



Kirklees

Corporate Parenting Strategy

2019-21

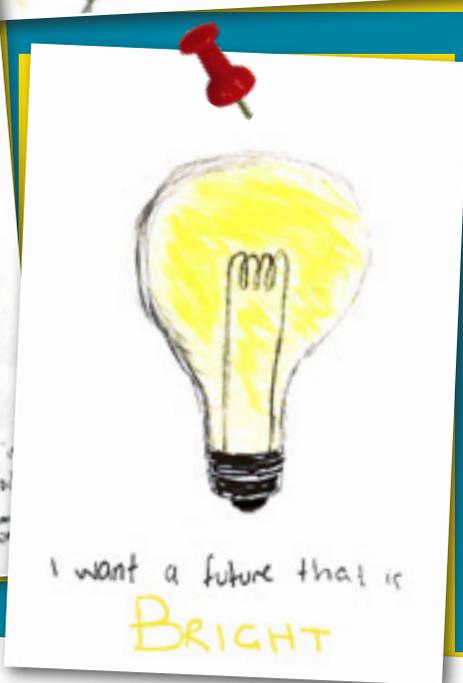
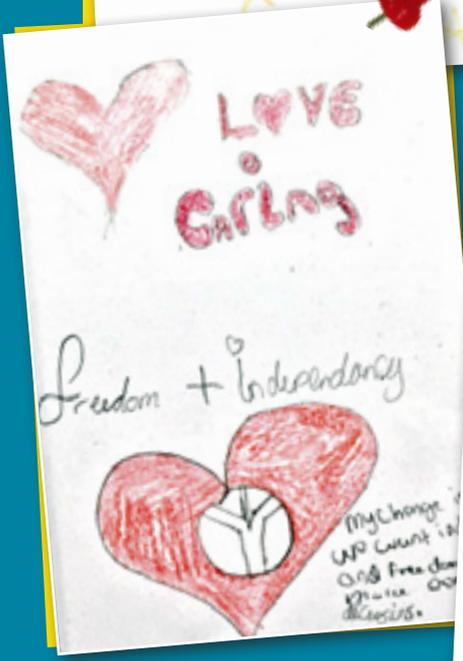
Our children in care and care leavers aspiring and achieving, safe and well, and prepared for successful independent lives



We'reKirklees



Artwork from our Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum



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

- 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

from the Kirklees Children in Care Council February 2019

Care Leavers say our priorities should be...

- 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
- Discuss problems that children leaving care face and discuss what to do to solve them
- Help us within the care system as well as to help the people that are leaving care to support them
- 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

from our Care Leavers Forum February 2019

Foreword from the Council

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

The questions we ask ourselves across the Council must always be: *'how will this help our children in care 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.

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.

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 what 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.



Shabir Pandor
The Leader of Kirklees Council



Mel Meggs
Strategic Director for Children's Services



Jacqui Gedman
Chief Executive of Kirklees Council



Richard Parry
Strategic Director for Adults and Health



CLlr Viv Kennedy
Cabinet Member for Children



Karl Battersby
Strategic Director for Economy and Infrastructure



Rachel Spencer Henshall
Strategic Director for Corporate Strategy and Public Health

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. 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;
- 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 Pledges:

Our Corporate Parenting Vision

The Council's vision for corporate parenting is that all of our elected members and officers 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.

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 needs** and plan ahead.

3

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

- a. **work with our children in care's families** so they are ready to support them on leaving care, when appropriate;
- b. create the conditions for **positive, lasting relationships** between care leavers and their personal advisors;
- c. with partners, create opportunities for **care leavers to aspire and achieve and improve their health and wellbeing**.

What is Corporate Parenting?

We have parental responsibilities for 633 (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 is about all parts of the Council and health, education, and other partners working together to ensure that services are appropriate to 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 specifically for children and young people.

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 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.

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

'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](#), the [Kirklees Economic Strategy 2019-25](#) and the [Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2014-20](#) 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.

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

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

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

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.

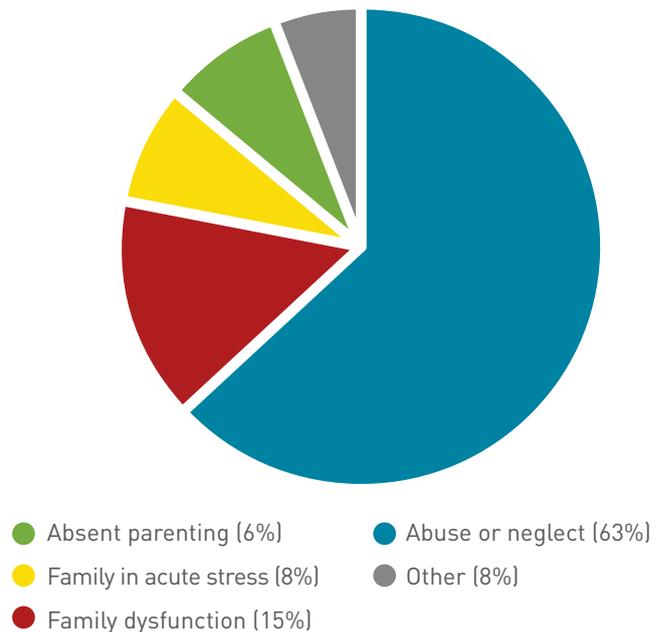


Context

National context of children in care 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%) children in care 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 children in care are five times more likely to face exclusion than their peers. Children in care 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.

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



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](#), 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](#). 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](#), 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](#). Abuse and neglect can have a significant impact on [later health and mental health](#). Clearly, children in care are more likely to experience a subsequent lifetime of disadvantage.

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.

The number of children in care 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. As of November 2018, the number of children in care in England per 10,000 population was 64.

[Recent analysis](#) 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.

National research indicates that a large proportion of children in care will live with their birth families when they become care leavers.

Note: This section uses the latest national statistics for children in care and care leavers, for March 2018 (published November 2018).

Local context

In Kirklees, the number of children in care 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 stabilising in response to increased efforts to keep families together when safe, with 633 children in care in Kirklees in January 2019, a reduction of 66 or just under 10% since March 2017. Kirklees now has 63.4 looked after children per 10,000 population (January 2019), just under the latest England average of 64 per 10,000 population and significantly lower than our statistical neighbours (86.1 per 10,000) (both March 2018).

The majority of our children in care (475 of 633) are placed in foster care, with the remainder in residential or semi-independent living, placed with parents or other family members, or placed for adoption.

We know that like most local authorities in the UK, we don't have enough local placements, education, and health and wellbeing support services of the right kind to meet the needs of all of our children in care and care leavers. Our children in care and care leavers are often living complex lives with multiple needs, sometimes highly complex. The more complex the needs, the harder it is to meet their needs locally.

39 children in care experienced three or more placements in the period February 2018-January 2019.

Care leavers in education, employment, or training was 47% in March 2018, compared to 51.1% for our statistical neighbours and 51% for England. We have made big improvements since then, with 58% now in education, employment, or training (January 2019). In Kirklees 91.3% of care leavers lived in suitable accommodation in Kirklees in March 2018, compared to 84% in England and 90.7% in our statistical neighbours. Since March 2018, we have seen this decrease to 89.8% in Kirklees (January 2019).



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 2020 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.

Key strategies for being a good corporate parent:

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

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.

2

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

To meet this pledge we will create the conditions for 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

By the Summer 2020 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)
- 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 handle challenges that would otherwise disrupt their placements.

Key strategies for children in care thriving in stable placements:

- [Improvement Plan](#)
- [Kirklees Pledge to Children in Care](#)
- Kirklees Voice Improvement Plan
- [Interim Sufficiency Strategy 2019](#)
- [Kirklees Integrated Commissioning Strategy](#)
- [Kirklees Future in Mind Transformation Plan](#)
- [Kirklees Health & Wellbeing Plan 2018-23](#)
- [Kirklees SEND Strategy 2017-20](#)

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
- % of our children in care achieving five or more GCSEs from level 4 to 9, which we are working to see increase
- % of children in care with three or more placements in the last twelve months, which we are working to see decrease
- % of children in care residing outside the Kirklees district and more than 20 miles from home, which we would like to see decrease
- 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
- % of children in care involved in the criminal justice system, which we would like to see decrease

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 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:

- [Improvement Plan](#)
- [Interim Sufficiency Strategy 2019](#)
- [Kirklees Safeguarding Board Early Support Strategy](#)
- [Kirklees Integrated Commissioning Strategy](#)
- [Kirklees Future in Mind Transformation Plan](#)
- [Kirklees Health & Wellbeing Plan 2018-23](#)
- [Accessibility Strategy 2018-21](#)
- [Kirklees SEND Strategy 2017-20](#)

3

Support our care leavers into independence at a pace that suits them

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 2020 we will have:

- launched a further drop-in support centre for care leavers in Dewsbury (by September 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](#)
- Kirklees Voice Improvement Plan

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

- % of care leavers in employment, education, or training, which we would like to see increase
- % of care leavers with their own personal advisor, which we would like to see increase

Oversight & Accountability

Council: Corporate Parenting Board & Children's Scrutiny Panel

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 and the underlying objectives via workstreams across the Council. The Children's Scrutiny Panel will be regularly updated on progress relating to this strategy.

Improvement Board will receive ongoing updates as part of its responsibilities in guiding the Council's current improvement journey, along with any other arrangements developed for this purpose in the future.

Partners

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

- Kirklees Safeguarding Children Board
- Partnership Governance Board
(governing partnership arrangements between Kirklees and Leeds City councils)
- Other partnership arrangements as they are developed



Research that has supported the development of this strategy

The latest figures on children in care in England can be found here (as of February 2019):
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2017-to-2018>

Prison Reform Trust (2016), *'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 (2018), Stability Index:
<https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Childrens-Commissioners-2018-Stability-Index-Overview.pdf>

CORAM (2017), *'Care Leavers Views on Their Transition into Adulthood'*
<https://coramvoice.org.uk/sites/default/files/999-CV-Care-Leaver-Rapid-Review-lo%20%28004%29.pdf>

Oakley et al (2018), *'Looked-After Children: The Silent Crisis'*
<http://www.smf.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Silent-Crisis-PDF.pdf>

Kirklees JSNA
<https://observatory.kirklees.gov.uk/jsna/specific-groups-life-events/looked-after-children-care-leavers>

We're
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