

Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy 2016-2019



Growing the right way for
a bigger, better Peterborough

Date developed:

Date approved:

Document Control Sheet

Appendix 1

Purpose of document:	To identify our priorities with relation to Children in Care and Care Leavers, the actions we will take to address these, and how we will measure the impact we make.
Document ratified by: (group)	Corporate Parenting Board
Date of meeting:	
If applicable, has an initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) been completed?	Not applicable
Document lead and author, and their role:	Myra O'Farrell Head of Service, Corporate Parenting
What other documents should this be read in conjunction with:	Children in Care and Care Leavers Policy

Revisions

Version No.	Page/ Paragraph No.	Description of amendment	Date of Change
2.	Throughout	The strategy has been amended (following consultation) to ensure it is in line with the Children and Social Work Act 2017	March 2018

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1. Introduction

In Peterborough we want the same things for the children and young people we look after as any good parent would want for their child. We want our children to:

- be healthy and happy in childhood
- feel valued for who they are and to feel loved
- enjoy learning and to benefit from the experience
- achieve their full potential and be able to fulfil their own personal ambitions and goals
- grow into well adjusted, emotionally balanced individuals who will experience positive relationships in adulthood
- become responsible citizens and be able to be good parents to their own children when the time comes

Our vision is that we will achieve this by providing the highest quality of care delivered through the services for which we are both responsible and accountable.

The purpose of this strategy is to amalgamate the areas for improvement that have been identified by the children and young people in our care, inspection, audit, review and a comprehensive needs analysis, and to detail how we will improve in these areas in order to achieve our vision.

1.1 Legislation

The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations Volume 2: care planning, placement and case review was published in June 2015. This guidance updates and consolidates The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations, Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review documents published in March 2010.

These revised regulations and guidance streamline processes to increase the emphasis on more effective care planning, with a focus on the child, and are designed to improve the quality and consistency of care planning, placement and case review for children in care. They also aim to improve the care and support provided to care leavers. This statutory guidance outlines all of our responsibilities and underpins all of our work in promoting good outcomes for children.

1.2 Sufficiency guidance

The statutory guidance on securing sufficient accommodation for in care children provides clarification on the 'sufficiency duty' placed on local authorities under 22(G) of the Children Act 1989, to secure sufficient accommodation to meet the needs of children in their care.

The sufficiency duty applies in respect of all children who are defined as 'looked after' under the 1989 Act. This guidance requires that, working with their partners, local authorities must be in a position to secure, where reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation for looked after children in their local authority area.

1.3 National Context

The term 'in care' is applied to a child for whom the Local Authority is providing care and accommodation, either by a Court Order or in agreement with the child's parent or guardian. Some children with disabilities who receive a regular series of short breaks are also classed as looked after.

A child or young person may come into care as a result of temporary or permanent problems facing their parents, as a result of abuse or neglect of the child or because the relationship with parents has broken down, or where a child has no one to care for them.

69,540 children were in the care of local authorities on 31st March 2015, compared to 68,800 in 2014. The rate of looked after children per 10,000 under 18 years on 31st March 2015 was 60. This figure varies significantly at Local Authority level from a low of 20 (Wokingham) to a high of 158 (Blackpool).

Children's early experiences have a significant impact on their development and future life chances. As a result of their experiences both before and during care, looked after children are at greater risk than their peers.

- Children in care are 4 times more likely than their peers to have a mental health difficulty
- Children in care are less likely than their peers to do well at school

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- 34% of care leavers were not in education, employment or training at age 19 compared to 15.5% of the general population
- Children in care are around 3 times as likely to have run away as their peers
- An estimated 20 to 35% of sexually exploited children are children in care.¹

1.4 Local Context

Children in care profile						May 2016					
	Jun-15	Sep-15	Dec-15	Mar-16	May-16		Jun-15	Sep-15	Dec-15	Mar-16	May-16
Children looked after	345	340	349	359	358	Children looked after	345	340	349	359	358
Age						Ethnicity					
Under 1	23	17	20	22	19	White British	237	227	235	237	236
1 to 4	39	37	39	36	33	White Irish	0	0	0	0	0
5 to 9	64	69	70	74	74	White Other	40	37	38	44	46
10 to 15	147	145	144	149	152	White	277	264	273	281	282
16-17	69	72	76	78	78	Mixed White & Black Caribbean	7	6	7	3	4
18 or over	2	1	0	0	2	Mixed White & Black African	2	2	2	5	5
Gender						Mixed White & Asian	11	12	11	13	13
Male	189	197	199	203	204	Any other mixed background	9	12	11	10	11
Female	151	152	156	156	154	Mixed	29	32	31	31	33
Legal Status						Indian	0	0	0	0	0
Interim care orders	26	39	49	56	50	Pakistani	5	5	5	6	5
Full care orders	160	157	162	167	166	Bangladeshi	0	0	0	0	0
Voluntary agreements	95	88	89	97	102	Any other Asian background	9	9	10	11	10
Freed adoption / placement order	63	53	47	37	38	Asian	14	14	15	17	15
Others	1	3	2	2	2	Caribbean	2	2	2	2	2
Placement						African	14	12	12	10	10
Foster carers - In House	152	143	154	168	163	Any other Black background	4	6	6	6	5
Foster carers - Agency	106	102	101	106	107	Black	20	20	20	18	17
Foster carers - Unknown	0	0	0	0	0	Chinese	0	0	0	0	0
Fostering by relatives or friends	13	26	32	24	20	Any other ethnic group	5	10	10	11	11
With parents	11	9	5	5	4	Other	5	10	10	11	11
Independent living	26	24	23	25	29	Not stated / not yet obtained	0	0	0	1	0
Residential care homes	23	23	23	22	27	Length of time in care					
Other residential schools	3	3	4	5	3	0 - 6 months	62	86	92	92	88
Placed for adoption	10	9	5	2	4	7 - 12 months	34	21	29	55	50
Secure unit	1	1	1	1	1	1 - 2 years	97	73	70	56	57
Other	0	0	1	0	0	3 - 5 years	66	66	62	67	74
						6 - 10 years	83	78	79	71	73
						11 - 15 years	12	15	16	16	15
						16+ years	1	1	1	2	1

2. Our priorities

Our strategic priorities are listed below:

- Assertive prevention of care
- Effective care planning
- Placement stability and range of high quality placement provision
- Health issues of children and young people in care
- Educational attainment and achievement
- Being part of a community
- Working to our promises in the Pledge

The strategy will now examine each priority in more detail, providing the evidence that tells us why it is an area for improvement, the main objectives of the work that we will do in order to improve, and the ways that we will evaluate the work to ensure that we are making progress.

The Children in Care and Care Leavers Document Suite also contains a Policy to show 'how' we will approach our work, an Action Plan to show the work we will do to improve, and an Evaluation Framework to show how we will know that our work is making a difference.

¹ Data from www.nspcc.org.uk

2.1 Assertive prevention of care

Objective:

To provide early multi-agency intervention and support to prevent children and young people needing to come into care.

Evidence
An imperative to reduce the numbers of children that need to be in care by providing early help and effective social work intervention to enable children to remain with their families where this is possible.
More robust pre proceedings work that ensure the right children become looked after at the right time in their lives.

Impact measures:

- Reduction in referrals to specialist services.
- Reduction in the number of children in care
- Increase in children being supported through the early help process
- Families report being better supported through earlier interventions.
- Improved performance in throughput of cases i.e. evidence of de-escalation of need.

2.2 Effective care planning

Objectives:

- To ensure we have the right children in care by robustly and regularly reviewing their care plans and exiting them from the care system as appropriate.
- To achieve legal permanence in a timely and appropriate way for children who will not be able to return home to the care of their birth parents.
- To ensure that all children and young people understand and are fully involved in any plans that are made and that they have copies of any plans where appropriate.
- To ensure that all children and young people have information about their rights and what they can expect when they are in care, including the right to an advocate and/or independent visitor (S.23ZB (1) Children Act 1989).
- To ensure that for young people who will go on to receive a service from Adult Social Care there is good transition planning aimed to achieve the best possible outcomes for each young person that maximises their independence, choice and control.

Evidence
To ensure we have the right children in care by robustly and regularly reviewing their care plans and exiting them from the care system as and when this is appropriate and in their best interests.
To ensure that all children and young people have good quality care plans that they can understand that set out how their range of needs will be met in the short, medium and long term, and which take account of their wishes and feelings.
Children report locally and nationally that they don't always feel fully involved in all decisions that affect their lives.

Impact measures:

- Reduction in the number of children in care
- An increase in the number of adoption orders
- An increase in the number of Special Guardianship Orders.
- An increase in the take up of advocates
- An increase in the number of Independent Visitors.
- Evidence that the views of children and young people have been actively sought and used to inform their reviews.
- Monitoring of drift through the court process.
- Evidence that children and young people are aware of and know how to use the complaints process.
- Monitoring of complaints made by children and young people, including against Diversity and Equality considerations.
- Percentage of audits that are judged adequate or better increasing

2.3 Placement stability and range of high quality placement provision

Objectives:

- To ensure that children in care have good quality foster care placements close to home, by increasing the number of local foster care placements able to meet a range of needs.
- To increase the number of children in care who achieve permanence through adoption, Special Guardianship Orders or placement with family and friends
- To develop and improve a wider range of placements at lower cost and high quality.
- To ensure that suitable placements are available to support young people with additional needs.
- To improve the support to placements in order to avoid disruption and breakdown.

Evidence

Achieving permanence in a timely and effective way for children in care by driving improvement in performance in completion of care proceedings and in more efficient planning and adoption processes.
To ensure that where residential placements are used it is on the basis of identified needs and that each placement is time limited with and every establishment used has evidence of having regularly achieved good outcomes for children and young people in its care.
Address the fact that children tell us that they want to be placed with their brothers and sisters and there are insufficient placements locally for sibling groups. Feedback from children in our care
Currently there is a limited choice of suitable supportive accommodation locally for our care leavers.

Impact measures:

- Percentage increase of children in care in permanent placements evidenced through long term linking agreed by Fostering Panels, improved performance in Adoption, Special Guardianship and Family Arrangement Orders.
- Reduction in the number of children in residential placements.
- Net increase in the number of in house foster placements.
- Improved performance of the distance of placements from the child's home area.
- Lower unit costs of placements.
- Average length of time children spend in care reduced
- Fewer adolescents coming into care for the first time
- Increase in number of younger children permanently placed before the age of 5

2.4 Health issues of children and young people in care

Objectives:

- To ensure that children in care are as physically, emotionally and socially healthy as they can be and have access to the right health resources, including additional support where a need is identified.
- To ensure that children and young people have access to the right help and resources that support their emotional health and wellbeing.
- To ensure that young men and women in care have access to the right health advice at the right time commensurate with their changing needs.
- To ensure Care Leavers receive a summary of their health history

Evidence

Interventions to meet the full range of emotional wellbeing and mental health needs are not always provided in a timely way where a need is identified to provide additional services for children.

Where children and young people are placed outside Peterborough health assessments and provision are not always accessible or take too long to sort out.

Impact measures:

- Increase the numbers of annual Health Assessments completed within time-scales.
- Monitoring of the use of SDQs to provide intervention as a result of high levels of need and increase in take up of CAMHS services at all tiers.
- Monitor referrals made to CAHMS services and take-up rate of referrals.
- Reduction in waiting times for CAMHS and monitoring of improved access to CAHMS at all tiers
- Reduction in incidence of self-harming behaviours in CLA.
- Feedback from Foster Carers and children and young people about the timeliness and quality of Health Assessments and interventions.
- Improvement in take up of Substance Misuse Services for Young People assessed as being at risk
- Young People identified as high risk of CSE have interventions provided in a timely manner
- Care Leavers to receive a Health Passport at their last Review Health Assessment.

2.5 Educational attainment and achievement

Objective:

- To raise attainment, achievement and engagement with education
- To ensure that all children have access to appropriate education provision.
- To ensure that children are able to maintain their school placements when needing to come into care.
- To ensure that children and young people are provided with opportunities to succeed throughout their education.
- To ensure that all children in care with Educational Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) receive the right support and resources to further their learning.

Evidence

Too many young people preparing to leave care are struggling to secure further education, employment or training.

Impact measures:

- Reduction in persistent absence
- Reduction in overall absence.
- Reduce the number of children changing school when they come in to care or following a change of placement.
- Numbers of children with compliant and good quality PEP
- Reduction in the number of children in care who become NEET.
- Increase the percentage of children making the nationally expected levels of progress.
- Increase the number of young people in higher education / apprenticeships / employment.
- Ensure that all children receive a minimum of 25 hours education.
- Reduce the number of fixed term exclusions.
- Increase in take up of apprenticeships
- Increase in young people in college and university post 18

2.6 Being part of a community

Objectives:

- To encourage children and young people to feel part of their local community, and support them to be involved in a range of leisure activities they are interested in pursuing.
- To support children and young people to continue to follow their religion and customs where they are living.
- To support children and young people in maintaining contact with their family and friends, unless it is not safe to do so.
- To ensure that young care leavers are properly supported to live independently in the community.

Evidence

Address the problems that children are not always placed near enough to their home address as the supply of foster placements in house and independent sector placements are not currently meeting our aim to keep our children, including those with complex needs, as close to their home communities as possible.

Impact measures:

- Monitoring of young people's views on the Pledge.
- Feedback from young people via steering groups and review monitoring forms.
- Numbers of Care leavers settled in appropriate independent accommodation
- Stability indicators improve

2.7 Working to our promises in the Pledge

Children in Care Pledge

1. **Respect** - We will respect you as individuals, with differing wants, needs and beliefs and tailor the service you get to fit you.
2. **Safe** – We will keep you safe and help you to keep yourself safe.
3. **Support** – We will support you in all aspects of your education so you are able to achieve your full potential.
4. **Health** – We will support you to live a healthy lifestyle and ensure you are offered regular health checks and supported to attend these.
5. **Listen** – We will support you to have a voice in your care plan and make sure you are listened to. We will ensure you know how to make a complaint or compliment about your care. You will have access to advocacy support to do this if wanted.
6. **Information** – We will keep you updated of any changes to your care plan and ensure you have contact details of your Social Worker and IRO as well as all meeting dates.

7. **Life Story**– We will make sure you know why you are in care and support you to understand this honestly at different age appropriate times through your journey.
8. **Contact** – We will support you, where possible, to have contact with the important people in your life (including friends).
9. **Prepare** – We will make sure you are given the knowledge and skills to ensure you are ready for adult life.
10. **Promises** – We will NOT make unrealistic promises to you and will explain fully if we are unable to do something.

Care Leavers Charter

1. Respect

We will listen to you as individuals with an open mind, with your different needs, ideas and beliefs. We will tailor the service to fit you or make sure you have an explanation if we are not able to do something for you.

2. Helping you to do the best you can

We will value your strengths and talents, encouraging your aspirations. We will support you with education and employment.

If we can't meet your needs we will try and help you find a service that can. We will do our best to help you break-down barriers you might encounter with other agencies, to ensure you reach your goals.

3. Clear Communication

We will stay in touch with you, and make sure you can contact your worker in a way that is best for you. We will let you know how to complain or access an advocate if you are not happy with the service you have. We will invite you to express your views on how the service can be improved.

4. Finding a home

We will work alongside you to prepare you for your move into independent living. We will help you think about the choices available and to find accommodation and furnishings that are right for you. We will do everything we can to ensure you are happy and feel safe when you move to independent living. We recognise that at different times we may need to reconsider the plan depending on your differing needs.

5. Support

We will provide support set out in current Regulations and Guidance. As well as information, advice, practical and financial help, we will provide emotional support. We recognise that you might change your mind about what you want to do. If we can't meet those needs we will try and help you find a service that can.

Objectives:

- To ensure that the Children in Care Council arrangements, the Pledge and the Care Leavers Charter are promoted with all children and young people and that children and young people are supported to attend participation events.
- To ensure that all those working with children keep to our promises in the Pledge and that the success of this is monitored.

Evidence	Source
We have recently updated a pledge made to our children and young people in care. The updated pledge was developed by young people themselves and reflects their experience of being in care and represents the things that are important to them. The pledge is the promise we have made that we will listen to what our young people have to tell us, take what they say seriously and will do our best to make sure that all	Feedback from children in our care

children and young people who are in the Council's care will be provided with the best possible care and support.	
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Impact measures:

- The monitoring of the Pledge at statutory reviews and by children and young people.
- Evidence of the views of children and young people positively shaping the service development and delivery.
- Improved performance across a range of indicators in the Children in Care scorecard.

3. Monitoring, Evaluation and Governance

The actions we will take to address our priorities, and the measures we will use to ensure we are improving are shown in Appendix 1,

We will take a 'you said, we did' approach to ensure that the children in our care, understand that we have listened to their feedback, as well as the results of inspection an audit, and have taken steps to improve. We will provide information on the impact of this strategy to the Children in Care Council at each meeting, and to all Children in Care on an annual basis.

We will provide evaluation and monitoring reports on both the implementation of the action plan and the impact of the work that has been carried out, to the Corporate Parenting Panel at each meeting. We will provide the CPP with an annual overview report to ensure that the priorities are still accurate and to agree any necessary changes.

Appendix 1: Action Plan

Appendix 2

Statutory Guidance
Promoting the health and well-being of Looked After Children, 2015
Promoting the education of Looked After Children, 2014
An Action Plan for Adoption – Tackling Delay, 2011
Further Action on Adoption – Finding More Loving Homes, 2013
Practice Guidance for the use of s.20 provision in the Children Act 1989 in England, 2016

Appendix 1

Special Guardianship Guidance, 2016
Children's Homes regulations, including quality standards, 2015
Framework and evaluation schedule for the inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers
The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations (Volume 2. Care Planning, Placement and Case Review)
Care of unaccompanied and trafficked children, 2014
Statutory Guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care, 2014
The NICE quality standard on the health and well-being of looked after children and young people

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