

Durham County Council Strategy for Children in Care and Care Leavers

January 2022-December 2024



Our Vision

- We will only bring children into care when it cannot be made safe for them to stay at home.
- We will work with each child's network to try and keep every child within their network.
- We will support all adults who care for children to do so safely.
- We want all children to live in safe homely and comfortable homes.
- We want all children to be able to build enduring relationships with consistent adults.
- We want to walk alongside children who are unable to stay living at home to stop them having to tell their story over and over.
- We want all children to achieve their best in education, and will work with them and their school, college or workplace to support this.



Children of Durham



- We will always try to provide warm and loving care to children and young people.
- We will work with each child in care and care leaver to explore their potential and support them to continue to develop skills.
- We will participate in research with Care Leavers Transition from Care (CCTC) research with Reading university and the network community that supports that research.
- We will hold annual celebration events for children in care and care leavers.

We will challenge discrimination towards any child in care or a care leaver.

Relationships

- We will make sure that all policies, and processes will consider the need to support enduring positive relationships with children in care and care leavers.
- This will include the policies for foster carers and children's home staff as well as for children's social workers.
- We will support our staff to understand the impact of relationship-based working with dedicated training, and reflective supervision to support their capacity to build and sustain meaningful relationships with children in our care and care leavers.



Education Employment and Training



- All children and young people in Durham will have a Personal Education Plan.
- All children and young people in Durham will be supported to remain in education to fulfil their personal ambitions
- Young People in Durham will be supported into employment with dedicated support from Durham Works

Local Offer to Care leavers



- We will provide a dedicated personal assistant to all young people who are eligible for leaving care services.
- We will have clear mechanisms for determining leaving care status and will explain this to care leavers and their families.
- We are committed to supporting care leavers to engage in education and employment.
- We respect the right of all care experienced people to retain the positive relationships they have established throughout their lives and accept that there may be periods of time when care leavers choose to have no communication with us, and times in their lives when they wish to do so.
- We encourage all care leavers to share their experiences, achievements, and challenges with the people they have the most positive relationships with regardless of work role.
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- We retain relationships with children and young people for as long as the young person wants to. While the Local Authority is not resourced to provide financial support to care leavers over 25, we always provide emotional support and sign posting to services regardless of age.
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Young People's Voices

- Commitment to co-production of all service developments
- Engagement with children in care planning.
- Use of advocacy on an individual and collective level to inform service developments.
- Acceptance of a degree of risk taking in young people's choices.
- Avoidance of a one size fits all model.
- Explaining when we can't do what young people want.



Key Priorities

- Establishing a young person's scrutiny committee.
- Using the research from the research project.
- Identify a new Hub location and open a hub.
- Every care leaver offered safe affordable housing.
- Promote education employment and training.

