

**TITLE OF REPORT: Children and Young People in Care and Care Leavers
Strategy 2018 - 2023**

**REPORT OF: Jill Little – Service Manager Looked After Children and Corporate
Parenting**

Purpose of the Report

The Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy sets out the strategic vision and intentions for the Looked After Service. This strategy sets out our new approach to providing services and support for Looked after Children and Young People and Care Leavers in Gateshead. It is based on supporting children in the community where it is safe and appropriate to do so, using strengths based practice. It also looks to improve the offer from ourselves and our partners, in supporting these children and young people to reach their full potential.

Background

In 2014, the Children and Young People in Care and Care Leavers Strategy was taken to Cabinet for approval. The 2018 – 2023 Strategy builds upon the previous strategy and highlights the Council's role in corporate parenting and as such, this document also serves as the Council's Corporate Parenting Strategy.

Gateshead Council has always been very clear about their role as Corporate Parents for Looked After Children and Care Leavers and has always had high aspirations for a child in care or care leaver as any good parent would have for their own child, in accordance with the national care leavers charter (Appendix 1). It means providing them with the stability and support they need to make progress, and helping them to access new opportunities and experiences that inspire them to set ambitious goals for themselves. It means celebrating their successes, but also recognising that they will sometimes make mistakes and need help to get back on track. It also means supporting them to gain the skills and confidence to live independent lives, while letting them know that they have someone to call on for help if the going gets tough.

The Government has introduced a set of Corporate Parenting principles that require all departments within a local authority to recognise their role as corporate parents, and encourage them to look at the support and services they provide (p7 of strategy) and it is paramount that as corporate parents we are clear about what is expected of us and how we all look at the support and services we provide to looked after young people and care leavers

Proposal

The strategy and its delivery plan will be monitored through the Corporate Parenting Sub Overview and Scrutiny Committee, who are responsible for ensuring the Council fulfils its role as a corporate parent

The corporate parenting partnership is an officer group chaired by the Service Director, Children and Families which meets every three months, with the sub groups meeting monthly. This ensures priorities are monitored and reviewed and progress is evidenced within the work plan.

The priorities are informed by what or looked after young people and care leavers tell us and we have identified seven key priorities which are at the heart of the strategy:

- Our Children and Young People are **respected** and **involved**;
- Our placements are **safe** and meet the **needs** of our Children and Young People;
- **Positive** relationships and **identity**;
- Our Children and Young People will be **supported** to **improve** their physical and emotional health and wellbeing;
- Our Children and Young People are **encouraged** to **reach** their educational, employment and training potential;
- Our Young People moving into adulthood will be **supported** to **achieve** their full potential in life;
- **Improve** our role as the Corporate Parent;

The strategy invites us to work together with a common purpose, putting the welfare of our children in care at the heart of everything we do

Conclusion

The strategy is aspirational and needs to be fully endorsed by all of the Council and it's partners.

Success will be directly measured against the following outcomes:

- Young people make successful transitions to adult life and achieve their aspirations through having the care, support and help they need from Gateshead Council acting as corporate parents;
- Care Leavers receive the help they need through having well developed Pathway Plans in place.
- Care leavers will be successful in obtaining education, employment or training
- We believe that if we get this right we will have achieved success and this is how it will look:
- Looked after Children and Care Leavers needs are championed across Gateshead;
- A robust offer is in place that is understood by all and interpreted in the same way;
- Our Looked after Children and Care Leavers achieve good outcomes that exceed the national average;

- Our Looked after Children and Care Leavers have higher aspirations and are on their way to achieving their aspirations;
- Our Looked after Children and Care Leavers tell us that they have been supported to reach their aspirations whether this is in education, employment or training;
- Numbers of Care Leavers in Education, Employment and Training are above the national average and rising;
- Young people are telling us that they are recognising their suggestions translating into service development and are happy with what they see;
- Increased Education, Training and Employment opportunities across Gateshead for Looked after Children and Care Leavers.
- Access to mainstream and specialist health services, which meet their physical, mental and sexual health needs;

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Health and wellbeing board endorse the Children and young people in Care and Care Leavers Strategy.

For the following reason(s)

- (i) To ensure that Corporate Parenting is embedded across the Council and with partners
- (ii) To ensure we achieve the priorities set out in the strategy
- (iii) To obtain advice and guidance from partners on any additional support or resources available to ensure better outcomes for Looked After young people and Care Leavers

The views of Board members are sought on how they can best contribute to the implementation of the strategy.

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