

**Corporate  
Parenting Strategy  
for Children and  
Young People  
aged 0–25 years**

**2019-20**

## **1 INTRODUCTION - CORPORATE PARENTING**

Looking after and protecting children and young people from harm is one of the most important jobs that a Local Authority can do. Where a child cannot remain safely at home for whatever reason and comes into the care of the Local Authority the council becomes the 'corporate parent' for that child. They are also the corporate parent for any young person who is under 25, who has been looked after for at least 13 weeks after their 14<sup>th</sup> birthday.

The term 'corporate parent' means the collective responsibility of the council, elected members, employees and partner agencies, in providing the best possible care and safeguarding support for the children and young people who are looked after by the council for the purpose of this strategy document. The associated responsibility and any reference to 'we' refers to all multi-agency partners. A child in the care of the council looks to the whole council to be the best parent it can be to that child. Every member and employee has the statutory responsibility to act for that child in the same way that a good parent would act for their own child.

This strategy sets out Durham County Councils ambition for our Looked After Children and our key priorities for 2019/20.

Our commitment is to all children and young people living in foster care and residential care; placed for adoption; living in supported lodgings or at home under Placement with Parent Regulations as well as those living in secure establishments or in custody.

## **2 DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL'S POSITION STATEMENT**

Durham County Council is committed to being the best parent it can be for our Looked After Children and Care Leavers and strives to ensure that we deliver support and care that is as good as every good parent.

Durham County Council is committed to ensuring our Looked After Children and Care Leavers have the best opportunities available to them to achieve their potential and that these are at least as good as the opportunities available for all other children. It is recognised that many children and young people face significantly greater levels of challenging circumstances before reaching adulthood than their peers and that this may mean that they have the need for additional support. Durham County Council are committed to ensuring that services are designed with and for Looked After Children and Care Leavers to meet their needs.

We want all of our Looked After Children to live in loving, stable and safe homes in a place that they can 'call home'. We want the people who are caring for them to be fun, loving, skilled, enthusiastic, ambitious and fighting their corner every step of the way. We want our children to form good, trusting, nurturing relationships with their carers and have positive experiences.

We want our children to live in stable placements, only moving when it is in their best interests or when they have chosen to do so.

Durham County Council is ambitious for our children and wants to encourage them to dream big and fulfil their potential. We are committed to ensuring that they receive the best education in the best schools and get additional support if they need it; that they are well prepared for independence and work through apprenticeships, high quality training, support into higher education and into university for those who aspire to do so.

We want our children to be well, healthy and have good emotional and mental health. We want to celebrate their achievements, whether big or small so that they can be proud of themselves and know that we are proud of them too. We want them to have fun and be able to develop their own interests and hobbies so that they can develop in confidence and establish friendships and make memories that they can fondly look back on in later years.

Across Durham County Council, we are committed to listening to our children and young people, hearing what they have to say and acting on it wherever possible. We will develop our services based on this feedback and regularly check with them that we have got it right. We will welcome their feedback and will use this to challenge the way we do things, and to make changes based on their views.

We want our care leavers to be well prepared for adulthood and want to ensure they feel part of a wider extended family who will be there for them if they are needed. We want our young people to be able to make mistakes and know that they will be supported to pick up the pieces if things don't go to plan. This is part of learning and developing, and an important part of growing up and it is really important that there is someone there to offer help, support and guidance at these times.

We want our young people to be able to move into their own homes when they are ready and to feel safe and supported. This can be a big a challenge for any young people and we know that young people who leave care, often do so earlier than their peers.

We also want our young people to have the knowledge, skills and confidence to be able to independently manage their own health and wellbeing to ensure they are living the best possible life they can.

### **3 YOUNG PEOPLE'S PROMISE**

We have a 'promise' that has been developed with children and young people who are in the care of Durham County Council to show our commitment to providing the best care we can. Our 'promise' outlines what young people have said they want from their social workers, foster carers and the other services we provide, to support them, to help them achieve and succeed and to ensure we listen to their views and their voice throughout the time we look after them.

Printed copies were distributed to teams and offices that work with Looked After Children, and framed copies are displayed in public view outside the offices of our Chief Executive, Director of Children and Young People's Services and Heads of Service within Children and Young People's Services.

We have asked those who work with our Looked After Children to keep the promise and stick to these principles in all aspects of their work. We promise to:

- Treat you with respect and to remember that everyone is different
- Help find best home we can for you. It will be where you feel safe, cared about and treated well
- Help you stay in touch with family and friends if it is ok to do so
- Listen carefully to you and try to act on what you say
- Make sure that your social worker will get to know you well
- Make sure your social worker will keep in touch with you and listen to what you say
- Really listen to things you would like to change about being looked after
- Be honest and share any information or changes with you
- Involve you in any decisions, plans or changes that affect you or your future
- Give you any help or support that you need
- Help you to be the best that you can at school, college, training and work
- Give you help and support when needed to move from care to adult life
- Work together and support you during every change in your life e.g. moving placement or leaving care.

## 4 ROLE OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

The Corporate Parenting Panel is made of 21 elected members including the Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People's Services and the Chair of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee as well as senior officers from within the council. In addition there are co-opted members on the panel including representatives from local schools and health services as well as a young people from the Children in Care Council.

The Corporate Parenting Panel is responsible for the following five functions as set out in the Council's constitution:

**Function One:** Ensure that the Council acts as a good corporate parent to children and young people in care and care leavers including:

- Children and Young People in residential care
- Children and Young People in foster care
- Children and Young People placed for adoption
- Children and Young People placed at home under Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations
- Young People who are living in supported lodgings
- Young People in Secure services
- Young People in custody.

Responsibilities:

- Take an overview of the Councils and partner agencies responsibilities toward children and young people in care and care leavers
- Monitor performance of services for children for whom we are corporate parents, including care leavers, receipt of information on regulation 44 visit and inspections, referring any systemic issues to Cabinet and or scrutiny as required
- Maintain a strategic overview of all developments, plans, policies and strategies for children whom the Council is a corporate parent and make appropriate recommendations for action
- Ensure all members of the Council are regularly updated on issues affecting children for whom they are the corporate parent including care leavers through an annual report to Council, Cabinet and Scrutiny
- Receive an overview of Regulation 44 visits and inspections of private children's homes within the County Durham area
- Receive an update on independent residential homes within County Durham and their Ofsted inspection reports outcomes
- Agree an annual work programme based on corporate parenting strategy and priorities.

**Function Two:** Engage and listen to the views of children, young people and their carers for whom the Council is the parent.

Responsibilities:

- Provide a forum for children and young people in care and care leavers to participate and influence policy and have an opportunity to talk about their experiences of the services they have received
- Ensure that positive experiences are maintained, lessons are learnt and changes made in areas that require improvement
- Meet with children for whom the council is corporate parent and their carers on a regular basis and celebrate their achievements
- Participation in Regulation 44 visits quarterly will allow the Panel to improve planning and understanding of care in residential homes
- Ensure that leisure, cultural, further education and employment opportunities are offered and taken up by our Looked After Children and care leavers.

**Function Three:** Work in partnership with other statutory agencies to drive forward improvements in care.

Responsibilities:

- Examine ways that the Council as a whole and partner agencies can improve life chances of children in care and care leavers
- Ensure there is good joined up working with partner agencies
- Develop links with the Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership (formerly Local Safeguarding Children's Board) including a picture of Serious Case Reviews of Looked After Children.

**Function Four:** Act as the governing body for the Virtual School for Looked After Children and young people.

Responsibilities:

- Maintain an overview and provide challenge of governance arrangements for the virtual school
- To monitor and bring challenge to ensure Looked After Children's educational attainment and performance is optimised.
- To encourage and support each looked after child to achieve optimum educational outcomes at each stage of their schooling.

**Function Five:** Act as the governing body for Aycliffe Secure Services, monitoring and ensuring the quality of secure accommodation.

Responsibilities:

- Maintain an overview and provide challenge of governance arrangements for Aycliffe Secure Services
- Support and bring challenge to achieve the best outcomes for Looked After Children who are in secure services
- Agree the themes and performance, on an annual basis that enhance corporate parenting of Looked After Children in secure services.

## **5 CHILDREN AND SOCIAL WORK ACT**

Section one of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 requires local authorities to have regard to the following seven corporate parenting principles when discharging their functions in relation to Looked After Children and care leavers:

- To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people
- To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
- To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people
- To help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners
- To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people
- For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work
- To prepare children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

## **6 CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL WORK PROGRAMME**

The Corporate Parenting Panel sets its work programme around key lines of enquiry, in relation to outcomes for Looked After Children and Care Leavers which require oversight and scrutiny, these include:

- Understanding the characteristics of our cohort of Looked After Children including age and length of time in care; where children are placed; numbers of children in different types of provision; those waiting for a permanent placement or match to an adopter, those with additional health or developmental needs
- Understanding the role of key partners in supporting Looked After Children and Care Leavers to achieve good outcomes and providing challenge where this is needed
- Exploring how we are demonstrating to children in our care that we have high aspirations for them
- Understanding how well we provide stable environments for our children.
- Ensuring that the partnership is looking after the health and wellbeing of our children
- Understanding how many children are placed out of county and the reasons for this and ensuring that there is sufficient placement provision within the local authority
- Ensuring that we support our foster carers well
- Examining the quality of outcomes for our care leavers against a range of measures
- Understanding how well we develop and commission new services to meet the needs of our children.
- Ensuring that children and young people have an opportunity to express their views and ensuring that we know that they have been acted upon.

## 7 SOURCES OF INFORMATION TO THE CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

There are a number of sources of information provided to the Corporate Parenting Panel, which informs the work of the Panel, and the Work Programme. These include, but are not limited to the following:

- Monthly Corporate Parenting Panel meetings, where members receive regular reports and updates from a range of sources
- The Children in Care Council (CICC) have a standing item on each Corporate Parenting Panel meeting agenda, where they provide feedback from CICC meetings
- The CICC host two meetings per year, where they set the agenda. Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel and senior officers within the service area are invited to attend, and feedback is shared through the Corporate Parenting Panel meetings and actions taken as appropriate
- Care Leavers have a separate forum and feed their views into a panel either by attending personally or through their representative
- Feedback from foster carers and adoptive families is shared with the Corporate Parenting Panel
- A number of annual reports are presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel, including:
  - Independent Reviewing Officer in respect of Looked After Children
  - Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership
    - Annual Serious Case Review update
  - Fostering Service
  - Adoption Service
  - Care Leavers
  - Sufficiency Strategy
  - Virtual School
  - Corporate Parenting Panel
- The Corporate Parenting Panel receives updates from the Corporate Parenting Panel sub groups:
  - Virtual School
  - Aycliffe Secure Centre
- Regular Performance Reports are presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel in respect of the following:
  - Placement stability
  - Health of Looked After Children and timeliness of health and dental assessments
  - Education outcomes
  - Outcomes for care leavers including the proportion in education, employment and training and appropriate accommodation
  - Children placed out of Durham or in external provision
  - Children who are missing from care
  - Unaccompanied asylum seeking children
  - Children awaiting adoption or permanence.

## **8 CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL ANNUAL REPORT**

The Corporate Parenting Panel Terms of Reference which form part of Durham County Council's Constitution, make specific reference that the Corporate Parenting Panel will prepare and provide an Annual Report that will be shared with Cabinet, Council and Overview and Scrutiny.

To ensure the voice of the child is reflected in the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel, it was agreed that young people from the Children in Care Council, supported by officers from Durham County Council Transformation and Partnerships team, would develop the Corporate Parenting Panel's Annual Report.

For the 2017-18 Annual Report, the young people worked on the design, layout, content and language of the Annual Report to ensure it was easy to read and understand.

For the 2018-19 Annual Report a decision was made to use DCC Design and Print Team to align the Annual Report with other strategic documents. As well as working with young people on the layout, content and language of the document, work also took place with the young people to ensure the corporate design retained enough of the young people's design to make it appealing to young people and easy for them to read and understand.

Moving forward, the Annual Report will hold a more prominent position on the Durham County Council website, and will again be hosted on the Investing in Children Website, and the Children in Care Council website.

The Annual Report includes information on:

- What a Corporate Parent is
- The role of the Corporate Parenting Panel
- The Corporate Parenting Panel's Terms of Reference
- Key performance data
- Achievements
- Evidencing the changes made as a result of consultation with young people 'You Said – We Did'
- The Corporate Parenting Panel's priorities for 2019/20.

## **9 ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2018-19 AND PRIORITIES FOR 2019-20**

### **Priority 1**

**Ensure good multi agency partnership work and integrated governance to meet the needs of our Looked After Children and Care Leavers.**

**We need to work closely with all partner agencies to ensure there is high quality multi agency working to meet the wide range of needs of our Looked After Children and Care Leavers.**

### **Achievements in 2018/19**

We have delivered a LAC Strategic Partnership (LACSP) performance management framework with performance on key questions monitored via a quarterly multi agency scorecard. Performance is reported to the LACSP and the Corporate Parenting Panel:

- What are the characteristics of our cohort of children in care and care leavers?
- Do our partner agencies understand their role in supporting us as corporate parents?
- How are we giving children and young people the chance to express their views, wishes and feelings? How do we know those are being acted on?
- Are we providing stable environments for children in our care?
- What are we doing to look after the health and wellbeing of children in our care?
- What are outcomes like for our care leavers?

These arrangements ensure better sharing of information across partners to identify performance priorities, understand need and children and young people's experiences, and to inform and shape the design of services and resources.

We have established reporting arrangements to the Integrated Steering Group for Children and the membership reflects a wide range of partner agencies who are key players in the integration of health, education and social care. These arrangements ensure that strategic partner members are fully sighted on and able to contribute to the work of the LACSP and Corporate Parenting Panel and key performance issues, obstacles and barriers are escalated if necessary, to deliver good outcomes for our Looked After Children and care leavers.

### What further action will we take and when?

<b>What</b>	<b>When</b>
We will establish a Multi-Agency Collaborative Care Board that will discuss and review the care, education and treatment of County Durham's most vulnerable Children and Young People to prevent in-patient admissions and/or the need to become Looked After	Spring/Summer 2019
We will design and deliver local services and models of working (place based services) to improve outcomes around safety, health and emotional wellbeing, quality education, training and local employment as identified in the Children and Young People's Strategy	2019/20

## **Priority 2**

**We will develop services which are focused on providing high quality support to enable children and young people to remain at home with their families where it is safe to do so.**

### **Achievements in 2018/19**

Following 150 family group conferences, 140 children and young people remained in their family/living arrangements with support, and did not become looked after.

Children and young people are working on making an animation video that will explain to other young people what family group conferencing is, and what to expect.

The Supporting Solutions Service was established in 2018, and works with young people aged 11-17 who are living in families where there is a risk of family/carer breakdown to provide intensive, responsive support to meet the individual needs of these families. The service worked with 107 young people on the edge of care, and as a result of offering crisis and intensive interventions, 100 young people remained in their family/living arrangements.

A Pre-birth Service was established to provide high quality support where either parent has had a child permanently removed from their care through the court process and are expecting another baby. The aim is to support parents to safely care for their children from birth and avoid them spending time in Local Authority care, or to progress permanency plans quickly so that children do not experience drift and delay, providing better outcomes for children and young people, as well as cost savings for the Local Authority.

Excellent partnerships have been developed with midwifery, health visiting services and Early Help colleagues across the county which impacts on the ability of the team to become involved with families from the outset, to ensure care planning for children is robust. We have worked with a number of families and have seen examples of children being placed from birth in their permanent placement.

Parents have reported a level of apprehension pre-birth given their previous interactions with children's social care, however one parent reported that things were different this time, and she felt more empowered to make changes and demonstrate that she could parent. She was helped to understand 'what had gone wrong in the past' and how her worker, with the benefit of positive relationships, was able to support her to make positive changes, and in this case the child remained in mother's care.

The practice of the Pre-birth Service was commended by Ofsted following the focused visit in January 2019.

The Signs of Safety approach is embedded in all of our work with children, young people and families. The signs of safety model puts the child's voice and the family's responses at the centre of assessment and planning. A Signs of Safety briefing session was delivered to members on 6 June 2019.

### What further action will we take and when?

<b>What</b>	<b>When</b>
We will undertake a Pre-birth Family Group Conference pilot, ensuring all families are offered a Family Group Conference, where plans are for the child to remain with family/carers	September 2019
We will develop a respite carer scheme for children on the edge of care as part of the intensive offer	March 2020

### **Priority 3**

**Sufficiency of Placements and Placement Stability is important for our children and young people. We want to ensure there are enough high-quality placements to meet their diverse needs and to ensure that young people have a choice where this is appropriate.**

#### **Achievements in 2018/19**

We have worked hard to recruit more foster carers and adoptive carers to look after our children.

We launched a fostering campaign last year, with the aim of dispelling some of the myths around becoming a foster carers, and encouraging more foster carers to come forward. On the back of this we have recruited 26 new foster carer households this year and 20 new adoptive families.

This continues to be very important and we will continue to work on this next year.

Most of the children in our care are looked after in foster homes (79%). It is really important to us that our children live in good or better children's homes with staff who they have good relationships with. Of our nine homes, two are rated by Ofsted to be 'Good' with 'Outstanding' features. Six are recognised to be 'Good' overall and we are awaiting a full inspection on the remaining home following a programme of remedial work being carried out.

Given the complex needs of some of our children and young people we have worked jointly with a provider to develop a new two bed children's home. This is now operational and has supported two young people. A further home is in the process of being developed.

Placement stability is important, and 86.6% of our children under 16 who have been in care for at least 2.5 years have been in the same placement for two years, in comparison to 69.3% in 2017-18 (note that 18-19 is provisional data).

We continue to host an awards evening for foster carers and their children, to celebrate and recognise the care and love they offer to our children.

Young people from the Children in Care Council continue to support our marketing and recruitment in many ways, either through featuring in articles to promote fostering and importantly in running the foster carer training sessions to share their views from a young person's perspective to prospective carers.

The Fostering Service also work closely with the Children in Care Council to ensure the young people's views and current issues are incorporated into our practice. This has included improvements to the information shared about children and young people and foster carers in advance of placements.

## What further actions will we take and when?

What	When
<p>We will undertake a Residential Services Review, which will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a focus on delivering alternative services, including respite care and maintaining young people at home with intensive family support</li> <li>• Recognise the complexity of some of our young people and develop provision to meet their needs.</li> </ul>	<p>2019</p> <p>July 2019</p>
<p>We will continue to review our fostering and adoption marketing strategy to ensure that we target recruitment activity for foster carers and adopters to those people who can meet the needs of our children, particularly for brothers and sisters, small babies, children with complex needs and our older young people.</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p>
<p>We will update the Placement Sufficiency Strategy to include an analysis of the needs of the children we are looking after and the types of placement and care provision that we need and to highlight where there are gaps.</p> <p>We will develop strategies to fill these gaps through the development of alternative provision where this is needed.</p>	<p>June 2019.</p>
<p>We will work to ensure that wherever it is in the child's best interests, Durham's children live in Durham and that we have enough resource and the right kind of resource to meet the needs of our children. This means reviewing the plans of all children who are placed in external provision and proactively planning for them to return to Durham wherever their needs can be met here.</p>	<p>Reviewed monthly</p>
<p>We will develop a new service that will provide a support, outreach and respite offer to our children and young people who are looked after to promote placement stability when this is required.</p> <p>This offer will also be available to children, young people and families on the edge of care to help prevent children moving into looked after services.</p>	<p>October 2019</p>
<p>We will implement a quality compliance framework across our own children's homes to ensure standards of service of consistent and best practice is replicated where possible.</p>	<p>July 2019</p>

## Priority 4

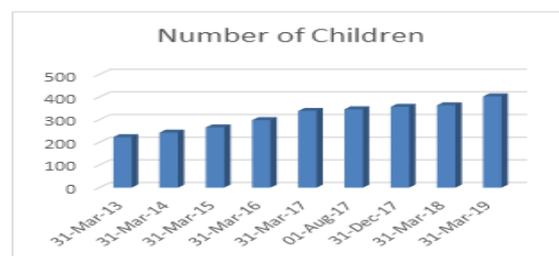
**Promoting Early Permanence is a key priority for us, we want to ensure that children are moved into their permanent placement or adoptive placement as quickly as possible once this has been agreed as the appropriate plan.**

### **Achievements in 2018/19**

We implemented our Early Permanence Strategy in May 2018 including an improved focus on 'fostering to adopt' whereby adopters are also approved as foster carers to ensure that very young babies have the opportunity to be fostered by the people who want to adopt them, where it is appropriate. To date we have placed ten babies under foster to adopt arrangements.

During 2018-19, 45 children were permanently matched into foster placements, which is an improvement on the previous year.

The total number of children and young people subject to a Special Guardianship Order and in receipt of financial support from the local authority has increased year on year, which means we have been able to secure stable long term permanent care arrangements for children within their families. This is demonstrated in the table below:



In addition, there are currently 58 children and young people subject to a Child Arrangement Order and 35 subject to historic Residence Orders who are receiving financial support from the local authority, which again demonstrates that we have been able to secure stable long term permanent care arrangements for children within their families

By the time a child or young person has been in the Looked After system for 4 months, there is a clear plan for the child about where they will live and who will be their carers in the longer term.

In addition, we want to minimise the average number of days between a child entering care and them moving in with their adoptive family.

We monitor children with a plan of permanence via foster carers, through the following two cohorts:

- Children with a plan of permanence in a permanent placement awaiting a match and
- Children with a plan of permanence not in a permanent placement and who we are actively family finding for

At May 2018 we had 33 children awaiting a match and 49 who we were actively family finding for, a total of 82 children. At May 2019 we had 37 children awaiting a match and 11 who we are actively family finding for, a total of 48 children, which is an improvement on the previous year.

We implemented the Early Permanence Strategy to assist in care planning for children to ensure that permanence is at the fore front of our thinking when working with children and families, and to reduce drift and delay in cases.

We delivered training in 2018 to professionals about the importance of permanence planning and planning for children's contact with their birth families. The Early Permanence training was delivered to 99 professionals, and the Contact workshop was delivered to 68 professionals.

### **What further action will we take and when?**

<b>What</b>	<b>When</b>
We will aim to deliver the Early Permanence workshop to approx. 75 additional professionals in the year.	2019/20
We will aim to deliver the Contact workshop to approx. 75 additional professionals in the year.	2019/20
We will ensure we audit cases, focusing on the quality of care plans, and learn from them to constantly improve practice.	Ongoing
We will continue to recruit adopters and foster carers who can meet the needs of our children, particularly for brothers and sisters, small babies, children with complex needs and our older young people.	Revised annually
We will ensure that the pre-birth team and the fostering to adopt approaches are integral in the early permanence strategy work	Ongoing

## **Priority 5**

**Durham County Council and its partners will develop a 'local offer' for our care leavers and provide them with advice and support from a personal advisor until they are 25 years old.**

**Care Leavers need to have a range of appropriate accommodation options to meet their needs.**

### **Achievements in 2018/19**

Our Care Leavers Local Offer was developed and published on Durham County Council website.

Durham County Council's Chief Executive Officer is a Care Leavers Champion and meets quarterly with young people to talk about their experiences and how services can be improved.

Care Leavers Champions have been identified for each service area within the Council.

We are recruiting apprenticeships within the council and will ensure that care leavers are given priority in applying for vacancies.

Care Leavers are now exempt from council tax when they live in Durham.

Winter Fuel allowance is paid to Durham Care Leavers.

Mentor training is being provided for a group of care leavers, who will then go on to support other young people as they leave care.

We hosted the third annual Exceptional People in Care (EPIC) awards ceremony during National Care Leavers Week in November 2018. The event was really well attended and provided an opportunity for our care leavers' achievements to be recognised and celebrated.

Durham Children in Care Council (CiCC) encouraged key policy and decision makers in the area to take on the Care Leavers Challenge to 'live in the footsteps of a care leaver'. Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel have undertaken the Challenge to raise the profile of care leavers, highlight some of the issues that they face and lobby for change.

It is important that our care leavers live in suitable accommodation, as at March 2019, 95% of our 17-21 year olds (232 of 244) were in suitable accommodation:

- 96.4% (80 of 83) 17-18 year olds
- 94.4% (152 of 161) 19-21 year olds

To further support this, we have developed new accommodation options for older young people and now have 10 flats which support for our care leavers.

Services are commissioned on a spot purchase basis to provide tailored supported living arrangements for young people aged 16+ with needs that challenge services and who require higher levels of support initially, then a plan is implemented to reduce support gradually.

**What further action will we take and when?**

<b>What</b>	<b>When</b>
We will review the local offer to ensure it is user friendly and meets our young people’s needs. We will continue to work with a wide range of partners to ensure we maximise the opportunities and support available to our care leavers	Ongoing
We will continue to celebrate success at every opportunity but specifically at the annual EPIC awards celebration of achievement event	Annually
We will support care leavers in gaining apprenticeships within the council in their chosen occupation.	Ongoing
We will improve the quality of pathway plans by focusing on outcome based planning and supportive provision	December 2019
We will provide a drop in centre for care leavers	By April 2020
We will work with colleagues in housing to develop alternative provision for care leavers who need some support when moving into independent living arrangements, for example Hedley House which is a new accommodation provision will open.	December 2019
Work will continue with housing and commissioning to develop other accommodation options such as taster flats and move on accommodation	Ongoing
We will develop accommodation and support services to meet the needs of young people with very complex needs who require higher levels of support. We will work with colleagues in commissioning to develop a range of options support this.	
We will undertake a marketing and engagement event with accommodation and support providers to look at options to meet the support needs of young people with complex needs	June 2019
We will then undertake an evaluation, and will work with our commissioners to develop a range of options to meet our young people’s needs.	September 2019

## **Priority 6**

**We will work to ensure the right services are in place to meet the health and wellbeing needs of our children and young people**

### **Achievements in 2018/19**

The health of our children and young people is very important.

A Health Dashboard has been developed as a tool to provide management oversight on dental checks and health assessments for our looked after children, to ensure these are undertaken in a timely way, or to flag if any are overdue.

As at 31 March 2019 91.4% of our children and young people had received the required number of health assessments.

An information leaflet about health assessments has been developed with young people so that they are fully informed.

Care leavers designed a health passport to ensure they have access to their health histories when they leave care.

In October 2018 Durham County Council's Public Health team published the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Health Needs Assessment (HNA). The HNA identified a number of key recommendations to ensure the Council fulfils its responsibility as Corporate Parent to better understand and support the health and wellbeing of Looked After Children and Care Leavers within County Durham. Recommendations have been pulled into an action plan for monitoring and impact review.

A priority action from the Health Needs Assessment was a review of the current emotional wellbeing and mental health pathway. In order to address these issues, a two day workshop was delivered in April 2019 to clarify, review and improve the current pathway through the eyes of children and young people and to identify barriers and enablers to reduce the number of unnecessary hand offs and duplication in processes.

The workshop identified a range of key actions across the following themes that once addressed will contribute to improved outcomes for Looked After Children and Care Leavers with emotional wellbeing and/or mental health issues by ensuring they receive the right level of support at the right time.

We will participate in the regional training in 2019 around age assessments for unaccompanied asylum seekers to ensure we have staff across the service appropriately trained.

The Teenage Parent Steering Group are overseeing a range of activities across County Durham that ensure young people who are pregnant/parents have access to good services for themselves and their children. We have also worked with young people to ensure they have good access to sexual health services and contraception advice.

The Integrated Sexual Health Service (ISHS) delivered by County Durham and Darlington Foundation Trust (CDDFT) are increasing their offer for young people particularly in areas where conception rates are consistently 20% higher than the Durham average.

In addition, CDDFT are increasing the level of C Card and sexual health support to identified vulnerable groups and the professionals that support them, which includes Looked After Children and Care Leavers.

Additional Relationship and Sex Education training delivered by Education Durham, has been made available to relevant teams within Children and Young People's Services, including Looked After Children Teams to ensure staff are equipped to support vulnerable young people effectively.

Sexual health training is now included in initial Foster Carer Launch Pad training programme and Teenage Carers Support Group. Additionally we are ensuring that C Card and wider sexual health support is available in and through all Durham County Council residential children's homes.

**What further action will we take and when?**

<b>What</b>	<b>When</b>
We will deliver the updated rolling training programme including introduction to sexual health services, C Card and Sexual Health and the law to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foster Carers</li> <li>• Staff within residential homes, and those directly supporting looked after children and/or care leavers</li> </ul>	July-September 2019 September 2019
We will strengthen the Vulnerable Parent Pathway (delivered by the 0-19 Service) to ensure that looked after children and care leavers who are pregnant continue to receive enhanced support. This will include the implementation of a single point of contact for staff who are supporting looked after young people and care leavers, strengthening links between Looked After Children teams, Health Visiting and Midwifery Services, and developing processes that identify all eligible looked after children and care leavers for additional support	September 2019
We will develop links between the Integrated Sexual Health Service Teen Mother Pathway to ensure that those looked after children and care leavers who do become pregnant are provided effective contraception advice, and a subsequent plan to prevent further unplanned conceptions	August 2019

<b>What</b>	<b>When</b>
We will work in partnership with Education Durham to enhance the offer of Relationship, Sex Education to Looked After Children and Care leavers to reduce the number of unplanned conceptions in County Durham	August 2019
We will ensure Health Passports are available digitally for young people aged 16+, so that they have access to their health information – further discussions will take place to discuss how this can be achieved.	Ongoing
We will implement the Health Needs Assessment recommendations and action plan	Ongoing

## **Priority 7**

**We will continue to work with our children and young people to ensure they have opportunities to access good education, employment and training to achieve their full potential.**

### **Achievements in 2018/19**

We are proud of the educational achievement of our Looked After Children. None of our children were permanently excluded from school, and they have good attendance.

Validated outcomes for 2018 show that Durham children made significantly better progress between KS1 and KS2 than looked after children nationally.

At KS4, our young people achieved particularly well in English and made better progress across the whole curriculum than children in care regionally and nationally.

Over 95% of children and young people were involved in the process of developing their personal education plan this year.

We have provided 1:1 tuition for children and young people in year 6 and year 11 to support their academic achievement.

We have also procured additional counselling time and provided funding for schools to access early intervention through behaviour partnerships to help keep young people in mainstream schools.

We have supported schools to understand the needs of Looked After Children and young people through sharing expertise on adverse childhood experiences (ACES), the impact of attachment and early trauma and on foetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD).

We have linked with Durham Learning resources to produce our 'Curious Kids' reading packs which have been well received by children and carers. A training session for carers on supporting reading was very well attended with excellent feedback.

The proportion of Care Leavers aged 17 and 18 in Education, Employment and Training is higher in County Durham (82%), compared to national (64%) and regional (66%) averages<sup>1</sup>.

Of our young people who have identified themselves as Looked After / Care Leavers, 447 have been supported by the DurhamWorks Programme. Of these 164 have completed the programme, with 141 progressing into a positive Education, Employment and Training destination – a rate of 85.9%<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Department for Education (2018) – Children Looked After in England including adoption: 2017 to 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Durham County Council – Progression and Learning Performance Report, March 2019.

We have continued to provide work experience opportunities for Looked After / Care Leavers through our 'Teenagers2Work' programme. This takes place during school holiday periods throughout the academic year and over 30 opportunities have been created during 2018-19 so far.

There are currently 22 young people in Higher Education, studying a broad range of subjects at various institutions.

We have provided more opportunities for Care Leavers within Durham County Council through our 'Pathway for Young People', including work experience opportunities and Traineeships. For example, five Care Leavers have undertaken a Traineeship with our 'Clean and Green' team through an innovative Intermediary Labour Market Model.

We have further developed measures to support more Care Leavers into Apprenticeship opportunities with Durham County Council. In addition to guaranteeing an interview for all Care Leavers who meet the essential criteria for the role, we are trialling the ring-fencing of Apprenticeship posts specifically for Care Leavers.

#### **What further action will we take and when?**

<b>What</b>	<b>When</b>
<p>We will develop a new protocol to ensure our children and young people have priority admission to a school which best meets their needs and gives stability in their educational placement.</p> <p>The protocol will be shared at Durham Association of Primary Heads (DAPH) and Durham Association of Secondary Heads (DASH) for comment.</p> <p>We will then implement the protocol</p>	<p>June 2019</p> <p>September 2019</p>
<p>We will streamline the process for completing Personal Education Plans (PEPs) to ensure that we meet the 10 day deadline for initiation. We will also improve our quality assurance systems so that the PEPs are an effective document with an impact on progress.</p> <p>We will implement a new IT system to help achieve this</p>	<p>Start of 2019/20 academic year for children of statutory school age</p>
<p>We will improve opportunities for our children and young people to have their voice heard with regards to education. We will use evidence of best practice in the child's voice in the PEPs to inform our new process.</p> <p>In addition, we will explore further opportunities to capture the voice of the children and young people in conjunction with the CiCC and Youth Voice initiative in the Education team</p>	<p>Autumn term 2019</p>

<b>What</b>	<b>When</b>
<p>We will engage with the National Association of Virtual School Headteachers (NAVSH) and consider recent research to keep abreast of the national agenda, to ensure our knowledge is current and our training is up to date so that we can disseminate this to schools to impact positively on the educational experience of our children and young people.</p> <p>Information will be disseminated at networks and training termly</p>	<p>NAVSH national conference March each year. Local conference Autumn term 2019.</p> <p>2019/20</p>
<p>We will work with teams in Early Years and Post 16 to ensure seamless transition in and out of statutory education and support young people to achieve the best outcomes they can to support transition into Employment, Education and Training (EET).</p> <p>We will work with social care teams to establish a PEP process for Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and post 16 with a view to moving to an electronic system</p>	<p>Streamline current system 2019/20</p> <p>Introduce electronic system 2020/21</p>
<p>We will review the impact of the Pupil Premium+ grant and explore how to use it more effectively to secure additional and timely therapeutic input to support emotional and mental wellbeing and readiness to learn.</p> <p>We will undertake consultation on top slice with DAPH / DASH. Planned spend will be issued.</p>	<p>Evaluation of PP+ 2018-19 in August 2019</p> <p>June 2019</p> <p>July 2019</p>
<p>We will ensure that all Care Leavers receive sustained wrap-a-round support from a Specialist Progression Advisor, to enable them to make an effective transition into post-16 and post-18 EET.</p>	<p>Ongoing – DurhamWorks Programme receives current Youth Employment Initiative / ESF funding until July 2021.</p>
<p>We will ensure that Care Leavers have opportunities to increase their confidence and motivation, as well as develop new skills and aptitudes to prepare them for employment as part of the DurhamWorks Programme.</p>	<p>Ongoing – DurhamWorks Programme received current Youth Employment Initiative / ESF funding until July 2021.</p>
<p>We will ensure all Care Leavers receive information about post-16 progression pathways including Further Education and Apprenticeships through Careers Events.</p>	<p>February 2020</p>

<b>What</b>	<b>When</b>
As an employer, we will further develop Work Experience, Traineeship and Apprenticeship opportunities for Looked After Children and Care Leavers, by embedding our 'Durham County Council Pathway for Young People'	Ongoing
We will develop more opportunities for young people to develop skills for life, to support their transition. This includes accredited programmes such as NOCN qualifications	Ongoing
We will work to increase the number of Care Leavers who progress into Higher Education by continuing to provide sustained support to young people whilst studying at University as well as further developing links with the North East Raising Aspirations Partnership	Ongoing
<p>We will continue to celebrate the success of our Care Leavers who progress into post-16 Education, Employment and Training through our annual awards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Care Leaver awards</li> <li>• DurhamWorks awards</li> </ul>	<p>November 2019 May 2020</p>

## **Priority 8**

**The engagement and influence of children and young people is a key priority across Durham County Council.**

**We will continue to work with Looked After Children to ensure that we have adequate strategies in place to hear their voice. We will work proactively to ensure that opportunities are available to enable more young people to share their views and be involved in developing services and setting priorities.**

### **Achievements in 2018/19**

We have an annual awards evening to celebrate the achievement of our Looked After Children, younger Looked After Children and Care Leavers.

Children and young people are regularly part of the recruitment process for staff who will be working with Looked After Children and care leavers within the council.

The views of children and young people are also included in relevant recruitment packs so that candidates know what children want from their practitioners.

Children and young people are able to chair their own looked after reviews where they wish to do so.

The Children in Care Council has worked closely with the Corporate Parenting Panel and two young people have a co-opted position on the panel, and attend each meeting to share feedback from the Children in Care Council.

At the request of our young people, photographs and profiles of Regulation 44 visitor are on display in all residential settings so that the young people know who's who before they come to visit their home.

Young people requested comments boxes to be in place in residential settings in case they are not on site whilst the Regulation 44 visit is taking place, therefore still enabling them to share their views with the inspectors and visiting members.

Young people also said they would like to know who their local Councillors are, so information has been shared with young people and hosted on the Children in care Council website for easy access.

Members of the Children in Care Council deliver training on a regular basis to potential foster carers and adopters as part of their assessment training. The sessions have received great feedback and will be included as part of the move towards a regional adoption agency.

All of Durham County Council's looked after services and their nine residential homes have retained the Investing in Children Membership Award™, and each were able to clearly demonstrate the ways in which children and young people had a voice and evidence the changes that had been made as a result.

Plans are in place to roll out our 'Digital Voice' project across all teams for both new and experienced staff to ensure they are sighted on the voice of the child.

Plans are in place to develop DVDs for prospective adopters which include the voice of young people whose brothers and sisters have been adopted. This is a regional project to fit with the plans for the regionalisation of adoption services by 2020.

A leaflet has been developed by our children and young people which will be given to other young people when they are coming into care, so that they know what to expect.

Work is taking place across Durham County Council to ensure we listen to the voice of children and young people, include this in service developments and design, and provide feedback to the young people on what decisions have been made as a result of their involvement.

**What further action will we take and when?**

<b>What</b>	<b>When</b>
Durham County Council engagement approach to be rolled out across the council	Ongoing
<p>We will present an annual update to Cabinet on the key themes and outcomes from our universal engagement mechanisms, including feedback from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Area Action Partnership priority surveys</li> <li>• Student Voice survey</li> <li>• Investing in Children membership awards</li> </ul>	July 2019
<p>We will roll out a modular approach for engagement within the following three areas of Children and Young People's Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children's Social Care</li> <li>• Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children</li> <li>• Education and Skills</li> </ul> <p>The modular approach will capture key themes from the engagement taking place within each service area. This will be fed into the performance clinics alongside performance data. Based on the signs of safety model, this approach will ensure that strategic leads are sighted on the key themes from engagement within their service, and will be able to agree necessary actions and monitor outcomes. This approach will ensure that feedback is provided to service users as appropriate.</p>	Ongoing

<b>What</b>	<b>When</b>
<p>Moving forward, we will explore the following engagement mechanisms, and consider implementation in County Durham:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth Mayor</li> <li>• Countywide Youth Forum/Youth Council</li> <li>• UK Youth Parliament representation</li> <li>• Area Action Partnership youth forums</li> <li>• UNICEF Child Friendly Communities status</li> <li>• Countywide awards for children and young people</li> <li>• Additional age relevant mechanisms for engagement</li> </ul>	<p>Autumn 2019</p>