

CORPORATE PARENTING SUB OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AGENDA

Thursday, 12 July 2018 at 1.30 pm in the Bridges Room - Civic Centre

From the Chief Executive, Sheena Ramsey

Item	Business
1	Apologies
2	Minutes (Pages 3 - 8) The Committee is asked to approve as a correct record the minutes of the last meeting held on 26 March 2018
3	Permanence Planning (Adoption) - Case Study (Pages 9 - 14) Report of Strategic Director Care, Wellbeing and Learning
4	Care Leavers Offer - Quality and Impact (Pages 15 - 44) Report of Strategic Director Care, Wellbeing and Learning
5	Regulation 44 Report (Pages 45 - 50) Report of Strategic Director Care, Wellbeing and Learning
6	Work Programme (Pages 51 - 54) Joint Report of the Chief Executive and Strategic Director, Corporate Services and Governance

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GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL
CORPORATE PARENTING SUB OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MEETING

Monday, 26 March 2018

- PRESENT:** Councillor B Oliphant (Chair)
- Councillor(s): A Geddes, C Davison, M Hall, N Weatherley, D Bradford, L Kirton, K McCartney, C McHugh and S Ronchetti
- CO-OPTED MEMBERS** Jeremy Cripps, Malcolm Hedley, Caitlin Fintoni and Abigail Smith
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Councillor(s): G Haley
- APOLOGIES:** Councillor(s): B Clelland and E McMaster
- Co-opted Member(s):

CP26 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr McMaster and Cllr Clelland.

CP27 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2018 were agreed as a correct record subject to Jeremy Cripps being added as in attendance.

CP28 YOUNG PEOPLES PRESENTATION - APPRENTICESHIPS

Committee received information around care leavers' apprenticeships and spoke to two care leavers who were currently undertaking apprenticeships within the Council.

It was noted that there are currently 13 apprenticeships which have been ring fenced for Looked After Children and Care Leavers. This adds to the offer of the Council as corporate parents to ensure those children and young people are prepared for adulthood and a move to independence.

It was reported that one of the apprenticeship posts created was that of a business apprentice to work alongside the Children's Rights and Enforcement Team. The apprentice will also represent young people on the Fostering Panel, Corporate Parenting Partnership and on this Committee.

It was noted that work is ongoing to look at any additional support which may be needed to support these young people during their apprenticeships to ensure they complete it successfully.

Discussions are ongoing with senior leaders around what else can be done, for example guaranteed offer of an interview for looked after children and care leavers. It was noted that some of the apprenticeships are for 18 months, whereas usually they are for 12 months, however this would be up to the individual departments and entry requirements, although there is flexibility when it comes to these apprentices.

RESOLVED - That the Committee noted the information presented.

CP29 PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW

Committee received a report and presentation on performance in relation to looked after children up until the end of January 2018.

It was reported that at the end of January there were 388 looked after children (LAC). This was made up of 263 individual families, therefore there are a number of sibling groups within the overall number. In terms of statistical and regional figures Gateshead is slightly higher and is also above the national average. It was noted that the LAC population is not static and that 148 children entered care and 130 left care over the last year. On average 16 children per month enter the care system and 13 leave care.

Committee was advised that the main reason for children entering care was due to abuse or neglect. The definition for this category is “children in need as a result of, or at risk of, abuse or neglect; also includes children at risk of domestic violence”. The largest proportion of children leaving care return home when it is deemed safe to do so. The next largest group of young people leaving care was because of a move to independent living.

It was noted that the majority of young people in care are in mainstream fostering. There are currently 18 LAC in independent fostering places, it was acknowledged that this figure is small in terms of neighbouring authorities. There has been an increase since last year in family and friend placements.

It was reported that targets are being met in relation to timeliness of LAC reviews and placement stability. During April – January 2018, 20 adoptions took place, of which 13 were within the best interest date timescale. However, targets around the use of adoptions, SGO’s and timeliness of children being placed for adoption have not been met. There have been improvements in the number of care leavers in education, employment or training and also the number of care leavers in suitable accommodation. In terms of placement stability there has only been 25 children out of 389 who have experienced three or more placements moves in the last 12 months, this is 6.4%. This figure compares favourably to the national picture which is around 10% of children experiencing three or more moves on average.

It was noted that adoption figures across the country have reduced, with a general reduction in the number of adopters nationally and regionally.

It was questioned whether the increasing number of LAC is due to the impact of Universal Credit. It was confirmed that there is not enough data to know that yet,

however, neglect and abuse are the highest factor as to why children come into care which could be some indication of a link to poverty.

It was queried whether support is offered once a child returns home. It was confirmed that all risk factors are tested before a child or young person returns to the family home, work would be ongoing to look at risk and manage any pinch points by working with parents to help and upskill parents. The support length to these children would depend on the individual circumstances.

It was questioned how Gateshead's out of borough placements compare to other authorities and how can the number be reduced. It was confirmed that a lot of the out of borough provision actually belongs to Gateshead, and a lot of carers living outside the area are still registered with Gateshead, for example there are a lot of friends and extended family placements through regulation 24 assessments. It was noted that LAC will always try to be kept within the Gateshead boundary area but there will still be assessments and support to carers outside of the area. There is also a small number of residential places outside of Gateshead. It was also confirmed that there are 18 independent fostering agency places in Gateshead, this is one of the lowest in the region. It was also acknowledged that there is a promising picture in relation to adoption targets, currently there have been 19 this year, although this is slightly lower than last year.

RESOLVED - That the Committee noted the content of the report.

CP30 CASE STUDY - PERFORMANCE/PLANNING/SAFEGUARDING OF CARE LEAVERS

A case study on the support to care leavers was presented to the Committee. It was noted that the Care Pledge and the local offer fits under the new legislation which requires local authorities to publish a 'Local Care Leaver Offer'.

The Government introduced a set of Corporate Parenting principles that all areas within a local authority should recognise as part of their role as a corporate parenting. The principles require corporate parents to;

- Act in the best interests and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing of LAC
- Encourage LAC to express their views, wishes and feelings
- Take into account the views, wishes and feeling of LAC
- Help LAC gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its partners
- Promote high aspirations and seek to secure the best outcomes for LAC
- Ensure LAC are safe and they have stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work
- Prepare LAC for adulthood and independent living

It was reported that the role of the personal advisor has changed under the new guidance, there is now a duty to support young people up to the age of 25, previously this was only required until the young person was 21.

All care leavers have a Pathway Plan, this sets out what is needed and who will support them, based on previous assessments and plans and is reviewed on a six monthly basis.

It was noted that previously the accommodation model did not meet young people's needs, therefore work has been undertaken with Commissioning and a new housing model will commence from 1 July 2018. The new model will provide emergency supported accommodation, a short term assessment unit, medium 24 hour supported accommodation with step down shared living and dispersed houses, supported lodgings and taster flats. A multidisciplinary panel will monitor all placements, therefore there is end to end pathway with more structured support built into the supported lodging accommodation model. This brings all services together to manage the young people effectively.

Prior to any move towards independence links are made with partners, Learning & Skills offers courses on budgeting, banking and debt management. There is also support in terms of Universal Credit and 2 Way Tenancy Solutions provides support in relation to managing a tenancy.

In terms of financial support there are leaving care grants in place to support young people in education, employment or training. In addition there is help for young people in higher education in relation to their accommodation during holiday periods and university fees. In relation to education, employment and training study programmes have been developed to offer employability skills, mock interviews skills to help young people progress into work. For young people who have had special educational needs packages are in place to help them gain skills to enter employment.

It was confirmed that there has been improvements made in terms of young people in education, employment or training (EET), the number of young people in EET has increased by 10% in the last 12 months.

It was questioned whether apprenticeships could be created within businesses that the Council commission. It was confirmed that a stakeholder event is to be held to build into the local offer and advise what is expected of stakeholders as corporate parents. There has been a commitment made that every contract will have commitment built into it to look at the possibility of apprenticeships.

It was queried whether there is medical support continuity if a young person moved placements. It was confirmed that all young people have a health passport and personal advisors ensure they are registered with necessary health professionals. It was acknowledged that there are challenges around ensuring all young people understand what the passport is for.

The point was made that there has previously been times with care leavers refusing to engage in education, employment or training and it was questioned whether the

use of a personal adviser would help in these situations. It was confirmed that currently there are 13 young people not engaging and therefore they have to be classed as NEET, even if they may be in work etc.

It was questioned what the situation would be with a young person attending university outside of the area. It was confirmed that in this situation a young person could still return to their foster placement and the service would work with the leaving care service in the young person's new area. There are currently 15 young people attending university outside of the area.

- RESOLVED -
- (i) That the Committee was satisfied with the level of support Care Leavers are receiving in Gateshead.
 - (ii) That Committee agreed to receive a further report on the support offered to Care Leavers.

CP31 WORK PROGRAMME REPORT

Committee received the provisional work programme for the municipal year 2018/19.

- RESOLVED -
- (i) That Committee endorsed the OSC's provisional work programme for 2018/19 and referred it to Council in June 2018 for agreement.
 - (ii) That the Committee noted that further reports will be brought to the Committee to identify any additional issues which it may be asked to consider.

CP32 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

- RESOLVED -
- That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the remaining business in accordance with the indicated paragraphs of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

CP33 REGULATION 44 REPORT

The Committee received a report on the Ofsted inspection outcomes and regulation 44 independent visits carried out in the Council's children's homes. The reports written as a result of the visits are circulated to the Service Director, Social Work, Care Wellbeing and Learning, Service Manager for Looked After Children and the Registered Manager of each Home.

- RESOLVED -
- That the information be noted.

Chair.....



CORPORATE PARENTING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 25 June 2018

TITLE OF REPORT : Case Study – Foster to Adopt

REPORT OF : Strategic Director - Care, Wellbeing and Learning

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides a brief summary of the experience of the Adoption Service to date in relation to “fostering to adopt”. The report includes feedback from the adoptive family with regard to their experience of fostering to adopt and an outline of the process in relation to the case.

Background

1. Under the Fostering for Adoption process adopters who have undergone an adoption assessment and been approved to adopt are given temporary status as foster carers for a specific placement. This would usually be in the case of a very young child or baby for whom the final plan is adoption and where the likelihood that this plan would be agreed by the court is extremely high.
2. This might include such situations as:
 - Where parents have had one or more children previously placed for adoption or other forms of permanent placement and the evidence strongly suggests that their circumstances have not changed and pose the same risks as for the previous children. Consequently, the Local Authority does not have a proactive plan to rehabilitate the child.
 - Where this is the first child, the circumstances of the parents and risks to the child are such that there is no proactive plan to place the child with birth parents or family members.
 - Where parents have indicated that they may want their child adopted but have not yet formally consented to this plan.

3. In relation to a foster to adopt placement it is essential that the Local Authority fully addresses all the issues with the birth parents and ensures they completely understand the actions being planned by the local authority and are consulted on their views of such a placement. Birth parents must also be informed that the local authority cannot prejudge the outcome of court proceedings and that until the court authorises the adoption placement, the placement of the child remains a temporary one made under fostering regulations.

Policy Context

4. The introduction of Fostering to Adopt was part of the Government's reform agenda. Regulation 25A of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 provides for the temporary approval of prospective adopters as foster carers for a named child by the Agency Decision Maker, (a senior manager in Care, Well-Being and Learning) where the Local Authority is satisfied that a placement with that person is the most appropriate for the child and in their best interests.
5. The Adoption Service continues to promote the concept of Fostering for Adoption to potential prospective adopters at an early stage, it needs to be borne in mind that Fostering for Adoption will not be suitable for every child, nor will it be appropriate for all adopters as it requires a high level of resilience, the emotional ability to deal with the potential of some degree of direct contact in the very early stages of a placement, the willingness to consider a meeting with birth parents, together with the ability to manage a considerably higher level of uncertainty up until the granting of the Adoption Order than is usual for the majority of prospective adopters. This is particularly pertinent given the recent increase in the level of challenges to placement orders/granting of adoption orders.
6. Therefore, in selecting children for Fostering for Adoption placements, it is essential that all the evidence indicates that the potential risk of disruption or termination of placement will be minimal, and that both the Fostering and Adoption Services receive as much advance warning as possible to explore possible placements, in order to properly brief and prepare prospective Fostering for Adoption carers.

Foster to adopt placements

7. Since the introduction of Foster for Adoption the Adoption Service has been able to offer seven foster to adopt placements and at the time of writing this report we have one current foster to adopt placement which is our first with an external agency, ARC. The background circumstances of each placement have been very different and the experience of the adopters involved to date has been varied, partly as a result of the changing view of the courts.
8. The Service continue to seek feedback from Foster to Adopt Families to ensure that we review our processes to better support these placements.
9. In terms of positive feedback; the Foster to Adopt Families found staff to be helpful, the joint visit by the child's social worker and the adoption social worker beneficial. Support from Fostering around how the placement would work was seen to be a good experience and financial support to the families who needed it was appreciated. Foster to Adopt Families have found attending the Loud & Clear music group an opportunity to meet other similar families and develop their support network.

10. The most positive feedback is the opportunity that these placements give adopters to parent a child from a very young age.
11. The issues which Foster to Adopt families reported that were not so positive are managing ongoing contact between the child and their birth family and needing to keep a diary. Attending Adoption Panel to be matched seemed 'artificial' when they had attended previously and had been caring for the child for some time. It was also suggested that some training for grandparents and family members would have been beneficial. This is something that is now discussed with prospective adopters during their assessment and an Evening Information Event is held.

Case Study (names have been changed for confidentiality)

12. Mary and Andrew are a young couple in their early thirties. They met 13 years ago at University and have been married for the past 9 years. Mary does not work and Andrew works as an accountant for a local company.

In 2009 following their marriage they decided to start a family but after many tests learnt in 2013 that they had unexplained infertility. The couple were understandably saddened but also a little frustrated by this diagnosis as they did not know whether to keep trying to conceive or look at alternative ways to become a parent.

They had long discussions about whether to try IVF and made an appointment to discuss this with professionals. At the same time, they attended an Adoption Information Evening.

After talking about it over a number of weeks they both decided that it would be 'a wonderful thing to adopt'.

13. In August 2014 the couple applied to Gateshead to adopt and attended preparation training sessions for adopters. Their assessment was completed and their approval as adopters for Gateshead for one child aged 0 to 2 years was ratified by the Agency Decision Maker in February 2015.

During their assessment Fostering to Adopt was discussed with the couple and they hoped to adopt either one child 0 -2 years or a sibling group 0-3 years and also be considered for a fostering to adopt placement. Following their approval as adopters the couple were selected for an inhouse match with a child in March 2015. The couple were successfully matched and Sam was placed with them at the end of April 2015 and adopted in September 2015.

14. In November 2016 the couple contacted the Adoption Service to enquire about adopting for a second time. Their Registration of Interest was received in January 2017 and the couple's assessment was updated. They were approved as second time adopters in May 2017. The couple's approval was for one child 0-2 years and again they did not want to rule out a fostering to adopt placement as they felt it would give a child the best start in life.

The couple stated in their assessment; *"It is difficult to remember what our lives were like before Sam moved in. He has changed lots of little things, but there is nothing that we miss from our childless days. We were content before we knew him, but are so very happy now that he is our son."*

15. The baby's birth mother, Amanda, had previously had extensive social work involvement with Children's Services. She was the mother of six children. Her eldest child resided with his maternal grandmother from birth under a family arrangement. The next three children came into foster care in October 2016 due to concerns about Amanda's capacity to safeguard and nurture her children. It was during the period of time that the three siblings were looked after that Amanda gave birth to her fifth child who was removed into foster care and an Interim Care Order was granted.
16. A psychological assessment was undertaken which concluded that Amanda had an affective disorder that compromised her ability to nurture and stimulate her children.
17. In February 2017 concerns emerged that the three siblings placed into care together had experienced sexual harm in their mother's care. Two of the three children made allegations that they were physically and verbally abused by their father which had caused them injury. A police investigation was undertaken.
18. A final hearing took place in June 2017 and Care and Placement Orders were granted for the children and a No Contact Order for the oldest child who was then placed in a specialist therapeutic residential placement. The next child down remains in foster care and the younger two were placed for adoption together in August 2017.
19. In July 2017 Amanda attended the civic centre and informed that she was pregnant with her sixth child. She discussed with the social worker relinquishing the baby and not wanting to 'fight' the Local Authority in care proceedings.
20. The Unborn Baby was subject to a child protection enquiry and made subject to a child protection plan with a Legal Gateway Meeting being held prior to birth. The outcome of the meeting was to remove the baby at birth, issue proceedings and place the baby in a foster to adopt placement. The sibling's adopters were approached but did not feel in a position to have another child.
21. A detailed report was presented to the Agency Decision Maker on 17 August 2017 requesting approval for Mary and Andrew as temporary foster carers on a Foster to Adopt basis and outlining the eventual plan of adoption for the baby.
22. Susie was born by caesarean section in August 2017 and following her birth, Amanda agreed Section 20. Susie was discharged from hospital into the care of Mary and Andrew, her foster to adopt carers and has remained in their care.
23. Susie had no further contact with her birth parents who disengaged with the social worker and did not attend any contact.
24. The couple received financial support via provision of a fostering allowance throughout the placement which ended when they were matched with Susie and the placement stops being Foster to Adopt and becomes an adoption placement.
25. During the early stages of the placement Mary and Andrew kept to the same routines and practices as would be expected of our Local Authority foster carers, e.g keeping a foster carer diary and being subject to social work visits.
26. Mary and Andrew stated; *'We met Susie within 24hours of her being born; we are the family she has known from birth. Our home is her home. She is settled and happy as part of our family. Our son Sam, adores her. Practically and emotionally she is our daughter, even if that is not yet legally the case'*.

27. A Placement Order giving permission for Susie to be placed for adoption was granted by the court in early November 2017 and on 15 November 2017 information about baby Susie and Mary and Andrew as prospective adopters for Susie was presented to Gateshead Council Adoption Panel. This was in order to ratify the adoptive match between the couple and baby Susie and to provide confirmation that the agency was giving its approval to the change from a foster placement to one of adoption, meaning baby Susie could now be deemed as being placed for adoption with Mary and Andrew. As soon as the couple were legally able they lodged their formal application with the court to adopt Susie and the Adoption Order was granted by the court on 23 March 2018.
28. Mary and Andrew have said in feedback that they initially felt shocked as they had not expected such a young child would be placed with them and that they only had a week to prepare for her arrival but with the support of family friends they got organised. They said that their experience of Foster to Adopt had been extremely positive but they acknowledge that it had been made easier for them due to the fact that there was no contact at all between Susie and her birth parents and so it did not feel like a foster placement.

Conclusion

29. Fostering to adopt is not without its challenges but the early months of a child's life are significant in that they lay the foundations for future development. Anything that can enhance these early opportunities and promote positive outcomes for children is to be welcomed. The achievement of the foster to adopt placements to date will have resulted in these children experiencing fewer moves and disruptions at a key stage in their early lives, being placed at a much earlier stage with their permanent family, and having the chance to jointly share more of their early history together with all the associated benefits this entails.
30. Mary and Andrew state that Susie; *'practically and emotionally she is our own daughter'* and *'we are the family she has known since birth'*.

Recommendation

It is requested that the Corporate Parenting Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider the case study and the issues that it presents.

Contact: Debbie Wilkinson Extension: 2377

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TITLE OF REPORT: Local Care Leavers Offer

REPORT OF: Caroline O'Neill, Strategic Director Care, Wellbeing and Learning

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide information on the Care Leavers Offer, highlighting what has been achieved, what else we need to do and how this is supporting care leavers.

Background

1. Every local authority has a statutory duty under the Children Leaving Care Act 2000 to offer care leavers support, advice and guidance. The Council publishes its current offer on its website, which outlines the services and support to care leavers.
2. Under the Children and Social Work Act 2017, the Government introduced the requirement for local authorities to publish a 'Local Care Leaver Offer', which outlines the services for care leavers available within the local authority area. This offer is a combination of statutory entitlements as well as how the Council and its partners can support care leavers over and above their statutory duty.
3. The draft Local Offer was published in April 2018 and it is hoped we will be able to subsequently refine this by hosting a stakeholder event, involving external partners and local businesses to encourage partners to sign up to the local offer and make pledges for our young people. It is hoped this will take place in the summer.

Progress

4. Progress has been made since the introduction of the Care Leavers Offer and we now have
 - Council Tax exemption for care leavers up to the age of 25
 - Free leisure passes for all care leavers
 - Peer mentoring
 - A housing pathway with a range of options for young people which will commence in July 2018
 - Improved employment, education and training offer from both within the Council and from partners
 - Improved apprenticeship offer within the Council
 - A commitment from a range of Council departments to offer shadowing days and mentoring
 - Practical support in helping young people move home
 - A greater understanding from partners about their role as corporate parents

Next steps

5. In order to achieve the best possible outcomes for our care leavers we need to
 - Host a stakeholder's event to get greater support from local businesses and partners to include not only employment or training but to broaden the offer to include free tickets to activities and events such as football matches, concerts, cinemas, meals out
 - Implement the care leavers app, which allows all care leavers access to the local offer on their phone. This will also enable them to get automatic updates and invitations to events being offered by the service
 - To seek the views of our care leavers on the local offer and develop accordingly.

Impact

6. It is too early to analyse the impact of the Care Leavers Offer as it has only been in place for three months, however having the right Care Leavers Offer should ensure care leavers
 - Have a smooth, planned transition when leaving care
 - Understand their entitlements
 - Have a choice of accommodation when leaving care
 - Have a range of supported opportunities into employment and training
 - Know how and where to seek support
 - Ensure all care leavers are supported up to the age of 25 by the leaving care team
 - Enable care leavers to gain access to, and make the best use of services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners

Recommendations

7. It is recommended that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
 - (i) Endorsed the draft Local Care Leaver Offer as set out in appendix 1, for the purpose of consultation and engagement with stakeholders; and
 - (ii) Agrees to receive a further report recommending a final Local Offer following the proposed consultation activity.
8. For the following reasons
 - To ensure the Council meets statutory requirements
 - To ensure that care leavers are supported by both the Council and partners in their transition into independence.

CONTACT: Jill Little
Service Manager
Looked After Children and Corporate Parenting
Extension 3420

Gateshead's Local Offer for Care Leavers

Gateshead has your back



What's inside this Offer to Care Leavers booklet?

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1. What is the Local Offer to Care Leavers?

Local authorities have a legal duty to support young people making the transition from care to adulthood. It is our responsibility to make sure you know what services are available to you, and what you can expect to receive when you are in care.

If you are leaving care, or have already left care, this doesn't mean that we don't care about you and don't want to continue to support you. We want to make sure that you feel safe and supported and know where to go for advice and help. This document will tell you about the support that Gateshead has in place for you as a care leaver. It will help you make the most of the services available to you so that you can make the most of your independence.

To be able to get the support set out in this document, you must have been in care for at least 13 weeks or periods totalling 13 weeks which began after you turned 14 years old, and also included some time on or after your 16th birthday. If you are not sure whether you qualify for support, you can ask your social worker or personal advisor.

This document will cover the following areas:

1. Health and wellbeing
2. Finances
3. Accommodation
4. Education, employment and training
5. Relationships
6. Participation in society

At the back of this document there is a list of useful contact numbers that you should find helpful. Below is some important information you will need to know about the support we must give you by law, the Leaving Care Team, Personal Advisors, Pathway Planning and more.

2. The support we must give you by law

Through the Children Leaving Care Act (2000) Gateshead must provide you with the following:

- A Personal Advisor (PA), who will offer you advice and support
- Suitable accommodation and financial support if you leave care before your 18th birthday
- A Pathway Plan which must be regularly reviewed with you.

Following changes introduced via the Children and Social Work ACT 2017, you can ask for support from your PA up to the age of 25, regardless of whether you are in education or training or not.

There are also times when you may need extra support and this may be due to:

- Being a young parent
- You have a disability or special educational need
- You are an unaccompanied asylum seeking child and you have an ongoing asylum claim
- You are in custody or in contact with Probation or youth offending services
- You are going through a difficult time.

3. What does the Gateshead Leaving Care Team do?

We are your 'Corporate Parents', which means that it our responsibility to be good parents to all young people in our care. A good corporate parent should have the same aspirations for a child in care, or a care leaver, that any good parent would have for their own child. This means providing you with the stability and support that you need to make progress; helping you to access new opportunities and experiences that inspire you to set ambitious goals for yourself. It means celebrating your successes, but also recognising that you will sometimes make mistakes and need our help to get back on track. It also means supporting you to gain the skills and confidence to live an independent life whilst letting you know that you have someone to call on for help if the going gets tough.

The Leaving Care Team is based in the Civic Centre, Gateshead. It is part of the Corporate Parenting Service and works with young people who are aged 18+ (care leavers). Our team is made up of PAs who will support you with your journey to independence. We have a legal duty to support and assist you until you are 25.

4. What you can expect from your Corporate Parents

A corporate parent is an organisation or person who has special responsibilities to care for looked after children and young people, including:

- those in residential care
- those in foster care
- those in kinship care, who live with a family member other than a parent
- those who are looked after at home

Our Care Pledge says that we will:

- Look after you
- Treat you right
- Find the right place for you
- Involve you
- Keep you happy and healthy
- Help you get a good education
- Help you get on in life

5. What is the role of the Personal Advisor (PA)?

Once you turn 18, you will no longer have a social worker and your PA will become your main worker and continue working with you until the age of 25, regardless of whether you are in education or training or not. A PA will be identified for you after you become 16, so you can build a relationship before they become your allocated worker.

Your PA is there to help you to prepare to live independently and be successful at this. They can offer you advice, guidance and support after you leave care. PAs will talk with you about the support that you may need and will write this support and how it will be offered to you in your Pathway Plan. The amount of support that you receive from them will depend on your needs and what you want from them.

We will try and keep the same PA allocated to you, however this can sometimes be difficult and you may wish to request a change in your worker. The relationship between you and your PA is important; make the most of them, treat them with respect and keep in touch.

6. What is a Pathway Plan?

Every young person between the ages of 16-25 in care or a care leaver has a Pathway Plan. Your Pathway Plan is a document that is written by your social worker and handed over to your PA after speaking to you and the other significant people in your life. It sets out what support and help you need, your views and what your future goals are. It will also outline exactly what support you will receive from Gateshead Council.

Your Pathway Plan will be reviewed with you every 6 months, or if there are any significant changes in your situation.

SECTION A: Health and wellbeing

Your health matters to us. Being healthy doesn't just mean eating fruit, exercising regularly and keeping your teeth clean. It also means feeling strong and well emotionally and being sexually healthy and safe. Your PA can offer you support to achieve and maintain positive health and wellbeing and we recognise that this is different for each individual. In Gateshead we will support you to recognise your own health needs and signpost you to services to meet these needs.

We also recognise that it can be very difficult leaving care and living independently and that this can often be lonely and isolating. This can have a negative impact on how you feel and cope on a day to day basis. There are lots of services and support out there. Read this section to find out some of the services available to you.

What we offer 2 U	What U Need to Know
<p>Emotional problems Your PA can offer you emotional support to talk through any feelings and problems you have and can put in strategies with you to help you cope. If you need more specialist support your PA can refer and support you to access adult mental/emotional health services.</p> <p>Streetwise offers free and confidential information, advice, support and counselling to young people aged 11-25: counselling@streetwisenorth.co.uk /Tel: 0191 2305400</p> <p>North East Counselling Service This is a free service for all children and young people aged 9-25 years old. You can contact them at: info@necounselling.org.uk /Tel: 0191 440 8127</p> <p>ChildLine offers 24-hours support: Tel: 0800 1111</p>	<p>Remember: if you are struggling with anything, speak to someone about it – don't bottle it up!</p> <p>Evidence suggests that a small improvement in wellbeing can help to decrease some mental health problems and also help people to flourish. There are five actions to improve personal wellbeing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • connect • be active • take notice • keep learning • give

What we offer 2 U	What U Need to Know
<p>Access to free leisure facilities If you want to access free leisure care within Gateshead, speak to your PA who will arrange for you to be issued with a Leisure Pass which can be used at any leisure centre within the Gateshead area.</p>	<p>Remember: Your PA can arrange free access to leisure services for you.</p>
<p>Sexual health If you need help and support with sexual health and family planning issues you will be signposted by your PA to the right local services for you that can offer you additional support and advice.</p> <p>Free contraception, pregnancy checks and check-ups are available. Contact: www.gatesheadsexualhealth.co.uk /Tel: 0191 283 1577</p>	<p>Remember: Keep yourself safe. If you do not use a condom you will be at risk of becoming a young parent and catching infections.</p>
<p>Drug and alcohol support Platform Gateshead offers a range of specialist substance misuse services to under 18's: www.platformgateshead.org.uk /Tel: 0191 4601354</p> <p>Gateshead substance misuse service (Change, Grow, Live) is a single, integrated drug and alcohol recovery service for all adults in Gateshead. https://www.changegrowlive.org/get-help/advice-information/drugs-alcohol /Tel: 0191 5947821</p> <p>FRANK (friendly, confidential drugs advice): www.talktofrank.com /Tel: 0300 123 6600 / SMS to 82111</p>	<p>Remember: At Change, Grow, Live we believe that everyone has the right to lead the best life they can. Our accessible services empower people to improve their health and wellbeing and take control of the direction of their lives.</p>

What we offer 2 U	What U Need to Know
<p>Dentist and opticians If you are receiving benefits then you will have access to free dental health care and opticians.</p> <p>Opticians and dentists are free if you are under 18 years old, on benefits or in full time education.</p>	<p>Remember: You should visit the dentist twice a year for cleaning and a check-up.</p> <p>Even if you do not have any eye problems you should have your eyes tested every 2 years.</p>
<p>GP/doctor Your PA will support you to register with a GP and will help you to attend health appointments. A GP treats preventative illnesses and will be able to refer you to other services.</p> <p>Your PA can also give you information on financial assistance for prescriptions which the GP may issue.</p>	<p>Remember: If you move it will be your responsibility to inform your GP and sign up with a different, more local GP.</p>
<p>Health passports When you become a care leaver you will be given a health passport by the LAC Nurse at your last statutory health check. This will contain all your available health information, like the name of your GP and dentist and any ongoing health conditions. This will be useful for you to use when you access health services and adult services.</p> <p>You will also be offered a monthly drop-in session which the LAC Nurse will attend giving the opportunity to discuss any health issues that you may have.</p>	<p>Remember: If you lose your health passport speak to your LAC nurse.</p>

SECTION B: Finance and money

We understand that one of the biggest concerns for care leavers is money. We can offer you financial support to make living independently that little bit less difficult. The amount of money you will get depends on your age and what type of accommodation you're in. There is a lot of information available online for care leavers and you will be able to ask your PA for more information if you need it.

What we offer 2 U	What U Need to Know
<p>Budgeting We will give you support with budgeting your money and help you learn how to budget and live independently. We can also offer you a finance education course to give you a bit more support.</p>	<p>Remember: If you don't know how to budget and spend your money wisely, you will really struggle when you live on your own.</p> <p>Not being able to budget properly may affect you in the long term.</p> <p>If you need more budgeting support, then speak to your PA.</p>
<p>Welfare benefits When you are old enough to apply for benefits, we will help you do this. Four weeks before your 18th birthday your PA will help you with this. We have an arrangement with the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) that your application will be processed on the day of your birthday, and given priority. If you have applied for benefits and are waiting to be paid, we will pay you a weekly living allowance to help you live while your claim is processed.</p>	<p>Remember: You must attend your appointments.</p> <p>It is a criminal offence to lie to the benefits office. You will also need to show your PA that you have applied for benefits.</p> <p>If you don't attend appointments with the Job Centre and don't keep to your agreement to look for work without a good reason, your benefits may be stopped.</p>

What we offer 2 U	What U Need to Know
<p>Benefit options</p> <p>Universal Credit – this is a monthly payment to encourage you to get into paid work.</p> <p>Job Seekers Allowance – this is a twice weekly payment to help you when you look for paid work.</p> <p>Income Support – if you are in college full time or other education (Level 3 or below) you can claim Income Support (but not Universal Credit or Job Seekers Allowance). This is a right for all care leavers until you turn 21.</p> <p>Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) – if you are ill or have other problems that stop you being available to work you may be able to claim ESA.</p> <p>Council Tax Exemption – all care leavers will be given 100% exemption from Council Tax until they turn 25.</p>	<p>Your PA will advise and support you with applying for benefits and attending appointments.</p>
<p>Living allowance payments</p> <p>If you are unable to claim benefits or are waiting for your application to be processed, you will be offered a weekly payment until you are in receipt of money. This payment will be the equivalent of state benefits. You will be expected to use this for all of your living costs.</p> <p>We will provide you with a financial gift on your birthday, at Christmas and other celebratory events.</p> <p>If you are in your own tenancy we will provide you with a winter fuel allowance to help with the extra costs of heating your home over winter.</p> <p>How will I be paid?</p> <p>You will be encouraged to set up a bank account. The best way to get paid is through BACS – which is a bank transfer. The money will be paid into your account each week.</p>	<p>Remember: You will need to spend your Weekly Living Allowance on day to day essentials. You should budget this money and pay for your essentials first (food and bills).</p> <p>Your PA will support you to open your own bank account if you haven't done this before.</p>

What we offer 2 U	What U Need to Know
<p>Savings If you have been in care for a while you will have a savings account which you can access when you turn 18.</p> <p>Your PA will provide you with information on how to access your Junior ISA or Child Trust Fund.</p>	<p>Remember: Depending on how long you have been in care, your savings may be quite a lot. Use this chunk of money to help you with your future and don't waste it.</p>
<p>Leaving care grant We will provide you with a leaving care grant, up to the value of £2,000, to decorate and furnish your home.</p> <p>At times you may need items of furniture before you move onto independent living. Your PA will help you decide which items you will need, such as white goods, crockery, beds, curtains etc. from a list of recommended items.</p>	<p>Remember: To choose items that you really need from the recommended items list.</p> <p>The grant is a contribution to help you buy everything you might need when moving into your first home.</p>
<p>Education incentive payment If you are in full time education we will provide you with bursaries or money for your education, employment or training.</p>	<p>See the education, employment and training section for more information.</p>
<p>Emergencies We understand that emergencies do happen. We will pay emergency payments or offer food packages to care leavers for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • as part of an education package • if you are unable to claim benefits • if you are waiting for your benefits to start • in an emergency 	<p>Remember: Speak to your PA if you think you are entitled to food packages or you are facing an emergency.</p> <p>You may be asked for proof of your situation.</p>

What we offer 2 U	What U Need to Know
<p>Other sources of funding Some organisations help care leavers by awarding grants (which do not need to be repaid). Some grants help with university, moving into independent accommodation, financial support to help you train etc.</p> <p>Contact the Care Advice Line at: www.thecareadvice.org /Tel: 0161 413 7860</p>	<p>Remember: Speak to your PA about what other funds you may be entitled to.</p> <p>You may apply to charities and organisations for additional grant funding if you meet their criteria.</p>

SECTION C: Your Important Documents

We all need important documents to do simple things like book on a course, claim benefits or open a bank account. We will make sure that you have the important documents that you need in adulthood, such as a passport and birth certificate. We will keep copies of your important documents safely on file and you will be responsible for keeping the original documents safe. If you lose any of these documents you should inform the relevant authority or discuss this with your PA immediately. Lost documents can be used for identity theft – this is where someone may use your name and personal information in order to obtain credit, loans, etc.

What we offer 2 U	What U Need to Know
<p>National Insurance number At 15 years and 9 months we will apply for your national insurance number (NI Number)</p>	<p>Remember: Remind your social worker if you do not receive this.</p> <p>Your PA will support you to find this out when you turn 18.</p>

<p>Passport We will support you with an application for a passport and pay the fee for your first one. Your passport is your main source of ID.</p>	<p>Remember: Do not lose your passport or you will have to apply and pay for a new one which will cost you over £70. If you lose it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • you will not be allowed to leave the country to travel • you may be at risk of identity theft
<p>Provisional Driving Licence We will support you with an application for a provisional driving licence and pay the fee for your first one.</p>	<p>Remember: You cannot drive without a provisional licence.</p> <p>If you lose your licence you will have to pay for a new one.</p>
<p>Birth Certificate If you do not already have a birth certificate, we will apply for you to get one.</p>	<p>Remember: If you lose your documents you will have to pay for new copies.</p> <p>Your birth certificate is an important document.</p>
<p>British citizenship If you are entitled to apply for British Citizenship before the age of 18 then we will support you to do this.</p>	<p>Remember: To tell us if you want to apply. We will help you with the application.</p>
<p>Access to your file You have a right to see the information we keep about you. If you apply, we will provide you with a copy of your social services records.</p> <p>If you would like to see a copy of your file, please make a request in writing and give this to your PA.</p>	<p>Remember: Think about the decision very carefully. Files can be very difficult to read.</p> <p>It can take some time to get a copy of your files, so please be patient.</p>

SECTION D: Accommodation

If you are aged over 18 your PA will help you find suitable accommodation. This might involve working with Gateshead Housing Company, supported housing and supported lodgings to support you to get the best accommodation suitable for you. We might also recommend a taster flat to you, in case you prefer to experience living independently with some support from the Leaving Care Team.

What we offer 2 U	What U Need to Know
<p>Staying Put If your foster carer and you decide that you would like to remain living with them, then we will support you to do that under a Staying Put arrangement. This can last until you are 21.</p> <p>Staying Put allows you to stay with your foster carers so that you can get further help and support with independent living skills. You will have responsibilities such as paying board and other independent living skills. All of this is to prepare you for when you move on.</p>	<p>Remember: Staying Put will help you maintain a supportive relationship with your foster carers.</p> <p>Your social worker, foster carer and PA will be able to discuss this option with you.</p> <p>If you decide to stay, we will help you apply for independent accommodation after you are 21.</p>
<p>Taster flat This is a flat that will be your own but will give you the opportunity to experience living independently without the added pressure of a tenancy agreement as it is managed by the Leaving Care Team. If, after a period of time, you have been successful at managing this tenancy then we will sign it over to you completely.</p>	

What we offer 2 U	What U Need to Know
<p>Independent housing</p> <p>When you are in independent accommodation you are responsible for yourself and for paying your bills. We will support you to make an application so you can access registered social landlords. You will get a tenancy of your own.</p> <p>Your PA will make a referral for floating support for you – this is so you can have more support with managing your tenancy and help you avoid arrears in your rent and bills. We know it can be very hard having your own place for the first time and we will support you the best we can to make that easier for you and ease some of the pressures.</p> <p>Your PA or Floating Support Worker will help you make a claim for housing benefit.</p> <p>You will be entitled to a setting up home allowance if you are living in your own tenancy. This will be £2,000 to furnish and decorate your home. See the Finance section of this offer for more information.</p>	<p>Remember:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To keep on top of your bills • To keep to your tenancy agreement <p>Work with your PA who will help you with all of these things.</p> <p>If you do not keep to your tenancy agreement, you may be at risk of losing it.</p> <p>Your bills (water, gas and electricity) can all be paid for monthly through your bank. This is often a much better option than running up bills.</p> <p>Make sure you know how your rent is being paid. It is your responsibility whether you are working or on benefits to ensure that your rent is paid to avoid eviction.</p>
<p>Supported Accommodation/Semi-Independent</p> <p>You may not be ready for your own tenancy when you decide to leave care and may prefer more supported options. Your PA will discuss these with you and help you identify one that will be suitable for you.</p>	<p>Remember: Make good use of your PA and Support Worker – they will help you access local services and help you connect with your local community. They are there for you.</p> <p>If you do not use your accommodation, then you may be at risk of losing it.</p>

What we offer 2 U	What U Need to Know
<p>University accommodation (holiday periods) We will provide you with accommodation during university holidays (or fund this if you make your own arrangements) if you cannot stay within your term time accommodation or return to your home area.</p>	

SECTION E: Employment, Education and Training

We want to make sure that every young person leaving care is able to achieve the goals that they set in life. We want you to succeed in your education, training and employment. When we meet with you we will find out how you are doing and will celebrate achievements with you.

What we offer 2 U	What U Need to Know
<p>Careers advice and information on training and courses We also recognise that personal circumstances can impact on a person's ability to engage full time in a course or job. We can offer support to look at courses that can be tailored to your needs, explore with you what you want to achieve and help you make a realistic plan to get there.</p>	<p>Remember: Education, training and finding a job is your responsibility. The Leaving Care Team will support and help you but you must be willing and give your best.</p>
<p>Job search We will support you with finding employment, including help to write your CV, apply for jobs and prepare for interviews. We will provide you with funding for interview clothing and transport costs.</p>	<p>Remember: Interview clothing should be WORK APPROPRIATE clothing and not new trainers! Speak to your PA or Support Worker for help to apply for jobs and get ready for an interview.</p>

What we offer 2 U	What U Need to Know
<p>The Job Centre Plus will support you to look and apply for work if you are not in education or employment.</p> <p>Your PA can refer you to Building Better Opportunities – Wise Steps, where you will receive one to one support from a job coach for up to 18 months. This will include help with a job search and will focus on removing any barriers to work through social inclusion activities, life skills, confidence building and skills development. Activities will also include ICT training and personal money management.</p> <p>You can also be referred to our in-house Learning & Skills provider who offers career information sessions, CV design, mock interview skills. You could also be offered a place on a Study Programme, Traineeship or Apprenticeship.</p>	
<p>Apprenticeships As your corporate parent we take our role seriously, we are therefore making efforts to offer opportunities for apprenticeships within Gateshead Local Authority. We have already secured apprenticeships in Business Administration and the Highways department, and we are working towards increasing the number of care leavers within the council. There will be further opportunities for work experience, apprenticeships and employment within the council.</p> <p>Year 11 guarantee We will give you access to a careers guidance and information meeting which lets you know what progression pathways are available into apprenticeships, which includes CV and interview preparation workshop.</p>	<p>Remember: You may still be get Housing Benefit and other support (talk to your PA to ensure that you are getting all the financial help available to you)</p> <p>Remember: If you didn't do as well as you had expected at school, we will still get you a job with training.</p> <p>Remember: You will have a dedicated advisor and personal tutor.</p> <p>Remember: You will be given pastoral care, to support you with personal issues.</p>

What we offer 2 U	What U Need to Know
<p>Apprenticeship guarantee</p> <p>We will give you an apprenticeship guarantee, you will have a guaranteed apprenticeship offer through learningSkills, this guarantee consists of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone interview with specialist information, advice and guidance to identify your vocational areas of interest, including access to live vacancies and for you to make an informed choice on whether apprenticeships are the right choice for you. • An invite to the weekly learningSkills Assessment Centre and an interview with our dedicated advisors who will help you to identify your skills, experience and prior attainment and support you to progress into an apprenticeship. This will give you access to the opportunities below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Programme of Study – a full time programme (16-18 years, 16hrs a week for up to a year) in a range of vocational subjects, maths and English support at an accessible venue in Gateshead, including financial support with travel and lunch. This route will give you the skills employers demand. ○ Employability programmes – intensive support for 19+ unemployed into sustainable employment. Including job search, maths and English support, help with job applications, digital skills and CV writing. ○ Traineeship – this programme provides a direct route into apprenticeships, you will have access to maths and English support if you need it, will be provided with a work placement in your chosen vocational area and will be supported to develop your employability skills to enable you to be 	<p>Remember: We expect you to have good attendance and punctuality.</p> <p>Remember: We expect you to attend all interviews.</p> <p>Remember: We expect you to sign up to our learner charter.</p> <p>Remember: We have a zero tolerance to bullying and harassment.</p> <p>Remember: We make decisions together, everyone is valued, all cultures celebrated and we share and respect the opinions of others.</p> <p>Remember: If you get an apprenticeship or traineeship we will provide you with support for transport costs. We will also provide you with support to buy any tools, equipment or essential clothing that you need as part of your apprenticeship.</p>

What we offer 2 U	What U Need to Know
<p>apprenticeship ready. You will be provided with financial support for travel, lunch and interview clothes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Apprenticeship – Gateshead Council is one of the largest local authority providers of apprenticeships in the country. Last year we had over 1000 people on apprenticeship programmes. We will guarantee you an apprenticeship in the vocational areas that learningSkills deliver inside and outside of the Council. This will include specialised one to one support with job search, interview skills and drafting your CV. ○ We will work with you to progress you onto the next level apprenticeship and into sustainable employment. <p>Do you have a learning difficulty/disability? We will guarantee a priority application to our internship programme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The internship offer is 4 days a week working with an employer and 1 day a week classroom based. You will be provided with financial support for travel, lunch and interview clothes. ● You will progress into employment, volunteering or further learning. <p>New this year! We would like to give you the opportunity to come and work for us! Gateshead Council has pledged to ring fence apprenticeship vacancies within the Local Authority for Looked after Children and Care Leavers.</p>	<p>Remember: For further information, advice and guidance please contact us direct on Tel: 0191 4338727/07825552087. Email apprenticeships@gateshead.gov.uk or register online at www.gateshead.gov.uk/applynow</p> <p>Alternatively, contact your PA to arrange an appointment with us or like/message us on Facebook to access all of our apprenticeship opportunities by searching “learningskillsapprenticeships”</p> <p>Or text JOBS to 80818.</p> <p>Remember: If you have a learning difficulty and/or disability and would like further information, advice and guidance contact Mary Burns on Tel: 0191 4338528/07887488305.</p> <p>Remember: For a wide range of other learning opportunities visit Gateshead.gov.uk/learningSkills to access our course directory.</p>

What we offer 2 U	What U Need to Know
<p>We will offer at least one employer event which will give you the opportunity to speak to employers who have pledged to support Looked After Children and Care Leavers into employment through work placements/apprenticeship opportunities.</p> <p>We will progress people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities into apprenticeships.</p>	
<p>University If you decide to go to university, we will assist you with your housing during holiday periods and provide you with extra financial support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will give you a higher education bursary of at least £6,000 • We will help you obtain tuition fees • We will assist you with the initial costs of moving to and from university • You will be eligible to apply for a student loan <p>You may also be entitled to additional support from the university who often have additional funds and grants for care leavers.</p>	<p>Remember: There is additional support available to you if you go on to attend university- this can be from a designated person within the university who your PA will help you to identify.</p>

SECTION F: Relationships

Having relationships, both personal and professional, is important for emotional health as well as support. One of the biggest issues raised by care leavers is that of isolation – without a strong and stable social network it can be extremely hard to navigate life after care.

What we offer 2 U	What U Need to Know
<p>Peer mentoring</p>	<p>Remember: Your peer mentor has also been in care and gone through similar challenges to you.</p>

What we offer 2 U	What U Need to Know
<p>We feel that it would be helpful for you to be in touch with other care leavers. We can link you with a peer mentor who can support you through the journey of preparing to leave care, and help you when you have left.</p> <p>There are also opportunities for young people to train to become a peer mentor themselves, offering support to other young people leaving care.</p>	
<p>Family and friends We will support you to reconnect with your family when this will be in your best interests.</p> <p>We will also help you to maintain contact with the significant people in your life – your family, friends and previous carers.</p>	
<p>Support networks We will support you to make contact with social support in your area which will build on the relationships within your life.</p> <p>We will also invite you along to our monthly participation meetings where you can link in with other care leavers and professionals that can support you.</p>	

SECTION 6: You as an active member of society and your local community

You have a right to be involved in all the decisions about your plans for leaving care. In Gateshead we value the participation of our care leavers within the development of services. We also want care leavers to be active members of society and the local community and to have all the chances that other young adults have.

What we offer 2 U	What U Need to Know
<p>Personal Advisor</p> <p>When you turn 18 a PA will be allocated to you. Your PA will keep in contact and arrange meetings with you, they will visit you at home but can also arrange to see you in the community. Your PA is there to give you advice, information and guidance to help you make the best decisions.</p> <p>If you are unhappy about the plans or support you get, you can speak to your PA about it. You also have a right to an advocacy service to help you say what you are not happy with and challenge any decisions.</p> <p>Gateshead’s Children’s Rights Officer can help you with this or you can access an independent advocate. Children’s Rights Officer: Tel: 0191 4332647 or 07795 021819/ email: rights@gateshead.gov.uk</p> <p>National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) https://www.nyas.net/ / 0808 808 1001</p>	<p>Remember: Make the most of your PA and stay in contact with them.</p> <p>If you don’t engage or speak up, decisions will be made without you. This may mean that things will happen that you do not want.</p> <p>Make sure you are clear about what you want – it’s your life after all.</p>
<p>Changing your worker</p> <p>In certain, exceptional circumstances you can request to change your social worker or Personal Advisor. Ask to speak to the Leaving Care Team Manager if you wish to change your worker:</p> <p>Lesley Thompson. lesleythompson@gateshead.gov.uk 0191 433 2263</p>	
<p>Participation</p> <p>We want to offer you the opportunity to have your say on service improvement and delivery. You can do this by speaking with your PA, completing a MOMO app or attending</p>	<p>Remember: Your views are important to us You need to speak up and tell us how we can improve the services for you now and others in the future</p>

What we offer 2 U	What U Need to Know
<p>one of the events that we hold to consult with young people. We also ask you to complete an annual survey.</p> <p>We will also provide you with information on groups and clubs that you may wish to join, along with informing you about relevant awards, schemes and activities you can engage in that are in line with your interests.</p>	
<p>Your right to vote Once you turn 18 you are entitled to vote in local and national elections. We will encourage you and help you to enrol on the electoral roll so that you can vote in these, if you wish to.</p>	<p>Remember: You can make sure that your voice is heard and your vote will play an important role in shaping the government and your future.</p>
<p>Citizens advice The Citizens Advice Bureau aims to provide free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities as a member of society.</p> <p>www.citizensadvice.org.uk / 0344 2451288</p>	
<p>How to complain You have the right to complain to Gateshead if you can't solve a problem with your social worker, Personal Advisor or their manager. You can contact the Social Care complaints team on 0191 4332692 / email: enquiries.cbs@gateshead.gov.uk / text "Complaint Call Back" to 07736 287376 (make sure you include your contact details within the text).</p>	

7. Where to get further information

As a Care Leaver there are a range of support services available to you. We have put together a list of useful contact details. If there is anything you do not understand or further information you need then please speak to your PA or social worker.

GATESHEAD LEAVING CARE TEAM CONTACT INFORMATION

Where to find the Leaving Care Team?	Gateshead Civic Centre, Regent Street, Gateshead NE8 1HH
When are we open?	Monday to Thursday from 9.00am to 5.00pm / Friday from 9.00am to 4.30pm
How to contact us?	0191 4332750 / email: lacadminteam@gateshead.gov.uk Out of Hours emergency number: 0191 4770844

Children's Rights Officer: Tel: 0191 4332647 or 07795 021819/email: rights@gateshead.gov.uk

National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) <https://www.nyas.net/> /Tel: 0808 808 1001

Complaints Team: Tel: 0191 4332692 / email: enquiries.cbs@gateshead.gov.uk /
text "Complaint Call Back" to 07736 287376 (include your contact details within the text).

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TITLE OF REPORT: Inspections by OFSTED of Gateshead Children's Homes and Regulation 44 visits

REPORT OF: Caroline O'Neill, Strategic Director Care, Wellbeing and Learning

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report outlines Ofsted regulation 44 independent visits and inspection outcomes carried out in the Council's children's homes between March 2018 and June 2018.

The Children's Homes have two types of inspections:

- Formal inspections are made by Ofsted twice a year in the form of key and interim inspections
- Monthly independent Regulation 44 management visits are undertaken by an Independent worker who took up this role in October 2016, after the reciprocal arrangement with Newcastle ended. She is undertaking the Reg 44 visits for both Grove House and Blaydon Children Home and this should give a consistent standard of scrutiny across both services

The report notes many positive areas from inspection and outcomes of visits. It also highlights some issues and actions.

POLICY CONTEXT

1. The statutory requirements under the Care Standards Act 2000, in particular the Children's Homes Regulations 2001 amended with new Children's Homes Regulations and Standards in April 2015. When the new framework of regulations and standards were introduced Ofsted also changed the inspection framework for children's homes.
2. Children's Homes are regulated services and inspected by Ofsted. Historically there have been at least two unannounced Ofsted inspections every 12 months, however the Social Care Common Inspection Framework (SCCIF) was introduced by Ofsted in April 2017. One of the inspection principles is to prioritise their work where improvement is needed most. If leaders and managers have shown that they can consistently deliver services for children well, they may decide to return less often or do a more proportionate inspection.
3. They inspect children's homes that were judged inadequate or require improvement to be good at their last full inspection at least twice in each year-long inspection period (from 1st April – 31st March)

Ofsted carry out at least 1 full inspection of homes that were judged as outstanding or good during a year long inspection period.

They carry out an initial risk assessment for every children's home judged as good or outstanding at the start of the inspection year to inform an initial decision of whether these homes will be subject to a second inspection (interim) in addition to a full inspection.

This takes into account:

- The most recent interim inspection
- Reports received under regulations 44 and 45
- Notifications received under section 40
- Information from complaints, whistle-blowers and local authorities
- Changes to the home's management
- Any other relevant information

4. Ofsted can choose to visit unannounced at any time in addition to these inspection episodes. Also on a monthly basis unannounced independent visits are undertaken as required within the regulations for each Children's Home, the outcome of these visits are reported to Ofsted every month.

Blaydon Children's Home

5. Blaydon children's home is a five bed long term provision for young with complex needs. They currently have 5 young people in placement, consisting of 4 males and 1 female. They have had 2 male residents move on and 2 new male resident admitted.

Ofsted Inspection

6. Blaydon children's home had a full inspection on 9th January 2018. The inspection report has been published and Blaydon Children's Home received an overall judgement outcome of "good".
7. The Inspectors looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. They talked to young people and their families. and in addition the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people who it is trying to help, protect and look after.
8. The report looks at the
 - The overall experiences and progress of children and young people
 - How well children and young people are helped and protected
 - The effectiveness of leaders and managers

All areas were judged as good

9. Requirements and recommendations:

- There are shortfalls in the home's practice, mainly in relation to the quality of record-keeping and planning documents. These do not have a substantial impact on outcomes for young people.
- The independent monthly overview of the home does not routinely record all aspects of regulatory requirement. This means that external, impartial judgement about the quality of care is missing.

These recommendations have been acted upon and there are no outstanding requirements or recommendations from Ofsted

Regulation 44 update

10. The Reg 44 reports state that the Reg 45 reports produced by the managers are of a high standard, with the information in the reports being factual, giving a good overview of the standard of care and work undertaken in the home
11. The home continues to be well managed by an experienced manager who is assisted by a team of skilled, experienced and appropriately trained staff. 2 new staff have been appointed and are very positive about joining Blaydon's staff team. Their induction has covered everything necessary and they have been made to feel very welcome by the team.
12. The reports identify that the home has a warm, welcoming comfortable feel to it and that staff follow the appropriate procedures for visitors to the building.
13. The independent visitor stated the standard of care provided by the home is very good and that staff are very positive about all of the young people they look after. They work hard to develop positive relationships with the young people in order to ensure their individual needs are met to a very good standard.
14. Interactions between staff and young people have been observed by the independent visitor on all 3 visits and she has noted that interactions are very positive and the young people appear to enjoy chatting with staff, relaxing watching tv with them and eating meals together.
15. They identified how young people's views and opinions are important at Blaydon and they are included, consulted and involved in making plans or decisions about all aspects of their lives and the running of the home. There are weekly consultation meetings and regular 1:1 meetings to obtain the young people's views and if they do not want to attend these their views are obtained via text and phone, which are recorded in the consultation file.
16. Positive behaviour is encouraged through praise, rewards and incentives and the young people are aware of the additional incentives they can receive for attending education employment or training, not going missing, being respectful to others within the house and helping with appropriate tasks around the home.
17. It is recorded by the independent visitor that engaging young people in education and training continues to be a priority for the home and it is impressive that all the young people are in education or training that meets their individual needs..

18. Risk assessments are clearly a priority within the home and are updated, sometimes on a daily basis. Safeguarding the young people is clearly a priority for staff and the daily handover discusses individual risk assessments so that staff are updated of any changes. Risk assessments continue to be emailed to each individual member of staff so that nothing is missed.
19. Missing episodes continue to be reported appropriately and recorded in detail, with evidence that staff attempt to keep in touch via phone or text with any young person that is classed missing or absent. Missing episodes have increased slightly with 2 of the young people and these are managed well by the staff.
20. Incidents of drug misuse and alcohol misuse, continue to be an area of concern for the manager and the staff team however they have reduced in this 3 month period. Staff work continuously with young people as a group and on a 1:1 basis to educate them and to try and help them reduce or stop their drug and/or alcohol use. This is well documented on young people's files, as is the support they receive in relation to services available to support them. Information is also shared with the police in a n appropriate way
21. The independent visitor has spoken with 2 of the families of the young people living in Blaydon and they were very happy with the care their children were receiving and very complimentary about the staff team.
22. There have been some challenges in relation to the dynamics within the home, which staff have managed very well.
23. The home continues to provide a very high standard of safe and stable care for young people. The staff are committed to ensuring the young people have the very best opportunities to reach their individual potential

24. Recommendations from independent visits

There were no recommendations from the three Reg 44 visits undertaken in this period

There are no outstanding recommendations

Grove House Children's Home

25. Grove House is a respite home for children with disabilities. The home had an Inspection on 1st February 2018 and were again judged by Ofsted as "outstanding". The full report is not available but the feedback from the inspector indicated that they were outstanding in every area.

Regulation 44 update

26. The independent visitor has commented that the short break service provided by Grove House is excellent, which consistently provides outstanding care.

27. The manager and the staff are highly skilled, experienced and committed to ensuring children are safe and have an enjoyable stay at Grove House
28. The home has a lovely warm and welcoming feeling, and the independent visitor observed how the children were warmly welcomed as they returned from school. They were given individual attention and seemed very relaxed in the company of the staff on duty.
29. The home continues to be well run with a conscientious, highly motivated staff team who clearly know the children well. They are able to adapt their approach to meet the individual needs of the children and young people using the home, which enables the young people to feel safe and enjoy their stay at Grove House.
30. Grove House is clearly a very child focussed children's home and the staff team ensure the young people are involved and included in continuously improving a service which already operates to the highest of standards.
31. There is good evidence that the manager and staff put a lot of effort into involving young people in decision making and planning, and it is apparent that children's views and opinions are taken into account in all aspects of running the home, which takes time and patience given the profound disabilities of some young people who use the service.
32. Daily handover meetings ensure that all staff are familiar with the most up to date information about the children they will be looking after.
33. Education is a priority and staff work closely with schools and parents, completing home/school diaries and encouraging and supporting young people to complete their homework during their stay.
34. There is good evidence that young people regularly receive praise, encouragement and rewards for positive behaviour and progress they make, with children receiving certificates and a choice of treats.
35. Incidents are still very low considering the challenging behaviours presented by many of the young people using the service, however when they do occur they are often violent and aggressive causing minor injuries to staff. Every incident is recorded in detail and there is evidence of management oversight and debriefings with staff involved. Additional behaviour management training is being sourced at the request of staff to help them manage such situations.
36. There are 54 young people currently using the service. All files are in good order, records are maintained to a high standard and there is evidence of file audits being carried out.
37. Grove House is a very safe place for young people to stay. Staff ratios are good and children who use the service are carefully matched to ensure their needs are met to the highest standards. The home is well equipped with suitable disability aids to meet the needs of children who use the service
38. Recommendations from independent visits

There was one recommendation from the three Reg 44 visits. This relates to extracts from consultations and feedback from parents being placed on the compliments file as this is not routinely done,

This has been completed and the manager will ensure this is routinely done to capture all compliments

RECOMMENDATION

39. The Committee is asked to consider and comment upon the contents of this report

CONTACT: Jill Little
Service Manager
Looked After Children and Corporate Parenting
Extension 3420

TITLE OF REPORT: Annual Work Programme

REPORT OF: Sheena Ramsey, Chief Executive
Mike Barker, Strategic Director, Corporate Services
and Governance

Summary

This report sets out the provisional work programme for the Corporate Parenting OSC for the municipal year 2018/19.

Background

1. Every year each Overview and Scrutiny Committee draws up a work programme based on the Council's policy framework which is then agreed by the Council as part of the policy planning process
2. The Committee's work programme is a rolling programme which sets the agenda for its quarterly meetings. It is the means by which it can address the interests of the local community, focus on improving services and seek to reduce inequalities in service provision and access to services.

Recommendations

3. The Committee is asked to
 - a) Endorse the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's provisional work programme for 2018/19 attached at Appendix 1.
 - b) Note that further reports will be brought to the Committee to identify any additional issues which the Committee may be asked to consider.

Contact: Angela Frisby

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APPENDIX 1

Draft Corporate Parenting OSC 2018/19	
12 July 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulation 44 Report • Permanence Planning (Adoption) – Case Study • Care Leavers Offer – Quality and Impact • Work Programme
11 October 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fostering Service Annual Report (Moved from July 2018 meeting) • Adoption Annual Report 2018 (Moved from July 2018 meeting) • Young People’s Presentation • Performance Overview • Work Programme • Regulation 44 Report
17 January 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missing from Care Annual Report • Education Annual Report (incl focus on employment / training / apprenticeships) • Health of LAC Annual report (Moved from Oct 2018 meeting) • Work Programme • Regulation 44 Report
28 March 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young People’s presentation • Performance Overview • Care Leavers Offer – Quality and Impact • Work Programme • Regulation 44 Report

Issues to slot in:

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