

Corporate Parenting Strategy 2019-22

V1.3 DRAFT FOR COMMENT & DISCUSSION (27/2/19)

'Achieving the best for our children and care leavers'

[PICTURE OF DIVERSE GROUP OF CHILDREN]

Foreword from the Council

Children and young people looked after by Kirklees Council are amongst the most vulnerable in our society. As corporate parents, we want for our children in care and care leavers what every good parent would want for their children: happy, healthy, and successful lives.

The questions we ask ourselves across the Council must always be: how will this help our looked after children and care leavers, and would this be good enough for my child?

To understand this fully, we need to listen to our children and care leavers and respond to their needs. We are making progress in this and finding new opportunities for the voice of our children and care leavers to shape what we do across the Council.

The whole Council has a responsibility to protect and promote our children and care leavers. Every elected member and every officer in every service shares this responsibility. We want our children in care and care leavers to have the best start in life, so they can aspire and achieve and live healthy, independent, and fulfilling lives.

This Strategy provides the overview of everything we're doing across the Council to deliver the best for our children in care and care leavers.

The needs of children and young people run through everything we do; the way we work with partners is central to delivering better outcomes. We will continue to have conversations with partners and colleagues across the council on the values and principles that need to underpin our role as corporate parents and further improvement work.

SIGNATURES OF:

- The Leader
- Cabinet Member for Children's
- Chief Exec
- Strategic Director for Children's
- SD for Adult Social Care
- SD for Econ & Infrastructure
- SD for Corp Strat & PH

Pledge to children in care

#DreamBelieveAchieve

Engage-Inspire-Progress

We want young people to be involved in the decisions that are made about them. We want to help young people to take control of their lives, to work to understand how much they can do and the impact they can have. And we will want to pool all the ideas and talents of young people to improve services so they meet what children and young people need and expect.

We pledge:

- To help and support you to stay safe and have a healthy and active lifestyle.
- To involve you in all decisions about your life.
- To want you to do well and encourage you to do and be the best that you can.
- To support you throughout your education and to plan for the future.
- To listen and make sure you know what will happen next.
- To celebrate your achievements.
- To make sure you have lots of different people to support you.
- To help you have new experiences and develop your own interests.

Commitment to care leavers

As a care leaver, you are legally entitled to a range of support and services from the local authority. Our Commitment to Care Leavers sets out the detail of how we can support you to plan for your future and the support you need in reaching your goals. We will provide this support from the age of 16 onwards, up to the age of 25 if needed.

We produced our Commitment to Care Leavers with the help of the Care Leavers Forum and the Children in Care Council. We will keep asking them their views about our services they receive along with other care leavers we are in contact with, to make sure that what we offer matches what you need.

Based on this feedback, we will annually review and develop our 'Commitment to Care Leavers' offer to make sure that these are the things that are important to you.

Children in Care say our priorities should be (from the Kirklees Children in Care Council February 2019)...

To improve the lives of all children in care:

- change the future
- make productive change
- show and give us as many opportunities as possible
- talk with us, listen, understand children's needs in care, and be willing to support us
- help young people from a young age enjoy being included instead of feeling guilty
- support and give children a voice and support the Children in Care Council to help get our ideas across
- make changes to the care system
- help us when we are actually struggling for example by giving us bus passes and not taking so long because managers need to agree

Care Leavers say our priorities should be (from the Kirklees Care Leavers Forum, February 2019)...

To change things, and make things better for the young people living in care to make their lives better:

- Help us to get somewhere instead of nowhere
- Someone to listen and be more understanding about our feelings as people haven't gone through what we have went through and we are saying things for a reason
- keep things confidential
- talk about problems that children leaving care face and discuss what to do to solve this
- help us within the care system as well as to help the people that are leaving care to support them
- to be able to work as a team for all of us to have our own voices and choices
- use the power of the Care Leavers Forum to get the care leaver's opinions and try make the system work
- Care Leavers Forum to be involved in stuff for future foster kids
- help us when we are actually struggling for example Bus Passes and Gym Passes
- For PAs: do more by being more pro-active

The Council

Kirklees Council is the democratically elected body governing local services for the 440,000 citizens living in the area. There are 69 councillors and a Leader with a Cabinet that works with officers to ensure everything we do is delivering for local citizens. Our mission is to make Kirklees an even better place to live, work, visit, and invest.



'We're Kirklees' is the way we describe the next phase of our journey to change the way we work to make Kirklees an even better place to live, work, visit, and invest:

- Working with people, not doing to them: organisations working together with people and communities to enable them to solve problems and make the most of their strengths and opportunities;
- Working with partners: organisations sharing knowledge, skills, and resources to work smarter together; and
- Place-based working: recognising that each town, village, and community has its own unique stakeholders, strengths, and opportunities that can help them solve their local problems locally, and working to support and enable this.

The Council has a shared vision, developed with partners in the private, public, and third sector, that Kirklees has both a strong sustainable economy and a great quality of life – leading to thriving communities, growing businesses, high prosperity, and low inequality, where people enjoy better health throughout their lives.

Underpinning this shared vision are our seven shared outcomes, plus one internal one for us (that we work more efficiently and effectively).

Our Vision

Our vision for Kirklees is to be a district which combines a strong, sustainable economy with a great quality of life – leading to thriving communities, growing businesses, high prosperity and low inequality where people enjoy better health throughout their lives.

Our shared outcomes



Best start

Children have the best start in life



Sustainable economy

Kirklees has sustainable economic growth and provides good employment for and with communities and businesses



Well

People in Kirklees are as well as possible for as long as possible



Safe and cohesive

People in Kirklees live in cohesive communities, feel safe and are safe/protected from harm



Independent

People in Kirklees live independently and have control over their lives



Clean and green

People in Kirklees experience a high quality, clean, sustainable and green environment



Aspire and achieve

People in Kirklees have aspiration to achieve their ambitions through education, training employment and lifelong learning

PLUS



Efficient and effective

Kirklees Council works smart and delivers efficiently and effectively.

Key strategies

Alongside the Corporate Plan 2018-20 ([link](#)), the Kirklees Economic Strategy 2019-25 ([link](#) **CABINET DRAFT VERSION**) and the Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2014-20 ([link](#)) set out the Council's overarching plans for delivering a strong sustainable economy and a great quality of life. The Economic Strategy's aim is to enable an inclusive and productive economy, with every person aspiring and achieving their ambitions, and recognising the positive difference that work and the economy bring to people's health and wellbeing. The Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy's vision is that by 2020 no matter where they live, people in Kirklees live their lives confidently, in better

health, for longer, and experience less inequality. It recognises children in care and care leavers as particularly vulnerable groups. It contains a Strategic Thinking Framework to address key health and wellbeing issues, and this Corporate Parenting Strategy has been developed in line with those questions.

By way of summary, the other key strategic documents that will deliver on this umbrella strategy are:

- Improvement Plan ([link](#))
- Kirklees Pledge to Children in Care
- Kirklees Commitment to Care Leavers
- Kirklees Voice Improvement Plan (under development)
- Interim Sufficiency Strategy 2019 ([link](#))
- Kirklees Safeguarding Board Early Support Strategy ([link](#))
- Kirklees Integrated Commissioning Strategy ([link](#))
- Kirklees Future in Mind Transformation Plan (2018 refresh) ([link](#))
- Kirklees Health & Wellbeing Plan 2018-23 ([link](#))

The Council's Improvement Journey

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 ([link](#)), which are, in turn, our response to Ofsted's recommendations following their September-October 2016 inspection ([link](#)).

The Improvement Plan sets out the stages of improvement we will make to take us from where we are now to an embedded culture of practice where we, and all partner agencies, are consistently and confidently doing the right things for children and young people. Ensuring children get the best start in life is everyone's business and owned by all.

Corporate Parenting

What Corporate Parenting is

We have parental responsibilities for 634 (January 2019) children who are in our care and offer support, advice, and guidance to 255 care leavers (January 2019) up to the age of 25, who were formerly in our care. Each elected member and officer has a duty to deliver on our responsibilities as a corporate parent. This means seeking for our children and young people the outcomes that every good parent would want for their own children.

Corporate Parenting Principles

In 2017 the Children and Social Work Act introduced a set of Corporate Parenting Principles for children in care and care leavers up to the age of 25 years. Kirklees Council and our partners believe adherence to these principles is the key to ensuring we deliver outcomes for our children and young people in care and care leavers.

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 children and young people in care, as follows:

- Act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of children in care and care leavers;
- Encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
- Take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;
- Help those children and young people gain access to, and make best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;
- Promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes for those children and young people;
- Be safe, have stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work;
- Prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

Shaped by these principles and our approach, our mission is to give our children in care and care leavers the best start in life through effective safeguarding, high quality health and wellbeing support, and support to aspire and achieve.

This document outlines how we will do this. It provides an overall understanding of how the more detailed plans fit together, and these are linked to throughout the document.

Context

National context of looked after children and care leavers

Nationally, the majority of children in care achieve better outcomes than they would have if they were not taken into care and often experience better outcomes than the wider group of children in need. However, children in care are particularly vulnerable to poor outcomes when it comes to education, employment, justice, and health. Less than one-in-six (14%) looked after children achieved 5 A*-C GCSEs (including maths and English) in 2015, compared to more than one-in-two (55%) of all children. National figures tell us that looked after children are five times more likely to face exclusion than their peers. Looked after children are also hugely overrepresented in the youth justice system: in 2015-16 it was estimated more than a third (39%) of children in secure training centres had been in care, despite children in care accounting for around 1% of all children.

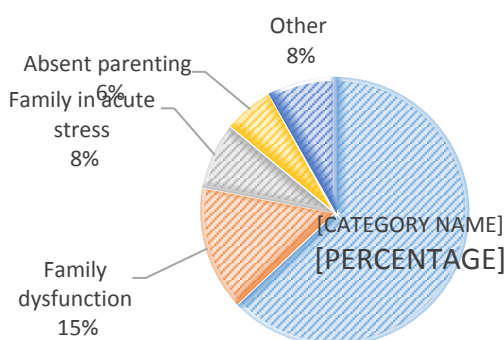
These outcomes follow children to adult life as well. Almost a quarter of the adult prison population has previously been in care according to two studies ([link](#)), and children who have been in care reoffend at roughly twice the rate of children who have never been looked

after. 50% of children in custody have been in care, according to an independent review from the Prison Reform Trust ([link](#)). Only 2% of children in care are in care for 'socially unacceptable behaviour' (as the primary reason for being in care), so it is clear that the reasons for these outcomes are more complex than their own choices in life. 63% of children are in care because of abuse and neglect according to the latest available national figures ([link](#)), which has lasting effects on anyone, not least a young child. It is estimated that nearly half of all children in care had a diagnosable mental health issue in 2015, and the proportion of care leavers not in education, employment, or training aged 19-21 was 40%. Some types of early trauma increase the likelihood of problems with family functioning, anxiety disorders, addictions, personality disorders, eating disorders, sexual disorders, and suicidal behaviour ([link](#)). Abuse and neglect can have a significant impact on later health and mental health ([link](#)). Clearly, children in care are more likely to experience a subsequent lifetime of disadvantage.

Sources: *Department of Education, Children Looked After in England, 2017; Outcomes for children looked after, 2017; Bazalgette.L et. Al, 2015* ([link](#)) + Kirklees JSNA ([link](#))

Some of these poorer outcomes are caused by circumstances prior to coming into care, but the right support can help mitigate these challenges and vulnerabilities by empowering and enabling children and young people and opening up doors to the same opportunities as any other child that their background might have prevented them accessing.

Primary reason for being in care in England (March 2018)



The number of looked after children in England has risen from around 60,000 in 2007 to 72,700 in 2017. This is an increase of 21% over the ten-year period. This compares to an AA% increase in the number of children and young people under-18s in England in the same period. As of November 2018, the number of looked after children in England per 10,000 population was 64.

Recent analysis ([link](#)) of the most recent Ofsted inspections suggests that 63% of local authorities are providing services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after, and care leavers, which either require improvement or are inadequate. Only 2% of local authorities are rated outstanding.

Local context

In Kirklees, the number of looked after children nearly doubled in the same ten-year period 2007-2017, from 385 in March 2007 to 699 in March 2017, with a large increase between 2005 and 2013 (from 312 to 639). This is likely due to a number of factors, including national and local high-profile cases, which led to closer scrutiny of children in need. The number is now beginning to stabilise in response to increased efforts to keep families together, and so the number of looked after children in Kirklees in November 2018 was 637, a reduction of 62 or just under 10% since 2007. This means that as of November 2018, Kirklees has 63.8 looked after children per 10,000 population, just under the England average of 64 per 10,000 population and significantly lower than our statistical neighbours (86.1 per 10,000).

Placement stability for children in our care in Kirklees: 49 children looked after experienced three or more placements in the period December 2017-November 2018.

Care leavers in education, employment, or training was 45.4% in October 2018, compared to 51.1% for our statistical neighbours and 51% for England. In Kirklees 89.1% of care leavers live in suitable accommodation in Kirklees in October 2018 compared to 84% in England), but this is not as good as our statistical neighbours where the 2018 figure was 90.7% in suitable accommodation. (These are the latest figures permitting national comparisons.

Keeping families together

The key context for all our corporate parenting is that only those who really need it come into care, and that, where possible, children and young people and their families are supported to stay together. We will support families to stay and thrive together, so they are resilient enough to manage challenging circumstances. The Council as a whole provides universal services such as libraries and parks and targeted interventions such as public health programmes that are the foundation of a great quality of life for everyone. We will ensure that children at risk of being taken into care, children in our care, and care leavers are not inadvertently inhibited from benefitting from these opportunities because of their background, circumstance, and experiences. The Council also has special responsibilities to children identified as being in need, and the early support provided to these children in need by the Council and our partners can make the difference between a child thriving in a familiar home environment and facing the disruption of moving into care.

Keeping families together is a key part of ensuring we have a good local sustainable corporate parenting offer. Ultimately we are all working to ensure that children and young people in Kirklees have the best start in life. Moving into care is a disruptive experience and it is important that children only move into care when they really have to, so that we are not causing unnecessary disruption to their lives. That's why keeping families together is an important part of our overall corporate parenting strategy. With the right support, many families can stay together.

Context:

- We have focussed a lot on improving children's social care and now we are catching up with early support, helping to keep families together with earlier support
- Our key principle is 'whole family working'
- Our community hubs work well.
- We have four designated children's centres.
- The number of children in our care and on child protection plans is reducing, but we now need to know why: whether it is because of our work (and, if so, to identify what worked and why) or external factors (and, if so, prepare for changes in these factors).

Key activities:

- Family Mental Health & MST (now mainstreamed following initial DfE-funding).
- Develop the relationships between service areas and between the Council and its partners, to mitigate the silos we work in. The Early Support Partnership will help with the partnership side of this.
- Public Health initiatives through Thriving Kirklees and Nurturing Parents programmes.
- Family Support Offer
- Family Group Conferencing
- A review of our children's centres to identify their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges.
- Measuring the success of early support is hard. We will continue to develop our measures and data so we can improve this.
- Focus on a good 0-5 offer and a good offer for older children and young people, recognising that both groups require specialist skills, whilst taking a more holistic view of the child's life.

Key Strategies

- Improvement Plan ([link](#))
- Interim Sufficiency Strategy 2019 ([link](#))
- Kirklees Safeguarding Board Early Support Strategy ([link](#))
- Kirklees Integrated Commissioning Strategy ([link](#))
- Kirklees Future in Mind Transformation Plan (2018 refresh) ([link](#))
- Kirklees Health & Wellbeing Plan 2018-23 ([link](#))
- SEND Strategy

Our Corporate Parenting Vision

The Council's vision for corporate parenting is that children and families can stay and thrive together, being resilient enough to manage challenging circumstances, that children in care and care leavers aspire and achieve and have a great quality of life, and that care leavers have control over their lives and access the same opportunities as any other adult.

To deliver this, we have four focus areas: a strong corporate parenting ethos at all levels of the organisation, resilient families, long-lasting placements, and confident independent care leavers.

Our corporate parenting priorities

1. Corporate parenting ethos

Firstly, we will nurture a strong Corporate Parenting ethos at all levels of the organisation. We will continue to train, educate, and raise awareness of this vision at all levels of the organisation. We must all realise that children and young people in care have the same needs as any other child: to be loved, cared for, and feel safe, and our activities must support this alongside our children's health, education, and placement support.

The questions we ask ourselves across the Council must always be: how will this help our looked after children and care leavers, and would this be good enough for my child?

Activities:

- Continue awareness-raising sessions with elected members
- Engagement with key services across the Council

Key strategies:

- Improvement Plan ([link](#))
- Kirklees Pledge to Children in Care
- Kirklees Commitment to Care Leavers
- Kirklees Voice Improvement Plan (under development)

2. Children in care thriving in stable placements

We will ensure that local placements and education and health services are properly coordinated to meet the often complex needs of our children in care, to prevent the additional disruption of placement breakdown or having to be placed outside of the district and far away from familiar places and support networks, when safe.

Moving into care is a challenging experience. Children have to forge new trusting relationships and get used to a new environment, which take energy and time. This can include getting used to a new school or other education setting and a new area. All placements must include a looked after child having their accommodation, health, and education needs met.

The Council's placement support team is very active, and has implemented innovative solutions to support several placements.

All of our placements must enable and be strengthened by services that support:

- Our children to be healthy and well: We want all of our placements to support looked after children to be as physically and mentally well as possible. This includes giving them not just the support they need for long-term health complications, but ensuring they have access to the

same social and leisure opportunities as other children, which is important for their mental wellbeing.

- Our children to aspire and achieve their best: It is important to emphasise that this is not just about how we meet the bare minimum requirements but how we support looked after children to aspire and achieve, so they are set up for successful, independent adult lives.
- Our children to have control over their lives: Voice
- Our children to be protected from harm: Children in care and care leavers are amongst the most vulnerable children and young people in our district. The safety of our looked after children is a central consideration in all our decisions. We have to consider safety 'in the round' in particular cases. Just like the other principles, there is no one-size-fits-all for safety.

Our mission is to drive improvement in the quality, variety, and availability of local services and listen effectively to our children in care, both new and existing, so that we can enable placement stability and minimise further disruption to their lives. Our Children & Young People's Interim Sufficiency Strategy 2019 sets out our interim measures to improve local services. In 2020, we will be setting out a longer-term plan.

Particular vulnerabilities, requiring specialist support include children and young people and care leavers:

- Involved in the criminal justice system (supported through the Youth Offending Team)
- With complex health needs (supported through all age disability and our health partners)
- With learning disabilities (supported through schools and the Virtual School)
- With mental health needs (supported through CAMHS)

The placement support team is now focussing its efforts on the most vulnerable children and young people to help build their resilience so they can build children and young people's resilience so they can handle challenges that would otherwise disrupt their placements.

Key strategies:

- Improvement Plan ([link](#))
- Kirklees Pledge to Children in Care
- Kirklees Voice Improvement Plan (under development)
- Interim Sufficiency Strategy 2019 ([link](#))
- Kirklees Integrated Commissioning Strategy ([link](#))
- Kirklees Future in Mind Transformation Plan (2018 refresh) ([link](#))
- Kirklees Health & Wellbeing Plan 2018-23 ([link](#))
- SEND Strategy

3. Care leavers moving into independence at a pace that suits them

Fourthly, we want to support our children in care in the transition into independent living at a pace that suits them and in a way that meets all their additional needs. Confident care leavers with control over their lives can aspire and achieve as much and at times more than those who haven't been in care, despite their challenging start in life. We want to build the number of these success stories across the district.

Care leavers are nurtured through positive, lasting relationships with their personal advisors to aspire and achieve and live healthy, confident lives. Our care leavers become more and more independent at a pace that suits them.

- Listening to care leavers. You can read more about how we will do this in our Voice Improvement Plan (under development).
- Positive and lasting relationships between young people and personal advisers (PAs), who have manageable caseloads, that start and are established well before the moment of leaving care.
- Robust, specific planning for young people's futures that engages young people by taking account of their individual needs and allows them to move towards independence at a pace that suits them. This will include assessing what skills individuals need, such as financial skills like budgeting, and supporting them to learn them in a way that meets their needs.
- Relaunch and continue to improve the offer for care leavers and the facilities at No. 11, our drop-in and support centre, as well as providing the same offer in a No. 11 centre in Dewsbury, ensuring that both enable and support care leavers into adulthood in the right way.
- Meeting accommodation placement needs:
 - A supportive place to live, in an environment that encourages and enables the young person to succeed.
- Supporting care leavers into sustainable employment:
 - Create opportunities within the Council for care leavers and remove obstacles to care leavers accessing these opportunities, building on the support package provided to services that wish to take a care leaver apprentice.
 - Build closer relationships between children's services and a range of partners in the public, private, and third sectors and exploit existing relationships to identify and create more work experience, employment, and training opportunities for care leavers
- Meeting health needs:
 -
- Continue to improve our support offer to care leavers through annual reviews of Our Commitment to Care Leavers in Kirklees (2018-19 version: [link](#)).
- Developing our Keeping in Touch Policy, and using Care Leavers Week annually as an opportunity to reengage with care leavers and update them on our developing support offer.

Key strategies:

- Improvement Plan ([link](#))
- Kirklees Commitment to Care Leavers
- Kirklees Voice Improvement Plan (under development)

Oversight & Accountability

Corporate Parenting Board will have oversight of progress on this umbrella strategy and the various strategies that sit below it. Through regular updates, they will ensure that the right progress is being made towards the vision set out in this document the four underlying objectives via workstreams across the Council. The Children's Scrutiny Panel will also be regularly updated on progress relating to this strategy.

Other key stakeholders that will receive updates on our corporate parenting include:

- Improvement Board
- Kirklees Safeguarding Children Board
- Partnership Governance Board (governing partnership arrangements between Kirklees and Leeds City councils)

How will we know if things are going well

- Positive educational outcomes for children in care
- Care leavers in education, employment, or training
- More placement stability
- Fewer children in care residing outside the Kirklees district and more than 20 miles from home
- Workforce stability, reducing social work and personal advisor turnover
- Timely permanence planning for children in care, with timeframes driven by the needs of the child
- Low numbers of children in care involved in the criminal justice system
- Children's health outcomes to improve across a range of measures, including both physical and emotional health and wellbeing
- All care leavers have their own personal advisor
- Number of children in need, children on a child protection plan, and children in care to decrease
- Audits to show improvements in case work recording, assessment, and planning relating to children in care reflecting and recording the needs, views and goals of children and young people in assessment and planning
- Achieve positive inspection outcomes relating to children in care (including children's homes inspections, fostering, social work inspections, services full inspection, and monitoring visits)

Research that has supported the development of this strategy

- The latest figures (as of February 2019) on looked after children in England can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2017-to-2018>
- In 2016, the Prison Reform Trust published 'In Care, Out of Trouble: How the Life Chances of Children in Care can be transformed by protecting them from unnecessary involvement in the criminal justice system'
<http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/care%20review%20full%20report.pdf>
- Children's Commissioner Stability Index 2018:
<https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Childrens-Commissioners-2018-Stability-Index-Overview.pdf>