

April  
2017

March  
2018

# Annual Report

County Durham Corporate  
Parenting Panel

Durham  
County Council



Cllr Peter Brookes

## What is a Corporate Parent?

If a young person can't stay at home safely, it is up to the council to provide the care, support and security that they need.

This isn't just up to the Corporate Parenting Panel, everyone should be looking out for our children and young people, and every Councillor and council employee has a role to play as the eyes and ears of the community.

Being a corporate parent means doing whatever we can to support young people in our care and care leavers, to help them to achieve their full potential and to have the best possible outcomes, including:

- Progress in school
- Education, Employment and training opportunities
- Physical, Mental Health and wellbeing
- Suitable accommodation
- Access to services and support
- Preparation for you leaving care

## Message from the Chair!

It gives us great pleasure to introduce the County Durham Corporate Parenting Panel Annual report for 2017/18.

As corporate parents, it is our responsibility to make sure that the council is meeting its duties towards children in care and care leavers.

## The role of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

We have a responsibility to act for the children and young people in our care, as a parent would for their own child, and to ask:

- ¥ If this were my child would it be good enough for them?
- ¥ If I were that child would it have been good enough for me?
- ¥ How could I make it even better?

We have come a long way in supporting the young people in our care, but we still have a way to go to ensure they are given every opportunity to achieve their full potential.

We would like to thank everyone involved for their hard work and commitment over the past year in improving outcomes for our young people, and look forward to influencing more positive change as we move forward.





# Corporate Parenting Panel

*The Corporate Parenting Panel is a group that is part of the council which is called a committee. It has 21 Councillors as well as council officers.*

## DID YOU KNOW!

There are also six other members which includes three school representatives and two representatives from other agencies and a young person.



## The Corporate Parent Panel has to:

1. Make sure the Council acts as a good corporate parent to children and young people in care and care leavers, including:
  - Young people in residential care
  - Children and young people in foster care
  - Children placed for adoption
  - Children placed at home under care planning, placement and case review regulations
  - Young people who are living in supported lodgings
  - Young people in secure homes
  - Young people in custody
2. Engage and listen to the views of children, young people in their care, and their carers.
3. Work in partnership with other agencies to make improvements for our children and young people in care.
4. Oversee the Virtual School for looked after children and young people.
5. Oversee Aycliffe Secure Services.

## Why Children are in Care?

**Children can be in care in a range of different settings including foster care, children's homes, and secure homes, with the council acting as corporate parent to all of them.**

## What can the Corporate Parenting Panel do for me?

Let me know how to contact/meet you

Listen to my views

Give me advice

Help with my benefits

Help me to understand and fill in forms

Feedback to the CPP on my behalf

Help me access food banks

Listen to me

## DCC Promise



Young People have been involved in supporting the council with the creation of the promise. This year the CICC have made changes to the promise to make it even more child friendly.

1. To treat you with respect and to remember that everyone is different.
2. To help find the best home we can for you. It will be where you feel safe, cared about and treated well.
3. To help you stay in touch with family and friends if it is ok to do so.
4. To listen carefully to you and try to act on what you say.
5. That your social worker will get to know you well. They will keep in touch with you and listen to what you say.
6. To really listen to things you would like to change about being looked after.
7. To be honest with you. We will share information and tell you about any changes.
8. To involve you in any decisions, plans or changes that affect you or your future.
9. To give you any help or support that you need.
10. To help you be the best that you can be at school, college, training and work.
11. To give you help and support when needed to move from care to adult life.
12. To work together and support you during every change in your life. For example moving home or leaving care.

**“Children and Young People will regularly review this promise to check the council is keeping its promise!”**



investing in children

The CCIC is supported by Investing in Children CIC, a children's rights organisation working in partnership with Durham County Council's 'Children's Care' service.

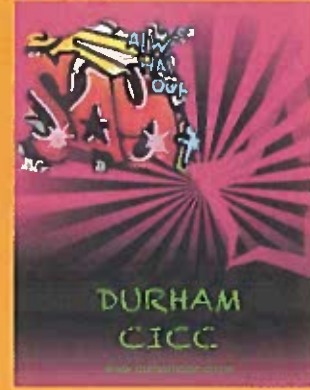


What makes a Perfect Corporate Parent!



# Durham Children in Care Council

All children and young people that are looked after in County Durham are automatically members of the CICC (Children in Care Council) and can take part in discussions and issues raised.



WORKING TOGETHER

CiCC



CPP

## What Young people wanted ...?

More children and young people's involvement in Corporate Parent Panel meetings and vice versa.

## What has changed ...

The CiCC continues to work closely with the Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP) at Durham County Council. Every month, a member of staff from Investing in Children attends the panel along with the CICC Member to give an update and raise any issues from children and young people. Monthly feedback is now a standard item on all the agendas.

Every six months Corporate Parents attend a session ran by the CiCC. In session one, members of both the CiCC and CPP discussed and identified how they can work more closely together, promote the image of looked after children in the media more positively and identified what makes a perfect corporate parent. At the end of the session each Corporate Parent made a promise of what they are going to help change.

In the second session, two members of the CiCC ran a training session for 15 Corporate Parent Members with the aim to understand, and be able to put in place the ways Corporate Parents can talk to and gather views from looked after children and young people and help make changes as a result.

## #CareDay18

On the 16th February Durham County Council and Durham CICC celebrated National Care Day. Over 50 people attended the event and Looked After Children and Young People spoke about their experience of being in care.

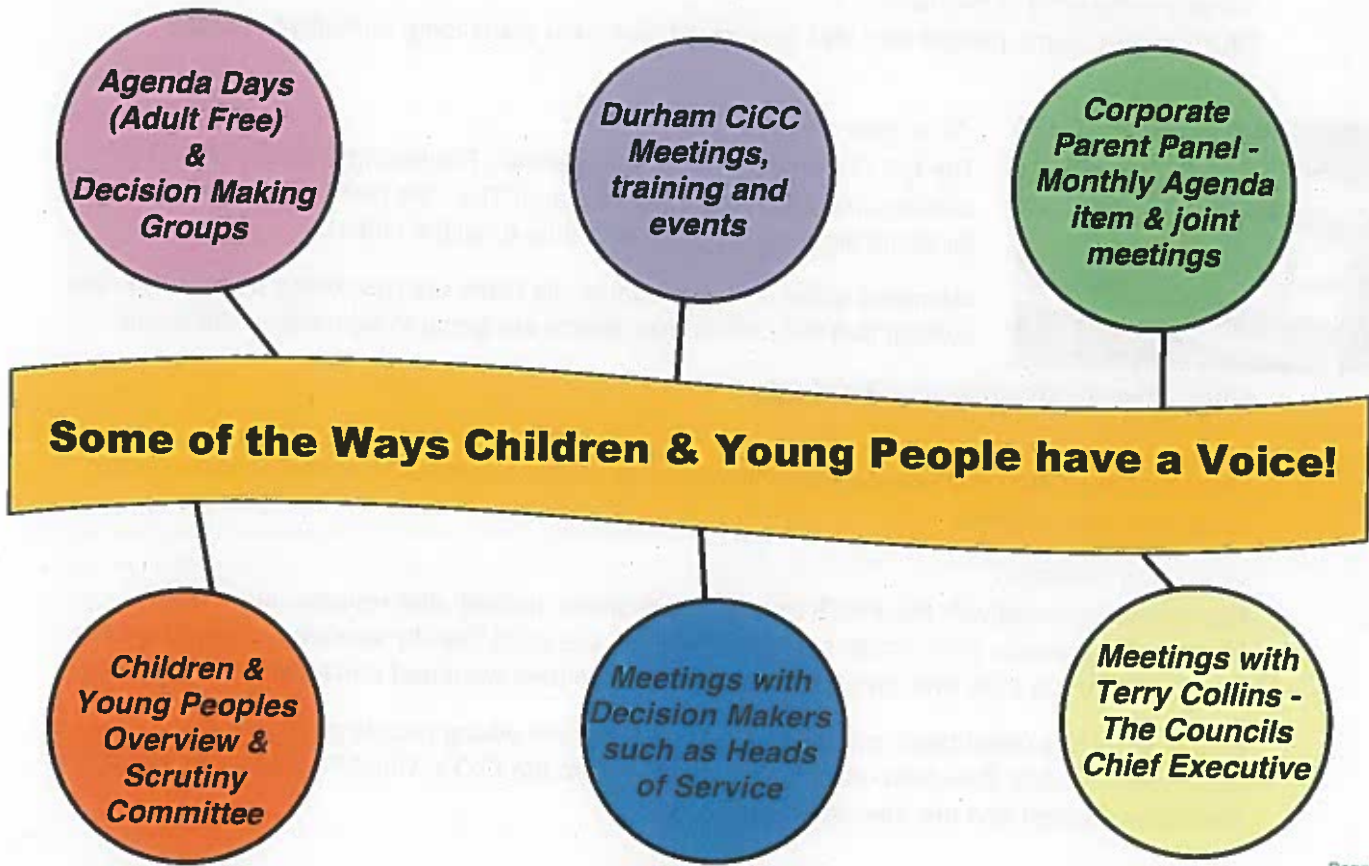


## DID YOU KNOW!

A young person from the CiCC is a member of the Corporate Parenting Panel. They are responsible for making sure children and young peoples voices feed into the panel and any decisions that are made.

# Some Key Facts & Figures

- ✚ Looked After Children in Durham made better progress at Key stage 2 and Key stage 4 than looked after children locally and nationally
- ✚ More children under 16 who have been in care for at least 2.5 years have been in the same placement for 2 years or more
- ✚ The average number of days between a child entering care and them moving in with their adoptive family is lower here than nationally
- ✚ More children in County Durham have had health assessments and dental checks here than nationally
- ✚ There are around 800 looked after children and 250 care leavers in County Durham
- ✚ There are over 200 children who have who have been looked after for more than 5 years, the majority are aged 10-15 years old
- ✚ Around 8 in 10 of children are living in foster placements
- ✚ More children live closer to home than in other areas of the country
- ✚ Around 4 in 10 care leavers are pregnant or mothers



## DID YOU KNOW!

During last years 'Speed Dating Style Event', Corporate Parents and Young People discussed and raised most of the topics in the You Said - We Did section of this report!

YOU SAID...

WE DID...

### CICC Website

#### What young people wanted ...?

Young People wanted to continue to have their own website, dedicated to the CiCC and looked after children/young people in Durham. They also asked for more information about who their local Councillors and Corporate Parents are.



#### What has changed ...

Over the past year the CiCC website has grown and developed with the help of young people. A page has recently been created to inform young people about their corporate parents and how to contact them. This suggestion was made by young people wanting to know who their local councillor/corporate parent is in their area and the Corporate Parenting wanting to create better links and relationships with looked after children and young people. The website is very well used and on average has over a thousand hits a month.

### Child Friendly Care Plans

#### What young people wanted ...?

Children and young people said that they found their care plans long, complicated and confusing.



#### What has changed ...

The CiCC worked with the Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO's) to create some child friendly care plans. The care plans have been in place for some time now and are available to all the children.

Members ideas on the child friendly plans are now being put into the new system that the looked after teams are going to be using in the future.

### Child Friendly Reviews and Agendas

#### What young people wanted ...?

Children stated that they wanted more child friendly reviews, agendas and the opportunity to chair their own reviews.

#### What has changed ...

Members discussed with the IRO'S how we could make 'looked after reviews' more child friendly. Suggestions were made such as creating more child friendly agendas, children having the chance to run their own meeting and deciding who they want and don't want at their review.

Lots of work has taken place around this and children and young people now have the opportunity to chair their own reviews with support from the IRO's. Child Focused agendas have also been created and are now well used.



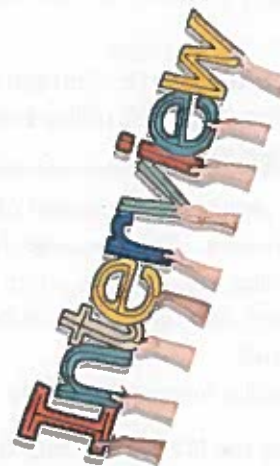
## Interviews

### What Young people wanted ...?

To be more involved in deciding who gets a job within the Looked After Service at Durham County Council. They also wanted to produce guidance for involving children and young people in interviews.

### What has changed ...

Looked After Children and Young People have undertaken Investing in Children's Interview Techniques Training so they can be a part of the recruitment for looked after staff within the council. Over the year various members have sat on interview panels, ran activities and influenced decisions about who to employ as Social Workers, Residential staff, Foster Carers and Young People's Advisors. The group have also produced guidance for Durham County Council regarding how best to support looked after children and young people when it comes to involving them in making decisions which decide who will get a job. Work has already started to make sure that all looked after services actively involve children and young people in choosing staff members.



## Council Tax

### What Young people wanted ...?

Care Leavers wanted more support around money and to highlight and raise awareness of the financial struggles they face when leaving care. Care Leavers said they needed reduced household bills including council tax to improve their lives.



### What has changed ...

A Care Leavers event was organised in Durham earlier on in the year, inviting care leaver to have a say on the things they wanted improved. One proposal which we are pleased to say is now in place is that Care Leavers no longer have to pay council tax when they live in Durham.

## Apprenticeships

### What young people wanted ...?

Young People wanted to see more job opportunities within the council 'Family Business'.

### What has changed ...

Regular meetings have taken place with Terry Collins, the Chief Executive of Durham County Council, staff at the council and the Children in Care Council. The main aim of the meetings was to look into the council creating more opportunities for Care Leavers within 'The Family Business – The Council'. The council now offer a number of apprenticeship vacancies targeted at care leavers.



**Another thing that now happens - "If you are a Care Leaver and you apply for an apprenticeship within the council, you will automatically get an Interview"**

## Care Leavers Challenge

### What Young people wanted ... ?

For the second year running, Care Leavers challenged policy holders and decision makers to live on a care leavers budget.

### What has changed ...

In February 2018, Durham Children in Care Council held their second two-week challenge for any policy and decision makers in the area to 'live in the footsteps of a care leaver'.

This challenge consisted of living off a care leaver's budget of £57.90 for either one or two weeks. This includes having to pay bills, buy food and other things such as toiletries and clothes out of this budget. The aim was to make as many decision makers as possible more aware of the difficulties care leavers face so that things improve.

Councillor Andrea Pattison took part in the challenge and this is her story:

*Living the life of a County Durham Care Leaver is no easy task and would best be described as 'surviving not living'. It's about managing to survive another week, free from ill health, with your mental status intact to be fortunate enough to do it all over again!*

*Whilst surviving on £57.90 is achievable in the short term it is not a long term solution without consequences. The choices you are faced with impacts on your standard of living, your accommodation, your health and well-being and your own self-belief.*

*I survived the Care Leavers Challenge by sacrificing heating in my home in favour of eating a basic diet with very little protein. I was faced with a choice between basic health care products*

*such as shampoo and electricity to cook the food. There is no choice about paying for energy or water rates and often bills are more expensive on a pay as you go basis. Despite forfeiting the TV, as I couldn't afford the licence charge, I could still only afford to heat my house for around 1-2 hours a day. With temperatures reaching below freezing on a night I had to sleep in my clothes, I couldn't shower as often I'd like and a bath would be considered a luxury. It took all of three days for my house to feel damp and for me to start to experience health problems. My washing took days to dry out and I soon learnt there was no room for any survival errors as you had no safety net or back up. At the end of week one I had forgotten to take the chicken out of the freezer, so had to go without.*



*The biggest barrier of all is transport, leaving you feeling isolated and at the mercy of what little amenities or shops you have at your disposal within the local Community. Even a trip to the Job Centre costs money if you don't happen to be located within walking distance.*

*There is no spare cash in the budget to replace essential household items, to buy a new pair of shoes or even have a haircut. A simple thing like breaking a tin opener, a vital piece of kit, leads you to a decision about what to go without i.e. a meal or heating for a day in order to be able to replace it. Being female you feel discriminated against having to purchase feminine hygiene products whilst your male counterparts receive exactly the same amount of allowance.*

*Our young people are dealing with a whole range of negative life experiences from their past and through no fault of their own often face independent living without the right skills or experience to be able to cope.*

YOU SAID...

WE DID...

**DID YOU KNOW!**  
CPP wrote to the government asking for additional financial support for care leavers upto the age of 25 in line with the Children and Social Care Act 2017.





## Training for Potential Foster Carers

### What young people wanted ...?



Young People wanted to be involved in the training and recruitment of new foster carers.

### What has changed ...

Discussions took place with Fostering and it was agreed that members of the CICC would run training every two months to potential foster carers as part of their assessment training. In September four CICC Members ran the first three hour training session for people who are going through the process to become foster carers. The session received some great feedback and was the first of many sessions the CICC will be running from now on. Since then 3 other sessions have been ran and more dates for next year are in the diary.

*"We just wanted to leave some feedback from our foster carer training from last night (25.9.17). We were really impressed with how the session was delivered and how the young people openly spoke about their own individual situations with confidence. Also very impressed with all the projects they are involved in to ensure the best outcomes for children in care."*

*It really made us think about how young people might feel coming into foster care and how we might be able to make that a smooth as possible transition for them. We are really enthused to continue with our journey and wish the four young people all the best for their futures and the future of the projects run by CICC"* (Participants feedback)



## Fostering and Adoption Marketing

### What young people wanted ...?

Children and young people requested to be involved in the marketing of new foster carers.

### What has changed ...

Members have been working with marketing to share their ideas on how the council could improve the marketing material they produce to recruit new foster carers and adopters. The group offered guidance, key messages and have produced posters, quotes and short stories that can be used in the future. Some of our members have also been filmed speaking about their experience of living with foster carers and giving top tips to what makes the perfect carer.



COMING SOON!

Care Leavers Local Offer



## liC Membership Award

Over the past year all of Durham County Council's looked after services and their nine residential homes have achieved the Investing in Children Membership Award™. Each team/home were able to clearly demonstrate the ways in which children and young people had a voice and the changes that had been made.

Each report was given the stamp of approval by Looked after Children and Young People from each team and home.



## Regulation 44 inspections

Young people said these visits sometimes feel that people are being nosy and asked for posters of the inspectors to be displayed along with personal and professional information about them to help young people feel at ease. Alternative feedback methods have been introduced in homes to allow young people to share their thoughts if they do not want to talk to the inspector, or if they are not on site when they visit.

## Policies – What changes can you expect?

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 has extended the responsibility of corporate parents to provide support, advice and guidance to care leavers up to the age of 25.

## Durham Virtual School

Did you know, we have a Virtual Head Teacher and Deputy Head in Durham to help looked after children get the best results they can.

We help schools understand the needs of looked after children, and put in place the right support so that they can enjoy school and achieve. We also offer training to foster carers so they can support the young people they look after to make good progress.

## Edge of Care

A group of young people with experience of being on the edge of care have been working with the council to develop a new edge of care service called 'supporting solutions.'

## Social Workers

Young people told us it was important to them they don't have lots of changes to social workers. In response Durham County Council's social work team has been restructured to help keep changes of social workers to a minimum.

## Link to CPP website

<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=361>

**To find out more about the CiCC or see what else has changed visit: <http://www.durhamcicc.co.uk/>**

**2018  
to  
2019**

## Some areas of work for the future....



**These are the things the Corporate Parent Panel will focus on over the next year:**



**Continue to improve Review Meetings for looked after Children and Young People.**



**Make sure more children and young people have care plans that they really understand.**



**Improve the experience of children and young people when coming into care.**



**Create more 'job opportunities' for care leavers within the council.**



**Support our care leavers with costs of council tax if they move out of county.**



**Raising the profile of Looked after Children and Care Leavers within all departments of the council to ensure they have a voice in influencing any decisions that are being made.**



**Encourage more people to become foster carers by spreading the word of how great and rewarding it is.**



**Sharing positive stories of looked after children in the media.**



**Relaunch the Durham County Council 'PROMISE' for looked after children.**

