

Care Leavers Strategy

2019 – 2023

[Updated January 2021]

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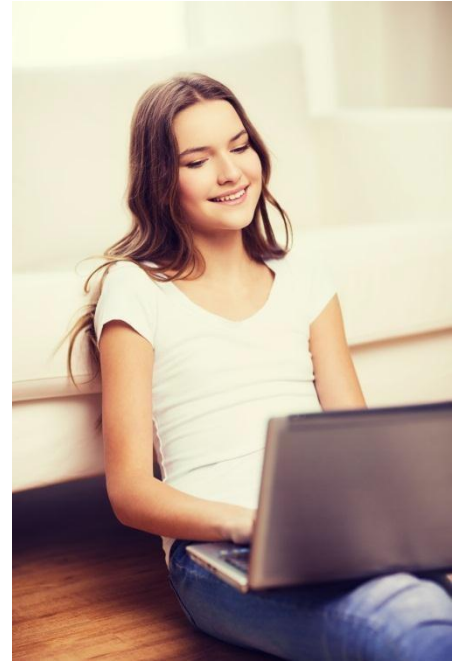
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1. Introduction

As Corporate Parents we want to give Care Leavers every opportunity to be happy, healthy and safe and to achieve their full potential. It is important that their transition into adulthood is positive and that all young people have the necessary life-skills, confidence and experience to enable them to thrive.

The responsibility for meeting the needs of Care Leavers requires an integrated multi-agency approach involving the Young People's Service within Children's Services, the County Council as a whole, and our partners.

This Strategy is supported by a Care Leavers Action Plan (2020/21) which outlines how the priorities within this document will be delivered.



2. Definition of 'Care Leaver'

The term 'care leaver', as defined in the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, refers to eligible, relevant and former relevant children:

- **Eligible** children are those young people aged 16-17 who are still in care and have been 'looked after' for a total of 13 weeks from the age of 14 and including their 16th birthday;
- **Relevant** children are those young people aged 16 and 17 who have already left care, and who were 'looked after' for at least 13 weeks from the age of 14 and have been 'looked after' at some time while they were 16 or 17;
- **Former relevant** children are those young people aged 18, 19 or 20 who have been eligible and/or relevant.

A Care Leaver can also be considered as a '**qualifying**' care leaver. This applies to young people who:

- Left care after they had turned 16, but who are not 'eligible' or 'relevant' because they were not looked after for 13 weeks.

- Were not looked after on their 16th birthday, but lived in residential education or a mental health establishment, or in private fostering or Special Guardianship.

For this category of care leaver, local authority help is discretionary, but can include advice, assistance, befriending, help with education and training costs and the provision of accommodation during college/university vacations.

3. Purpose

This Strategy reflects a 'whole' system integrated approach to support Care Leavers. It provides a framework for the Council, elected members, officers and partners to fulfil our duties and responsibilities as Corporate Parents of Care Leavers.

The document outlines what we have achieved and areas that we would like to develop further.

The successful implementation of this strategy will result in the following benefits:

- Improved health and well-being of our Care Leavers;
- Emotional resilience;
- Improved placement stability, safety and quality;
- More opportunities and improved attainment at school, college and university for our young people;
- Young people leaving care on an educational or work route that meets their ambitions;
- Resources being used to maximise outcomes

4. National Context and Guidance

In 2018/19, 11,140 young people left care in England. Of these 1,530 were aged 17 and 9,610 were 18.

Young people leaving care tend to leave home at a much younger age and have more abrupt transitions to adulthood than their peers.

Under the Government's Strategy for Care Leavers, 'Keep On Caring; Supporting Young People from Care to Independence' published July 2016, the entitlement of care leavers was extended, enabling young people to access support from a local authority Personal Adviser until the age of 25..

Care leavers should expect the same level of care and support that other young people receive from their parent(s). This strategy is based on the principles of good corporate parenting, in line with the government's commitment to remove some of the practical barriers that care leavers face as they progress into adulthood.

National Guidance on the Local Offer

The 2016 'Keep On Caring; Supporting Young People from Care to Independence' strategy also included the development of the Local Offer to care leavers, which was placed on a statutory footing by the Children and Social Work Act 2017. This requires local authorities to publish their information about the services it offers to care leavers which may assist them in preparing for adulthood and independent living. These services may include health and wellbeing, education and training, employment, accommodation, and participation in society.

The guidance on the Care Leavers Local Offer, issued February 2018, states that local authorities should provide information about all the services and support that is available to care leavers, including information about their statutory entitlements, as well as any discretionary support that a local authority chooses to provide.

5. Durham's Vision and Local Context

The County Durham Vision for 2035 includes the aspirations that:

'Our young people will achieve their full potential by having access to good quality education and training to prepare them for employment'

And:

'Our children and young people will have the best start in life and enjoy good health and emotional wellbeing'

Our vision for the County's children and young people is:

'County Durham will be a great place for children and young people to grow up in and for Durham to be a place where all children are healthy, happy, safe and achieving their potential.'

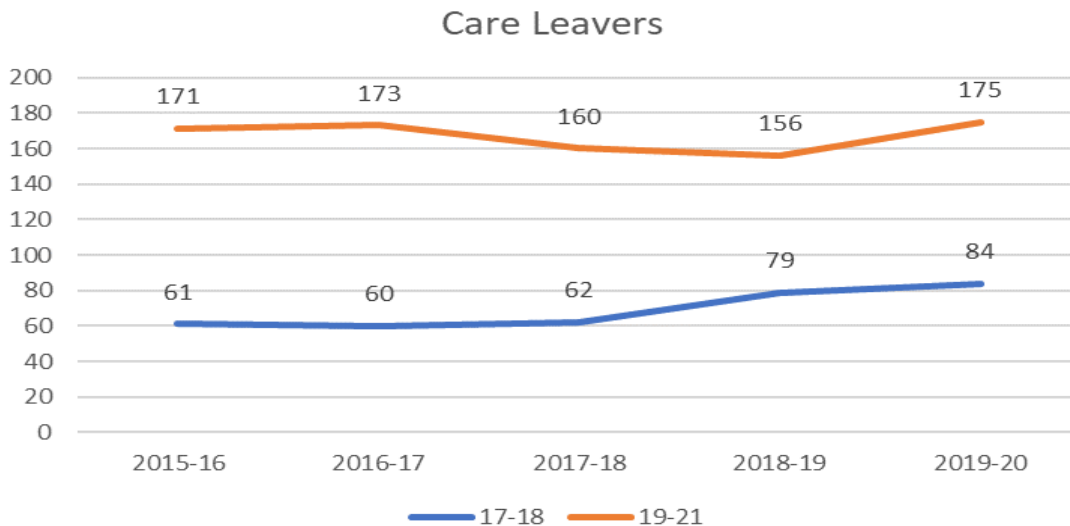
In line with these visions, our aspiration for our care leavers is:

“All care leavers live in suitable and appropriate accommodation, they are well supported and the service has the same aspirations for them as we would our own children to ensure they realise their potential”

Local Context

In the last 5 years Durham has seen an increase in the number of care leavers that it supports aged 17-18 and in the last year also an increase in those aged 19-21, following a decrease over the last 2 years. This is reflected in Graph 1. NB: The Department for Education amended the way care leaver figures were collated and reported in 2016.

Graph 1 – Care Leaver Figures (Updated October 2020)



In Durham, when a looked after young person reaches the age of 15, the Young People’s Service works closely with the Looked After Team to facilitate the transfer of the young person to a social worker within the Young People’s Service. The role of the YPS social worker is to become involved in the young person’s pathway plan and providing ongoing support to develop independent living skills.

When a young person reaches the age of 18 they are assigned a Personal Advisor, unless the young person is a young parent or has high level complex needs, in which situation their social worker will remain involved. The Personal Advisor will support the young person in their life choices and providing practical support.

Durham’s Performance in relation to Care Leavers:

- In 2019-20, 65% of our Care Leavers aged 17-18 were in education, employment and training (EET), in comparison to 64% in England, 63% in our Statistical Neighbours and 63% in the North East (2018-19).
- In 2019-20, 54% of our Care Leavers aged 19-21 were in education, employment and training (EET), in comparison to 52% in England, 52% in our Statistical Neighbours and 50% in the North East (2018-19). This includes an increase in the proportion in higher education to 9% which is also higher than comparators.
- In 2019-20, 90% of our Care Leavers aged 17-18 were in suitable accommodation, in comparison to 88% in England, 91% in our Statistical Neighbours and 93% in the North East (2018-19).
- In 2019-20, 83% of our Care Leavers aged 19-21 were in suitable accommodation, compared to 85% in England, 87% in our Statistical Neighbours and 90% in the North East (2018-19).

Educational attainment on leaving care

As the attainment of our care leavers at Key Stage 4 is an important determinant of outcomes throughout life, every effort is made to maximise their attainment.

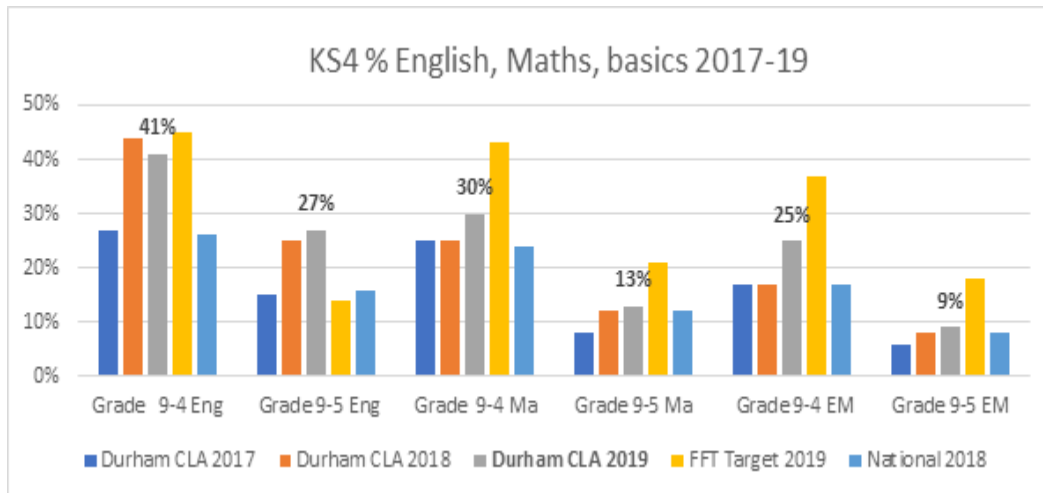
In 2019 there was further improvement in attainment at KS4 with a positive 3-year trend in all measures apart from English at Grade 9-4, where results showed a slight dip (3%, equivalent to 2 pupils). This followed a 17% increase the previous year

The Virtual School had shared their concerns about the 2018 maths outcomes with schools, and provided maths tutors for many of the cohort, and as a result this subject shows signs of improvement. The Virtual School was able to offer tutoring in a range of subjects in 2019, held revision sessions and worked with therapeutic services for those young people who were very anxious about exams. 4 young people with identified needs achieved grade 4+ in English, 5 achieved this in maths, and 3 achieved both, a real achievement. There are still gaps with all Durham children, but it is expected that these results will be above the national averages for children in care when comparative data is available.

The 3-year increase at 9-5 is a result of targeting higher grades and instilling higher expectations. In 2019 our young people deserve

congratulations for achieving 4 grade 7s and 1 grade 9 between them in English and Maths

However outcomes for our children continue to be below the targets provided to schools by the Fisher Family Trust (FFT), in line with the national trend. (FFT is a charitable organisation who use data about specific children to produce predicted grades. Schools can then use as a benchmark to monitor a child's performance.)



6. Our Promise

Children and young people who are looked after have the right to the same outcomes as every child in County Durham – to ensure that children and young people are kept safe from harm and are enabled to 'believe, achieve and succeed'.

Our 'promise' to all children and young people in care and care leavers is:

- To treat you with respect and as an individual;
- To help find you the best available home where you feel safe, cared about and treated well for as long as you need
- To help you stay in touch with family and friends like other young people not in care where it is safe and appropriate;
- To take what you say seriously by listening to you and trying to act on what you say;

- That you will have a Social Worker who will get to know you well and who will keep in contact and listen to what you say;
- To really listen to things you would like to change about the care system to make your daily life better where there are problems;
- To work in an open and honest way and share any information or changes with you;
- To involve you in any decisions, plans and changes that affect you and your future and your Social Worker, Independent Reviewing Officer, carers and other people who support you will make sure that this happens;
- To make sure we offer you the opportunities, guidance and support needed in placement, in education, your health and all other areas of life;
- To help you be the best that you possible can at school, college, training and employment;
- To give you all the support and help you need to make a success of moving on from being cared for to living an independent adult life;
- To work together and support you during every transition in your life while you are looked after, for example during placement moves, when you are leaving care and similar situations.



7. Corporate Parenting and Governance

The Corporate Parenting Panel in Durham recognise that they have a critical role in both setting the strategic direction of the council's services and in determining policy priorities. The Corporate Parenting Action Plan sets out 3 priority areas (see appendix 2). These are:

- Employment, education and training (EET);
- Care Leavers; and
- Placement Stability

We will:

“Continue to be excellent parents for care leavers and wish to see every care leaver have the very best experience and chances in life, as any good parent would expect”

8. Strategic Priorities

In 2019 the key strategic priorities for the 3 years 2020 to 2023 were refreshed. These are in line with the priorities outlined in the National Care Leaver Strategy, 'Keep On Caring; Supporting Young People from Care to Independence', 2016.

(i) Physical Health and Mental Health

Children often enter the care system with a poorer level of physical and mental health than their peers, and their longer-term outcomes remain worse.

Young people making the transition to adulthood may have continuing health needs that require ongoing treatment. The Department of Education Statutory Guidance – Promoting the health and wellbeing of looked-after children (2015) states that local authorities should ensure that there are effective plans in place to enable looked after children aged 16 to 17 to make a smooth transition to adulthood, and that they are able to continue to obtain the health advice and services they need.

We will

- *Refocus the work of the Pre-Birth team to provide assessment and intervention to care leavers who are becoming parents and require that level of support, to maximise their opportunities for successful parenting*

We will continue to:

- *Support the emotional wellbeing of care leavers so they are able to reach their full potential. Ensure that each Looked After Child and Care Leaver has an up to date statutory health assessment and a health plan that outlines how their physical and emotional health needs will be met. These will be of high quality and will be timely.*
- *Make sure that health plans include personal and family health histories in order to enhance the value of health plans and facilitate better awareness of current and future health needs, including when children return home.*
- *Ensure that all Care Leavers have access to and understand their full health history by collating a 'Health Passport' with their health history recorded. They will also have access to all key documents such as birth certificate, passport, national insurance number and NHS number.*
- *Ensure that Care Leavers have advice on health matters prior to moving onto independence or semi-independence and have ongoing support. This will provide knowledge of their health history so that Care Leavers are empowered to manage their own health needs.*
- *Work collaboratively with Health partners to ensure young people and their personal advisors are aware of how to meet their health needs during the transition to adulthood and beyond?*
- *Ensure that personal advisors have access to information and training about how to promote physical and mental health.*



- *Ensure that a young person's health plan and pathway plan enables looked after children and care leavers to understand how they can promote their own health in the future by adopting healthy lifestyle choices e.g. diet, substance misuse, risk taking behaviours and emotional well-being, pregnancy, keeping safe, sexual health and the benefits of sport and exercise.*
- *Ensure that commissioning arrangements for health provision addresses inequality for care leavers and ensure they are a priority group.*
- *Continue to provide the Full Circle Service which is joint-funded with CAMHS that provides services to support and promote the emotional and psychological wellbeing of looked after children and young people, care leavers and their carers.*

We will:

- *Explore potential options for extending referral criteria for emotional and mental health services to include access for all Looked After Children and Care Leavers. This will prioritise short term placements, new placements, placements which may be at risk of breakdown and care leavers. The difficulties faced by Care Leavers in receiving mental health services was highlighted by young people in the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategic Needs assessment.*
Full Circle now works in a trauma-informed way with 18 to 21 year olds.
- *Develop policy and guidance so that all children, young people and care leavers can have access to support and specialist services to help them understand their past and reasons why they became looked after e.g. through life-story work, revisited at key stages and as they grow up. There is now a Life Story Work Co-ordinator in place, to maximise the opportunities for life story work being, and an Access to Records Officer post has recently been recruited to. We will develop awareness raising for the new Access to Records Officer and our YPAs on proportionate, appropriate and sensitive access to records, to improve outcomes for care leavers.*

(ii) Housing and Staying Put

Care Leavers are a vulnerable group of young adults who have particular needs in relation to housing and homelessness. Nationally around a quarter of people living on the streets have a background in care.

Securing better placement stability and increased choice to meet a variety of needs will enable young people to stay safe. Young people are discouraged from leaving their final placement until they are ready to manage on their own, with ongoing support as required.

We aim to secure placement stability through increased placement choice and to provide more tailored services to those young people with the most complex needs where they are unable to live in traditional care arrangements e.g. Children's Homes.

This continues to be supported by our 'Staying Put Policy', which was implemented in 2014, enabling young people to leave stable and secure homes when they are ready and able to make the transition to independence. It also helps young people enter adult life with the same opportunities and life prospects as their peers.

Staying Put enables care leavers to continue living with their former foster carers when they reach the age of 18. This is an 'arrangement' whereby a young person, who when they became 18 was in law an 'eligible child' placed with a foster carer, continues to live with that person. This arrangement can continue until the young person becomes 21. A young person who enters into a Staying Put arrangement is likely to view this as continuation of fostering and to refer to the person providing the care as their foster carer, in much the same way. Similarly, Staying Put carers will often view the arrangement as just an extension of fostering.

If a young person cannot stay within the family network or does not feel that this option is appropriate to them, our Young People's Service is able to offer tailored accommodation options that provides a pathway between care and independence. When it is appropriate for a young person to return home, we will support the young person to do this, through a package of support.

At the end of 2019/20, there were 18 18-20 year olds who were in a 'staying put' arrangement with their former foster carer. We also have an additional 18 young people living in Supported Lodgings 'staying put' with former carers.

In addition to the use of Staying Put, the Young People's Service, in conjunction with Residential Services, is developing a Staying Close policy to enable young people to continue receive support from the staff they know; once they leave residential care provision within County Durham.

We will continue to:

- *Take appropriate steps to increase the number of Care Leavers in suitable and appropriate accommodation.*
- *Support Care Leavers to move into a Staying Put arrangement with their carer(s) if this is what the young person and carer wants.*

- *Develop a Staying Close policy that will enable Care Leavers to continue to access support from staff within residential services*
- *Implement and monitor the use of an Independent Living Skills booklet for young people; in order to assist in their preparation for Independence*
- *Revise and re-develop the NOCN Accredited qualification across the service for young people who wish to participate in this nationally accredited qualification around developing independent living skills*
- *Provide a range of support and different types of semi-independent living accommodation which supports different levels of independence and transitions to adulthood and which meets the needs of those young people with the most complex needs.*
- *Commission a range of placements to meet the needs of young people who have come through the care system and are moving towards independence, including those young people who come into care as 16 or 17 year old Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers.*
- *Increase and improve the capacity for Supported Lodgings for the 16-19 year old group. This will provide accommodation and support to young people who cannot 'Stay Put' or who wish to move. This will include provision of placements for vulnerable young people and young people with complex needs/behaviours that preclude them from mainstream supported accommodation options within County Durham.*
- *Apply a zero tolerance approach to the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for young people involved with our service. Only in an extreme emergency will bed and breakfast accommodation be used and for a maximum of 2 days in exceptional circumstances.*
- *To continue to work with the Housing Solutions Service to ensure young people access appropriate accommodation should they become homeless; ensuring CLASP meetings are held and the housing support plan devised under the remit of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 meets the needs of the young person.*

We will:

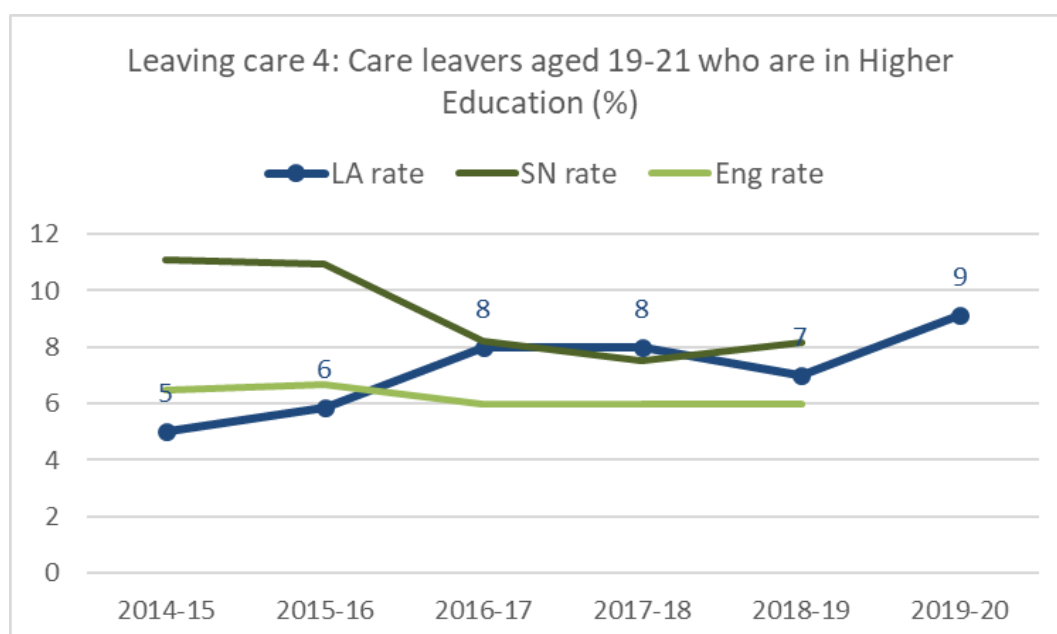
- *Develop a 'no eviction policy' within County Durham, which will result in improved placement stability.*
- *Continue to work with Housing colleagues to develop a range of accommodation options for care leavers, including utilising the Durham Lettings Agency.*

- *As part of our Sufficiency Duty, we will work with commissioners to develop a wider variety of services to meet the needs of those young people with the more complex needs.*
- *The revised and updated Sufficiency Strategy will include the provision of supported accommodation for care leavers*
- *Hedley House Supported Living Accommodation opened in 2019, housing 12 young people. We will explore the possibility of extending the current offer*

(iii) Education and Attainment

There continues to remain a gap between the educational achievements of care leavers and their peers. In 2019-20, 9% of Durham’s former relevant young people were in higher education, compared with 5% in 2014-15. As of October 2020 we have 30 young people in higher education. This is stronger performance than that of our comparators in 2018-19.

It is anticipated that these figures will continue to rise in forthcoming years, as work is undertaken with young people to raise their aspirations and improvements in educational attainment are progressed in Key Stage 4.



It is a priority that care leavers receive the support they need from schools, colleges, universities and local authorities to maximise their educational attainment and employment opportunities.

Young people aged 16-19 are currently supported to access a bursary via college to assist in their attendance at college.



We will continue to:

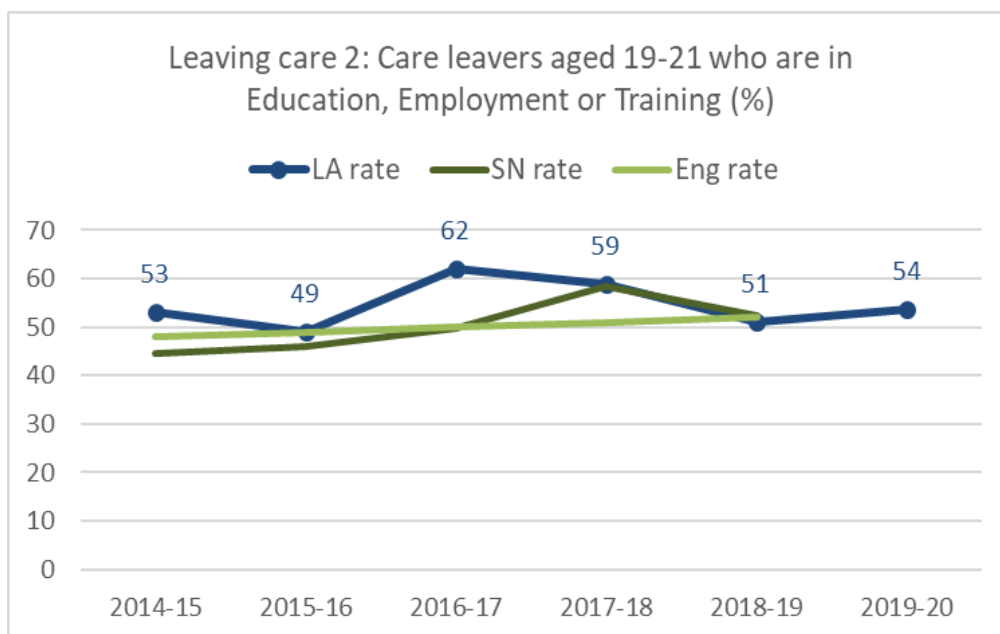
- *Ensure that Personal Advisors engage with future care leavers from Year 9.*
- *In line with Section 23 of the Children's Act 1989, ensure that young people eligible for leaving care services resume a programme of education or training after the age of 21.*
- *Provide care leavers with a Personal Advisor up to the age of 25, in line with Keep On Caring guidance; subject to the wishes of the young person.*
- *Encourage care leavers to attend further and higher education and give them specialist advice and support and careers advice when applying for further education or higher education where this meets their aspirations. (We currently have 30 young people in higher education).*
- *Provide information and advice on apprenticeships where this would be the most appropriate pathway.*
- *Support young people fully in their transition to higher education or further education, employment and training. The future life-chance of Care Leavers are dramatically improved if they can be supported effectively.*
- *Ensure that all partners are aware of a young person's potential from the end of Year 9 to enable them to receive the right support in a timely manner.*

- *Have a post 16 PEP in place for all Year 11's in line with Improving Progression legislation.*
- *Promote educational achievement for care leavers through the Virtual School head and ensure that a quality PEP is in place.*
- *Ensure that foster carers, social workers and teachers will all have high aspirations for young people and will work in partnership together having an active role in supporting transition into education, employment and training.*
- *Increase the proportion of young people aged 16 who achieve grade 5 and above in English and Maths and the Basics measure and improve their progress and grades across all subjects.*

(iv) Employment & Training

Employment and training not only provide the best route out of poverty, it also delivers positive change for individuals and for communities across County Durham. Having a job or accessing appropriate training provides structure, a sense of purpose, progress, achievement, encourages self- confidence and personal responsibility for young people who are Care Leavers. It is also important to note that young people have a statutory duty to participate in education, employment or training until at least their 18th birthday.

Through targeted work within the Young People's Service and through the partnership working with DurhamWorks, the number of young people aged 19-21 engaged in EET is 54%. This is above the England average of 50% and statistical neighbour rates of 52% for 2018-9.



The proportion of care leavers aged 17-18 engaged in EET is 65%, this is also higher than the England average of 64% and statistical neighbour average of 63% for 2018-19. Data from the Local Authority's Client Caseload Information System shows that the proportion of Care Leavers aged 16 and above participating in education, employment and training has increased across the previous three years, whilst the proportion of Care Leavers who are NEET has declined.

Participation in Education, Employment and Training of Care Leavers aged 16 +

	March 2018 %	March 2019 %	March 2020 %
Education	44.2	45.8	46.8
Employment	11.6	10.8	10.2
Training	5.1	6.6	5.7
Re-engagement Activities	2.3	3.3	10.2
Total EET	63.3	66.5	72.8
NEET	31.6	29.2	23.4

The Local Authority undertakes a number of actions to support Care Leavers into sustained education, employment and training. These include:

- The offer of individual careers guidance with a Specialist Progression Advisor to support transition.

- The opportunity to undertake work experience in occupational areas of interest through the Teenagers to Work Programme. (Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 Teenagers to Work could not operate during the summer of 2020)
- The opportunity to meet and discuss progression plans with a variety of learning providers at an annual Careers Event specifically for Care Leavers.
- Traineeships
- Apprenticeships – including posts within the Local Authority that are specifically ring-fenced for Care Leavers.
- Wrap-a-round support for Care Leavers who are NEET through the DurhamWorks Programme.

We will:

- Enhance the quality of pathway planning in relation to education, employment and training by ensuring that the Young People’s Service has a greater awareness of careers information, advice and guidance.
- Ensure that Care Leavers receive support with their progression into post-16 education, employment and training through the new DurhamWorks Programme for Schools.
- Ensure that Care Leavers who have learning, physical and mental health barriers to employment are supported through the new DurhamEnable Programme.
- Ensure that Care Leavers whose employment prospects have been adversely affected by COVID-19 have access to the range of support available to young people, including Kickstart, Intensive Support, as well as Employment and Skills Hubs.
- Ensure that Care Leavers receive their entitlement of £1,000 when securing an Apprenticeship and that employers are aware of financial incentives for employing young people as Apprentices, including incentives introduced as part of the Government’s Action Plan for Jobs in response to COVID-19.
- Enhance opportunities for Care Leavers within the Local Authority, including sessional employment.
- Enhance the position of Care Leavers within the Local Authority’s recruitment process through the inclusion of an Equal Opportunities statement within corporate policy.

(v) Access to ongoing advice and support

Care leavers require support and guidance before and after they turn 18. The Government's 'Keep on Caring: Supporting Young People from Care to Independence', published in July 2016, outlined the measures local authorities should undertake to ensure that young people are better prepared and supported to live independently. The key points identified were:



- setting out in law for the first time what it means for a local authority to be a good corporate parent;
- creating a new care leaver covenant; introducing a new legal duty on local authorities to consult on, and publish information about, services for care leavers; and
- extending existing entitlements so that all care leavers will be able to access support from a local authority Personal Adviser to age 25.

As an authority we have signed up to the Care Leaver Charter which is a set of principles that capture the high aspirations we wish for our young people who are preparing to leave care.

We will:

- *Update the format for our Pathway Plans in consultation with young people, making sure that every Pathway Plan has a clear overall objective, and timely, measurable, actions*

We will continue to:

- *Provide a range of services to meet the needs of older Looked After Children aged 16 to 25 through our Young People's Service.*
- *Ensure all that Providers support young people with transition to independence in line with the young person's pathway plan e.g. providing guidance and support to find permanent housing, accessing education, employment and training, practical living skills such as financial management, budgeting and claiming benefits.*

- *Encourage care leavers to access advice and support from independent advocates when required and to continue accessing Independent Visitors until they no longer feel the need to.*
- *Offer advice and support care leavers who are pregnant or who are young parents through the Young People's Service. Additional support will be offered through the Vulnerable Parents Pathway.*
- *Make sure that Care Leavers know how to make a complaint if they need to.*

We will

- *Develop the new Drop in Centre/Hub which is specifically for care leavers. This will offer facilities for group work, support from YPS welfare rights, health , therapeutic services and career guidance.*
- *Continue to ensure that we stay in touch with all care leavers aged from 16 to 25*

The Local Offer

In line with statutory guidance from Government, we have developed a Local Offer for young people leaving care and have established website pages and a booklet for young people, outlining the support they can expect to receive from the Young People's Service, the Council and its partner agencies and any entitlements they have to services and support.

Through the Local Offer, young people will be supported to access advice and guidance from the Young People's Service and will receive specific advice around:

- Support for you
- Where I can live
- Money
- Looking After yourself including physical and emotional health and wellbeing
- Education, Employment and Training

As care leavers, young people are also entitled to the following:

- up to £2,000 to set up home
- a discount on council tax with the possibility of not having to pay any at all
- get £2,000 to help with going to university
- get £1,200 to help with attending sixth form or college
- get £500 towards driving lessons

- get a Freedom Card which is a leisure and activity pass

(vi) Financial Assistance

Having timely financial help and support is crucial when you do not have the support of family to fall back on. Care leavers can often find it difficult to navigate services and work out what financial support they are entitled to. As a local authority we are committed to ensuring that care leavers are adequately supported financially in their transition from care to adulthood to enable young people leaving care to have the same opportunities to fulfil their potential as their peers.

We will continue to:

- *Offer advice and guidance to Care Leavers claiming Universal Credit, through specialist advice from the Welfare Rights Officer based in the Young People's Service*
- *Provide information to Care Leavers so they understand how to access support from Durham's assigned DWP worker. DWP will ensure that Care Leavers claiming Universal Credit, who need help to manage their money and pay bills, have access to personal budgeting support.*
- *Provide care leavers with a Higher Education Bursary of £2,000 if they are attending university.*
- *Provide Welfare Assistance Grant (WAG) of up to £2,000.*
- *Provide a 'Setting Up Home Allowance' of up to £2,000, where Care Leavers are not eligible for WAG.*
- *In line with DfE guidance, support care leavers aged 16-19 attending a Further Education course to access a £1,200 Further Education Bursary (Educational Maintenance Allowance replacement).*
- *Ensure that care leavers have an understanding of their rights and benefit entitlements.*

This will result in care leavers receiving financial support and guidance, so that they are able to manage their income and reduce the risks of falling into debt. The Education Bursaries will continue to support care leavers attending further and higher education.

(vii) Justice System

We recognise that young adults who have been in care can be particularly vulnerable as they transition into adulthood, particularly if they are in the criminal justice system. They can also be a particularly vulnerable group that are at risk of being criminally exploited. Care leavers can also be particularly vulnerable to becoming a victim of crime, including in some cases falling victim to grooming and exploitation online or offline.

We will;

- Implement the use of the ClearCut Communication Tool across the Young People' Service to enhance communication with children and young people

We will continue to:

- *Ensure that all previously and current looked after children and young people in custody are recorded on the prison system as being a care leaver.*
- *Ensure that they receive the appropriate support and services from probation, Children and Adult Services, Youth Offending Service and the National Offenders Management Service upon release from custody.*
- *All looked after children and young people upon release from custody will have a release plan and a review of their pathway plan in partnership with relevant agencies.*
- *Introduce restorative approaches to reduce the likelihood of young person re-offending.*



9. Conclusion

This strategy sets out how we will deliver our commitment to Care Leavers and their families over the next year. We recognise the progress that we have made as an authority and the ongoing improvement that is required, which will make a difference to the lives of our care leavers.

Delivering this strategy requires an integrated and sustained effort across the Children and Young People's Service, other County Council departments and partner agencies, which will continue to improve service standards and everyday practice, and to be able to meet the challenges that the current economic climate brings.

This Strategy will be refreshed in November 2021 and an update against the key priorities within this document will be provided.

APPENDIX 1: Current number of care leavers open to the Young People's Service

Table 1: Care leavers open to the Young People's Service, as of 6th October 2020

	'Monitoring'	Open	TOTAL
Young People Services Team 1			
Number of Care leavers	41	61	102
Young People Services Team 2			
Number of Care leavers	52	103	155
Young People Services Team 3			
Number of Care leavers	40	84	124
TOTAL	133	248	381

- 'Monitoring' relates to care leavers who choose not to have active involvement with the service, but can access support from the Young People's Service at any time. The service has a responsibility to keep in contact with these young people at intervals of no less than twice a year. If a young person requires any additional support, they will be allocated a Young Peoples Advisor.

APPENDIX 2: Care Leavers Action Plan 2021