

2022 - 2024

CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY





Dear Corporate Parents,

We are children and young people who are looked after by you.

As our corporate parent, we want you to think about us when you are making decisions about our lives. We like to be treated with respect, we want our voices being heard and we do not want to feel judged.

Please don't make assumptions about us and treat us fairly. Sometimes we feel like we are the last to know about things that affect us so please talk to us when you are making decisions and tell us what is happening as soon as you can.

For us, building relationships is important. We want to have the same social worker where at all possible and live with the same family until we are grown up or until we can go back to live with our families. It is hard for us to trust people, so give us time to get to know you. If we trust you that means you're special and you have listened to us.

Treat us like we are your own child. Make sure you do the things you say you will do and don't make promises you can't keep. Please give us permission for things important to us quickly, otherwise we worry we may not be able to do the things we like, like go on holiday or take trips.

Sometimes it is hard for us to talk about and explain how we are feeling. Let us know you understand what we are really saying and feeling. By speaking to us and the people closest to us. Sometimes we feel that our lives are not private like other people's and we struggle with that, so think about our privacy.

Finally, please never forget you are our corporate parent. You are responsible for us. Make sure our voice is at the heart of all you do and always try your best for us. No one can change our past, but you can help us shape our future.

Your Kirklees Child.

IMPROVING THE LIVES OF ALL CHILDREN IN CARE.

To improve the lives of all Children in Care, the children told us our priorities should be:

“	Change the future	Make productive changes
	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
	Support and give us a voice	Support the Children in Care council to help get our ideas across
	Don't make decisions without discussing with us first	Respect our privacy
	Do what you say you will do	”



WHAT CARE LEAVERS SAY OUR PRIORITIES SHOULD BE.

Care Leavers say our priorities should be:

“	Don't judge us by what is written in our file, judge me for who I am	Understand and respect us
	Be open and honest	Let's problem solve together
	Help young people still in care and those who are care experienced to shape services	Keep things confidential
	For PA's: do more by being pro-active	Help us achieve by assisting to get us bank accounts, passports, national insurance numbers, accommodation, education and finances
	Ensure our voices are being heard by working alongside Children's Advocacy	”



FOREWORD FROM THE COUNCIL.



As corporate parents, we would want for our care experienced children and young people what every good parent would want: happy, healthy, and successful lives. Children and young people in our care and those post 18 are amongst the most vulnerable in our society. Provided with the right support, our care experienced children and young people can go on to aspire and achieve and live healthy, independent, and fulfilling lives.

To achieve the best outcomes, we need to listen to our children and young people and respond to their needs. We are continually seeking and finding new opportunities to ensure the voices of our children and young people influence and help shape the work we undertake across the Council.

Their experiences in early childhood through to their teenage years will shape their future happiness and set the foundations for what they can achieve throughout their adult lives.

We recognise that children and young people, who have care experience, can face additional challenges that others their age may not. As their Corporate Parents, and despite these obstacles, we want them to achieve good outcomes in all aspects of their lives.

The needs of our children and young people are central to everything we do at Kirklees Council; the way we work with partners and colleagues is central to how we deliver better outcomes for our care experienced children and young people.

We want every child and young person to be able to achieve their full potential. For this reason, our ambition to be good Corporate Parents goes far beyond any legal requirements. Instead, we have a moral, social, and economic responsibility to work together to equip and empower our care experienced children and young people to succeed and thrive.

Clir Shabir Pandor
Leader of Kirklees Council

Jacqui Gedman
Chief Executive of Kirklees Council

OUR PLEDGE TO OUR CHILDREN IN CARE.

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. 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;
- Involve you in all decisions about your life; want you to do well and encourage you to do and be the best that you can;
- Support you throughout your education and to plan for the future;
- Listen and make sure you know what will happen next;
- Celebrate your achievements.
- Make sure you have enough different people to support you;
- Help you have new experiences and develop your own interests.
- View our Pledge to Our Children in Care in full at: www.kirklees.gov.uk/ourpledge

OUR 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.

View our Commitment to Care Leavers in full at: www.kirklees.gov.uk/leavingcare

OUR CORPORATE PARENTING VISION.

The Council's vision for corporate parenting is that all of our elected members and officers and everyone else in the Council champion our children in care and care leavers in everything they do and that our children in care and care leavers aspire and achieve, are safe and well, and are prepared for successful independent lives.



OUR CORPORATE PARENTING PLEDGES.

1.

We will be a good corporate parent to children in care and care leavers. We will...

- a. **Listen** to the needs of children in care and care leavers and to our health and education partners;
- b. Encourage elected members and officers from across the Council to **advocate and champion** children in care and care leavers;
- c. **Design services** that work with children in care and care leavers to meet their needs, not doing to them.

2.

We will create the conditions for our children in care to thrive in stable placements. We will...

- a. Create the conditions for **placements of the right kind**, including attracting and retaining more foster carers;
- b. Support all our children to **aspire and achieve** in education and training and to be as **healthy and well as possible**;
- c. Work with partners to **assess future placement, education, and health**.

3.

We will support our care leavers into independence at a pace that suits them. We will...

- a. **Work with our children in care.**
- b. **We will work with families** so they are ready to support them on leaving care, when appropriate;
- c. Create the conditions for **positive, lasting relationships**.



WHAT IS CORPORATE PARENTING?

Corporate Parenting is the term used to describe the responsibility of Local Authorities towards children and young people in care.

Corporate Parenting is our responsibility to be loving, caring and aspirational for all children and young people in our care or who have recently left our care now adults.

Corporate Parenting is about all services of the Council working together with health, education, and other partners to ensure that services are appropriate and meet the needs of and improve the outcomes for our children in care and care leavers across a range of services including

housing, health and leisure as well as those specific for children and young people.

Above all else, this means protecting children and young people from harm and keeping them safe but, equally important, it is about always striving for their best interests, nurturing their ambitions, and helping our children and young people get the most out of life. Ultimately, it means they become independent and thriving young adults.

At its heart, Corporate Parenting means always asking ourselves 'would this be good enough for my child?'

CORPORATE PARENTING PRINCIPLES AND OVERSIGHT.

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 good 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.

Corporate Parenting emphasises the collective responsibility of the Local Authority and its partners to achieve 'good parenting' for all children in care. It is not the sole responsibility of the children's Social Work Services. It is the responsibility of the whole Council, including Councillors, our health service and other partners.

In February 2018 the Department for Education published Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities for applying Corporate Parenting Principles for children in their care and care leavers. As corporate parents elected members and council officers have a statutory responsibility for the wellbeing of children in care. Elected members play a large part in holding officers and partners to account as well as being proactive in the corporate parenting role themselves.

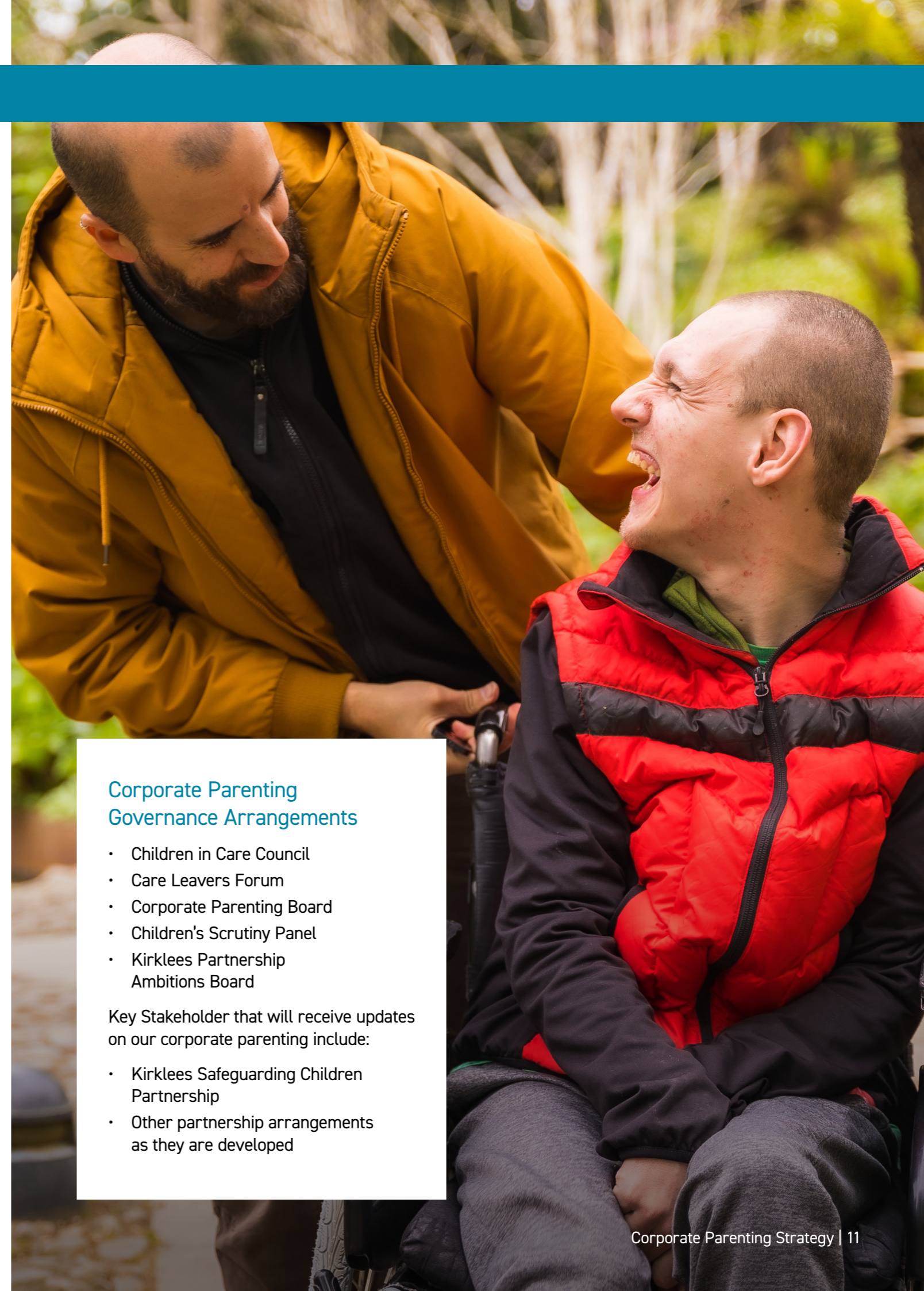
This Corporate Parenting strategy describes how the local authority and its partners, such as housing, health services, Police and schools, act as 'responsible parents' to children and young people living within their care. Effective corporate parenting requires everyone involved including elected members, officers, teachers, GP's etc. to recognise their role as corporate parents and understand what they can contribute to enable us to be the best corporate parents we can be to all children and young people in our care.

When providing a service for our children and young people in care we should always challenge ourselves by asking, 'would this be good enough for my child?'

The Corporate Parenting Board will have oversight of progress on this framework.

Through regular updates, they will ensure that the right progress is being made towards the vision set out in this document and the underlying objectives.

The Children's Scrutiny Panel will be regularly updated on progress relating to this strategy.



Corporate Parenting Governance Arrangements

- Children in Care Council
- Care Leavers Forum
- Corporate Parenting Board
- Children's Scrutiny Panel
- Kirklees Partnership Ambitions Board

Key Stakeholder that will receive updates on our corporate parenting include:

- Kirklees Safeguarding Children Partnership
- Other partnership arrangements as they are developed

KIRKLEES

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.
- Place-based working: recognising that each town, village and community has its own unique stakeholders, strengths and opportunities that can help them solve their 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 through their lives.

Underpinning this shared vision are our 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.



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



Independent
People in Kirklees live independently and have control over their lives.



KEY STRATEGIES

Alongside our [council plan 2021/23](#), the [kirklees economic strategy 2019-25](#) and the [kirklees health and wellbeing plan 2018 - 2023](#) 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 2025 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.

By way of summary, the other key strategic documents that support good corporate parenting:

- [Inclusion and Diversity Strategy 2021 - 2023](#)
- [Kirklees Pledge to Children in Care](#)
- [Kirklees Commitment to Care Leavers](#)
- [Kirklees SEND Local Offer](#)
- [Kirklees Safeguarding Board Early Support Strategy](#)
- [Our Kirklees Future Approach to Learning 2021 - 2030](#)
- [Kirklees Health & Wellbeing Plan 2018 - 2023](#)
- [Kirklees Children and Young People's Plan 2020 - 2023](#)
- [Joint area child protection inspection - June 22](#)
- [Local area SEND inspection - Feb 22](#)
- [Children's Services focused visit - Oct 21](#)
- [Children's Services inspection - June 2019](#)

THE COUNCIL'S JOURNEY TO OUTSTANDING.

In October 2021 Ofsted inspectors carried out a 'focused visit' to Children's Services and looked at the experiences of children in care, how the best living arrangements are made for them and the quality of social work and management.

Ofsted praised the council's work with children who are in care, recognising many strengths which improve outcomes for young people and help them to enjoy the best start in life.

The Strategic Director of Children's Services, said: *"The outcome is hugely positive and is a tribute to the commitment, talent and dedication of the Children's Services workforce. It also highlights how seriously the council takes its responsibility in being excellent corporate parents."*

A joint statement has been issued by Cllr Viv Kendrick, Cabinet member for Children, along with the council's political group leaders – Cllr Shabir Pandor (Labour and Leader of the Council), Cllr David Hall (Conservative), Cllr John Lawson (Liberal Democrat), Cllr Andrew Cooper (Green) and Cllr Charles Greaves (Independents).

They said:

"Supporting children is an absolute priority for all of us and we are delighted with this outcome, which shows our unwavering commitment to helping children and young people to thrive."

"Children who come into care have often faced difficult upbringings which can impact on their long-term life chances. It's incredibly important to us that they receive all the help we can give."

"Ofsted's visit looked at a specific part of children's social care, but we believe their findings reflect the improvements we have been making across the board over a number of years."

"Whilst there is still work to do – and our aim is to be outstanding in every single aspect of the support we provide – we are clearly heading in the right direction."

"We would like to thank all the staff teams for their hard work and passion, which we know improves the lives of children and families across Kirklees."

Working together, we want to make a profound difference and put children's voices at the heart of everything we do. We want every child to be protected, to fulfil their potential and - no matter how many problems they have faced - to have the same opportunities as those who are more fortunate."

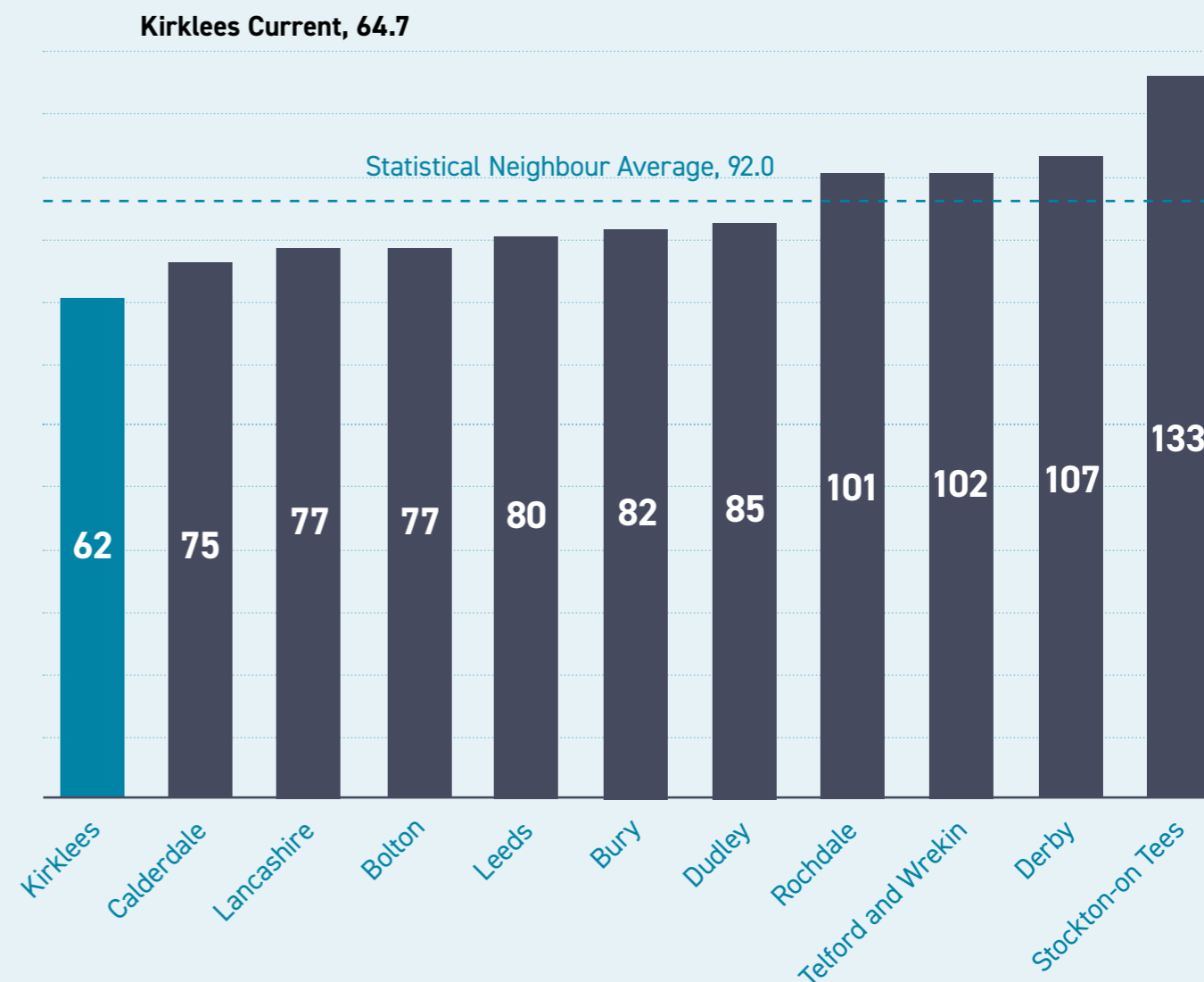
THE KIRKLEES CONTEXT.

At present we have 634 children in care (November 2022). As the corporate strategy outlines there was a nearly doubling in the 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 several factors, including national and local high-profile cases, which led to closer scrutiny of children in need.

Since 2017 Kirklees has stabilised this figure by increased efforts to keep children with their families either birth family or with carers who are connected to the children. This has led to a 10% decrease in children in care since March 2017.

There is currently an increasing trend in the number and rate of children in care from 63.8 (625 children) in December 2021 to 64.7 (634 children) in November 2022. The current 12-month average for Kirklees is 63.0 (618 children), above our 31 March 2022 published rate of 62.0, and significantly below our Statistical Neighbours 2022 rate of 92.0. The published rates for our Statistical Neighbours as at 31 March 2022 are shown in the graph for comparison.

Rate of children looked after per 10,000 aged 0 - 17



MEETING OUR CORPORATE PARENTING PLEDGES.

1. Be a good corporate parent to children in care and care leavers.

To meet this pledge we will listen to the needs of children in care and care leavers and to our health and education partners. We will encourage elected members and officers from across the Council to advocate and champion children in care and care leavers. We'll design services that work with children in care and care leavers to meet their needs, not doing to them.

Recently we have:

Undertaken engagement sessions with our councillors.

Arranged for corporate parenting to be included in inductions for new councillors.

Developed the critical friend relationship between Children's services and Corporate Parenting Board and Children's Scrutiny, with visits to services and other activities.

By the summer 2023 we will have:

- Delivered more awareness-raising sessions with elected members and with services from across the Council that help elected members and officers develop empathy and an emotional connection to our children in care and care leavers as well as recognise their role in our parental responsibilities.
- Encouraged services to have mechanisms in place to monitor and review the contribution they make to the lives of our children in care and care leavers; and
- Reported to strategic partnerships, Children in Care Council, and Care Leavers Forum on how every Council directorate is contributing to the improvement in life chances of our children in care and care leavers.

How we will know if we are a good corporate parent?

- Judging the emotional connection, knowledge, and awareness of elected members and officers through engagement sessions
- Through the oversight and scrutiny of Corporate Parenting Board and Children's Scrutiny Panel on this strategy and all of the strategies and performance and impact measures mentioned in this document.

Key strategies for being a good corporate parent:

- [Kirklees Pledge to Children in Care](#)
- [Kirklees Commitment to Care Leavers](#)
- [Our Council Plan](#)

2. Create the conditions for our children in care to thrive in stable placements.

To meet this pledge we will create the conditions for the right kind of placements, including attracting and retaining more foster carers. We'll support all our children to aspire and achieve in education and training and to be as healthy and well as possible. We will work with partners to assess future placement, education, and health needs and plan ahead.

Recently we have:

Reduced the size of our children's homes

Reduced the number of children living in residential care

Increased fostering family-setting placements

Reduced the number of children placed more than 20 miles outside Kirklees

By the summer 2023 we will have:

- Set out our long-term ambitions and plan for local sufficiency of placements, education and training, and health and wellbeing support services for our children in care and care leavers.
- Developed closer partnerships at a district-wide and more local level to help provide the right wrap-around support.

We recognise that particular vulnerabilities require specialist support, including:

- Involvement in the criminal justice system (supported through the Youth Offending Team)
- Children with complex health needs (supported through All Age Disability and our health partners)
- Children with learning disabilities (supported through schools and the Virtual School)
- Children 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 handle challenges that would otherwise disrupt their placements.

Key strategies for children in care thriving in stable placements:

- [Kirklees Pledge to Children in Care](#)
- [Kirklees Health & Wellbeing Plan 2018-23](#)
- [Kirklees SEND Strategy 2017-20 add new date](#)

How we will know that our children in care are thriving in stable placements:

- Net change in foster carers and net change in placements with foster carers, which we are working to see increase.
- Increase the number of children in care achieving five or more GCSE's from Level 4 to 9.

- Decrease the number of children in care with three or more placement in the last 12 months.
- Decrease the number of children in care residing outside the Kirklees district and more than 20 miles from home.
- Social worker and personal advisor turnover, which we would like to see decrease.
- Children's health outcomes, which we would like to see improve
- Audits to show improvements in recording the needs, views, and goals of children in care in case work recording, assessment, and planning.
- Inspection outcomes relating to children in care (including children's homes inspections, fostering, social work inspections, services full inspection, and monitoring visits), which we would like to see continue to improve.
- Timeliness of permanence planning for children in care, with timeframes driven by the needs of the child, which we would like to see improve.
- Increase the number of children in care achieving five or more GCSE's from Level 4 to 9.



The key context for all our corporate parenting principles 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 focused 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 early support 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 for early support:

- Kirklees Safeguarding Board Early Support Strategy
- Kirklees Health & Wellbeing Plan 2018 - 23
- Accessibility Strategy 2018 - 21
- Kirklees SEND Strategy 2017 - 20

3. Support / Create the conditions for our children in care to thrive in.

To meet this pledge we will work with our children in care's families so they are ready to support them on leaving care, when appropriate. We'll create the conditions for positive, lasting relationships between care leavers and their personal advisors and with partners, create opportunities for care leavers to aspire and achieve and improve their health and wellbeing.

Recently we have:

Arranged free KAL leisure centre membership for our care leavers;

Arranged free travel for our care leavers;

Relaunched the No.11 drop-in support centre for care leavers in Huddersfield and launched our Commitment to care leavers.

By the summer 2023 we will have:

- Launched a further drop-in support centre for care leavers in Dewsbury (by Sept 2019);
- Worked with the PAs of our care leavers not in employment, education, or training to support them into employment, education, or training as appropriate; and
- Refreshed our Commitment to Care Leavers.

Key strategies for supporting care leavers into independence:

- [Improvement Plan](#)
- [Kirklees Commitment to Care Leavers](#)

How we will know if care leavers are being effectively supported into independence:

- Increase the number of care leavers in employment, education or training.
- Increase the number of care leavers to have their own personal advisor.

May 2023

