ Partners have obligations under the Children Act 2004 section 10 in relation to improving the outcomes for children in the local area.

Enabling families to stay together and children and young people to be independent and leave care early

Early help delivers better outcomes for children and families and is less expensive than late intervention.

Problems at home become entrenched when left too long, which makes them more disruptive for the children and family and harder and more expensive to solve. It also raises the risk of a child being taken into care, which is disruptive for the child and expensive for the Council.

Early help means managing challenges when they are easier to solve, to prevent their problems becoming entrenched. It also means targeted and evidence-based responses to entrenched problems to support a child or young person to stay at home when safe. This is an urgent issue, as without any intervention the number of looked after children is predicted to rise. Entrenched problems increase pressure on social services. Early help helps manage that pressure, which helps social workers make high-quality, cost-effective decisions. Our Early Help Strategy sets out how we will ensure our early help offer continues to improve.

We want a full range of care and support packages to support children and young people living with disabilities or health (including mental health) problems. Disabilities and health problems create challenges at home that make it more likely that a child or young person will be looked after, but the right support can help them and their families manage. It is more difficult and costly to complete health assessments on our children and young people once they are placed outside the District, making it harder to ensure we're meeting all the needs of those with complex health problems, including mental health problems.

We will support our children and young people exiting care early

When safe, young people will be enabled to return home or exit care early. To this end, we will try to support more children and young people into adoption and other permanence arrangements. We will work more closely with One Adoption West Yorkshire, who provide our adoption services. We will also support children and young people to exit care earlier through more Special Guardianship Order and Child Arrangement Order placements.

We will build our relationships with private sector providers of both fostering and residential services. We will meet regularly with private sector fostering and residential services to understand their capacity and challenges and to share relevant policies and procedures.

We will have effective support for young people entering adulthood, including a range of appropriate semi-independent accommodation placements and high quality personal advisor support. This will assist them in exiting care early, if beneficial to their wellbeing. If we don't

have this semi-independent accommodation available, these young people might be placed out-of-area.

Accommodating young people leaving custody

If a child or young person leaves custody following a criminal offence and they do not have a parent or guardian, cannot return home, or were previously in care, the local authority will be responsible for providing accommodation. Some of these children and young people have very complex needs, which require highly specialist support. We have to plan our specialist placement provision in line with what we know about children and young people due to leave custody. We need the right kind of local placements and supporting services for these young people. Without the right specialist provision, we will have to place them out-of-area.

We will continue the good work of the dedicated Looked After Children team within the Young Offenders Team: since 2010/2011 we have seen a gradual year on year reduction in the percentage offending of LAC young people, from 12.8% (10/11) to 6% (15/16).

We will also continue the good restorative justice work, delivered by schools, partners, and the Council through the Youth Offenders Team and others. **EVIDENCE OF IMPACT**

More local placements of the right kind

Our broad approach: a mixed offer of mostly family settings complemented by good relationships with private providers that helps children return home when safe.

More foster placements

Wherever it is in their best interests, children and young people will be placed in family settings with friends and family (Connected Persons) or foster placements rather than residential settings.

The local children's residential market is not currently meeting local need either due to availability, quality or affordability. We have above average numbers of children in residential care. In November 2017, 11.2% of Kirklees' looked-after-children, comparable local authorities have around 8.2%. Residential care placements are expensive and this high proportion in residential care affects the sustainability of our offer.

We will continue our mixed approach of Council-run and commissioned provision and we welcome private placement providers, who develop the local placements market. Like most local authorities, however, we will try to increase the number of in-house placements to reduce our dependency on private-sector placements. In times of high-demand private sector providers cost more and we must then pay extra or find a provider out-of-area. The Specialist Accommodation project board will assess ways for the Council itself to provide more small children's homes so we have a sustainable local offer.

We have proportionately few foster placements in our care: 68% of our looked after children are in foster care compared to 73% in other local authorities' care. The use of the Council's own in-house foster carers for placements is also low at 34% of placements against 44% for our comparators. In April 2017 there were 169 Kirklees Council carers offering 221 placements this equates to 1.3 placements per carer, the national average is 1.7 placements per carer.

With this in mind, increasing local fostering and other family setting placements and improving foster care retention are our key measures to guaranteeing the sustainability of our local offer. We will try to lower the proportion of children placed in residential care by increasing the number placed in family settings such as foster care. Children in residential care aged 12 or below might especially benefit from being in foster care. These decisions will always be made with the best interest of the child in mind and in light of their views.

We know that word of mouth is the strongest advert for foster carers, so we will focus efforts on providing the best quality support to existing foster carers and encourage them to talk to people they know. This will also help improve retention.

The Head of Corporate Patenting is looking to meet with researchers from the University of Huddersfield to discuss options for collaborative research on local foster care retention.

The key challenges to fostering in Kirklees are:

- We heavily rely on Independent Agency Foster placements (IFAs). There are currently 153 IFA placements and 75% of these placements are outside Kirklees.
- 23% of Kirklees foster carers are aged 56 and above. We need to make plans now for their potential retirement as well as other carers deregistering.
- Kirklees Councils' recent foster carer recruitment campaigns have not been as successful as anticipated and have not kept pace with carers de registering or retiring.
- The introduction of Staying Put has reduced the local foster placement capacity as young adults are now staying in their foster placements after their 18th Birthday.
- There are especially few foster carers for older children, long term placements, sibling groups and young people with complex needs.
- Staying Put arrangements give children and young people the right to stay in their foster placement after they are 18, so long as both parties agree. Whilst this brings many benefits for the child or young person, this reduces the number of foster placements.

Small residential homes

Our children and young people in residential care have told us they feel safer and enjoy home more when they are in smaller residential homes. They highlighted how larger homes have more children and young people with more complex needs together and that this heightens the risk of conflict and disorder in the home.

We will monitor the Government response to the 36 recommendations in the Review into Foster Care in England by Sir Martin Narey and Mark Owers. We will consider the impact of the Government response on providing sufficient accommodation in developing the next, 5-year Sufficiency Strategy (2020-25).

Specialist residential homes

We know the majority of badged 'therapeutic or specialist' residential placements do not currently deliver the outcomes we expect or value for money. We will explore other options to meet needs.

For some of our children and young people, specialist placements within fostering or residential care can be the best way to give them the best start in life. A small number of our children and young people, often with autism, learning difficulties, and/or emotional and behavioural issues, need highly specialist placements and educational settings. Our local offer

for these children requires improvement so that more of these children are placed locally. This should reduce costs and help ensure the placements are of the highest quality possible. To ensure we have the right offer for those of our children with such complex needs, we need to fully understand their needs. The findings of the High Needs Review (ongoing) will be vital for this. It will inform our understanding of local need and decision-making around priorities for developing our local offer in future commissioning. Some of our young people with the most complex needs will transfer to Adult's Services on or close to their 18th birthday. We will support them in this transition.

We will review our commissioning practices

A key means to achieving this outcome of this strategy is securing the placements and services needed to meet need when a child or young person's wellbeing is better served in care. We need to ensure our placement offer is sustainable, so we will review and improve our arrangements for purchasing placements. These might include:

- Regional and/or sub-regional collaboration;
- framework contracts;
- block and/or spot purchasing;
- partnering with others, including another council or councils, businesses, and/or charities and voluntary organisations.

We will review our current placements service, examining the efficiency and effectiveness of current arrangements. The service will manage all placement referrals and use a robust quality assurance and contract management model to ensure good quality matches and sustainable investments.

Quality assurance is a priority. There will be robust quality assurance and oversight. For children's homes, there are monthly Regulation 44 visits. There are also regular manager reports. We are developing regular foster care business meetings, which will take place every 6 weeks. We are also creating new practice standards for our fostering service and a quality assurance officer role within the Placements Team to drive up standards in private sector residential and fostering provision.

Placement stability

Children and young people have the best start in life when they develop secure attachments with their carers. Evidence shows that moving care placements reduces children's opportunities to develop these attachments. It may also worsen any behavioural and/or emotional difficulties. Moving placements only happens when absolutely necessary, so moving placements means that the child or young person and the placement either no longer match or that they did not match in the first place.

The main ways to ensure placement stability are: proactively asking our children and young people whether they are happy in their placements, effectively responding when they're not and as early as possible, and ensuring they have the right health support and education placement alongside their accommodation.

We and our partner agencies will always look to improve the quality of our wrap around care and improve support to carers. Our new Quality Assurance Officer role in the Placements Team will help make this happen.

Speaking to our children and young people

Research and reviews from Laming to Munro emphasise the importance of the voice of the child in ensuring children are effectively supported and protected. Children's services need to build the right relationships and trust with our children and young people to enable them to voice their concerns, share their views and be involved in agreeing the support and plans that are right for their needs. Kirklees will have better services, better outcomes and better future if our children's voices are at the heart of everything we do. In line with the Improvement Plan, this is becoming a shared value and central to the work of our services and partners.

In 2016 a survey was sent to 165 young people placed out of area to which 20 responses were received. For this small quota of young people most were happy with their placements but the overarching issue was around contact with family and friends i.e. wanting to see them more. Whilst placing young people out of area makes contact more difficult, the Local Authority has a duty to ensure that good quality, regular contact happens (unless restrictions apply) and this should be facilitated by giving whatever support is needed. For any young person moving placement either within or out of area there are also the obvious issues of feeling nervous / frightened as they move to somewhere new and have to get to know new people and used to new surroundings. Having to change school is a further disruption as they leave familiarity and their school friends behind.

When a child or young person goes missing, it is an indication that something is wrong and they are struggling to cope. Being away from their placement also makes them more likely to be a victim of crime, including child sexual exploitation. In-depth return home interviews provided by someone the child or young person trusts are an effective way for us to check-in

with the child and identify why they are struggling. We will ensure we provide timely return home interviews given by someone the child or young person trusts.

In April and May 2018, a draft version of this strategy was discussed with the Children in Care Council and the Care Leavers Forum. In Appendix 1, we have our 'Voice of the Child' Sufficiency Action Plan. It sets out what the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum told us and our response. This is to demonstrate how the voice of the child is helping to design our local offer.

What our Looked after Children and Care Leavers told us:

- "Make sure you listen to children and young people to get their views on their placements"
- "Care Leavers should be in a comfortable placement so they can feel at home"
- "Make sure that people in care feel important"
- "Not enough attention given to Care Plans and Pathway Plans"
- "Kids in care and care leavers don't know what social workers expect of them"

Extracts from "Views of Children" by the Kirklees Children's Rights Team, March 2017

The Children in Care Council also provided us with a check-list for what counts as a great placement:

'Voice of the child' 'great placement' check-list

A list produced by our Children in Care Council (May 2018)

1. The child or young person is given skills for living independently
2. A non-judgmental carer that respects the child or young person
3. The family positively including the child or young person in activities with the extended family or young people they live with, to create good memories
4. A variety of placements are available, so the placement chosen suits the person's needs
5. The carer and support workers listen to the voice of the child or young person
6. The carer helps with and promotes education and extra-curricular activities
7. The child or young person lives with the right number of people
8. The child or young person lives in a safe and accessible area
9. The carer understands the child's family dynamics and culture
10. The carer allows the child or young person personal space

Education needs will be central in every placement decision

Alongside health and a good home life, education is one of the most important considerations in delivering good placements for our children and young people. When we don't have the right education placement locally for one of our children or young people, they may have to move out-of-area to ensure they get an appropriate education placement. Placement stability is key to good outcomes for our children and young people. Getting the right educational decision first-time is crucial for placement stability.

Alongside monitoring the attendance and attainment of children and young people in our care, the Kirklees Virtual School flags difficulties children and young people may have in their education placements. This can indicate support is needed to help keep them in their placement. We will involve the Virtual School in all placement moves from the earliest possible stage so educational requirements are considered.

Finding a school place can be complicated for the small number of children and young people requiring specialist placements with on-site education, such as some of those living with complex disabilities, or those with complex emotional, behavioural, and social needs. When education is an afterthought or education needs are not thoroughly assessed, it can lead to a child or young person having a place to live without the right high quality school placement to match their sometimes complex needs. This leads to education placement breakdown. This is disruptive in itself, but it can also then result in a child or young person having to move home in order to stay in education if there is no alternative nearby.

The Virtual School will liaise with SENACT to ensure children with special education needs are identified on the Placement Referral Form prior to commencing the placement search. SENACT will be involved at all stages and always before any education package is chosen.

We will strengthen our relationships with both mainstream and specialist education providers and look at ways to provide more bespoke education provision locally to meet our children and young people's educational needs.

This Strategy conforms with the latest statutory guidance on promoting the education of looked after children, which was published in February 2018 ([link](#)). The guidance means that:

- When we make a care plan for one of our children or young people, we have to set up a Personal Education Plan as part of that and at the same time.
- Social workers, the Virtual Headteacher, Independent Reviewing Officers, school admissions officers, and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities departments in Kirklees should work together to ensure appropriate education provision is arranged at the same time as the care placement, except in an emergency (p.6). In emergency placements, Kirklees has to find a suitable education placement for the child within 20 days (p. 11).

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Data development agenda

Effective commissioning requires that we collect the right data and draw the right conclusions about what it says. Alongside drawing on the findings of the High Needs Review to understand the most complex needs in the District, teams in the Council are developing baseline figures for more effectively monitoring things like our early help and intervention and prevention efforts. This will mean an intelligence-led response to the challenge of early intervention and prevention that is thereby more likely to deliver the outcomes our children and young people need and helping to ensure sufficient local placements and support services to meet those needs.

Next steps

By late 2018 we know we will have a better understanding of current and expected support needs and potential sites that can be converted into residential care. These will help us produce commissioning options that will inform the next 5-Year Strategy. We will also produce a Market Position Statement, so that private providers know what the needs of our local children and young people are and the volume of demand.

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APPENDIX 1: 'Voice of the Child' Sufficiency Action Plan

What our Children in Care Council told us (May 2018)	What we'll do about it
<p>When someone is a carer, they should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understand the needs of children and what motivates them - Teach life skills that young people will need in the future, including independent living skills - Be supportive - Be non-judgemental - Be flexible - Be understanding 	<p>Develop and implement a Corporate Parenting training package for elected members, social care and other Council staff, and partner agencies.</p> <p>Develop and deliver our local offer for care leavers as defined in the 2017 Children Act.</p> <p>Improve training to foster carers and residential staff.</p> <p>Implement better quality assurance in relation to purchased placements.</p>
<p>When someone becomes a foster carer, their extended family should receive training on how to behave appropriately with the child or young person</p>	<p>There is currently some training available to extended family members. We will look to extend this to more family members with regular contact with those of our children and young people in foster care, developing a skilled, informed team around the child.</p>
<p>When residential homes (in-house and private) recruit, they should include children and young people on the recruitment panels</p>	<p>This will be made a requirement for recruitment processes in residential care.</p>

When the Council recruits a foster carer, children and young people should be involved	We will start to involve young people in foster carer recruitment events, when appropriate. However, there is a regulatory process for the recruitment of foster carers that includes analysis of their history and appearance before a panel. We will find ways of involving our children and young people as much as possible, including in the developing recruitment material.
When children are in care, there should be no more than 4 children or young people in total in their placement	The Sufficiency Strategy seeks to develop smaller children's homes with occupancy four and below. Current mainstream homes are now operating as an occupancy of four residents.
When a child or young person is in care, their carer should start planning them leaving care and thinking about the skills they need earlier	Skills training for carers will incorporate the local offer for care leavers that is currently being developed.
Police come to care homes too frequently	Residential staff and foster carers will continue to receive training in restorative ways of working to improve conflict resolution.

What our Care Leavers Forum told us (April and May 2018)	What we'll do about it before the end of 2019
<p>When a young person is leaving care and moving into independent living, they need:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An introduction to independent living; 2. in-depth skills in money management (including budgeting, debt management, bills, and the cost of living), shopping, cooking, cleaning, and other skills; 3. support with home decoration, repairs, and maintenance; 	<p>Local care leavers offer</p> <p>Being developed. Act says what it has to include.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4. more resources for emotional resilience; 5. mental health support; 6. more housing options; 7. housing with wifi; 8. housing in a good location; and 9. housing options in their Pathway Plan. 	
<p>When a young person lives in foster care, they should be able to ask to stay in the home until they're 21</p>	<p>The Council actively encourages foster carers to become involved in Staying Put arrangements. However, foster carers are volunteers and it is their choice if they wish to care for an adult post-18.</p>
<p>When a care leaver finishes University, they should have housing available</p>	
<p>When a care leaver lives in semi-independent accommodation, they should receive more support from staff</p>	
<p>When supported lodgings providers are trained, young people should be involved</p>	
<p>The Leaving Care Grant should be £250 higher to reflect the higher cost of living</p>	<p>Analysis to take place of the Kirklees Leaving Care Grant compared with other authorities in the reason and evidence to be gathered to give consideration to this request.</p>
<p>When a young person leaves care, they should have accommodation available</p>	<p>The Specialist Accommodation Board is looking at needs for specific groups. Young people leaving care are included as a specific group. Discussions are already taking place between the Council and local partners.</p>

APPENDIX 2: Service Action Plan

This Action Plan and services' progress against it will be monitored by the Corporate Parenting Board. It is not a list of everything we will be doing, but a statement of the key performance measures by which the success of our Strategy will be evaluated. It is therefore an accountability document in line with the Council's move towards Outcomes-Based Accountability. The progress against the performance measures will be monitored monthly and there will be six-monthly updates to the Corporate Parenting Board with commentary from those identified in the relevant column. Decisions about modifications to this Action Plan will be approved at Corporate Parenting Board. For example, as baselines become available, Corporate Parenting Board will need to approve measure targets and actions to achieve them.

Our key indicator is the proportion of looked after children placed outside Kirklees, which cuts across all three of our main outcomes:

Indicator	Baseline (date)	Target (date)	Rationale for target	What will be done?
% of Looked After Children placed more than 20 miles outside Kirklees	???	TBC	<p><i>Why not a higher target?</i></p> <p>This is an Interim Strategy that sets out what we will do whilst developing the detailed knowledge base to get a longer-term Strategy right. The main local challenge is a lack of local places. It takes time to develop local placements because that are high-quality. Our focus on improving the support offer to foster-carers will also not have an immediate effect, but will in the long-run. Sufficiency is a complex issue that requires lots of time, attention, and coordination. A new Head of Sufficiency</p>	<p>In 2018, the new Head of Sufficiency post will be filled</p> <p>Every 6-months, the Corporate Parenting Board will review progress against the indicators and actions in this Action Plan</p> <p>At least every three months, the Head of Corporate Parenting will meet the CCGs, Virtual School, and external placement providers to discuss local health, education, and accommodation needs</p> <p>At least every three months, the Head of Service for Assessment and Intervention will meet the CCGs, Virtual School, and external placement providers to discuss early-help services</p>

			will mean more time can be given to solving the problems.	
# of children in care that have three or more placements moves on a year	???(???)	Reduction (???)	<p><i>Why not a lower target?</i></p> <p><i>Why these actions?</i></p> <p>The chief preventable reason for placement moves is that the placement doesn't meet all of the child or young person's needs, including care, education, and health needs. By continually learning what works well in our residential and family-setting placements, we can encourage good practice that is based on real experience. By involving the Virtual School at the earliest possible stage, we can ensure that our children and young people's education needs are fully met in any new placement. Going missing is an indication that something is wrong and it's important that we figure out what that is through timely return interviews. The new Resource Panel provides an important check that service decisions reflect overall requirements.</p>	<p>In 2018, the Virtual Headteacher will develop new services and resources for the education, health, and wellbeing needs of complex children</p> <p>In 2018, the Placements Team Service Manager will create a Quality Assurance Officer role within the Placements Team</p> <p>When children and young people identify good practice in their placements, the Children's Rights Team Manager will collect and communicate it</p> <p>On a regular basis, the Children's Rights Team will hold regular informal consultations with young people on foster care recruitment and developing new residential homes</p> <p>When a placement decision has to be made, the Placements Team will involve the Virtual School at the earliest possible stage</p> <p>Within 72 hours of one of our children or young people returning from being missing, the Team will provide return interviews or organise them with an external provider</p>

				<p>When agreeing a Care Plan with fostered children, the Fostering Team will ensure it is outcome-focussed</p> <p>Every X months, the new Resource Panel will meet to ensure there is senior management oversight of all placements</p>
# of foster care households	???(???)	Increase of 24 by end 2019 calendar year.	<p><i>Why not a higher target?</i></p> <p>A higher target is not currently realistic because we expect many foster carers to be retiring soon.</p> <p><i>Why these actions?</i></p> <p>We know that word of mouth is the strongest advert for foster carers, so we will focus efforts on providing the best quality support to existing foster carers and encourage them to talk to people they know.</p>	<p>In 2018, the Head of Corporate Parenting will meet with the Centre for Applied Childhood, Youth and Family Research (CACYFR) at Huddersfield University to find opportunities for collaborative research into the recruitment and retention of foster carers</p> <p>Every two months, the Head of Corporate Parenting will meet with the local Foster Care Association every two months to identify good practice and challenges in our support and recruitment/retention of foster carers</p> <p>In 2018, the Service Manager for Fostering will survey existing and former foster carers on their support needs</p>

				In 2018 and 2019, the Service Manager for Fostering will develop new training and support models that better meet the identified support needs of foster carers
# of in-house placements (residential and family-setting)	???	Increase	<p><i>Why not a higher target?</i></p> <p>We are looking to have more small residential homes, which will mean the number of homes will go up. This will be a significant investment, but we must balance that with financial sustainability.</p> <p><i>Why these actions?</i></p> <p>Our children and young people in residential care have told us they feel safer and enjoy home more when they are in smaller residential homes. They highlighted how larger homes have more children and young people with more complex needs together and that</p>	<p>At least every three months, the Head of Corporate Parenting or Head of Sufficiency will hold regular meetings with external providers to understand their future plans and how they impact on our provision</p> <p>In 2018, the Head of Corporate Parenting OR the Head of Sufficiency will meet regularly with the Specialist Accommodation Board to help identify sites potentially convertible into children’s homes</p> <p>In Summer 2018, the Commissioning Team will produce Commissioning Options papers for small residential homes and the Head of Corporate Parenting OR the Head of Sufficiency will share these with the Specialist Accommodation Board</p>

		<p>this heightens the risk of conflict and disorder in the home.</p> <p>We know that external providers are significant local providers. If they decide to provide more or less local placements, we need to know as far in advance as possible so we can prepare for any resulting changes in local demand. Also, telling external providers what our children and young people's needs are and how we expect them to change will ensure they are developing an offer that meets local demand.</p> <p>Converting existing homes into residential children's homes is cheaper and quicker than building new homes.</p>	
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Future strategy

What will be done?
When the High Needs Review is complete, the Head of Corporate Parenting will begin producing the next 5-year Sufficiency Strategy

Data development agenda

Some things are important for us to measure, but we don't measure them yet. Baselines will be available by the end of calendar year 2019.

What will be done?

The Head of Education, Safeguarding, and Inclusion is coordinating the High Needs Review, which will provide us with data such as:

- % of our children who need specialist health support
- % who need specialist education support and/or placement

We also want to know:

- % of local partners reporting high levels of confidence with locality early-help services
- % of partners who report improved satisfaction with partnership arrangements / joint working
- # of children and young people moved outside of Kirklees that have complex needs (emotional, behavioural, educational, and health)

APPENDIX 2: Our Approach to Commissioning

Improving commissioning is the primary way to deliver better outcomes. In delivering the outcomes set out in this Strategy, we will follow the four-stage commissioning model set out below:



Effective commissioning requires agreeing outcomes and strategic vision with partners and utilising our resources and assets in a more collaborative way. It also involves being clear about needs through comprehensive and high quality intelligence. It also requires us to involve children at each stage of the commissioning process. We will also adopting a whole system approach to designing our services:



(Wright et al, 2006)

The Council has an ambition to become an 'Outcomes-Led Commissioning Council'. Part of this means we will ensure our planning starts from outcomes (e.g. looked after children living in the District) and judge our success on the following:

- How much we have done (e.g. 20 more homes secured);
- How well we have done it (e.g. how long it took to secure the homes, how expensive it was);
- If anyone was better off (e.g. 60% improvement in placement stability).

Our Corporate Plan sets out how we want to prioritise work with people, partners, and places. This means doing more work to enable and facilitate the variety of strengths and capacities people have so they can live as independently as possible. It means working more with partners and being clear about what our unique role in any partnership can be, focussing on only what we can do. It means focussing on the uniqueness of places, the unique capacities and strengths that differentiate each community and place and not taking a one-size-fits-all approach.

Once our approach is agreed, future Sufficiency Strategies will implement this new approach.

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APPENDIX 3: Looked After Children in Kirklees in November 2017

FIGURES TO BE UPDATED FOR FINAL DRAFT

A Snapshot of Our Looked after Children

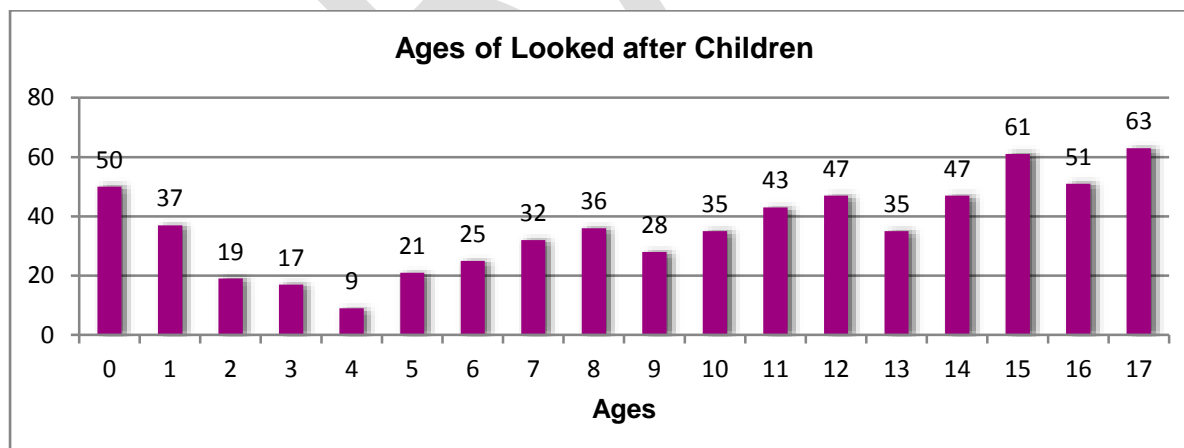
Our key aggregated needs assessment is our Joint Strategic Needs Assessment ([link](#)). Our Children's Rights Team also work with children to get their views and our Children in Care Council and Youth Council also work on this. We also monitor the needs of all children engaged with our services as part of our day-to-day work.

The number of looked after children has grown from just over 300 in 2005 to a peak of 705 in December 2016 and has since dropped.

The local population of all young people aged 0 -17 years living in Kirklees is increasing, and based on the current rate of Looked after Children which is 65.6 per 10,000 aged 0-17; this would mean that if we do nothing the looked after children's population could potentially increase to 708 by 2020 and to 745 by 2035.

Set out in this section is a snapshot of our current cohort of looked after children. Is CareFirst 11/17 the latest?

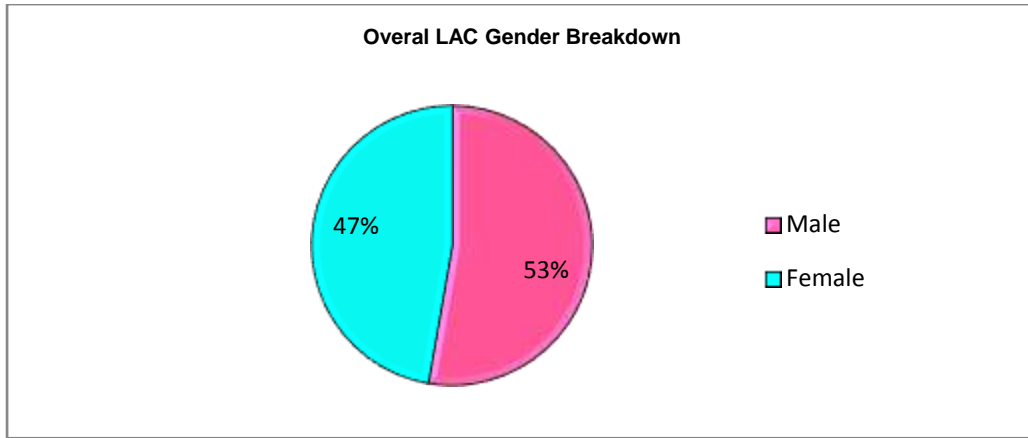
Table 1



Data from Carefirst 22.11.17

Table 1 tells us that 20% of looked after children in Kirklees are aged 4 and below, this is above the English average of 13%. Kirklees have 58% of looked after children aged 10 years and above this is lower than the English which is 62%.

Diagram 2

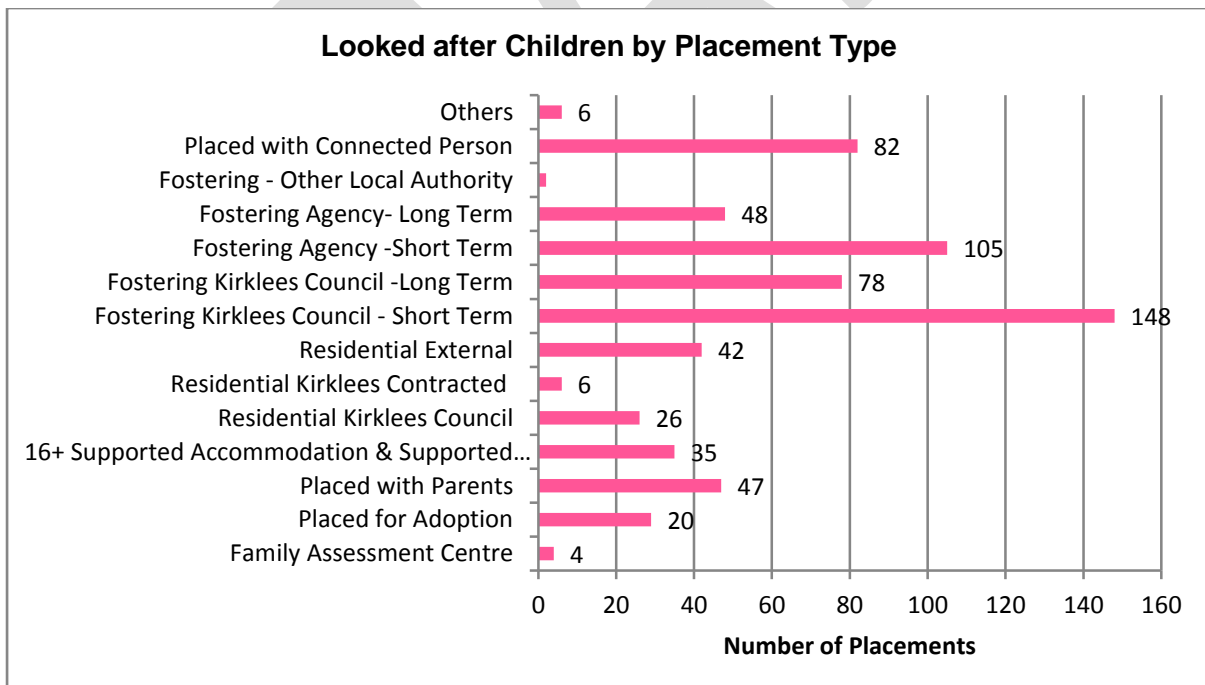


Data from Carefirst 22.11.17

The overall gender split of looked after children is 47% female and 53% male. This tells us that we need around 40 more placements for boys and young men than for girls and young women.

For Kirklees young people in residential care the gender split shifts to 34% female and 66% male. This tells us we need one third of residential placements suitable for the specific needs of girls and two thirds for boys.

Table 3



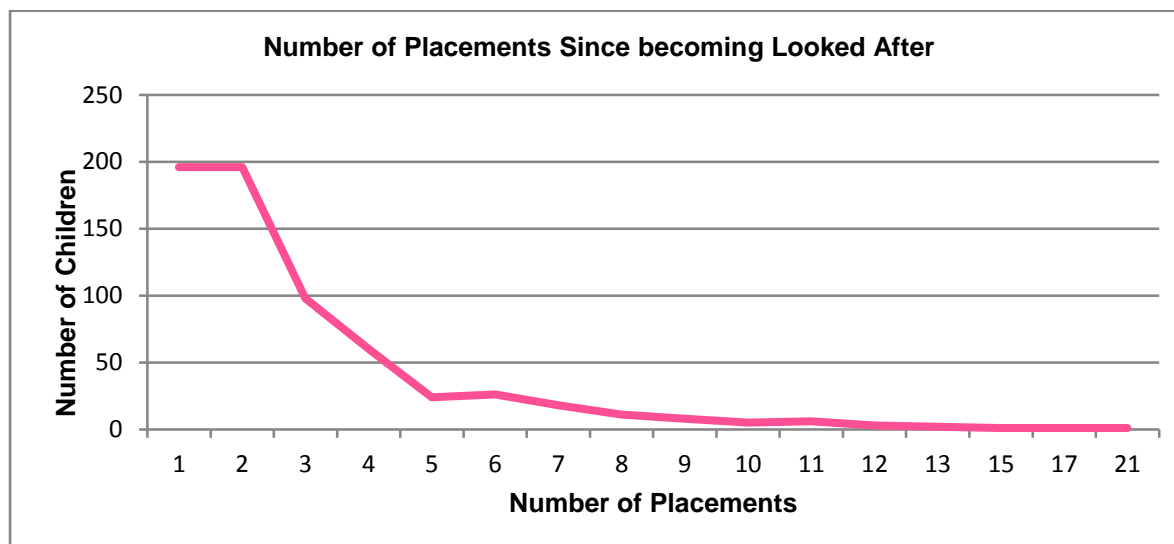
Data from CareFirst 22.11.17

Kirklees have more young people (11%) in residential care than our statistical neighbours and comparators (8%).

Kirklees have a total 58% of children in foster care. Kirklees have 34% of our total looked after children placed with our own foster carers compared to our comparators who have on 43.8%.

Number of Placements since becoming Looked After

Table 4



Carefirst 22.11.17

The table above sets out the number of placements each young person has had since coming into care.

- 70% have had 3 placements or less
- 147 have had between 4 and 9 placements since coming into care
- 19 children have had 10 or more placements since coming into care

Evidence shows that having multiple care placements reduces children’s opportunities to develop secure attachments. It may also worsen any existing behavioural and emotional difficulties. Therefore placement stability is something we will continue to strive to improve.

Age

In Kirklees 58% of looked after children are aged 10 or above. Children at this age are far more likely to be placed in out of area, specialist residential placements, which are costly. There is currently little or no choice in placement availability for this age group. Links to family and education placements frequently disrupted through lack of placement choice. Looking at new entrants into the care system we can see that 10-15 year olds make up 22% of new entrants.

Children and young people living with disabilities in Kirklees



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Corporate parenting resource pack

Foreword

Looking after and protecting children and young people is one of the most important jobs that councils do and when a child, for whatever reason, can't safely stay at home, it is up to us as the local authority to step in and give them the care, support and stability that they deserve. This isn't just up to the lead member or director of children's services – we need everyone looking out for our most vulnerable children and young people, and every councillor has a role to play. This pack aims to help them fulfil that role as effectively as possible.

Being a corporate parent means doing everything we can for every child in the council's care – and every care leaver – to give them the opportunities that other children get. This covers everything from keeping an eye on their progress at school, to looking after their health and wellbeing, to preparing them for life as independent adults – and supporting them when they get there. We need to be ambitious for the children in our care, encouraging them to dream big and take chances even if they don't feel like that's been an option in the past.

It's also about the smaller things that make life more fulfilling. It's about making sure children receive birthday cards, are rewarded when they do well (and supported when they don't), get to take part in the activities they enjoy and have new experiences. It's about making sure someone's on the end of a phone when a care leaver is having a hard day at work or university, or is there to help them navigate an application form. It's about doing the things you'd do for your own children.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 defined for the first time in law the responsibility of corporate parents to ensure, as far as possible, secure, nurturing and positive experiences for looked-after children and young people, and care leavers. Councils across the country already do a fantastic job of this, and we've highlighted some examples in this pack. We'd be delighted to hear of any others to add to our online good practice database for others to learn from, to make sure every councillor has the tools they need to be a good corporate parent.

Many of the children who come into our care will face more challenges before they reach adulthood than any child should have to. It is our duty and our privilege to fight their corner and give them every opportunity to reach their potential.

Councillor Richard Watts

Chair, LGA Children and Young People Board

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Corporate parenting an introduction

What is a corporate parent?

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 says that when a child or young person comes into the care of the local authority, or is under 25 and was looked-after by the authority for at least 13 weeks after their 14th birthday, the authority becomes their corporate parent. This means that they should:

- act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and young people
- encourage them to express their views, wishes and feelings, and take them into account, while promoting high aspirations and trying to secure the best outcomes for them
- make sure they have access to services
- make sure that they are safe, with stable home lives, relationships and education or work
- prepare them for adulthood and independent living.

As corporate parents, it's every councillor's responsibility to make sure that the council is meeting these duties towards children in care and care leavers. Children can be in care in a range of different settings, with the authority acting as corporate parent to all of them. This includes foster care, children's homes, secure children's homes and kinship care.

Every councillor and officer within a council has a responsibility to act for those children and young people as a parent would for their own child. Lead members, those on corporate parenting panels, and overview

and scrutiny committees will have particular responsibilities, but for all councillors, this is where your role as the eyes and ears of the community is particularly important. Are there youth services in your ward that provide a vital service for looked-after children, and if so, how are you supporting them? Is there a children's home or care leaver accommodation in your ward? If foster carers in your ward provide care for disabled children, do they need any help to improve accessibility of local services? What feedback are you getting from residents? It's important to remember the need to protect the privacy of these children and young people, so work with officers to find out how you can best provide support.

For both officers and councillors, being a corporate parent means that when any service is being reviewed that could impact upon looked-after children and care leavers, or when you're hearing feedback from, or reports about, children in the council's care, consider:

“What if this were my child?”

What can we do to put this right?”

It is important to remember that, just as not all children are the same, looked-after children and care leavers are not one homogenous group. While it is true that some will have experienced trauma and disruption in their lives and need support to cope with those experiences, others will have adjusted well to being in care and may be flourishing. As corporate parents, councillors need to recognise the uniqueness of the children in their care, and make sure each child is getting what they need to do their best.

Corporate parenting panel

As corporate parents, all councillors should seek to stay informed about children in the council's care, and care leavers. However, the establishment of a corporate parenting panel can provide a useful forum for regular, detailed discussion of issues, and a positive link with children in care forums. Members of the corporate parenting panel can also use their position to raise awareness of the role amongst colleagues, and provide support to the lead member for children's services.

It can be helpful to include senior officers on the panel, including from areas such as health and housing that have a significant impact on children in care and care leavers. In two-tier areas, consider how district council colleagues can be included.

The corporate parenting panel does not replace the duty of all councillors; members of all committees have a responsibility to consider how reports before them impact upon children in care and care leavers.

Working with partners

Under the Children Act 2004, local authorities have a duty to promote cooperation between 'relevant partners', including the police, the NHS and education providers, while those partners have a duty to cooperate with the local authority in turn. Guidance on the Act highlights that corporate parenting is a 'task [that] must be shared by the whole local authority and partner agencies'.¹ Councils should consider how their partners can help them to deliver their corporate parenting role, especially in relation to the provision of services. The NHS has a responsibility to make sure looked-after children receive the physical and mental health support that they need, for example, while close working between schools and the virtual school head (VSH) can help to improve outcomes for children and young people in care.

1 The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations
Volume 2: care planning, placement and case review

Information and data

The lead member for children's services and those on the corporate parenting panel should receive regular progress reports with regard to looked-after children and care leavers, while data will be available to all members through reports presented to Full Council and scrutiny committees.

Data will be able to provide an overview of medium-to-long-term trends, but statistics on their own are not enough. Make sure that data is presented with the necessary context and explanations – for example, if fewer children are going missing, is this the result of a positive intervention that should be continued? Or are there issues with reporting? Also look for direction of travel, and comparisons with your statistical neighbours and national data to see where the council is performing well and what could be better.

However, as any parent will know, situations with children and young people change quickly, and statistics will not provide all the real-time data that you need. The corporate parenting panel should keep in close contact with the children in care council, independent reviewing officers (IROs) and the director of children's services (DCS) to make sure they're receiving up-to-date information and can respond quickly if needed.

Safeguarding

Local authorities have a responsibility for safeguarding all children², but there are certain risks that particularly affect children in care and care leavers that corporate parents need to be aware of.

Children in care are three times more likely to go missing than children not in care.³ Processes must be in place to report missing children, take the appropriate action to find the child, and then to follow up with them when they are found to establish

2 Children Act 1989, Section 47

3 Ofsted (2013) 'Missing Children'

the underlying reasons for going missing. Corporate parents should be monitoring instances of children going missing, and how regularly return interviews are taking place (including for children placed out of area), as well as any emerging themes.

Child victims of modern slavery are particularly vulnerable, with nearly two thirds of trafficked children in local authority care going missing at some point; some within just one week.⁴ Councils need to make sure a strong multi-agency approach is in place to protect victims from further risk from their traffickers and preventing trafficking from taking place. In particular, there should be a clear understanding between the local authority and the police of roles in planning for this protection and responding if a trafficked child goes missing. Council representatives on local multi-agency safeguarding partnerships should make sure there is oversight of those arrangements, and monitor how well they are being implemented and reviewed.

Children in care are also disproportionately likely to be at risk of child sexual exploitation (CSE) than those in the general population, though it is important to remember that the vast majority of CSE victims are living at home. While those issues that led young people to need local authority care in the first place may increase their vulnerability to CSE, the experience of care itself can also be significant, especially if the child's placement lacks stability. Those at risk of CSE will need to have clear plans in place to protect them, and all social workers and partners should know how to spot signs of risk and deal with them appropriately.

The Local Government Association's (LGA) resource pack for councillors on tackling CSE, which contains detailed information on the issue, is available on: www.local.gov.uk/tackling-child-sexual-exploitation-resource-pack-councils

Sufficiency

The council has a duty⁵ to ensure, as far as is reasonably possible, sufficient accommodation is available locally to meet the needs of looked-after children and care leavers. This can be directly provided, or commissioned provision. Councils should regularly review their position on this, and report on how they intend to meet the sufficiency duty. This will be a valuable source of information for corporate parents.

Sources of information

Children in Care Council and other feedback mechanisms

There should be mechanisms in place to hear from children in care, with this information being reported regularly to the corporate parenting panel. There may also be an annual report submitted to Full Council. The format for reporting should be discussed with children and young people; some may wish to meet with councillors to discuss issues face-to-face, some may prefer to use mediators, and others may prefer online methods.

This feedback can provide rich information to act upon to make sure children in care and care leavers are getting what they need – from concerns about how they're kept informed about their placements, to how often they can see any siblings they aren't placed with, right down to whether they're happy with their pocket money.

Independent Reviewing Officer annual report

Amongst other duties, IROs are responsible for making sure that the local authority, as a corporate parent, gives proper consideration and weight to children's wishes and feelings in their care plans, and that it genuinely responds to a child's needs.

The IRO manager should produce an annual report for the consideration of the corporate parenting panel, which should include areas of good practice, and areas for development.

4 ECPAT (2014) 'Trafficked Children Briefing October 2014'

5 Children Act 1989, Section 22G

It should include commentary on issues including the participation of children and their parents, and whether any resource issues are putting the delivery of a good service to all looked-after children at risk.

Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy

Joint health and wellbeing strategies (JHWSs) are developed by local leaders to enable the planning and commissioning of integrated services that meet the needs of their whole local community. They particularly work to reduce health inequalities and support the needs of vulnerable groups and individuals; the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment underpinning the JHWS should include specific consideration of children in care and care leavers. The strategy (or associated delivery plan) will include targets, actions and who is responsible for implementing those actions.

The JHWS will be agreed by the health and wellbeing board, which should also monitor its implementation. Board meetings should be public, as should the JHWS, reports and meeting minutes.

Performance reports

Reports should be published regularly updating on key indicators in relation to children in care, including direction of travel. These indicators are part of a nationally collected dataset reported to government, and include information on placement stability, outcomes for children in care and adoption. Your authority may also report on other indicators according to local priorities.

Key priorities to consider include:

- placement stability
- health data
- educational attainment
- proportion of care leavers in education, employment or training
- children in care being placed out of area or at a distance
- proportion of care leavers that the council has regular contact with
- availability of suitable housing for care leavers.

Further information on these points is included throughout this pack.

Performance reports should be publicly available, and should also be presented to a locally agreed committee – for example the corporate parenting panel, the relevant scrutiny committee or cabinet.

Feedback from foster parents

Most children who are in care live with foster parents, and the quality and experience of those foster parents is key to delivering good outcomes for children. Each council will have different ways of gathering feedback from foster parents, including surveys and focus groups, along with different ways of reporting that feedback. The corporate parenting panel should receive updates on foster parent feedback, and this should be used to help inform support for foster parents, and to improve recruitment and retention.

The panel may also wish to consider ongoing input from foster carers by co-opting representatives onto the panel, or having regular meetings with carers to hear about experiences and receive feedback.

Stability Index

Stability for children in care, where they are in an appropriate placement that meets their needs, is an important element in helping them to secure positive outcomes. To help support improved placement stability, the Children's Commissioner is developing a Stability Index to measure three aspects of children's experiences of care – placement moves, school moves, and changes in social worker. This was first published in April 2017 on the Children's Commissioner's website, with the intention of an annual publication to provide analysis and support for councils to improve provision and outcomes for children in care.

Updates to legislation and practice

National Quality Standards for Children's Homes

The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 set out nine Quality Standards which outline the aspirational and positive outcomes that all children's homes are expected to deliver.

These quality standards are:

- quality and purpose of care
- children's views, wishes and feelings
- education
- enjoyment and achievement
- health and wellbeing
- positive relationships
- protection of children
- leadership and management
- care planning.

Further information on each standard is outlined in the Department for Education's (DfE) Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations.

New rules for out of area placements

Statutory guidance⁶ has strengthened the responsibilities of local authorities to notify other local authorities if they place a looked-after child within their area. Children's homes are also now required to notify their host local authority when a child is placed with them by another authority.

⁶ The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations
Volume 2: care planning, placement and case review

An 'out of area' placement is classified as one outside of the council's geographical boundary, but within an authority that it shares a boundary with. If a child is placed in an authority that doesn't share a geographical boundary with the placing authority, that is classed as an 'at a distance' placement.

A responsible officer should be formally appointed by the DCS to approve out of area placements; this will often be an assistant director. All at a distance placements must be signed off by the DCS. This does not apply where the placement is with the parent, a connected person or a foster carer approved by the responsible authority.

The child's IRO should always be consulted prior to an out of area placement being made, and the wishes of the child should be taken into account. The host authority should also be consulted in advance in the case of out of area and distant placements, and notified when the placement is made.

Staying put and staying close

'Staying put' is an arrangement that allows a looked-after child to continue to live with their foster carer after their 18th birthday, when they cease to be 'looked-after' by the local authority. This can take place where the council considers it appropriate, and both the young person and the carer want to enter a staying put arrangement.

A 'staying put' duty was introduced in the Children and Families Act 2014, which requires councils to monitor arrangements and provide advice and support (including

financial) to the foster parent and young person to facilitate the arrangement until the young person reaches 21.

A number of councils are currently trialling approaches to 'staying close' – a variant of staying put for young people leaving residential care – using funding from the DfE's Innovation Programme.

Sir Martin Narey's Independent Review of Residential Care

Sir Martin Narey was commissioned by the Prime Minister in 2015 to carry out an independent review of children's residential care.

The final report was published in July 2016 and contained 34 recommendations. These included ways to improve commissioning of places in children's homes, and to encourage development of the right sort of provision where it is needed.

Sir Martin also recommended a review of fostering provision, and the need for sharing of best practice across a range of areas.

Several areas of national policy were also singled out as needing review, including guidance around planning, the use of restraint, and the recording of criminal offences to avoid the unnecessary criminalisation of children in care. Changes to Ofsted inspections of children's homes and guidance were also recommended.

Finally, Sir Martin highlighted ways to improve staffing, including making sure social work students spent part of their placement within a children's home to make sure new staff are getting experience across the sector.

Fostering stocktake

Following Sir Martin Narey's recommendation in July 2016, the DfE has launched a fostering stocktake, which is also being led by Sir Martin. The aim of the stocktake is to understand what is working well and why, where improvements are needed to achieve better outcomes for children and to identify areas where further research is needed.

Evidence has been sought from a wide range of stakeholders, with the LGA as active participants, and the final report is due at the end of 2017.

Care Leaver Strategy 2016

The Government published a new Care Leaver Strategy in July 2016, entitled 'Keep on caring: supporting young people from care to independence'.

The strategy strengthens the role of the corporate parent, paving the way for the provisions in the Children and Social Work Act 2017; pledges to use Innovation Programme funding to trial new ways to support young people leaving care; and looks at improving the measurement of outcomes for care leavers.

Statutory guidance: Children who go missing from care

Statutory guidance was issued in January 2014 on children who run away or go missing from home or care.

The guidance highlights the need for a children's services authority to name a senior children's service manager as responsible for monitoring policies and performance relating to children who go missing from home or care. The responsible manager should understand the risks and issues facing missing children and review best practice in dealing with the issue.

Councils should agree a protocol, with the police and other partners, for dealing with children who run away or go missing in their area. Protocols should be agreed and reviewed regularly with all agencies and be scrutinised by local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. Where appropriate, agreed protocols should also be in place with neighbouring authorities.

Statutory guidance: Promoting the education of looked-after children

The Children and Families Act 2014 places a duty on every children's services authority in England to appoint a virtual school head (VSH) – an officer employed to make sure that the council's duty to promote the educational achievement of its looked-after children, those looked-after under special guardianship orders and adopted children, is properly discharged.

This statutory guidance, issued in July 2014, details that duty, and highlights that as corporate parents, councils should have high aspirations for the children they look after. The guidance outlines the ways in which authorities should work to close the attainment and progress gap between looked-after children and their peers, and to make sure that looked-after children have access to high quality education.

Statutory guidance: Special guardianship

New guidance was issued in January 2017 on special guardianship, outlining the issues local authorities should take into account when preparing reports for the court to apply for special guardianship orders. This includes information about the child's needs, and more detailed assessments of the child's relationship with, and the parenting capacity of, the prospective special guardian, both now and longer-term.

Children and Social Work Act 2017

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 defines, for the first time in law, the role of corporate parents, in addition to expanding and extending support for care leavers, for example through the publication of a 'local offer for care leavers' and making personal advisers available for care leavers up to the age of 25.

The Act also sets out revised arrangements for local multi-agency safeguarding partnerships to replace local safeguarding children boards (LSCBs). Under the new provisions, the local authority, clinical commissioning group and the police have a shared responsibility to make arrangements for themselves and 'relevant agencies' to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in the area. These statutory partners should make sure that all appropriate agencies are involved meaningfully in the partnership, and in particular should look at the engagement of schools, including academies and free schools, which have a key role to play in safeguarding children and young people.

Key lines of enquiry for all councillors

What are the characteristics of our cohort of children in care and care leavers?

Understanding the characteristics of children and young people is the first step to making sure that councils are able to act in their interests. The Children in Care team will have information on the children in the council's care, including:

- age and length of time in care
- where children are placed
- number of children in foster care, secure units, children's homes or other placements
- number of children awaiting adoption
- number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children
- placement stability
- accommodation and employment information about care leavers.

The corporate parenting panel and children's scrutiny committee should also receive information about social worker caseloads, to make sure that these are manageable and social workers are able to dedicate sufficient time to children, regardless of their needs.

Find out how this information compares to that of other authorities in your statistical group, and to the national picture, and look at direction of travel to help spot trends and areas of concern. Everyone with a local authority email address has access to LG Inform⁷, which provides a rich source of data for use by councils.

⁷ <http://lginform.local.gov.uk>

Do all of our councillors and officers know about their corporate parenting responsibilities?

Every councillor should ideally have training on their corporate parenting role when first elected. It is every councillor's responsibility to consider how new plans and policies might affect children in care, and to ask questions to ensure that those children are getting the best outcomes.

There are certain departments within a council that this will be particularly important for, such as education, housing and skills, but every part of the council needs to consider how its work impacts on children in care and care leavers. Look at how business plans and reports are structured – are officers proactively considering the needs of children in the council's care, or could this be improved?

Consider ways of raising awareness about the corporate parenting role, for example inviting all councillors to any celebration events, or inviting the children in care council to give feedback at Full Council or relevant committee meetings.

Do our partner agencies understand their role in supporting us as corporate parents?

The council has a duty, under Section 10 of the Children Act 2004, to promote cooperation between local partners to improve the wellbeing of young people in the area. This includes:

- physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing
- protection from harm and neglect
- education, training and recreation
- the contribution made by young people to society
- social and economic wellbeing.

Relevant partners include the police, probation services, the NHS, schools and further education providers.

The participation of partners in work to promote the wellbeing of all children and young people is vital, and it's important that they understand the specific needs of children in care so that this can be taken account of in their plans. For example, children in care are more likely to need support with their mental health, so colleagues in the NHS will need to consider this, while close working with the police to protect children who are at risk of going missing is essential. The phrase 'it takes a village to raise a child' is pertinent here; the council alone cannot provide all the support that a child in care needs, and all local services have a responsibility to keep children safe and well.

Consider how existing partnership forums, such as local safeguarding partnerships and health and wellbeing boards, are taking into account the needs of children in care in their plans, and consider whether other partners might wish to support your ambitions for children in care. For example, local businesses might consider offering apprenticeships to children in care, or leisure facilities might be able to offer discounts or free memberships.

How are we giving children and young people the chance to express their views, wishes and feelings? How do we know those are being acted on?

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously. Children should be involved in developing their care plans, and provided with advocates to help them do this wherever necessary. Likewise, care leavers need to be integral to the development of their pathway plans. Social workers make the necessary arrangements for this to happen, and IROs should ensure children and young people are listened to, and their views taken seriously. IROs should provide feedback on how well this is happening.

Most councils have established children in care councils, comprising any looked-after children and care leavers who want to take part (though some councils hold a separate care leavers' forum, depending on what young people ask for); for councils that haven't done so, it is worth considering this or an alternative method of feedback that's appropriate for looked-after children in the area. They should be able to set the agenda so that they can talk about what matters to them, and they should also decide how they would like to engage with the corporate parenting panel – whether that's through joint meetings, feeding back via a mediator, or something else.

Don't forget, however, that not all children will want to take part in group forums – there should be mechanisms set up to allow all children and young people to express their views in a way that they're comfortable with.

Also consider how to engage with children with special educational needs and disabilities, or those who may face cultural or

language barriers to engaging in feedback processes. In some cases, there may be safeguarding concerns about children with particularly complex needs being asked to take part in certain ways of giving feedback – there should be sensitive discussions between the children’s carers, advocates, the complex needs team, social workers and any other relevant professionals to find the best ways of engaging these children, who should still have the opportunity to say how they feel about their care.

Very young children may also find it harder to explain their wishes and feelings, and there will inevitably be children and young people who actively disengage from review meetings or feedback forums. Consider also those children placed out of area and at a distance. All looked-after children and care leavers have a right to be heard, and support must be put in place to give them that opportunity.

Review how feedback from children in care and care leavers is fed back to the whole council so that it can be factored into all relevant decisions – from housing and employment to education and public health.

Regardless of how feedback is collected, make sure that all children and young people (not just those who attend forums or participated in the feedback exercise) find out what has been done as a result of that feedback – show the young people that their voices are being heard, and changes are being made as a result.

How do we show children in our care that we have high aspirations for them?

Councils should be ambitious for every child in their care, working with and encouraging them to achieve their full potential, from overcoming early instability or trauma to progressing well in education, learning and training, depending on what’s most appropriate for the individual child.

It’s important to recognise that children in care are likely to have had very different experiences to their peers, therefore they might be at very different stages at school to other children of the same age. Additionally, in 2016, 57.3 per cent of children in care had a special educational need, compared to 14.4 per cent of all children.⁸ Providing the appropriate support can help children begin to overcome some of these difficulties, and research shows that children in care achieve better educational outcomes than children in need who stay at home, thanks to the protective factor of that care.⁹ The VSH will keep the council updated with how looked-after children are progressing in school, what support is provided to those with learning difficulties, and what action is being taken to help them reach their potential.

Children and young people thrive on recognition and reward, and it’s important to make sure that children in care receive this in the same way children in the rest of the population do. Award ceremonies, money for carers to take children for a celebration of a sports win, or a congratulations card from the lead member for a good school report will all help to reassure children that their efforts are recognised, supported and cared about.

As young people approach leaving care, they should be getting support from their social worker and a personal adviser to consider their future options. The VSH can make sure that young people are encouraged to think broadly and ambitiously about their options, and how to get there.

⁸ DfE (2017) ‘Outcomes for children looked-after by local authorities in England’

⁹ Rees Centre (2015) ‘Educational Progress of Looked-after Children’

Are we providing stable environments for children in our care?

Stability for children and young people is linked to improved mental health and educational attainment.¹⁰ It also helps children to develop relationships, feel more secure, and develop a sense of belonging.

That said, clearly statistics alone cannot be taken on face value. A child or young person should not stay in an unsuitable placement, while a change of social worker to one with a smaller caseload may ultimately be positive for the child – provided this is well managed.

Ten per cent of looked-after children had three or more foster care placements in 2015-16.¹¹ Analysis by the Office of the Children's Commissioner also found that 24 per cent of children experienced at least one school move that year, and 35 per cent saw their social worker change at least once.¹² One child in twenty experienced a change of placement, school and social worker over the course of a year.¹³

It's important that the council understands the reasons for any instability experienced by children, and takes action to limit this where it is not in their best interests, while recognising that some moves may be unavoidable.

What are we doing to look after the health and wellbeing of children in our care?

The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment should include consideration of the needs of children in care and care leavers¹⁴, with an accompanying Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS) in place to meet those needs and minimise inequalities. The health and wellbeing board is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the JHWS.

Particular issues to look out for include:

- mental health services – children in care are four times more likely to have a mental health difficulty than children in the general population¹⁵
- sexual health and family planning services – a quarter of young women leaving care are pregnant, and nearly half become pregnant within two years¹⁶
- drug and alcohol prevention services – a third of young people leaving care report problems with drugs or alcohol within a year.¹⁷

It's important to remember that while many children in care will be happy and well-adjusted, some will have experienced significant trauma, others will have lived unstable home lives, and some may lack good support networks. It's the responsibility of councils, as corporate parents, to work hard to tackle those issues and support the children in their care as they work to overcome difficulties that most children in the general population might never have to deal with.

If a child has experienced one or more placement moves, check whether health records are being passed between carers so

10 Children's Commissioner (2017) 'Stability Index for Children in Care: Technical Report'

11 DfE (2016) 'Children looked-after in England (including adoption) year ending 31 March 2016'

12 Children's Commissioner (2017) 'Stability Index for Children in Care: Technical Report'

13 Ibid

14 Statutory Guidance on Joint Strategic Needs Assessments and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategies

15 NSPCC (2017) 'Children in Care: Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health'

16 HM Government (2016) 'Keep On Caring: Supporting Young People from Care to Independence'

17 Ibid

that things like regular dental check-ups and standard vaccinations aren't being missed. Looked-after children should receive an annual health assessment (every six months for under-fives)¹⁸, but make sure these are being carried out in a child-friendly way – some children find these intrusive and feel they are unnecessary, so make sure they understand why they are taking place and that they know their right to opt out. Pass on feedback about assessments to the clinical commissioning group (CCG), which carries them out, and check whether this is being acted on.

Consider also issues like access to sports facilities and music lessons or other activities outside of school, which will contribute to a child's wellbeing and sense of belonging. What happens to these if a child changes placement? Are care leavers helped to keep accessing activities to support their wellbeing? And what is the local offer for care leavers?

A significant issue for looked-after children and care leavers is having a support network. If they aren't able to rely on family, and if they've experienced multiple placement or school moves, they might not have had a chance to build up a network of their own. Look at what's being done to help them develop relationships that will support them both now and when they leave care, and see what help is available locally – are there volunteer mentors or support groups, for example? All looked-after children should be offered the chance to have an independent visitor – a volunteer to befriend and support them consistently, providing a relationship with an adult who isn't their carer or social worker. Having stable placements and social workers will also help children to feel more secure and help them learn to develop positive relationships.

It is important to respect the diversity and individual needs of children in care and care leavers, and to make sure that those needs are responded to appropriately.

¹⁸ DfE (2015) 'Promoting the Health and Wellbeing of Looked-After Children'

This includes catering for the cultural and religious needs of children, and support for children's emotional wellbeing including, for example, issues around gender identity and sexuality.

What are outcomes like for our care leavers?

As a corporate parent, it's up to you to make sure that care leavers are getting the support they need to lead successful lives.

Care leavers can face a wide variety of challenges and, depending on their individual needs, they might need the support of their personal adviser and social worker to overcome their own hurdles to progress – and they need to know that support is there as they make the transition from a looked-after child to independent living.

Each young person's pathway plan should consider their options for when they've left school, whether they want to go on to further study or straight into the world of work. Work should start on this plan well in advance of a young person leaving care.

For those aiming for university and further education, children in care should be getting support at school to help them get achieve the best results they're capable of, and the VSH will know what interventions are working best or could be expanded. It's also important to look at pathway plans to see how children are reassured about university – it's a scary prospect for most young people, so care leavers need to know how they'll manage their finances, and where they can go during the long university holidays.

For those that don't go on to university, how many are not in education, employment or training – and what is the council doing to improve that? Are the statistics getting better or worse? Find out how care leavers factor into your authority's recruitment, skills and economic development strategies, including access to apprenticeships and work experience.

The availability of suitable housing is a key issue for care leavers, as is preparation for moving on to independent living. Care leavers should not be placed in bed and breakfast accommodation, and the type of housing that they will move into after leaving care should be included in the pathway plan. Some young people will need more support than others as they move towards independence, while all will need to know that there are fall-back options if things don't work out.

For more information on support and outcomes for care leavers, please see our 'Support for care leavers resource pack'.

How many children are we placing in out of area placements and why?

Every children's services council has a 'sufficiency duty', which states that it must take steps to secure, as far as possible, sufficient accommodation within its area to meet the needs of children that it is looking after. But there is no one-size-fits-all approach to meeting the needs of individual children, and there are often very good reasons why some children are placed outside their home authority. This could be for their own safety, to break gang affiliation, to place them near other family members or to access specialist services.

If your council is placing a higher proportion of children out of area than its statistical neighbours, or than it was two years ago, for example, it is important to ask why. Is this because the children need very specialist placements that can only be found elsewhere, or because there are not enough placements locally? If the latter, what is being done to improve this? If children are moved out of area, this may mean moving them away from their school, their friends and family, and the area they're familiar with – it's important that if that happens, it's for the right reasons and that appropriate support is provided to help the young person manage that transition.

How are we planning for the future and commissioning services?

If a council has too many children and young people being placed out of area inappropriately, it will need to revisit its sufficiency strategy and revise plans and commissioning to address this. The council will need a strong understanding of what its needs are now and into the future, which it can identify by looking at the data and feedback available, and analysing local and national trends. Councils can then use this information to better manage the local market, whether through recruiting and training more foster carers; evaluating the use of in-house and external provision; and considering the balance of children's home places or foster care with high levels of support for children with complex needs.

Consider also the way in which services for looked-after children are commissioned; are services better commissioned at a local (how local?) or regional level? Would children and young people's outcomes be improved if resources were pooled with partners for specific outcomes, such as early intervention or wellbeing? Are young people involved at any point in commissioning processes, to make sure that services meet their needs?

If in-house provision is an issue, feedback from foster carers – both those that are still working for your authority, and those that have either stopped fostering or moved to an independent fostering agency (IFA) – will be important to find out whether things need to be improved to increase the number of in-house carers.

How well do we support our foster carers?

It's vital that foster carers feel well supported so that they feel able to provide the best possible care to children and young people, and to encourage them to foster for as long as they are able.

The Fostering Network's State of the Nation Report 2016 identified the following three issues that foster carers would choose to change to improve their ability to care for children:

- improved communication and support
- being treated more as a professional
- better financial support.

These issues highlight the importance of making sure that foster carers are listened to and have access to the right kind of support when they need it. For example, how are foster carers involved in care plan reviews? Do all in-house carers have up-to-date training plans? Is there good support available if there's a problem in the middle of the night? How much freedom are carers given to make decisions for their foster children?

It's important to remember that a foster carers' role is to provide a loving, caring home for a child, rather than to be a council employee; being treated as professionals is about their being valued, respected members of the team whose knowledge and understanding of the child is given appropriate weight in all decisions.

It's also essential that wherever possible, foster carers are kept fully informed about children coming into and leaving their care, and up-to-date with planned changes. This allows them to provide the right support and ease transitions for their foster children.

Financial support can be an issue for any carer, but in particular there may be concerns around carers with young people in staying put arrangements. While they still receive fees and allowances, these are lower than

for fostering placements, which can be problematic where fostering is a major source of income for the family, and may make it difficult for families to continue supporting a young person.

Your best source of information about whether your foster carers feel adequately supported is from foster carers themselves; feedback should be considered by the corporate parenting panel, who can then make recommendations for improvements.

Local case studies

Hampshire County Council

Being a good corporate parent means getting involved, asking questions and making sure the voices of children and young people are being heard.

When the children's residential service was under review in Hampshire, the Lead Member for Children's Services took the opportunity to find out exactly what children wanted and needed, and to make sure their voices were at the centre of any new proposals. This included visiting existing homes – owned both by the council and other sectors – to find out about the experiences of the children living there, and to see what they thought made a 'homely environment'.

At the same time, work was underway to implement the evidence-based Pillars of Parenting model, an approach to move from 'looking after' children to 'caring for' them, and providing strong support for staff including access to an educational psychologist. Children were involved in board meetings as the new care model was put in place, ensuring that they could flag up any issues with the model and let officers and councillors know how they felt about the changes.

In one small children's home using the Pillars of Parenting model, stability for the children living there was found to be better, involvement in crime was reduced, and engagement in education was good. The improved outcomes for children as a result of the new care model and the small, well-located home provided a good evidence-base to support what young people were saying.

The Lead Member took those views and the evidence directly back to his fellow elected members, emphasising the benefits the council could realise – both in terms of outcomes for children in care, and financially thanks to those long-term outcomes – by selling old, larger children's homes with poor community links to support new homes more suited to caring for children. As a result, he was able to successfully bid for considerable investment from the council to provide six new homes.

The Lead Member has continued to champion children's views as the process has continued, attending workshops where children contributed to the design of the new homes, and regularly visiting the homes during the build process to make sure they met the varied needs of the children he'd been speaking to. He has also worked with officers on keeping his fellow corporate parents engaged, with many visiting children's homes, and some even taking their dogs along to meet the children – a great ice breaker.

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Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

In Stockton-on-Tees, councillors and officers have worked hard to make sure that the voices of looked-after children and care leavers are not only listened to – they are seen to make a real difference to services.

Virtually all care leavers – 93 per cent, well above the national average – move on to suitable accommodation of their choice, thanks in no small part to careful listening to the needs of care leavers, and the work of ‘Young Inspectors’. These young people review all semi-independent accommodation to check that it’s somewhere they would like to live, and make sure the corporate management team takes action to tackle any areas found to be in need of improvement.

The ‘Let’s Take Action’ group, part of the Children in Care Council, is a group of young people who meet fortnightly to develop projects and initiatives to support the voice of the young people they represent. Their work has included developing a pledge for children in care for senior leaders to work to, delivering workshops on finance and budgeting challenges and speaking at corporate parenting events. One of the members of this group recently won a Civic Award in Stockton as ‘young person of the year’.

The council also took part in The Fostering Network’s ‘Inspiring Voices’ project to raise awareness of, and engagement with, children in care councils. In Stockton-on-Tees, the group consists of young people, who chair the meeting, foster carers, senior council officers and key partners. The group has worked together on a range of projects to respond to the needs of children in care and care leavers, from developing welcome packs for children coming into care, producing information packs on corporate parenting for councillors, and reviewing how young people are engaged and what is then done with that information.

During Ofsted’s latest visit, inspectors commented on how children’s voices were clearly heard, praising the “very healthy culture” promoted by senior managers and political leaders to make sure that learning from the views of looked-after children and young people was taken on board, and to involve them in shaping services.

For more information, please contact: martin.gray@stockton.gov.uk

Gloucestershire aims to put the voice of children and young people at the heart of its approach to corporate parenting, with children in care, young people with experience of children's services and corporate parents working together on everything from strategic planning and service delivery to training and consultation.

One of the key ways that Gloucestershire is working to incorporate the voice of children and young people is through their Ambassadors for Vulnerable Children and Young People, which was highlighted as a strength in an otherwise difficult Ofsted inspection for the authority. These young people, aged 16-25, all have experience of children's social care – whether through being in care, experiencing early help, or receiving support for a disability, for example – and play a central role in developing the council's services. They also act as a link between children and young people and the rest of the council, making sure those voices are heard.

As Participation Manager Della Price highlights, "Ambassadors help us to keep our focus on, and communicate effectively with, children and young people; they challenge us, work with us, and often identify areas of our work that might be neglected. Most importantly, they've changed our attitudes, understanding and awareness of the issues that are important to children and young people".

Ambassadors are recruited annually, with 12 currently in post, and are paid for their time and expenses whenever they attend meetings or events. They attend the Children in Care Council so that they can feed back to the Corporate Parenting Group, which they are co-opted onto, and have led consultation with looked-after children to help improve everything from the activities children do with their social workers, to issues around contact with family; their own experiences make them ideally placed to help communicate the needs and wants of children back to corporate parents. They have also been part of task groups to improve the quality of care plans, improve questions on fostering panels, and to secure a pilot of personal budgets for children in care who need mental health support. The early involvement of young people in the latter was instrumental in gaining the support of NHS England for the pilot, highlighting the way in which the council places the voice of young people at the heart of their work for looked-after children.

The council has involved the Ambassadors in the design of information for young people, which has been highly successful, for example leading to more young people attending fostering panels as they now understand better what goes on, and improving the use of the MOMO app so that children in care can get help with things they are worried about more easily.

This year, all councillors will receive training from the Ambassadors about the role of members as corporate parents, while each year, Ambassadors run workshops as part of the Virtual School Designated Teacher training. The Ambassadors have also helped the Children in Care Council to host meetings with councillors, which have had excellent feedback from the children, who feel listened to, and the councillors, whose understanding of being a child in care has improved significantly.

For more information, please contact: [**della.price@gloucestershire.gov.uk**](mailto:della.price@gloucestershire.gov.uk)

London Borough of Lambeth

Any good parent will know that the needs of their children always come first – and Lambeth Council is committed to putting that philosophy into practice with all the children for whom it is a corporate parent.

Where children are placed in residential care, the council works hard to develop and maintain strong partnerships with those providers to make sure that the children's individual needs and wants are properly taken care of.

In the case of 14-year-old Amy, this has meant support to feel stable in her children's home, and honouring her wish to stay in that home with those she describes as 'family', rather than transferring into foster care. The council and the children's home have worked together to find ways to help her develop her confidence and self-esteem, including providing piano lessons to nurture her passion for music.

Amy is now considering whether she wants to move on to foster care as she gets older, so both the children's home and the council are starting to plan with her. Most importantly, they are working at a pace that suits her, rather than trying to rush her, making sure that her voice is at the forefront of any decision – as any parent knows, children and young people need support and encouragement to work through big decisions, to make sure that they can come to the right decision long-term.

The relationship between the council and the provider is a vital one – much like the relationship between two parents. Trust, mutual respect and good communication mean that both parties can concentrate on working towards the same outcome – a successful and positive care experience for all children being looked-after.

For more information, please contact: communications@lambeth.gov.uk

Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council

When a young person presents as homeless to a local authority, and they have not been in care before their 16th birthday, the authority's responsibilities in law are very limited, requiring only advice and assistance. In Trafford, the Corporate Parenting Board and officers felt that, despite not being corporate parents in such cases in legislative terms, they still had a responsibility to these vulnerable young people, who were homeless and in need of trusted professional support; doing the bare minimum was not good enough.

They agreed to provide these young people with a full leaving care service, with support from a personal adviser, a pathway plan, safe and appropriate accommodation, support to live independently and help to engage in education, employment and training. The leaving care grant could also be awarded in certain circumstances.

Ofsted was very supportive of the approach, which is an example of how councillors and officers can and do still step in to help young people – even where they don't have to, and where it isn't easy, just as other good parents would.

For more information, please contact: aftercare@trafford.gov.uk

Key resources and further reading

Centre for Public Scrutiny **Safeguarding Children: A Practical Guide for Overview and Scrutiny Councillors** June 2016

www.cfps.org.uk/safeguarding-children-practical-guide-os-councillors

Department for Education **Children Act 1989 Statutory Guidance: care planning, placement and case review** March 2010 (updated July 2015)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-act-1989-care-planning-placement-and-case-review>

Department for Education **Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care** January 2014

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/307867/Statutory_Guidance_-_Missing_from_care__3_.pdf

Department for Education **Promoting the education of looked after children – statutory guidance for local authorities** July 2014

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/335964/Promoting_the_educational_achievement_of_looked_after_children_Final_23-....pdf

Department for Education **Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards** April 2015

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/463220/Guide_to_Children_s_Home_Standards_inc_quality_standards_Version__1.17_FINAL.pdf

Department for Education **Special Guardianship Guidance** January 2017

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/586406/Special_Guardianship_Statutory_Guidance_20_January_2017.pdf

HM Government **Keep On Caring: Supporting Young People from Care to Independence** July 2016

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/535899/Care-Leaver-Strategy.pdf

Local Government Association **Tackling child sexual exploitation: LGA resource pack for councils** December 2014

www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/tackling-child-sexual-exp-8d3.pdf

National Children's Bureau **Corporate Parenting Tool Kit** 2013

https://www.ncb.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/attachment/corporate_parents%20toolkit.pdf

Glossary of useful terms

Advocacy

An advocate's role is to make sure that the child's views and experiences are considered when decisions are made about their future. Every child has the right to be supported by an advocate and councils must have a system in place to provide written, age appropriate information to each looked-after child about advocates and how to request one.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)

All services that work with children and young people experiencing emotional, behavioural or mental health difficulties.

Care order

A court order approving the case for a child to be taken into care.

Care plan

A care plan should be developed for every child and young person when they come into care. This should identify how the child will be accommodated, how long it is anticipated that the care order will last, and formulate planned outcomes for the child with associated actions. The plan should be reviewed at least every six months.

Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)

These commission most hospital and community NHS services in their area, including mental health and learning disability services.

Child sexual exploitation (CSE)

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

Children's home

A residential facility where groups of children are cared for by qualified workers.

Former relevant child

A care leaver aged 18-21 who was a relevant child or was in care until the age of 18. Young people who are still getting help with education or training remain 'former relevant' until their training has finished.

Foster care

Foster care is a way for children to be cared for within a family setting when their own family is unable to care for them. It is considered temporary in that there is no legal split from the family (as with adoption), but can be long term where this is in the best interests of the child.

Independent Fostering Agency (IFA)

IFAs provide fostering services to local authorities. They recruit, train and support their own foster carers who the council can then place a child with on payment of a fee. IFAs can be charities, not-for-profit or profit-making.

Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)

An IRO chairs a looked-after child's review(s) and monitors the child's case on an ongoing basis. They ensure that the care plan for the child fully reflects their current needs, wishes and feelings, and that the actions set out in the plan are consistent with the local authority's legal responsibilities towards the child.

Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)

JSNAs identifies the current and future health needs of the local population to inform and guide commissioning of health, wellbeing and social care services within local authority areas.

Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS)

The JHWS outlines how local partners will work to improve health in the local population and reduce health inequalities.

Kinship care

Kinship care is where a child is looked-after by a relative or a friend, but the local authority still has legal responsibility for them.

Modern slavery

Modern slavery encompasses slavery, servitude, and forced or compulsory labour and human trafficking. A person is trafficked if they are brought to (or moved around) a country by others who threaten, frighten, hurt and force them to do work or other things they don't want to do.

Pathway Plan

A Pathway Plan is developed by the local authority with a young person in care as they approach their 16th birthday to help them effectively make the transition from care to living independently. It includes areas such as accommodation, education, life skills and health.

Personal Education Plan (PEP)

The PEP is a statutory part of a child's care plan, making sure that all relevant partners are engaged in a child's education, tracking their progress and giving them the support they need to achieve and be aspirational in their education.

Private arrangement

An informal arrangement where a child or young person is looked-after by a close relative such as grand-parents, aunts or uncles.

Private fostering

An informal arrangement where a child or young person is looked-after by someone who is not their parent or close relative. The local authority should ideally be informed of the arrangement, but is not responsible for the child and is therefore not the corporate parent.

Secure children's home

Secure children's homes offer specialist care and intensive support in a secure setting to young people sentenced by the courts and to young people detained for their own welfare (for example, where children are at risk of child sexual exploitation, and likely to place themselves in risky situations). These are referred to as youth justice beds, and welfare beds respectively.

Special guardianship

Special guardianship means that a child lives with carers who have parental responsibility for them until they turn 18, but legal ties with the parents are not cut as with adoption. The child is no longer the responsibility of the local authority.

Staying Put

An arrangement whereby a looked-after child can stay with their foster carer after the age of 18, as long as both the young person and the foster parent is happy with this arrangement, and it is in the young person's best interests. The council has a duty to support the arrangement up to young person's 21st birthday.

Sufficiency Duty

The duty for a council to take steps that secure, as far as possible, sufficient accommodation within its area to meet the needs of children that it is looking after.

Unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC)

The definition of an unaccompanied asylum seeking child is set out in the Immigration Rules as someone who:

- is under 18 years of age when the claim is submitted;
- is claiming in their own right; and
- is separated from both parents and is not being cared for by an adult who in law or by custom has responsibility to do so.

Virtual School Head

All local authorities must have a virtual school head (VSH) in charge of promoting the educational achievement of the children looked-after by that authority. Their role is to know how the looked-after children are doing, and help school staff and social workers to find out about the extra needs of these children and any additional support available to them. VSHs also work with the children's services department and all schools in the area on initiatives to promote the education of children in care.



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Department
for Education

Applying corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers

Statutory guidance for local authorities

February 2018

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1. Summary

About this guidance

This guidance is about the role of local authorities and the application of corporate parenting principles as set out in section 1 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017. Local authorities must have regard to the seven needs identified in the Children and Social Work Act when exercising their functions in relation to looked-after children and care leavers (relevant children and former relevant children). It should be read and applied alongside the [Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2: care planning, placement and case review](#) and [The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 3: planning transition to adulthood for care leavers](#).

This guidance is designed to help local authorities consider the kinds of services that may be offered when having regard to the corporate parenting principles. It is not intended to be prescriptive about what must be offered. It is expected, however, that services respond to the individual needs of looked after children and care leavers when they exercise their functions in relation to these children and young people.

Expiry or review date

The guidance will be reviewed on an annual basis but will not be revised unless it is considered that it requires amendment.

What legislation does this guidance refer to?

This guidance refers to:

- Section 1 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Part 3 of the Children Act 1989 (the Act)
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 (the 2010 Regulations)
- The Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010 (the Care Leavers Regulations)

Who is this guidance for?

This guidance is for local authorities and their 'relevant partners' (as defined in section 10 of the Children Act 2004) and others who contribute to services provided to looked-after children and care leavers.

The principles are applicable to all local authorities in England whether they are or were the local authority looking after a particular child/young person. They apply to the whole local authority and not just to children's services functions. However, they apply only to local authority functions that are exercised in relation to looked after children and care leavers (see page 11).

For the purpose of this guidance, a local authority in England means:

- A county council in England
- A district council
- A London borough council
- The Common Council, of the City of London (in their capacity as a local authority)
- The Council of the Isles of Scilly; and
- A combined authority established under section 103 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009

Main points

- 1.1 The role that councils play in looking after children is one of the most important things they do. Local authorities have a unique responsibility to the children they look after and their care leavers (relevant and former relevant children). In this context local authorities are often referred to as being the 'corporate parent' of these children and young people, and the critical question that local authorities should ask in adopting such an approach is: 'would this be good enough for my child?'
- 1.2 A strong ethos of corporate parenting means that sense of vision and responsibility towards the children they look after and their care leavers is a priority for everyone. They recognise that looked-after children have the same needs – to be loved, cared for and feel safe - as other children. But also that there are unique challenges that looked-after children and care leavers face. 60% of children become looked-after due to abuse or neglect and they have poorer educational and health outcomes than their peers¹. Local authorities that have a strong corporate parenting ethos recognise that the care system is not just about keeping children safe, but also to promote recovery, resilience and well-being.
- 1.3 All children need love and stability in order to thrive. A strong corporate parenting ethos means that everyone from the Chief Executive down to front line staff, as well as elected council members, are concerned about those children and care leavers as if they were their own. This is evidenced by an embedded culture where council officers do all that is reasonably possible to ensure the council is the best 'parent' it can be to the child or young person . [Statutory guidance](#) on the role of the Director of Children's Services and Lead Member for Children describes how those roles set the tone for the local authority to be an effective corporate parent.
- 1.4 The term 'corporate parent' is broadly understood by Directors of Children's Services and Lead Members for Children, as well as those working directly in children's services, in relation to how local authorities should approach their responsibilities for looked after children and care leavers. Corporate parenting is an important part of the Ofsted inspection framework and the corporate parenting Principles are referenced in Ofsted's Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) framework.² However, it is vital that all parts of a local authority beyond those directly responsible for care and pathway planning recognise they have a key role too.

¹ [Department for Education, Children looked after in England including adoption: 2015 to 2016](#)

² Framework for the Inspections of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS), <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-local-authority-childrens-services-from-2018>, p. 58.

- 1.5 The Children and Social Work Act 2017 therefore introduces corporate parenting principles, which comprise of seven needs that local authorities in England must have regard to whenever they exercise a function in relation to looked-after children or care leavers (collectively referred to as *looked-after children and young people*).
- 1.6 The corporate parenting principles are intended to secure a better approach to fulfilling existing functions in relation to looked after children and care leavers and for the local authority to facilitate as far as possible secure, nurturing, and positive experiences for looked after children and young people and enable positive outcomes for them.
- 1.7 It will be important for all who exercise functions in relation to looked-after children and care leavers – from elected councillors and the teams dealing with placements and care leaver services to those responsible for special educational needs, housing and council tax – to work together to ensure they have a more joined up approach.
- 1.8 The corporate parenting principles are not new requirements, but provide a framework to help local authorities understand and fully comply with existing duties across the whole of their services as they discharge those duties to looked-after children and care leavers.
- 1.9 The corporate parenting principles apply only to local authorities. Directors of Children’s Services and Lead Members for Children should nevertheless ensure that relevant partners understand how they can assist local authorities apply the principles in relation to the services those partners may provide. ‘Relevant partners’ include local policing bodies and Chief Officers of Police, local probation boards and probation services, youth offending teams, clinical commissioning groups, NHS England, schools and educational institutions.
- 1.10 The corporate parenting principles are about embedding a positive culture in the local authority towards looked-after children and care leavers and their success will depend on the extent to which directors, councillors, heads of service and front line managers champion and promote understanding of them.
- 1.11 The experiences of looked-after children and care leavers, particularly in regards to whether they feel cared for and listened to, will therefore be an important measure of how successfully local authorities embed the principles.
- 1.12 The corporate parenting principles should be integral to the way in which local authorities approach the development and review of their local offer to care leavers. They will also provide an important framework in promoting the mind-set and culture that will underpin the non-statutory care leaver covenant (see paragraph 3.12).

2. What are the corporate parenting principles?

The principles

- 2.1 In order to thrive, children and young people have certain key needs that good parents generally meet. The corporate parenting principles set out seven principles that local authorities must have regard to when exercising their functions in relation to looked after children and young people, as follows:
- to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people
 - to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
 - to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people
 - to help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners
 - to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people
 - for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and
 - to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.
- 2.2 The corporate parenting principles do not exist in a vacuum. They should shape the mind-set and culture of every part of a local authority in how it carries out all of its functions in relation to looked-after children and care leavers. The full range of duties placed on local authorities in respect of the children they look after and their care leavers is set out at Annexes 1 and 2.
- 2.3 The corporate parenting principles are not about applying a formulaic approach to how services are delivered in relation to looked-after children and care leavers. Rather they describe the behaviours and attitudes expected of councils when they are acting as any good parent would do by supporting, encouraging and guiding their children to lead healthy, rounded and fulfilled lives. The principles intend to ensure that all councils have high ambitions for the children in their care. In doing so, the application of the principles must respond to the individual needs, vulnerabilities or disadvantages of looked after children and care leavers. This will assist in securing that such children and young people are

not placed at significant disadvantage when compared with the support a non-looked after child or young person may receive from their family.

How the principles work

- 2.4 The detail of what local authorities must do to effectively care for looked-after children and care leavers is addressed through existing legislation, regulations and accompanying statutory guidance. The corporate parenting principles are intended to inform how a local authority carries out those existing responsibilities, whether that is about assessing a looked after child's needs or listening to and taking account of the wishes and feelings of care leavers. The principles are intended to encourage local authorities to be ambitious and aspirational for their looked-after children and care leavers.
- 2.5 The corporate parenting principles do not replace or change existing legal duties, for example in relation to the provision of accommodation for care leavers aged 18 and above.
- 2.6 Local authorities will need to consider the extent to which the corporate parenting principles are relevant to a particular service area or exercise of a particular function. This should be a reasonable and proportionate evaluation based on the extent to which the service/function is being carried out in relation to looked-after children and/or care leavers. This should include arrangements for ensuring that in two tier authorities that district and county councils work closely together. For example, although county councils exercise social services functions to this group of young people, district councils (which do not have social service functions) should consider how the principles apply when they are exercising their functions in relation to looked-after children and care leavers.

3. Applying the principles to local authority functions

Leadership

- 3.1 Strong corporate parenting means strong leadership, challenge and accountability at every level. The quality of support can be measured in how the child or young person experiences the support they receive and the extent to which they feel listened to and taken seriously. To that end, many top tier local authorities have established Corporate Parenting Boards or Panels to look strategically at the way in which their looked-after children and care leavers experience services. Feedback from looked-after children and care leavers is an important way in which local authorities can consider how effectively the corporate parenting principles are being applied when exercising functions in relation to these young people.
- 3.2 For care leavers, one of the main ways in which local authorities will bring the corporate parenting principles to life will be through their local offer to this group of young people. Through provisions in the Children and Social Work Act 2017, local authorities will also be required to publish information about the services that they offer that may assist care leavers in making a successful transition to independence. Where it considers it appropriate, a local authority should publish information about services for care leavers it has the power to provide but which are offered by others. The local offer should be developed in close partnership and dialogue between senior leaders and young people who are looked-after and care leavers.

Examples of how senior leaders and councillors may champion corporate parenting

- Lead members and senior officers promote the idea that looked-after children and care leavers are part of the local authority 'family'.
- Members of Children in Care Councils (CiCCs) have regular and positive contact with senior managers and the Lead Member for Children, who know them well. CiCC members are part of the selection process for senior staff in the local authority and in the design of an annual questionnaire about services for looked after-children and care leavers.
- Senior officers and councillors demonstrate that they care about what happens to their looked-after children and care leavers by taking their corporate parenting role seriously. For example, by visiting their looked-after children and care leavers who are placed outside or are living outside of the local authority.
- Services and practice change as a result of the views of care leavers. One local authority acted on their views by making changes to the job descriptions of personal advisers (PA) to emphasise their role in encouraging aspirations and getting to know each care leaver well. PA support is now available during weekday evenings.
- A number of local authorities have a yearly takeover day or week for looked-after children who make presentations to the senior management team and social workers on their experiences of being in care and what they would do if they took over.
- One local authority has appointed a Young Director, an apprenticeship for a care leaver, who mirrors the work of the Director of Children's Services. The Young Director engages with staff at all levels to ensure the views of looked after children and young people are at the heart of the work the local authority does. The local authority has a programme of participation activities in place that ensures young people feel like they are driving the quality of the service they receive.

Deciding relevant functions to which the principles apply

- 3.3 Local authorities provide around 700 services to their local communities. For some of these services (e.g. refuse collection, building control, trading standards and environmental protection), it may not be appropriate or necessary to provide a differentiated service to looked-after children or care leavers. Other services (e.g. fostering, education provision, the administration of housing benefit, the

administration of council tax and access to leisure activities) will be more relevant and in these instances, Directors of Children's Services and Lead Members for Children will want to ensure the needs identified as corporate parenting principles are taken into account.

- 3.4 The services that local authorities deliver can be broadly categorised into 14 different types of service. The service areas where consideration of the corporate parenting principles are of most relevance are: education, social care, housing, libraries, leisure and recreation, strategic policies (such as health and well-being plans) and local tax collection.
- 3.5 The seven other types of service provided by local authorities include highways, transport planning, passenger transport, environmental health, waste collection, waste disposal and town and county planning. Looked-after children and care leavers access these services as residents of the local authority area, regardless of their legal status. These services are less likely to require differentiated service for looked-after children or care leavers and therefore the need to have regard to the corporate parenting principles will either not apply or apply only in a limited way. This is because it may not be possible to do anything towards meeting one or more of the identified needs or, although it may be possible, it is not appropriate to do so.
- 3.6 The way in which a local authority operates its corporate services is important to consider in relation to the principles. For example, the way a local authority acts as an employer can have an impact, such as by ring-fencing apprenticeships for care leavers. These opportunities can be provided in any department of the council regardless of the function it performs. For example, there is no reason why a care leaver could not take up an apprenticeship opportunity in the highways department. All services can have a role in providing these opportunities for looked-after children and care leavers. This is different from providing a differentiated service, for instance, a differentiated service for looked-after children or care leavers in relation to a particular function such as waste collection.

The duty to co-operate

- 3.7 While the duty to have regard to the principles applies only to local authorities, other agencies play an important role in supporting them to carry out their responsibilities to be a good corporate parent.

- 3.8 Local authorities are under a duty (section 10 of the Children Act 2004) to make arrangements to promote co-operation between ‘relevant partners’³ with a view to improving the well-being of children in their area. This should include arrangements in relation to looked-after children and care leavers. Local authorities will therefore need to consider the implications of how they take account of the corporate parenting principles – especially the need to help them access services - when they make arrangements under section 10 of the 2004 Act.
- 3.9 Section 10(5) of the 2004 Act places a duty on relevant partners to co-operate with the local authority in the making of these arrangements, therefore promoting and ensuring a joined up approach.

Some examples of key organisations/services local authorities need to think about engaging with

- Early years settings, schools, further and higher education, employers
- Health services, including Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and Adult Mental Health Services (AMHS)
- Housing services
- The immigration service
- The police and criminal justice agencies

3.10 In making arrangements to co-operate, Chief Executives and Directors of Children’s Services should ensure that:

- there is a shared understanding across the local authority, relevant partners and the agencies with which it works about the needs of looked-after children and care leavers; and that
- their arrangements and strategies for multi-agency working take account of the needs of looked-after children and care leavers.

³ Section 10 of the Children Act 2004 defines relevant partners as including: the district council; the local policing body and the chief officer of police; probation board; any provider of probation services; youth offending team; the Secretary of State in relation to functions under sections 2 and 3 of the Offender Management Act 2007; NHS England; Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs); the governing body of a maintained school; an academy or City Technology College or City Technology College of the Arts; the governing body of an institution within the further education sector; the Secretary of State in relation to functions under section 2 of the Employment and Training Act 1973.

3.11 County councils should ensure they work with their district councils, which also need to have regard to the need to act in accordance with the corporate parenting principles.

The care leaver covenant

3.12 There is wide recognition that care leavers have faced many challenges in their lives and are likely to need much more support than other young people in making the transition to adulthood. We do not expect local authorities to do it all on their own. We therefore want government departments and their agencies, relevant partners, charities and private sector organisations to play their part as part of a wider corporate parenting family. The Department for Education is therefore introducing a 'care leaver covenant' that will enable organisations to make commitments to care leavers within the spirit of the corporate parenting principles in a way that is most appropriate to them.

4. Implementing the principles

Examples of questions for local authorities

- What more could we do to ensure looked-after children and care leavers feel listened to and their suggestions acted on?
- To what extent are the needs and priorities of looked-after children and care leavers reflected in local strategic needs assessments, local service provision, and development plans?
- How can we collectively deliver services to looked-after children and care leavers in a way that is joined-up and which supports young people to make a successful transition to adulthood?
- Are the children and young people in our care enjoying happy, fulfilled childhoods and looking forward to their adult lives, with positive foundations and stable relationships? If not, why not and what can we do to address this?
- How do we know what children and young people's wishes and feelings are and how do we capture their views?
- How can we deliver services to looked-after children and care leavers in a way that mirrors as far as possible the way a good parent would support their child?
- How can we deliver services in a way that recognises the unique circumstances of looked-after children and care leavers?

4.1 There are many good examples of how local authorities are acting as a good corporate parent. Many of these will reflect the spirit of the corporate parenting principles. Authorities with the strongest corporate parenting ethos consider how services can be delivered differently in order to meet the needs of the care population as effectively as possible.

4.2 Although there are seven needs identified, they should not be seen in isolation from each other because they are not mutually exclusive.

4.3 This section focuses on each need and sets out the range of approaches that a local authority might take in having regard to that need at both a strategic level and in relation to individuals. It is not intended to be comprehensive: local

authorities will be expected to apply the corporate parenting principles in their local context, based on the needs, wishes and feelings of the children in their care and their care leavers.

Acting in the best interests and promoting physical and mental health and well-being

- 4.4 All good parents take account of their children's best interests and health and well-being. This is integral to a culture and attitude where investing in the quality of relationships with looked-after children and care leavers is recognised as of crucial importance. Young people will feel listened to, understood and supported to reach their full potential.
- 4.5 There are many different ways in which local authorities can have regard to the need to act in the best interests of and promote health and well-being for looked-after children and care leavers. It may involve understanding the reasons behind challenging behaviour and, for example, encouraging carers and professionals to adopt a restorative approach to problem solving where appropriate. Health and well-being should encompass emotional, mental and physical health and well-being.

Promoting good mental health and well-being

- One local authority has worked with local mental health services in order to respond to the mental health needs of looked-after children and care leavers as they make the transition from care by extending the service to care leavers up to the age of 25. Care leavers can self-refer or ask their personal adviser to refer them where there is a significant emotional health issue that is affecting their life.
- In another authority, care leavers who feel lonely and isolated can self-refer or be referred to volunteer mentors from their local community who have been recruited and trained by the local authority. Care leavers benefit from weekly meetings with their mentor and have the chance to build a personal relationship that is independent of the 'formal care system'. A number of local authorities carry out regular surveys of their looked-after children and care leavers' wellbeing and experience of care and use the surveys' results to drive improvements to care planning.
- Ten local authorities and four police services in the south-west have developed a protocol that recognises the potential of restorative justice approaches where there is an expectation that local authorities, staff and carers will strive to manage challenging behaviour without the involvement of the police wherever possible.
- Many local authorities provide family support workers or contact centres to support contact with looked-after children's birth families.

4.6 Local authorities should consider and be able to demonstrate how they have regard to this need when discharging their functions, for example:

- local authorities and their health partners may consider how physical, emotional and mental health needs are taken into account in developing their local Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNAs) and their Joint Health and Well-being Strategies (JHWS).
- How local authorities, Clinical Commissioning Groups, NHS England and Public Health England consider the needs of looked after children, and by extension care leavers, when they co-operate to commission services for all children in their area.
- The arrangements in place to ensure that looked after children are not refused a mental health or other health service on the grounds of their placement being short term or unplanned.

- 4.7 In accordance with care planning requirements as set out in Volumes 2 and 3 of The Children Act 1989 guidance and the 2010 Regulations local authorities may also wish to consider how to help children and young people develop their sense of identity in order for them to make sense of their early life experiences, reasons for entering care and family relationships. This might include focussing on the quality of life story work carried out with the children they support.
- 4.8 More broadly, local authorities may wish to consider how to enable looked-after children and care leavers to access services (e.g. sports and leisure services and cultural activities) that promote a young person's well-being as well as access to the outdoors (e.g. parks, beaches and woodlands). Local authorities that have a strong corporate parenting ethos will stress the importance of every child's interests, talents and aptitudes being noticed and nurtured.

Supporting access to leisure and cultural services

Local authorities may want to work with schools and local partnership organisations to help ensure looked after children are able to access local leisure and cultural services. To help achieve this, authorities may wish to work with their local Music Education Hub, bridge organisation and County Sports Partnership.

Music Hubs are groups of organisations working together to create joined up music education provision. Local bridge organisations work with local arts organisations, museums, libraries, music education hubs, further and higher education institutions and other partners, so children and young people can have access to great arts and cultural opportunities.

[Music Education Hub details](#)

[Bridge organisation details](#)

County Sports partnerships work to develop strong local sports offers and can provide details of local sports opportunities and clubs.

[County Sports Partnership details](#)

Encouraging and taking into account the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people

- 4.9 The second and third principles (having regard to the need to encourage views, wishes and feelings of looked-after children and care leavers; and having regard to the need to take account of them) is fundamental to being a good corporate

parent. These principles include and apply to every looked after child, regardless of their age, circumstances or needs. This includes children with disabilities, education needs (for example speech, language and communication difficulties) or other complex needs. It is also important to encourage and promote the views of those with other barriers to participation, such as young children, young people with cultural or language barriers and those young people who are currently disengaged. Both principles underpin how local authorities can deliver high quality care and pathway planning for looked-after children and care leavers.

- 4.10 The way in which local authorities involve care leavers in the design and development of their local offer to care leavers is a specific example of how local authorities will demonstrate they have regard to the needs identified in the second and third principles. Another tangible way of responding to the need to encourage and take account of the views, wishes and feelings of looked-after children and care leavers, is through the establishment of a Children in Care Council or Care Leaver Forum. Some local authorities use technology. For example, the use of online surveys may allow local authorities to capture the views of a wide section of their looked-after children and care leavers, including those placed out-of-authority.
- 4.11 In some instances, a looked-after child or care leaver may express wishes that are not always in their best interests or which may conflict with other considerations. In such circumstances, local authorities will have to balance the wishes and feelings of the children and young people with what is in their best interests – and like any good parent – have to take into account what is reasonably practicable and achievable. The child’s best interests and their right to be heard are not mutually exclusive. Due consideration must be given to the child’s wishes and feelings, and in circumstances where decisions are made contrary to this, it is equally as important to explain to children and young people why these decisions were made.

Improving participation and acting on what young people say: examples of local authority practice

- Council members and officers are proactive in seeking ways to improve the participation of looked-after children, including those placed out-of-authority, through, for example, the effective use of technology.
- Some local authorities have designed their websites for looked-after children and care leavers by collaborating with children and young people to ensure that it is young people friendly and contains important information about how young people can make their voice heard.
- Other local authorities have developed videos with their Children in Care Councils which communicate what looked-after children want and need from their social workers as well as how they feel about their experiences.
- A number of local authorities make use of apps which allow looked-after children to regularly communicate how they are feeling with their social workers and other professionals, such as advocates.
- The corporate parenting board priorities in one authority are derived from its Children in Care Council review of the authority's pledge for looked after children.
- One local authority changed the times at which Personal Advisers were available to support care leavers as a direct response to feedback from its care leaver forum.
- One local authority is launching a youth-led inspection programme of its children services to ensure their practice reflects their commitment to children and young people.

Helping looked-after children and care leavers gain access and make best use of services

4.12 As corporate parents, local authorities should have regard to the need to help the children they look after and care leavers to secure the services they need. At its most basic level, this principle is about giving some consideration to how looked-after children and care leavers might benefit from and access a particular service based on an understanding of the needs of these children and young

persons. This might be a factor that is considered when either designing or implementing services.

4.13 Another way in which local authorities may take account of this principle would be, for example, in their school choice for looked-after children. The school admission code requires schools to give priority to looked-after children and previously looked-after children in their admission criteria. Local authorities will need to consider how to most effectively use these arrangements. We would expect a local authority to match the best school to the child's needs, which includes where practicable, choosing good or outstanding schools.

4.14 To help children to access and use services will often require persistence. Local authorities should ensure social workers, children's carers and personal advisers have the skills and training they need to help looked-after children and care leavers access the appropriate services.

Examples of local authorities helping looked-after children and care leavers access services and advocating for them in accessing what they need

- Embedding a culture where the local authority builds positive relationships and routinely works with a wide range of agencies to ensure that, for example:
 - specialist health teams secure speedy access for looked-after children to specialist provision such as speech and language therapy.
 - children placed out-of-authority receive the support that they need in a timely way.
- Supporting a vulnerable care leaver through pregnancy and her foster carer to the point where she was ready to return to education and training, helping her find the right course and then to apply successfully for an apprenticeship in the local authority.
- Ensuring that transitions into adult health services are clear and efficient and ensuring that health needs are considered consistently in reviews and assessment meetings so that care leavers are aware of and able to access medical clinics, drug and alcohol services and family planning clinics when necessary.
- Designing an effective local offer for care leavers, in collaboration with care leavers, that sets out the range of available services and how to access them.
- Ensuring there are formalised transition arrangements for care leavers into adult services. For example, young people who will need ongoing support have their needs assessed jointly with adult services soon after their 16th birthday, so that there are no interruptions or delays in receiving help and the support services they need.
- Providing support and training to foster carers to engage with school staff and 'be there' when children need help with school work.
- Equipping carers and others to support children to make the right post-16 choices to access education, employment and training.

Promoting high aspirations and securing best outcomes

4.15 It is important that we set high ambitions and aspirations for looked-after children and care leavers. The fifth principle is intended to promote the cultural mind-set

that looked-after children and care leavers should be treated as individuals for whom, like any good parent, local authorities want the best outcomes possible. This might mean, for example, spotting potential and nurturing it by making it easy for a looked-after child or care leaver to pursue a particular activity they enjoy and are good at, encouraging them to set their sights on a good university if they have the potential to succeed there and exploring all avenues to help them access the support they need to do well.

- 4.16 Local authorities with social service functions are required to have an officer (called a Virtual School Head) whose role is to make sure the authority promotes the educational achievement of the children it looks after. The Virtual School Head has a vital role in ensuring the local authority embeds promoting high aspirations and best outcomes as part of the corporate parenting culture.

Encouraging, aspiring and responding to interests and needs like all parents

- For example, local authorities can help children to access easily a range of extra-curricular and recreational activities. These could include confidence building, cultural and/or sporting activities.
- Corporate parenting boards can routinely promote participation in programmes such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and the National Citizenship Service.
- Through the work of personal advisers, changes can be made in the approach to reviewing pathway plans to ensure that those transitioning from care have a positive mind-set about their futures.
- A number of local authorities are offering apprenticeship/traineeships within their local authority to care leavers.
- One local authority has developed a dedicated Employment and Housing Coach who is jointly managed by the council's employment team and leaving care service to increase cross-departmental support for care leavers.
- In one local authority the elected members fund a Trust Fund to promote the aspirations, life experiences and opportunities. Looked-after children and care leavers can apply for up to £400 per annum. Young people can use the money for things like laptops to support educational attainment, the purchase of an outfit for a young person going for a job interview, educational trips abroad or additional social activities.

4.17 At an individual level it will be crucial to build children's confidence and aspiration so they have high expectations of themselves. It will also be important to work together with carers to ensure children can access opportunities such as membership of sports clubs, visits to museums or theatre performances that relate to their interests. Local authorities may also wish to consider ways to help inspire young people to aim high and achieve. That might involve providing early "work tasters" in areas or establishing a mentoring/role models scheme that match young people with successful care leavers.

4.18 At a strategic level, local authorities may consider working with the regional network for collaborative outreach. These networks were designed to encourage more young people into higher education and bring together higher and further education institutions to coordinate their outreach activity. The access

agreements of 80% of higher education specifically include care leavers. Working with the regional network provides a way for authorities to use this and help ensure that outreach activities include looked-after children and care leavers.

Details of these regional networks can be found at:

<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/sas/ncco/find/>.

Universities working collaboratively with local authorities

There are already a number of universities working collaboratively with local authorities to help looked-after children and care leavers think about higher education and to access it successfully.

York St John University works with the professional support workers, foster carers and other influencers of looked-after children in two Virtual Schools in York and North Yorkshire.

Lincoln University and Bishop Grossetest University run the Joint Universities Mentoring Project (JUMP), which operates in collaboration with local authority, community and university partners to provide care leavers with a mentoring scheme. ⁴

One local authority worked with care leavers and local universities to develop informative video guides for looked-after children and care leavers thinking of going to university.

Being safe and having stability

4.19 In order to thrive, looked-after children and care leavers need to feel and be safe, to have stability in their lives including in their education and work and to build resilience by forging strong and trusted relationships.

4.20 For looked-after children this will mean having regard to the need to maintain, as far as possible, consistency in the home environment, relationships with carers and professionals and school placement. For some care leavers, it may involve supporting a Staying Put arrangement where care leavers and their former foster carers wish to remain living together after the young person reaches the age of 18. It may also mean wider support to help care leavers navigate the inevitable

⁴ <https://www.offa.org.uk/universities-and-colleges/guidance/topic-briefings/topic-briefing-care-leavers/>

challenges of moving to independence through early preparation, good planning, securing a range of housing options and maintaining relationships with those whose continued support they might want or need during their transition to adulthood.

4.21 The examples of support in North Somerset (page 29) illustrates how it demonstrates its commitment to meeting the needs of its care leavers. An important way of responding to these needs is the approach local authorities take to housing and homelessness or rent and council tax arrears. For example, in some local authorities, the leaving care team will have a protocol in place with the housing services, which means that the care leaving team is notified as soon as a care leaver has arrears over a certain amount. This means that problems can be identified early rather than escalating to the point where the care leaver loses their tenancy. Many councils have also taken steps to exempt care leavers from council tax altogether.

Promoting safety and stability

Local authorities are proactive in ensuring that looked-after children have advocates to talk to about any concerns and are supported in articulating and taking action on any concerns. Local authorities support carers to provide stability for children, for example, authorities may provide foster carers with additional training to effectively respond to looked-after children's needs.

In one local authority, an individual housing protocol – integral to their pathway plan – was introduced for each care leaver from the age of 16 together with a wide range of accommodation options to match the young person's needs. Alongside this, a non- eviction/ placement stability policy is being developed together with consideration of how to address issues of loneliness and isolation experienced by young people moving into independent living.

Another local authority has introduced a 'housing taper' to enable care leavers to pay a reduced rent for longer once they have started earning in recognition of the need for on-going support and to reduce unplanned moves at this key point in a young person's life.

Preparing for adulthood and independent living

Effective planning for managing day-to-day life

Some local authorities are using 'training flats' to help looked-after children and care leavers develop the skills they need to live independently and are putting this in place at an earlier stage. Foster carers and residential care workers are integral to this by encouraging looked-after children to help with cooking and household chores as part of normal family life rather than seeing those activities as tasks to be 'taught' a few weeks before a young person leaves care.

- 4.22 Similar to other young people, looked-after children in their transition to adulthood and care leavers need support to live independent lives. Many care leavers, however, feel under-prepared for living independently. Alongside having to manage practical matters such as paying bills, they often struggle with loneliness and isolation. It is particularly important that local authorities consider the need to help prepare looked-after children and care leavers for making the transition to adulthood and independence. This includes the building up of support networks prior to leaving care, in addition to focussing on practical support and skills, such as managing money. It will be particularly important for local authorities to work with young people in developing their local offer so that it sets out what support care leavers can expect as well as where and how they can access it.
- 4.23 Good preparation, a gradual transition and flexible ongoing support are key to helping young people achieve a successful move to independent living. The most effective local authorities establish joint working arrangements between children's services, housing and other specialist services to help young people prepare for the realities of living independently, involve them in planning and decisions about their housing options, ensure suitable housing and support is in place and are ready to respond with contingency arrangements if things do go wrong.
- 4.24 St Basils and Barnardo's have produced a Care Leavers' Accommodation and Support Framework and toolkit, which can be downloaded [here](#). The framework,

which comprises of five steps, draws together expertise from local authorities as well as leaving care and housing charities.⁵

Local Authority (LA) Case Study

The Government puts £200 into Junior Individual Savings Account (Junior ISAs) for looked-after children. These are long-term tax-advantaged savings accounts, and the young person can then access the funds when they turn eighteen and leave care. Anyone can pay money into these accounts, and some LAs make additional contributions into the Junior ISAs, in the same way that other parents save for their children's long-term futures. This means these young people have a larger nest egg when they leave care. In one LA, £5 a week is added to each child's Junior ISA. The LA also encourages children and young people to save money from their personal allowances, which helps them to develop financial capability skills that will benefit them when they face the challenges of living independently.

4.25 The illustrative local offer, which is published alongside this guidance, exemplifies the kinds of support that local authorities may include in their offer to care leavers. Annex 1 of this guidance sets out the statutory entitlements that a local authority must provide, whilst the local offer provides additional examples of support that a local authority may choose to provide to its care leavers in fulfilling its duties as a corporate parent.

⁵ The five steps to the framework are: training young people on tenancies and the housing market; involving young people in planning their accommodation; reducing housing crisis by having emergency options; commissioning a wide range of housing types; and developing skills and confidence ahead of a move to independent living.

Examples of support for care leavers in North Somerset

North Somerset provides practical and financial help that supports care leavers to achieve key adulthood milestones, such as opening a bank account, and to deal with the emergencies where others would turn to their families for help. This includes:

Financial Help

Offer financial and practical support to help pay Council Tax.

Cover Council Tax if a care leaver takes up an apprenticeship position.

Provide a Leaving Care Grant of £2,000 to each care leaver to buy essential items for their home such as a TV and TV Licence.

Pay for five hours of driving lessons and the cost of driving theory test if in education, employment or training.

Pay 50% of the cost towards broadband internet if living on their own.

Practical help

Visit when care leavers move in to their new housing to ensure they have settled and have everything they need.

Help to open a bank account.

Give health passport to everyone who leaves care at 18, including details of your health history

Provide an exceptional clothing payment of up to £100 if in need of extra money for a winter coat, shoes, warm clothing and maternity clothing.

Offer food parcels, emergency payments, and vouchers or a top up for gas and/or electric if care leavers are in crisis and have no money for food or electricity).

Help to access education and work

Meet public transport costs up to age 21 for those travelling to training, education and apprenticeships and travel costs when travelling to attend an interview.

Provide up to £100 a year towards books, equipment and essential clothing for those in education and up to £100 a year for essential work clothes such as work boots.

Annex 1

Under the Children Act 1989 a 'child' is defined (subject to a couple of exceptions not relevant to this issue) as "a person under the age of 18".

- 1 If a child meets the test in section 20(1) of the Act the Local Authority (LA) is under a statutory obligation to provide accommodation for them.
- 2 Section 22 of the Act (general duty of local authority in relation to children looked after by them) defines what is meant by a "looked-after child" (LAC). A child provided with accommodation by the LA under section 20 of the 1989 Act for a continuous period of 24 hours or more, becomes a looked after child.
- 3 Section 22(3) and (3A) set out a general duty that an LA has in relation to any LAC:

(3) It shall be the duty of a local authority looking after any child—

(a) to safeguard and promote his welfare; and

(b) to make such use of services available for children cared for by their own parents as appears to the authority reasonable in his case.

(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.

So a local authority owes this duty to any child that they are looking after.

- 4 Where a child is looked-after, section 22C sets out the framework for accommodating those children. Section 22C essentially sets out a hierarchy of placement types that the LA must look to accommodate the child in. Their first duty is to try and rehabilitate the child home to their parents or someone with parental responsibility. If that is not practicable then the LA are under a duty to place the child "in the most appropriate placement available". "Placement" in this context is defined in section 22C(6) as:

(6) In subsection (5) "placement" means—

(a) placement with an individual who is a relative, friend or other person connected with C [the child] and who is also a local authority foster parent;

(b) placement with a local authority foster parent who does not fall within paragraph (a);

(c) placement in a children's home in respect of which a person is registered under Part 2 of the Care Standards Act 2000; or

(d) subject to section 22D, placement in accordance with other arrangements which comply with any regulations made for the purposes of this section.

There is a duty on the LA to give priority to kinship care placements (that is a placement with a relative, friend or other person connected with the child who is also a local authority foster parent) which although won't be relevant in the majority of cases could be relevant in relation to unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) if they have connections with this country and there is someone that could be assessed as a foster carer for them.

5 So the LA must be placing the child in "the most appropriate placement available". Section 22C(7) – (9) provides that:

(7) In determining the most appropriate placement for C, the local authority must, subject to [subsection (9B) and] the other provisions of this Part (in particular, to their duties under section 22)—

(a) give preference to a placement falling within paragraph (a) of subsection (6) over placements falling within the other paragraphs of that subsection;

(b) comply, so far as is reasonably practicable in all the circumstances of C's case, with the requirements of subsection (8); and

(c) comply with subsection (9) unless that is not reasonably practicable.

(8) The local authority must ensure that the placement is such that—

(a) it allows C to live near C's home;

(b) it does not disrupt C's education or training;

(c) if C has a sibling for whom the local authority are also providing accommodation, it enables C and the sibling to live together;

(d) if C is disabled, the accommodation provided is suitable to C's particular needs.

(9) The placement must be such that C is provided with accommodation within the local authority's area.

- 6 Although section 22C(9) provides that the LA is to ensure that the accommodation is within the LA's area, section 22(7) does provide that they only need to comply with ss(9) if it is reasonably practical to do so.
- 7 Placements in a section 22C(6)(d) placement (i.e. a placement in "other arrangements") are unregulated in the sense that they aren't registered and regulated by Ofsted in the same way that a registered children's home would be so the requirements on such settings is lighter touch. However section 22D of the Act applies to such settings and there are specific provisions in the 2010 Regulations which also apply.
- 8 Under section 25A of the Act an LA must appoint an independent reviewing officer (IRO) for any child they are looking after and this appointment should be made before the child's case is first reviewed.

Care planning obligations

- 9 When a child is a looked-after child the 2010 Regulations apply to that child's case.
- 10 Briefly the 2010 Regulations provide that the LA must:
- prepare a care plan for that child before that child (C) is placed by the LA or, if it is not reasonably practical to do so, within 10 days of the child being placed. Regulation 4(5) provides that where the child is aged 16 or over and agrees to be accommodated under section 20 of the Act, the care plan should also be agreed with the child.
 - Regulation 5 sets out what the care plan must include and includes things like the long term plan for the child's upbringing, the arrangements made by the LA to meet the child's needs in relation to health, education and training etc. and must also include the name of the child's IRO. Since August 2014 the care plan must include:
 - (1)(f) where C is—
 - (i) a victim, or there is reason to believe C may be a victim, of trafficking in human beings within the meaning of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings,
 - (ii) an unaccompanied asylum seeking child within the meaning of the Immigration Rules and has applied, or has indicated to the responsible authority an intention to apply, for asylum and has not been granted indefinite leave to remain, that fact.

- The care plan must be kept under review (regulation 6).
- Regulation 7 provides that before a child is first placed, or if that is not reasonably practicable, before the first review of the child's case, the LA must make arrangements for a medical practitioner to examine the child in order to assess the child and provide a written report. The LA must then take all reasonable steps to ensure that the child is provided with the appropriate health care services in accordance with the plan.
- Under regulation 9, before making arrangements to place the child under section 22C, the LA must prepare a placement plan setting out the matters listed in regulation 9 and in Schedule 2. If it is not reasonably practicable to prepare the placement plan before the child is placed it must be prepared within 5 working days of the start of the placement. There are specific requirements in regulation 27 of and Schedule 6 to the 2010 Regulations where a child is being placed in "other arrangements" under s22C(6)(d) of the Act (see below).
- Under regulation 11, where an LA decide to place a child out of area, where the placement is not with a connected person who is an approved foster carer or another LA approved foster carer, the placement must not be put into effect until it has been approved by a nominated officer and where the placement is "at a distance" (not within the area of an adjoining LA) it must be approved by a Director of Children's Services (DCS). Regulation 11 also sets out what the nominated officer or DCS must be satisfied about before they approve the placement.
- Regulation 14 provides that if the LA want to terminate the placement they must comply with the provisions of regulation 14.
- Part 4 of the 2010 Regulations set out the requirements applicable to different types of placement. Regulation 27 provides:

27 General duties of the responsible authority when placing a child in other arrangements

Before placing C [the child] in accommodation in an unregulated setting under section 22C(6)(d), the responsible authority must—

- (a) be satisfied that the accommodation is suitable for C, having regard to the matters set out in Schedule 6,
- (b) unless it is not reasonably practicable, arrange for C to visit the accommodation, and
- (c) inform the IRO.

Schedule 6 to the 2010 Regulations provides:

Matters to be Considered Before Placing C in Accommodation in an Unregulated Setting Under Section 22C(6)(d)

1 In respect of the accommodation, the—

- (a) facilities and services provided,
- (b) state of repair,
- (c) safety,
- (d) location,
- (e) support,
- (f) tenancy status, and
- (g) the financial commitments involved for C and their affordability.

2 In respect of C, C's—

- (a) views about the accommodation,
- (b) understanding of their rights and responsibilities in relation to the accommodation, and
- (c) understanding of funding arrangements.

- Part 5 of the 2010 Regulations deals with visits to LACs. LAs must visit the child in accordance with regulation 28.
- Part 6 of the 2010 Regulations deals with reviews of the child's case and the LA must review the case in accordance with that Part. Regulation 33 sets out the timings of such reviews (first within 20 days of when the child first became looked after, the 2nd not more than 3 months after the first and subsequent reviews at intervals of not more than 6 months).
- Regulation 36 sets out the role that the IRO has in relation to the LAC.
- Part 7 of the 2010 Regulations contains the LA's duties if they are considering ceasing to look after the child.

Annex 2

Categories of Care Leavers

1. A LA has the duties set out in section 23B in relation to a “relevant child”. A “**relevant child**” is defined in section 23A(2) of the Act as one who:
 - (a) is not being looked after by any local authority;
 - (b) was, before last ceasing to be looked after, an eligible child for the purposes of paragraph 19B of Schedule 2; and
 - (c) is aged sixteen or seventeen.

The Care Leavers Regulations provide for an additional category of relevant children in regulation 3; if a child falls within the following criteria:

- (a) is aged sixteen or seventeen,
- (b) is not subject to a care order, and
- (c) on attaining the age of 16 the child was detained, or in hospital, and immediately before being detained or admitted to hospital had been looked after by a local authority for a period or periods amounting in total to at least 13 weeks, which began after the child attained the age of 14.

“**Eligible child**” is defined as a child that is:

- (a) aged sixteen or seventeen; and
 - (b) has been looked after by a local authority for a prescribed period, or periods amounting in all to a prescribed period, which began after he reached a prescribed age and ended after he reached the age of sixteen.
- 2 The relevant prescribed period is set out in the 2010 Regulations as 13 weeks and the prescribed age is 14 years. An eligible child is one who has been looked after for a period of 13 weeks, or periods amounting to 13 weeks, which began after he reached the age of 14 and ended after he reached the age of 16.
 - 3 **The period of time for which the child should have been looked after to be an eligible child must amount to at least 13 weeks and be between the child’s 14th Birthday and at least one day after their 16th Birthday.** So if a child becomes an LAC at any time after they turn 14 and ceases to be looked after at any time after they turn 16 then they will be an “eligible child”.

- 4 Local authorities also have statutory obligations to “**former relevant children**” who are defined in section 23C(1) of the Act as a young person who is:
- (a) aged 18 or above, and either
 - (b) has been a relevant child and would be one if he were under 18, or
 - (c) immediately before he ceased to be looked after at age 18, was an eligible child.
- 5 LA’s also have some statutory obligations to former relevant children who are **pursuing further education or training** who are defined in section 23CA(1) as a former relevant child who is:
- (a) aged under 25,
 - (b) a former relevant child in relation to whom the duties in section 23C(2),(3) & (4) no longer apply, and
 - (c) he has informed the local authority that he wants to pursue or is pursuing a programme of education or training.
- 6 A final category of “**persons qualifying for advice and assistance**” to whom the LA will owe certain duties (see section 24A and 24B) are defined in section 24 of the Act as a person who is:
- (a) aged at least 16 but is under 21 with respect to whom a special guardianship order is in force (or was in force when they reached 18) and was looked after immediately before the making of that order, or
 - (b) under 21 and at any time after reaching the age of 16 but while he was still a child was, but is no longer, looked after, accommodated or fostered.

What provision is the care leaver entitled to?

This depends on what type of care leaver the young person is.

Eligible Children

- 7 The local authority has the same statutory obligations in relation to eligible children as they do towards other children looked after by them, including a duty to maintain their care plan, carry out regular reviews of their case and appoint an independent reviewing officer (IRO) for the child. In addition they must:

- prepare an assessment of the eligible child's needs with a view to determining what advice, assistance and support it would be appropriate for them to provide him (both while he is still looked after and after he stops being looked after) (paragraph 19B(4) of Schedule 2 to the Act; the requirements for carrying out the assessment are set out in regulation 42 of the 2010 Regulations).
- As soon as possible after the assessment of needs is completed, prepare a pathway plan (which includes the child's care plan) (paragraph 19B(4) of Schedule 2 to the Act; the requirements for preparing the pathway plan are set out in regulation 43 of and Schedule 8 to the 2010 Regulations).
- keep the pathway plan under regular review (paragraph 19B(5) of Schedule 2 to the Act).
- appoint a personal adviser for the child (paragraph 19C of Schedule 2 to the Act; the functions of the personal adviser are set out in regulation 44 of the 2010 Regulations).

Relevant Children

8 The local authority that last looked after the relevant child must:

- take reasonable steps to keep in touch with the relevant child even if the child is not in the LA area (section 23B(1) of the Act).
- Prepare an assessment of the relevant child's needs with a view to determining what advice assistance and support it would be appropriate for them to provide him (unless they already did so when he was an eligible child) (section 23B(3)(a) of the Act; the requirements for carrying out the assessment are set out in regulations 4 and 5 of the Care Leavers Regulations).
- As soon as possible after any assessment of needs is completed, prepare a pathway plan (section 23B(3)(b) of the Act; the requirements for preparing the pathway plan are set out in regulation 6 of and schedule 1 to the Care Leavers Regulations).
- Keep the pathway plan under regular review (section 23E(1D) of the Act; the requirements for carrying out reviews are set out in regulation 7 of the Care Leavers Regulations).
- Appoint a personal adviser for the child (unless they already did so when he was an eligible child) (section 23B(2) of the Act; the functions of the personal adviser are set out in regulation 8 of the Care Leavers Regulations).

- Safeguard and promote the relevant child’s welfare by maintaining him, providing him with or maintaining him in suitable accommodation and providing assistance in order to meet his needs in relation to education, training or employment as provided for in his pathway plan (section 23B(8) of the Act and regulation 9 of the Care Leavers Regulations; regulation 9 and schedule 2 to the Care Leavers Regulations also make provision about the meaning of “suitable accommodation”).

Former Relevant Children

9 The local authority that last looked after the former relevant child must:

- take reasonable steps to keep in touch with the former relevant child even if the child is not in the LA area, and if they lose touch with him, to re-establish contact (section 23C(2) of the Act) continue to keep the pathway plan under regular review (section 23C(3)(b) of the Act; the requirements for carrying out reviews are set out in regulation 7 of the Care Leavers Regulations).
- Continue the appointment of the personal adviser for the child (section 23C(3)(a) of the Act; the functions of the personal adviser are set out in regulation 8 of the Care Leavers Regulations).
- If his welfare requires it, provide financial assistance by contributing to the former relevant child’s expenses in living near the place where he is, or will be, employed or seeking employment (sections 23C(4)(a) and 24B(1) of the Act) if his welfare and educational and training needs require it, provide financial assistance to enable him to pursue education or training (sections 23C(4)(b) and 24B(2) of the Act).
- If the former relevant child pursues higher education in accordance with his pathway plan, pay him the higher education bursary (section 23C(5A) of the Act and the Children Act 1989 (Higher Education Bursary) (England) Regulations 2009).

To the extent that his welfare requires it, provide “other assistance” which may be in kind and in exceptional circumstances, cash (section 23C(4)(c) and 23C(5)). The case of *R (on the application of) S.O. v London Borough of Barking and Dagenham (2010)*⁶ considered whether section 23C(4)(c) of the Act provides a

⁶ R (on the application of O) v London Borough of Barking and Dagenham [2010] EWCA Civ 1101.

power for the LA to accommodate a former relevant child and held that the subsection does afford an LA with a power to accommodate.¹⁰ The duties in section 23C(2), (3) and (4) of the Act continue until the former relevant child reaches 21 or, where the child's pathway plan sets out a programme of education or training which extends beyond his 21st birthday, they continue for so long as the child pursues that programme and the other duties in section 23C(2), (3) and (4)(b) of the Act also continue for the same period.

- 11 Although local authorities can provide support to any care leavers who want to remain with their former foster carers, a specific duty was placed on local authorities in section 23CZA of the Children Act 1989. This duty places a legal requirement on local authorities to advise, assist and support (which must include financial support) both the young person and their former foster carers when they wish to stay living together after the former relevant child reaches their 18th birthday.

Former relevant children pursuing further education or training

- 12 The local authority which owed duties to a former relevant child under section 23C and 23CA of the Act must:
- appoint a personal adviser for that person (section 23CA(2) of the Act).
 - Carry out an assessment of the needs of that person with a view to determining what assistance (if any) it would be appropriate for them to provide him (section 23CA(3)(a) of the Act; the requirements for carrying out the assessment are set out in regulations 4 and 5 of the Care Leavers Regulations).
 - Prepare a pathway plan for that person (section 23CA(3)(b) of the Act; the requirements for preparing the pathway plan are set out in regulation 6 of and schedule 1 to the Care Leavers Regulations).
 - To the extent the person's educational or training needs require it, provide financial assistance (section 23CA(4) and (5) of the Act).

Persons qualifying for advice or assistance

- 13 The relevant local authority (as defined in section 24(5) of the Act) must consider whether the person needs help of a kind the local authority can give:
- Under section 24A - to advise and befriend and give assistance.

- Under section 24B - to give financial assistance to a person over 16 years old but under 21 who was either made subject to a special guardianship order immediately after being looked-after by a local authority or who was looked-after but is no longer looked-after in relation to expenses incurred in living near the place where the person is, will be, or is seeking work or where the person is or will be receiving education or training ; or where the person is in full time further or higher education, is under the age of 25 and qualifies for advice and assistance, or would have done if he was under 21, assistance in relation to securing vacation accommodation (sections 24A(2) and (3), and 24B of the Act).

Unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) and victims of trafficking

- 14 Under the Care Leavers Regulations a care leaver's needs in relation to their status as a victim of trafficking or an unaccompanied asylum seeking child must be considered when the local authority is preparing an assessment of needs and to require that, where a child is a victim of trafficking or an unaccompanied asylum seeking child the local authority must consider whether their related needs are being met when reviewing the child's pathway plan.

Annex 3

Table A: functions where consideration of corporate parenting principles should generally apply

	Shire areas			Metropolitan areas	London	
	Unitaries	County councils	District councils	Metropolitan districts	London boroughs	GLA
Education	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Social care	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Housing	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Libraries	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Leisure and recreation	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Local taxation collection	✓		✓	✓	✓	

Table B: functions where corporate parenting principles are less likely to apply

	Shire areas			Metropolitan areas	London	
	Unitaries	County councils	District councils	Metropolitan districts	London boroughs	GLA
Highways	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Transport planning	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Passenger transport	✓	✓				✓
Environmental health	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Waste collection	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Waste disposal	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Planning application	✓		✓	✓	✓	

Further information

Relevant departmental advice and statutory guidance

- Care planning, placement and case review guidance:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-act-1989-care-planning-placement-and-case-review>
- Planning transition to adulthood for care leavers:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-act-1989-transition-to-adulthood-for-care-leavers>
- Roles and responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children's Services:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/directors-of-childrens-services-roles-and-responsibilities>
- Promoting the health and well-being of looked-after children:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-the-health-and-wellbeing-of-looked-after-children--2>
- Promoting the education of looked-after children:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-the-education-of-looked-after-children>
- Care Leaver Strategy: a cross departmental strategy for young people leaving care: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keep-on-caring-supporting-young-people-from-care-to-independence>
- Working together to safeguard children:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>



Department
for Education

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Corporate Parenting Board

Agenda Plan 2018/19

Date of Meeting	Issues for Consideration	Officer Contact	Notes
<p>Monday 9 July 2017</p> <p>10.00 a.m. – 12.00</p> <p>Mtg Room 1, HTH</p>	<p align="center">Public Items:</p> <p>One Adoption WY Annual Report</p> <p>OFSTED Update (verbal)</p> <p>Foster Care Recruitment and future membership of Foster Panels to include quoracy</p> <p>Care Leavers – Keep on Caring</p> <p>Sufficiency Strategy and Action Plan</p> <p>Training for CPB Members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - LGA - Total Respect <p>Children’s Rights – verbal update</p> <p>Corporate Parenting Board Agenda Plan 2018/19</p> <p align="center">Informal Items</p> <p>Educational attainment and progress – LAC outcomes data</p> <p>2017 SFR analysis</p>	<p>Sarah Johal or Mandy Prout (One Adoption)</p> <p>Steve Comb</p> <p>S Comb</p> <p>J Bragg Team Manager (Leaving Care) tbc</p> <p>S Comb/S Bonnell</p> <p>S Comb</p> <p>M Tiernan</p> <p>H Kilroy</p> <p>J Tolley</p>	

Corporate Parenting Board

Agenda Plan 2018/19

	Performance Monitoring report	S Comb	
	Training Briefings – Officers to advise		
Monday 24 September 2017 10.00 a.m. – 12.00 Mtg Room 1, HTH	<p align="center">Public Items:</p> <p>OFSTED Update (verbal)</p> <p>CSE and Missing Provision Quarterly Report</p> <p>Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report – September 2018</p> <p>Corporate Parenting Board Agenda Plan 2018/19</p> <p align="center">Informal Items</p> <p>Performance Monitoring report</p> <p>Training Briefings – Officers to advise</p>	<p>S Comb</p> <p>O Rix</p> <p>S Comb</p> <p>H Kilroy</p> <p>S Comb</p>	
Monday 19 November 2017 10.00 a.m. – 12.00 Mtg Room 1, HTH	<p align="center">Public Items:</p> <p>OFSTED Update (verbal)</p> <p>Annual Report on Children’s Health</p> <p>CSE and Missing Provision Data</p> <p>Corporate Parenting Board Agenda Plan 2018/19</p>	<p>S Comb</p> <p>G Addy</p> <p>O Rix</p> <p>H Kilroy</p>	

Corporate Parenting Board

Agenda Plan 2018/19

	Informal Items		
	Performance Monitoring report	S Comb	
	Training Briefings – Officers to advise		
Monday 21 January 2019 10.00 a.m. – 12.00 Mtg Room 1, HTH	Public Items:		
	OFSTED Update (verbal)	S Comb	
	Head Teacher Annual Report 2018	J Tolley	
	CSE and Missing Provision Quarterly Report	O Rix	
	Corporate Parenting Board Agenda Plan 2018/19	H Kilroy	
	Informal Items		
	Performance Monitoring report	S Comb/O Rix	
	Training Briefings – Officers to advise		
Monday 11 March 2019 10.00 a.m. – 12.00 Mtg Room 1, HTH	Public Items:		
	Membership and Terms of Reference of the Board (prior to Council AGM)	S Comb	
	CSE and Missing Provision Data	O Rix	
	OFSTED Update (verbal)	S Comb	
	Corporate Parenting Board Agenda Plan 2017/18	H Kilroy	

Corporate Parenting Board

Agenda Plan 2018/19

	Informal Items		
	Performance Monitoring report	S Comb	
	Training Briefings – Officers to advise		
Monday 15 April 2019	Public Items:		
10.00 a.m. – 12.00 Mtg Room 3, HTH	NO QUESTION TIME		
	OFSTED Update (verbal)	S Comb	
	Statement of Purpose for Registered Children’s Homes (Annual)	L Caunce	
	CSE and Missing Provision Quarterly Report	O Rix	
	Statement of Purpose for Fostering Service (Annual)	S Comb	
	Corporate Parenting Board Agenda Plan 2018/19 and 2019/20	H Kilroy	
	Informal Items		
	Performance Monitoring report		
	Training Briefings – Officers to advise		

Future reports:

Ofsted update – standard item (E McShane)

Corporate Parenting Board

Agenda Plan 2018/19

- Performance Monitoring report – Standard Item (Informal meeting) (S Comb)
- Corporate Parenting Board Agenda Plan – standard item (H Kilroy)
- Future shape of service and relationship with partners (E McShane/S Comb) – date to be determined
- Independent visitors scheme (quarterly report) (M Tiernan)
- Action Plan on the Fostering and Placement services in Kirklees – date to be confirmed
- Access and support for children and young people to mental health services (T Brailford) – date to be confirmed
- CSE and Missing Quarterly Report (O Rix)
- CSE and Missing Data (O Rix)
- Progress report on Corporate Parenting Board to Council and Health and Wellbeing Board (Lead and date – to be confirmed)

Annual

- One Adoption Annual Report (J Chew) – date to be determined
- Membership and Terms of Reference of the Board (March each year)
- Private Fostering Annual Report – date to be determined
- Annual report on Children’s Rights (M Tiernan) – date tbc
- Annual report on Complaints and Compliments (Y Mughal) – date tbc
- Annual report on children who go missing from care (Lead Officer tbc) – date tbc
- Annual report on the health of looked after children (G Addy) – date tbc
- Annual report from the Head of the Virtual School on the educational outcomes for looked after children (J Tolley) – date tbc
- Annual report on the work of the leaving care service (J Bragg) – date tbc
- Annual report on children and young people placed outside the Kirklees boundary (S Comb) – date tbc
- Youth Offending Team relating to their work to children in care (R Smith) – date tbc
- Annual Report on the areas considered by the Board, including its work programme, for presentation to Council and Kirklees Health and Wellbeing Board (S Comb) – date tbc

6 monthly

- Adoption Agency Report (April to September) – date tbc
- Adoption Agency Report (October to March) – date tbc

Corporate Parenting Board

Agenda Plan 2018/19

Quarterly

- Fostering Agency Report (April to June)
- Fostering Agency Report (July to Sept)
- Fostering Agency Report (Oct to Dec)
- Fostering Agency Report (Jan to March)
- Overview of number of children in Care (snapshot) including age profile (J Bragg) – date tbc
- Children’s Rights and Complaints and Compliments (M Tiernan) – date tbc
- Financial and practical support for foster carers (S Comb) – date tbc
- Corporate Parenting Board Strategy (S Comb) – date tbc
- Education Statistics (when released by DFE) (J Tolley) – date tbc
- CSE and Missing Provision Quarterly Updates (O Rix)
- CSE and Missing Provision Data (O Rix)