



**Cambridgeshire Children, Families and Adults Services**

# **Corporate Parenting Strategy 2015-2018**

**Produced July 2015  
To be revised July 2016**

*'As corporate parents we will ensure you feel safe, supported and cared for. We will respect and listen to you and involve you wherever possible. This is our pledge and our promise to you'*

**The Pledge**

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Cambridgeshire  
County Council

Cambridgeshire Children, Families and Adults Services

# Corporate Parenting Strategy 2015-2018

## Children and Young People's Version

(this version is included as the  
Executive Summary)

Developed by Young Members of the Voices Matter  
(Children in Care Council) Panel



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Produced July 2015  
To be revised July 2016

The Pledge

Please feel free to contact us via [voicesmattercicc@gmail.com](mailto:voicesmattercicc@gmail.com)

## Who is a Corporate Parent?

Everyone who works with Looked After young people and care leavers have the responsibility of a corporate parent. This can be a social worker, councillor and other professionals who work in health, housing and education.

Some of these professionals meet on a regular basis to discuss the important issues involving LAC young people and what work and support is needed to help young people succeed in lives. This is called a [Corporate Parenting Board](#) meeting and young people from the Voices Matter panel also attend to represent other looked after young people.

The Council has a [Pledge](#) for looked after children and young people which was developed by young people themselves with different professionals, senior managers and councillors. The pledge is a commitment to young people by the council so they know what help and support is available and what their rights and entitlements are.

In regards to corporate parenting, the Council pledge is:

***‘As corporate parents we will ensure you feel safe, supported and cared for. We will respect and listen to you and involve you wherever possible. This is our pledge and our promise to you’***

## Corporate Parent Strategy

We have a Corporate Parenting Strategy to help support children who come into care as the majority of Looked After Children need extra support in their lives because they've experienced a lot of disruption and hurt. Their experiences may make it harder for them to do as well as they could for example in their school, health and in their relationships. The strategy looks at the areas that are needed to support the young people and over the next 3 years they will focus on 5 key areas. These are:

- Improve the life chances of looked after children, young people and care leavers by widening the ownership of responsibility for these children to all Councillors, Officers and partners				
- Improve key performance indicators for looked after children and young people to meet national and local targets				
OUTCOME AREAS				
1. Looked After Children fulfil their educational potential	2. Care Leavers successfully gain employment	3. Looked After Children have good health and wellbeing	4. Looked After Children and care leavers are well equipped to be parents	5. Cambridgeshire Looked After Children and young people placed outside of the county are not disadvantaged

## How we will achieve the key areas in the strategy

### **Outcome1: Looked After Children fulfil their educational potential**

- Corporate Parents will support schools to ensure you have full-time education and make good progress in school.
- Provide good support during the year and at important times like exams to help you achieve your goals and aspirations. They will work with other partners to create opportunities such as apprenticeships and when you leave school, help and support you with your choices for higher education.

### **Outcome 2: Care leavers successfully gain employment**

- Corporate Parents will support you when choosing a college that's right for you and with linking potential employers with schools and colleges to support you in progressing onto a job.
- We will ensure that your Personal Education Plan is completed and the information from this is included in your Pathways Plans to support your transition when you leave school.
- We will promote apprenticeships including opportunities within the Council and ensure that there are named Jobcentre Plus Advisers for care leavers if they need to claim benefits.
- Opportunities and support will also be provided for young people with disabilities for when they leave care.

### **Outcome 3: Looked After Children have good health and wellbeing**

- Corporate Parents will make sure you know how your health is by having appointments and make sure things are on track. Help you to go to appointments and get the support and advice you need to maintain your good health and wellbeing.
- Make sure your carers can help you with being healthy.
- Help you to be part of decisions about your health.

### **Outcome 4: Looked After Children and care leavers are well equipped to be parents**

- Corporate parents will work with young parents in care or who have left care to help them get the services and support they need to support them to be good parents.

### **Outcome 5: Cambridgeshire Looked After Children and young people placed outside the county are not disadvantaged**

- Corporate parents will make sure your health, education and contact is given the same top priority as if you were living closer to home and to make sure that where you live is right for you.
- Ensure that you are involved in decisions about whether it's best for you to stay living out of County or return to Cambridgeshire.

## How we will do this:

### **County Councillors**

- They will be provided information about issues that effect young people in care. They will make sure that they talk to you and give you a say in how the council is run. They will help secure opportunities for looked after young people and care leavers with apprenticeships.
- They will champion the needs of looked after children and care leavers.

### **Council Officers and partner agencies**

- To know about the Corporate Parenting Strategy and to think about how this affects all parts of their day-to-day work.
- To help develop Council services to make sure that the Corporate Parenting Strategy is being put into practice.
- Help you to gain work experience, apprenticeships and job opportunities.

### **Involve Looked After Children and care leavers**

- This version of the Strategy has been put together to be more reader friendly so young people can understand the strategy.
- Corporate Parents have an ongoing commitment to seek your views in the following ways: LAC Reviews, Children in Care Council, Just Us, Advocacy Service, Pledge Training and in the day-to-day ways where you come into contact.

## How the strategy will be used

- Through the '[The Corporate Parenting Board meeting](#)', the board members will monitor and discuss the issues in the strategy and ensure the work is being undertaken and checked.
- There will also be '[Implementation groups](#)' where each of the 5 five outcome areas (in the blue table above) will have an action plan. Each group will have a lead officer who will report the progress on the action plans and making sure the work being undertaken is working and successful and meeting the targets. This will then be shared and discussed at the Corporate Parenting Board, 4 times a year.

## Children in Care council (CICC ) – Voices Matter

The Voices Matter representatives will meet regularly with key professionals to look at the work being undertaken in the areas identified in this strategy and in partnership with the Voices Matter Action plan. They will also randomly check with young people to gain their views and feelings about some of the services they receive.

### **Voices Matter vision statement;**

- *“Our aim is to use our experiences of being in care to improve the services for other looked after children and young people.*
- *We will listen to the views and feelings of other looked after children and young people to ensure their voices are heard.*
- *We are determined and committed to improving services that children and young receive to ensure they achieve their full potential*
- *As a Voices Matter panel we will work towards achieving the best possible standards for every child and young person looked after by Cambridgeshire.*

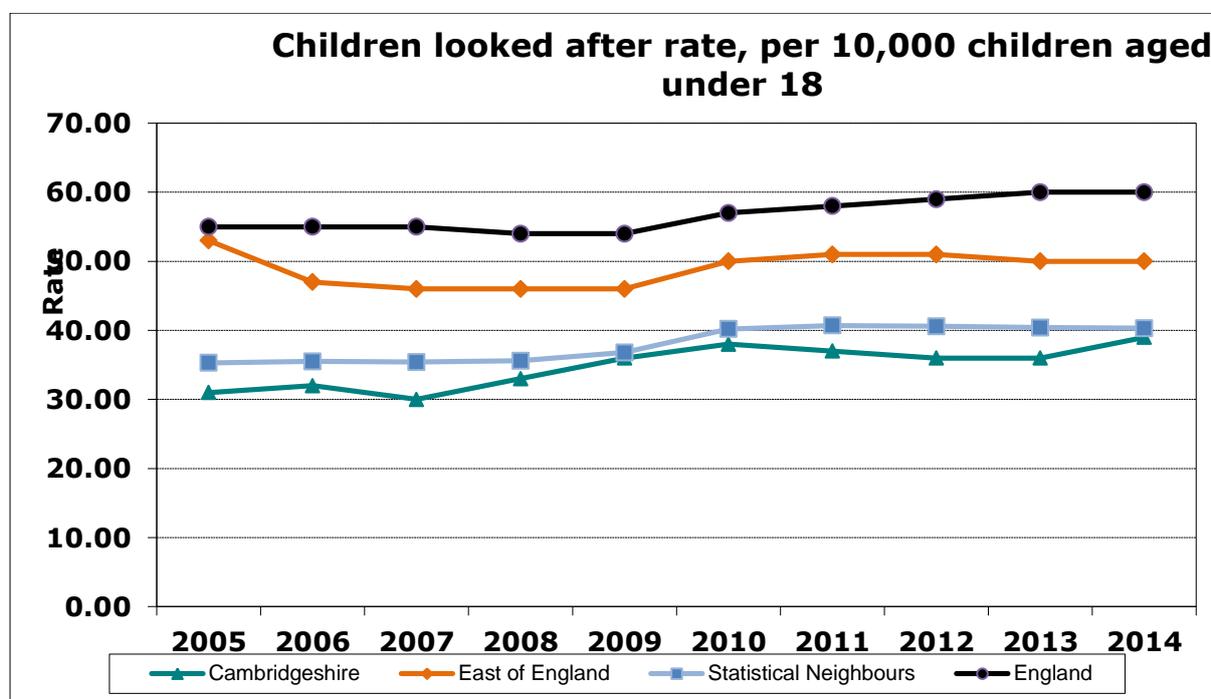
## Why we need a strategy

### National and Local Context

The national trend over the past 5 years has shown steady increase in the number of children and young people becoming looked after. There were 60 Looked After Children in every 10,000 children aged under 18 in England in 2014. This compares to 57 per 10,000 in 2009.

Historically, Cambridgeshire's rate of Looked After Children has been well below the national average and this continues to be the case in 2014 at a rate of 39 per 10,000 children. In regards to the county's statistical neighbours, Cambridgeshire has had a relatively low rate in the past but with an increase in 2014 the rates are currently comparable.

Chart1: Rate of Looked After Children in Cambridgeshire



Source: Local Authority Interactive Tool (LAIT)

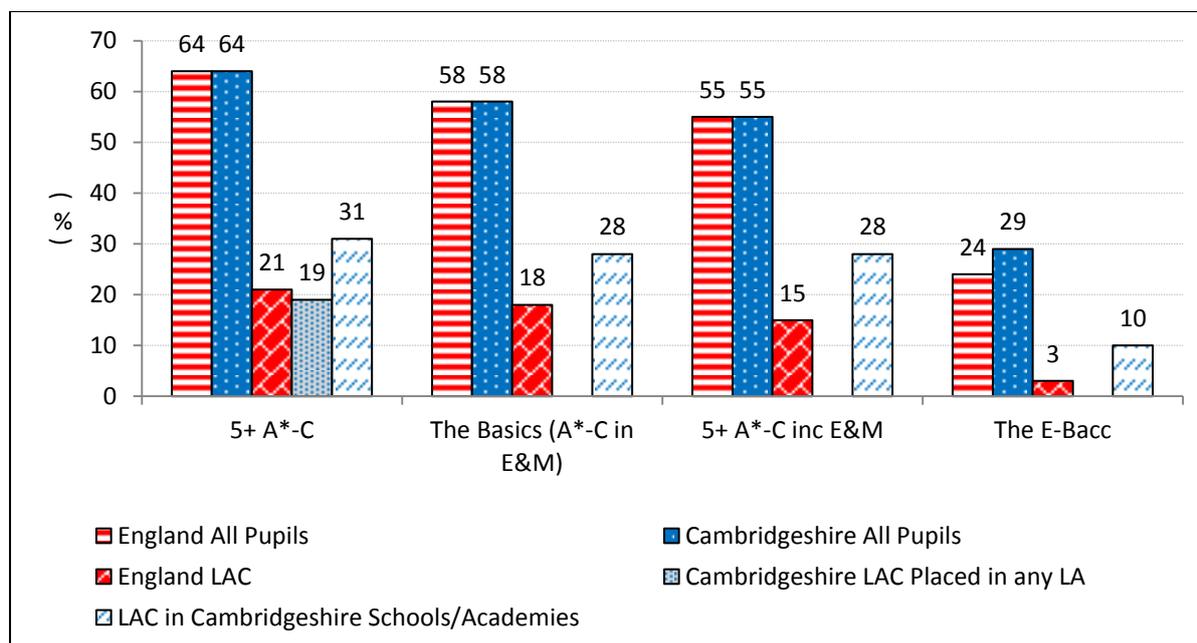
In terms of numbers, Cambridgeshire has 535 Looked After Children as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015.

### Outcomes for Looked After Children

The majority of Looked After Children and young people start from a position of increased vulnerability and disadvantage that means additional support is needed to overcome the factors which will contribute to unacceptably high levels of poor outcomes.

This chart shows the educational attainment of Cambridgeshire's Looked After Children against the performance of all pupils in Cambridgeshire schools (some Looked After Children will live and be educated in other local authorities).

Chart 2. Key Stage 4 Outcomes for Cambridgeshire Looked After Children (2014)



Source: LA RAISEOnline accessed 09 March 2015 and DfE SFR 49/2014

Note. x indicates that the data has been suppressed by the DfE

Note. There are 29 KS4 LAC in Cambridgeshire schools

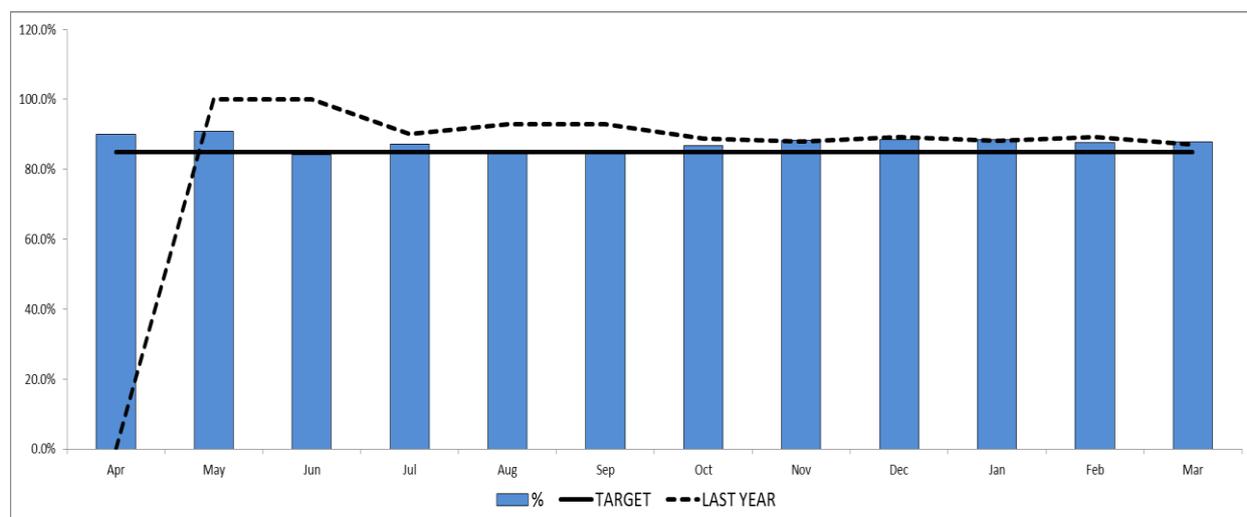
It should be noted that, at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014, 66% of all Looked After Children in England had some form of special educational need and 29% had their needs recognised in a Statement<sup>1</sup>. Despite this fact, the attainment of Looked After Children is still well below that of their peers. Poor attainment, in addition to other barriers, makes it far more difficult for them to successfully move into further education, training and work.

In March 2015, 48.6% of care leavers in Cambridgeshire aged 19 years were in Education, Employment or Training, compared to 85% of Cambridgeshire's general 19 year old population (December 2014) (CFA Management Information Team). This has increased significantly from 34% in 2011 and is above the average of Cambridgeshire's statistical neighbours (39.9%) but is still too low.

Opportunities for care leavers to successfully gain employment can also be exacerbated by inappropriate accommodation which is either in a location where job opportunities are scarce, or does not have the support needed by care leavers to develop their life skills or sustain the tenancy. In the past year, Cambridgeshire has been performing at 85-90% in respect of care leavers 19-21 years being in suitable accommodation. This is above our statistical neighbours (77.4%) and England (77.8%).

<sup>1</sup> DfE (2014) Statistical first release: Outcomes for children Looked After by Local Authority in England as at 31 March 2014

Chart 3: Care leavers in suitable accommodation at 19-21 years (2014/15)



Source: CFA Management Information Team

Because of their often difficult start in life, Looked After Children tend to have higher physical, psychological and emotional ill-health than their peers. About 60% of those looked after in England have been reported to have emotional and mental health problems, around four times the rate for children generally<sup>2</sup>. Delays in identifying and meeting their emotional well-being and mental health needs can have far reaching effects on all aspects of their lives, including their chances of reaching their full potential and leading happy and healthy lives as adults.<sup>3</sup> If their placements have been unstable, it can also be the case that they miss out on preventative healthcare such as immunisations.

Recent findings suggest that 22% of girls that are looked after will become teenage parents<sup>4</sup>. This is approximately 3 times that of their peers. Current teenage pregnancy rates in Cambridgeshire care leavers supports this figure. Analysis of this local group of teenage parents suggests that they are not a homogenous group in terms of their background and care experience, however, there are some factors which are common including having poor educational attainment and being NEET, risk taking behaviours, self-harming and early sexual activity.

## Our legal duties

'Corporate Parenting', as a collective responsibility for local authorities, was first laid out in the Children Act 1989. Government guidance 'If this were my child' (DfES 2003) reiterated the leading role of Councillors in ensuring that their council acts as an effective corporate parent for every child looked after; actively supporting standards of care and seeking the high quality outcomes that any good parent would want for their child. The mind-set should

<sup>2</sup> National Institute for Clinical Excellence (2010) Public Health Guidance: Looked-after children and young people

<sup>3</sup> Department for Education & Department of Health (2015) Promoting the health and well-being of looked-after children: Statutory guidance for local authorities, clinical commissioning groups and NHS England

<sup>4</sup> The Centre for Social Justice (2015) Finding Their Feet: Equipping care leavers to reach their potential

be 'if this were my baby; if this were my child in their school years; if this were my son/daughter moving into independence'.

Local authorities do not act alone in their corporate parenting role. The Children Act 1989 placed a duty on the NHS, housing and education to assist social care services to fulfil their responsibility by providing support and services. This was further compounded by the role of collaborative service agreements being emphasised in the Children Act 2004.

A full list of key legislation and guidance can be found as Appendix 2.

## Objectives and intended outcomes of the Corporate Parenting Strategy

The majority of children and young people that become looked after do so because of the inability of their parents, for a range of reasons, to offer safe, nurturing and effective care within the family home. The majority of these children and young people have suffered some form of abuse or neglect prior to coming into the care of the Local Authority and there is substantial evidence that they begin life at a disadvantage compared to their peers.

Cambridgeshire County Council has 3 priorities for children and families in Cambridgeshire:

- *Improve learning and health outcomes for every child and young person*
- *Narrow the gap in learning and health outcomes for vulnerable children and young people*
- *Keep children and young people safe at home and in their communities*

The higher chance of poorer outcomes for Looked After Children means that they are a key group of children to prioritise when implementing action to meet these priorities for children and families.

This strategy document describes the Council's aspirations for Looked After Children and care leavers, acting collectively as a corporate parent to these children and young people to seek high quality outcomes with the mind-set of 'if this were my child' (DfES 2003). It is intended to provide a framework for all Council Officers, Councillors and partners to clarify their responsibility to contribute to corporate parenting and to fulfil their role in achieving our ambition for these children and young people.

- Improve the life chances of looked after children, young people and care leavers by widening the ownership of responsibility for these children to all Councillors, Officers and partners
- Improve key performance indicators for looked after children and young people to meet national and local targets

1. Looked After Children fulfil their educational potential	2. Care Leavers successfully gain employment	3. Looked After Children have good health and wellbeing	4. Looked After Children and care leavers are well equipped to be parents	5. Cambridgeshire Looked After Children and young people placed outside of the county are not disadvantaged
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To enable the outcomes to be achieved, all County Councillors, Officers and partners will be aware of their corporate parenting responsibility and know how to fulfil it.

### The Council's pledge to Looked After Children, young people and care leavers

The Council has worked in partnership with young people, senior managers and lead Members to develop a pledge for Looked After Children, young people and care leavers. This is a commitment about how the Council will act and what these children and young people can expect in regards to their experience of services.

In regards to corporate parenting, the Council pledge is:

***'As corporate parents we will ensure you feel safe, supported and cared for. We will respect and listen to you and involve you wherever possible. This is our pledge and our promise to you'***

This strategy is written with this pledge as its guiding principle. Additional areas of the pledge will be referenced in other areas of this document where they are most relevant. A full copy of The Pledge can be found as Appendix 1.

## Definitions

**Looked after Child:** The term 'looked after' refers to any child or young person for whom the authority has, or shares, parental responsibility for. Or, for whom the authority provides care and accommodation to on behalf of their parent/s. A 'child' refers to any child or young person between 0-18 years and includes children with disabilities and care leavers. The Council also has a duty and responsibility to young people who leave local authority care from the age of 16 years until they reach the age of 21, or 25 if they are in higher education

**Care Leaver:** a person who has been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14, and who was in care on their 16th birthday

**Corporate parenting:** 'Corporate parenting' is the term used to refer to the collective responsibility of the Council to provide the best possible care and protection for children and young people who are looked after or care leavers. This includes being ambitious for these children and young people, encouraging and supporting them to overcome obstacles and achieve their full potential to be the best they can be; as one would want for their own child. This concerns their education, their physical and psychological health, their leisure, how they celebrate culture and praising their achievements

**Who is a corporate parent?:** When a child becomes 'looked after', the tasks of their parents become the responsibility of everyone working for the Council, including the elected Members, all service departments and officers and partner agencies, not just children and young people's services.

## How we will achieve the objectives of the strategy

### 1. The Council's Placement Strategy for Looked After Children 2012-2015

*'We are fully committed to finding you a caring place to live and we will make sure you feel safe, loved and cared for and receive the right information for you about your placement'*      **The Pledge**

Children and young people cared for in their own families are more likely to achieve positive outcomes. Preventing children becoming looked after, where it is safe to do so, is one of the key objectives of the Council's Placement Strategy 2012-2015. The Council is committed to keeping families together by investing in preventative services and supporting parents.

If it is in the best interests of children and young people to become looked after then the Council strives to meet their needs for permanence and stability in their placements. This will ideally be with wider family or kinship. Otherwise, placements should be well-planned to reduce the risk of them breaking down, fostering should be long term if possible and care planning should support good transitions into independence.

The Council's Placement Strategy will be revised in 2015.

## 2. Improving outcomes for Looked After Children

### Outcome1: Looked After Children fulfil their educational potential

**Target:** Increase the proportion of LAC reaching level 4 expectation at KS2 by 3% by 2015  
(a further target to be set when new Government performance indicators for KS2 are known)

**Target:** The proportion of LAC making expected levels of progress between KS2 and KS4 is 3 percentage points above the national average

*'Your education and individual learning is important to us. We will encourage and guide you to reach your full potential and achieve your goals and aspirations and celebrate your achievements with you'*

**The Pledge**

This outcome is closely aligned to the Council's Accelerating Achievement Strategy 2014-2016 which is aimed at groups of children and young people who are vulnerable to underachievement.

To overcome the challenge of poor educational outcomes for Looked After Children we will:

- Challenge and support early years providers and schools to ensure that all Looked After Children and young people make appropriate progress and attainment
- Ensure that all professionals, in all phases of education, have the highest aspirations for Looked After Children
- Ensure that children in care are not moved and do not change schools in Key Stage 4 wherever possible (years 10 and 11)
- Ensure that needs are supported during transition to new early years settings, schools, school to post 16, and from school to education, work and training
- Ensure that the admission arrangements are followed in order for children to gain a place in funded early years provision and a school which best meets their needs
- Improve wider learning and life skills for all children and young people, ensuring access to opportunities that exist and being creative in developing new ones, and include these in Personal Education Plans
- Where bullying is reported, ensure that there is a positive resolution
- Ensure that early years providers focus on accelerated achievement for vulnerable groups of children, through a programme of Keeping in Touch visits and training
- Make all carers and professionals working with Looked After Children and care leavers aware of post-16 opportunities for further education and university entrance, providing information about entitlements and support from universities and schools (e.g. The Realise project hosted by Cambridge University)
- Ensure that Social Workers and Young People's Workers promote and support the 16-19 bursary for eligible Looked After Children and care leavers
- Improve Social Workers understanding of the achievement agenda and what they and parents/carers can do to support learning
- Professionals, including Social Workers and Specialist Teachers, will be clearer about how early years providers and schools are using the Pupil Premium for a

particular Looked After Child and will ask for evidence that this is having a positive impact on their achievement (from the Accelerating Achievement Strategy)

- Provide opportunities for Looked After Children and young people with learning disabilities to learn the skills they need to live independently
- Ensure that children living out of county are not disadvantaged in fulfilling their educational potential

## **Outcome 2: Care leavers successfully gain employment**

**Target:** Increase in % of care leavers aged 17-21 years engaged in education, training or employment (baseline to be set June 2015 - new indicator)

It is well evidenced that a number of factors can affect career options and success after the age of 16, including: limited educational qualifications and training, mental ill health, substance misuse and family breakdown. Care leavers are more likely to have experienced a combination of these factors so it may not be unexpected that they are over-represented in the category of young people classed as 'Not in Education, Training or Employment' (NEET). In 2014, 47% of care leavers in Cambridgeshire were NEET, this compares to a national average of 40%.

To improve the employment opportunities and success of care leavers we will:

- Provide stable placements in care and at school and safe, appropriate, affordable housing for care leavers
- Identify early in year 11, those young people who have not applied for learning and ensure that appropriate encouragement and support is in place over the transition to post 16 i.e. through Guidance Advisers and Young People's Workers and ESLAC Workers
- Improve the quality of data that is collected about Looked After Children and care leavers and their education, training and employment status so resources are allocated to support young people most in need
- Use the early leaver data with learning providers so they can identify ways to minimise drop-out
- Provide support to young people at risk of dropping out from year 12 onwards through the Post 16 and Locality Team
- Ensure correct support is in place in further education colleges, training providers and higher education establishments to enable care leavers to achieve
- Link employers with schools and colleges to support the progression of young people into skilled employment
- Promote apprenticeships for Looked After Children and care leavers, including opportunities within the Council
- Have named Jobcentre Plus Advisers for care leavers claiming benefits to support them back into suitable training or employment
- Start early to provide looked after young people with learning disabilities to prepare for leaving care
- Include ESLAC Personal Education Plan information and Education, Health and Care Plan information in Pathways Plans to support transition from school to post-16 education and training
- Ensure that care leavers living out of county successfully gain education, training and employment

## Outcome 3: Looked After Children have good health and wellbeing

Target: 90% of children have a health assessment within 20 days of entering care

*'We will support you in all your health needs including physical, emotional and mental health and will ensure you have access to your health history we hold for you'* The Pledge

The level of physical and psychological ill-health tends to be higher in Looked After Children and young people than the general population because of their often difficult start in life.

Looked After Children tend to have more health problems compared with their peers which can result from a range of factors including missed health checks, early life experiences, poor diet, smoking and drug misuse within their household.

To improve the health, wellbeing and mental health of Looked After Children we will:

- Arrange for all Looked After Children to have a timely and high quality health assessment of physical, emotional and mental health needs, regardless of where that child lives
- Understand the emotional and behavioural needs of Looked After Children by using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)
- Ensure that every child has an up to date individual health plan, based on the written report of the health assessment, and review these plans at least once every six months for children aged under 5 years and at least once a year for children aged over 5 years
- Ensure that plans are in place to enable care leavers to continue to obtain the healthcare they need
- Ensure Looked After Children are registered with a GP and have access to a dentist near to where they are living
- Notify the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and the child or young person's GP when a child starts to be looked after, changes placement or ceases to be looked after (and notify both the originating and receiving CCG where the child is placed out of county)
- Ensure continuity of healthcare for Looked After Children and care leavers who move out of the CCG area through discussion between the originating and the receiving CCGs
- Ensure a smooth transition from children's to adults services for looked after young people and care leavers so they experience continuing healthcare, if eligible
- Never refuse to provide a service to a Looked After Child on the grounds of their placement being short-termed or unplanned, including mental health services
- Make arrangements to enable Looked After Children to participate in decisions about their healthcare
- Take the health needs of Looked After Children into account when developing the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and the Health and Well-being Strategy
- Assure the quality of health services for Looked After Children through clinical governance and audit arrangement

- Provide social work teams/Units with direct access to clinical consultation through the Unit Model. This will support them to identify and work with mental health issues across the age range from 0-25 and enable some direct clinical work; contributing to assessments and supporting referral into specialist mental health services
- Provide training to support foster carers and adopters to effectively understand and support the emotional well-being and development of Looked After Children, including input to programmes from clinicians based in social work units
- Ensure that information about Children's Centres and their services are made available to foster carers and adopters as a priority group
- Provide targeted and dedicated CAMHS support to Looked After Children, according to need (Clinical Commissioning Group leading on this)
- Publish a Local Offer which sets out in one place all information about education, health and social care for children and young people with SEND
- Ensure that children living out of county are not disadvantaged in their health and wellbeing

#### **Outcome 4: Looked After Children and care leavers are well equipped to be parents**

**Target:** Reduce the % of care leavers becoming parents before their 21st birthday to 15% by July 2018 (new indicator)

Looked After Children can be ill-equipped to be parents due to their own experience of being parented and being in the care system. The result can be that they themselves have a higher chance of their children becoming looked after. This is estimated by recent findings to be the outcome in 10% of cases. There is growing evidence that women can become trapped in a cycle of becoming pregnant; not engaging effectively with services to cope with underlying issues and the trauma of their children being taken into care and so quickly becoming pregnant again and having further children removed.

As corporate parents, more must be done to encourage these young people to delay parenthood and, where they do become pregnant, to support them to be more effective in their parenting.

To do this we will:

- Have a formal protocol to ensure that practitioners working with Looked After Children and others in the Council, such as those working in Localities, are clear that this group of young people are a priority group and need to be targeted to encourage engagement in Children Centres. This protocol needs to include other partner agencies such as health
- Have a prevention strategy regarding teenage pregnancies and parenting; to include training and development of social workers, residential and foster carers in engaging young people in discussions regarding the reality of parenting and ensuring that they have access to reliable contraception, including young people with learning disabilities
- Have specialist workers within the 18 – 25 Service who can actively engage with both the young people and other support services

- Ensure that young parents are supported to engage in education, employment and training in preparation for when they will be expected to engage with Jobcentre Plus to be actively seeking work once their youngest child becomes 5 years old
- Ensure that all Looked After Children and care leavers are offered the services of the Family Nurse Partnership where eligible and if they are not able to access they receive an alternative support package which will be equivalent to such support
- Review the report 'Finding their Feet' and establish how the Council can improve services to this group of young people in all key areas
- Support looked after young people and care leavers, including those with learning disabilities, to avoid their children being taken into care, where appropriate
- Provide support for looked after young people and care leavers who have had a child taken into care
- Draw upon the recommendations from the 'Breaking the Cycle of Repeat Removals of Babies into Care' report to ensure that looked after children and care leavers are identified as a priority group to be engaged in this program of pregnancy prevention
- Ensure that looked after children and young people living out of county are not disadvantaged in being well equipped to be parents

## **Outcome 5: Cambridgeshire Looked After Children and young people placed outside the county are not disadvantaged**

**Target:** decrease the proportion of children looked after being placed more than 20 miles from their homes, outside the Local Authority boundary to 32%

29.5% of Cambridgeshire's Looked After Children were placed outside of the county and more than 20 miles from their home postcode as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015. The total placed outside of Cambridgeshire borders is 41.7% as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015. This compares to an England average of 13%<sup>5</sup> as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014. Figures for 2015 for England were not yet available at the time of preparing this strategy. The reasons for children being placed out of county are varied but are usually because of a lack of appropriate provision in the county. Sometimes children may be placed out of county to be nearer relatives and friends or for their own safety. Cambridgeshire's figures for children placed out of county have been high for 18 months, but there is a slow and steady drop in the numbers in 2015.

Children and young people placed outside of Cambridgeshire do not always experience the same quality of services as their peers that remain living within Cambridgeshire.

To ensure that children placed out of county are not disadvantaged we will:

- Consult with children placed outside Cambridgeshire about service development through mediums such as The Participation Plan and the Youthoria website
- Ensure health assessments are timely and there is no delay in timely, quality access to health services

<sup>5</sup> Source: LAIT (Local Authority Interactive Tool) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-interactive-tool-lait>

- Support care leavers to access local services if they choose to remain in the area within which they've been placed
- Ensure Looked After Children access appropriate educational provision and that their progress and achievement is monitored and ensured
- Put young people at the heart of decisions about whether it is best for them to remain living out of county or to move their placements back to Cambridgeshire
- Provide accommodation which is safe and appropriate
- Understand how effectively the Sufficiency Statement is being delivered to offer local placements to children and young people wherever possible

### 3. Enablers: Everyone in the Local Authority being an effective corporate parent

#### a) The role of County Councillors

All County Councillors, Officers and partners are aware of their corporate parenting responsibility and how to fulfil it

*“Elected Councillors, you have a crucial role. Only you can carry it out. You can make sure the interests of children in care come first.”* (If this were my child, DfES 2003)

Councillors are in the unique position of being able to promote opportunities for Looked After Children and care leavers through their political power and influence; through their connections to the community, schools, health services, local businesses and employers.

All Councillors should be aware of their corporate parenting responsibilities:

- Have a clear understanding and awareness of the issues for Looked After Children and care leavers in the authority area and those placed out of county
- Champion the interests of Looked After Children and care leavers in all you do
- Ask questions about outcomes for Looked After Children and care leavers
- Communicate with Looked After Children so that they can have a say in how decisions are made about the services that affect them, and so that they can influence those decisions. This may include engaging with the ‘Voices Matter’ panel (Children in Care Council)
- Supported by officers, promote partnership working as a pre-requisite for delivering effective service to Looked After Children and care leavers; ensure that joint planning and commissioning delivers on this agenda
- Lead on securing apprenticeships for care leavers within the Council to improve their opportunities and future prospects
- Be equally mindful and responsive in your role of corporate parent to children placed out of the county
- Contribute to the Corporate Parenting Board and Corporate Parenting Working Group
- Question whether the Council, as a corporate parent, is keeping the promise it has made to Looked After Children and care leavers in The Pledge (see Appendix 1)

Some questions that Councillors should be asking themselves:

- Do I understand why infants, children and young people need to be looked after and the legal and policy framework that governs this?
- Do I know about the profile, needs and achievements of all children looked after by my Council?
- Are we providing the best care possible to our Looked After Children and care leavers? Would it be good enough for my baby, my child, my son/daughter moving into independence?
- Do I know how well my council is doing in comparison with other comparable councils and government indicators?
- Is there an action plan to address any shortcomings in services and to constantly improve outcomes for Looked After Children?
- Am I taking responsibility for promoting the welfare and opportunities for Looked After Children and care leavers in all my work in the council – and in my other capacities?

## **b) The role of Council Officers and partner agencies**

**All County Councillors, Officers and partners are aware of their corporate parenting responsibility and how to fulfil it**

To be most effective at improving the life chances of all Looked After Children and care leavers, the ownership of responsibility for Corporate Parenting must be extended beyond Children's Social Care. All Council departments, Officers and partner agencies have a responsibility to act together as Corporate Parents for all Looked After Children. To do this they need to be aware of this responsibility and the role that they play in ensuring that service development and delivery meets the needs of Looked After Children and care leavers.

For a whole-authority approach to corporate parenting to be effective, all Council departments and Officers will:

- Ensure employee awareness and commitment to the Corporate Parenting Strategy
- Include the corporate parenting role in officers individual appraisal objectives across the Council's Children, Families and Adults directorate
- Audit the ability of all services to deliver the corporate parenting agenda, monitor and review their service's contribution to positive outcomes for Looked After Children, including those for children with disabilities and children from different cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds
- Create human resources policies that support the needs of employees who provide care to our Looked After Children

- Establish recruitment and employment practices that offer supported work experience, apprenticeships and employment opportunities for young people who are in or have left the Council's care
- Promote access to services for Looked After Children and their carers through both policy and practice (where relevant to service departments)
- Ensure that commitment to corporate parenting is realised through a range of opportunities that lead to measurable improvement in life chances for Looked After Children – enabling them to succeed in line with their peers
- Raise awareness of Looked After Children at all levels of the organisation and challenge negative and discriminatory perceptions
- Ensure elected members are provided with appropriate information in relation to their corporate parenting responsibilities, including service developments and key messages about what contributes to improving outcomes for Looked After Children and care leavers

In addition to these aims for all Officers and partners, some services will play an enhanced and specific role in improving outcomes for Looked After Children and care leavers. Some of these have been identified, where relevant, in outcomes 1-4. The role of the Council's key partners includes:

### **Housing for care leavers**

The lack and quality of supported tenancies and supported accommodation is a major concern within Cambridgeshire. Private rentals do not tend to accept care leavers on benefits and so our young people, whilst prioritised, are competing with other vulnerable groups for accommodation such as families with young children. Accommodation that may be suitable is often not benefit sustainable. It is therefore imperative that the District Councils, in partnership with other housing providers, are committed to working to increase the number of properties available for care leavers post 18 years old.

There is a joint protocol with Housing and it is important that housing providers work with Children's Social Care and partners to ensure there are robust and varied packages of support to enable young people to maintain their accommodation provision.

### **Health**

Improving the health, both physical and psychological, of Looked After Children and young people is a high priority.

Specialist nurses and designated Doctors for Looked After Children and young people play an important role in ensuring that Personal Health Plans are developed with the child or young person and that these are fully implemented. Developing effective communication channels between agencies is fundamental to ensure that there are robust monitoring and referral processes.

Assessing and referring to meet the health needs of Looked After Children and young people will include their mental health and sexual health needs as well as emotional and physical health needs.

Work with partner agencies to ensure access to a wide range of services alongside a good education and training programme for Looked After Children and young people and their carers is essential in achieving positive health outcomes.

### How we will involve Looked After Children and care leavers

Children and young people will receive information on Corporate Parenting appropriate to their understanding, including a pictorial and a children’s version of this strategy. This will be disseminated to all children, including those living out of county, via their Social Workers and through the Youthoria website.

This strategy endorses an on-going commitment to increased communication, consultation and involvement with Looked After Children and care leavers. This will be facilitated in the following ways:



We commit to communicating with all Looked After Children and care leavers and recognise that some will be more vulnerable than others. Disabled children, who, due to their unique and complex needs are often looked after in residential Out of Authority placements, far from their homes and family networks, are particularly vulnerable. The communication difficulties experienced by some of these children and young people increases this vulnerability. To consult with severely disabled looked after children and young people the Council will involve specialist services to ensure that people with skills in communicating with children and working directly with this vulnerable group.

Children and young people from black and ethnic minority groups also experience increased vulnerability when they become looked after. The Council will ensure that the views and specific needs of this group of children will be heard.

## How we will ensure this strategy is implemented

### **The Corporate Parenting Board**

The Corporate Parenting Board's purpose is to ensure that the whole Council and partner agencies have a joint commitment to Corporate Parenting. The aim of this is to achieve continuing improvements in the lives and outcomes for looked after children and young people and those who are care leavers.

The Corporate Parenting Board membership includes representatives from the Council, Health services and elected councillors. As a group, it will be responsible for overseeing that the objectives of the Corporate Parenting Strategy are realised and targets to improve outcomes are met.

### **Implementation Groups**

Each of the five outcome areas in the strategy will have an associated action plan which will be delivered through an implementation group made up of key Council Officers and partners. Each group will have a lead officer who will report progress on implementation of action plans and performance against targets to the Corporate Parenting Board.

### **Review of the impact of the strategy**

There will be a six month update and a full annual review of the strategy in regards to how effectively it is being implemented through the working groups and what impact it is making on the outcomes and associated targets that have been set. These reviews will be presented to the Corporate Parenting Board so they can monitor and challenge performance.

## Appendix 1: Cambridgeshire's pledge to its' looked after children and care leavers

# The Pledge: Our Promise

Cambridgeshire's pledge to its Looked After Children and Care Leaver young people has been developed in partnership with young people, senior managers and lead members.

It is Cambridgeshire's promise and commitment to you. It is to let you know what we should be doing for you and for you to know what your rights are. We only want the best for you and want to work with you to support you in achieving the best that you can be and for you to be safe, happy and to have success in your life.

May 2014

### CORPORATE PARENTS

As corporate parents we will ensure you feel safe supported and cared for. We will respect and listen to you and involve you wherever possible. This is our pledge and our promise to you.

### CARE PLANS & REVIEWS

We will always try to involve you when we are making decisions that will affect you. We will be understanding & listen to your opinions. We will give you clear information in a way you understand.

### HEALTH

We will support you in all your health needs including physical, emotional and mental health and will ensure you have access to your health history that we hold for you.

### CARE LEAVERS

When you are ready to leave care we will fully support you in your decisions as stated in the care leavers charter.

### EDUCATION

Your education and individual learning is important to us. We will encourage and guide you to reach your full potential and achieve your goals and aspirations and celebrate your achievements with you.

### PLACEMENTS

We are fully committed to finding you a caring place to live and we will make sure you feel safe, loved and cared for and receive the right information for you about your placement.

### ADVOCACY

We will make sure you have the right support at the right time from the right person. If you need to talk to someone independent we will make an advocate available to you.

### SOCIAL WORKERS

We will provide you with a social worker who will listen to you, be supportive and honest. They will work on your behalf and make sure you have access to all your rights and entitlements. They will be contactable when you need them and if out of hours they will make sure you are given the relevant emergency contact information.

### CONTACT

**We will help you stay in touch with people who are important to you. We will find an appropriate place for your contact. If contact can't happen we will be upfront with you and explain the reasons why.**

**LIFE STORY. We will make sure that your life story work is kept up to date and help you understand your life history when you are ready.**

## **Appendix 2: Key legislation and guidance**

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) – provides the framework for all services and activity.
- The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 – extends responsibilities to care leavers up to 21 and to 25 if in higher education or training. It requires LAs to produce a 'pathway' plan and provide support to care leavers into independence.
- The Care Standards Act 2000 – set out national minimum standards for care in residential homes, fostering and adoptive placements and requirement to be inspected by Ofsted (after CSCI)
- The Adoption and Children Act 2002 – reformed existing adoption law to ensure welfare of child central to all decision making. The Act also extended responsibility of adoption services (including LA adoption services) to provide support for adoptive parents and birth parents.
- National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services 2004 – a 10 year programme aimed at achieving long term improvements in children's health
- The Children Act 2004 – enactment of Every Child Matters placing a duty on all local authorities to produce a plan which addresses disadvantage, raises achievement and safeguards children and young people in their area.
- Statutory Guidance on Promoting the Health and Well-being of Looked After Children 2009 (DoH)
- Statutory Guidance on Corporate Parenting responsibilities of Directors of Children's Services and Lead Members 2009 (DCSF)
- Promoting the Educational Achievement of Looked After Children: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities 2010 (DCSF)
- Statutory Guidance and Regulations on Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (2010)
- Legal Aid and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012