

We're  
**Kirklees**

# Children and Young People's Interim Sufficiency Strategy 2019

Keeping families together,  
improving local placements



 **Kirklees**  
COUNCIL

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## The Challenge

All children in Kirklees should have the best start in life possible, which includes safe and secure relationships in a good home, a good education that helps them achieve their potential, and the right health support when they need it.

This document describes the Council's approach and outlines what the Council is doing to improve the availability of local placements and supporting services (such as education settings and health services) in Kirklees. The long-term aim is that we have enough ('sufficient') placements and supporting services to meet local demand.

At the moment, a large and relatively quick rise in demand has meant that local authorities across England don't have enough local placements and/or supporting services. The number of children and young people in care is continuing to rise in England ([link](#)), and as of 31 March 2017, 40% of looked after children in England were placed outside their home area ([link](#)).

In Kirklees, the number of looked after children and young people has increased from 312 in 2005 to 646 in July 2018. Like other local authorities, we have therefore had to find more placements outside the District. It is important to emphasise that we only do this when it is, on balance, best for the child or young person because their often complex needs cannot be met locally.

Why is this important? Moving into care is often difficult for any child or young person. They will have to get used to a new place and find new people they can trust. It might become harder for them to keep in touch with old friends and support networks, leading to a significant sense of loss. If they are fortunate enough to keep their education setting, they might have to travel further to get there. Being placed out of area exacerbates these challenges.

The key challenges in Kirklees are the large number of foster carers due to retire, relatively low foster care recruitment levels, and the relatively large number of children in residential placements, compared to other comparable authorities. More details about these challenges is set out later in the relevant section of this document.

## Our Strategy

We will improve early intervention to help children and young people stay with their families when safe and we will support our children and young people leaving care to maximise their independence. This will mean the local placements and support services we have are available to those that need them most.

For our currently looked after children and young people, we will increase the number of local family-setting (especially foster) placements. Family-setting placements emulate a healthy home life, providing secure relationships that make it easier for our children and young people to achieve their potential and live happy lives. More local foster placements will also mean our residential care is reserved for those in need of more specialised support. We know that word of mouth is the best advert for foster care.

For those who do need residential care, we will increase the number of in-house residential placements with four or less beds, either by reducing the beds in existing children's homes or purchasing properties and converting them into small residential homes. Our children and young people have complex needs and placing large numbers of them together can create complications that are difficult for our staff and for our children and young people to manage. This was one of the suggestions from our Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum.

For all those we already look after, we will improve placement stability. Moving placements brings with it similar disruptions to moving into care in the first place. Children and young people only move placements when their needs have changed or the placement was not the right match in the first place. We will strengthen the involvement of supporting services, especially our education and health partners, in placement decisions. None of our children and young people should have to change their placement because they don't have the right education or health support.

With every child or young person we work with, whether in early support or as one of our looked after children or young people, their voice will be central. Listening to children and young people and developing a trusting relationship with each child and young person, is the key to understanding problems at home or care setting. Our Voice Improvement Plan (under development) will set out in more detail how we will not just include the voice of the child in our decisions, but set it at the heart of those decisions. In line with that commitment, an early draft of this Strategy was discussed at our Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum, who provided the clear asks in the 'Voice of the Child' Sufficiency Action Plan appended to this document.

In the course of this strategy, we will be using the findings of the High Needs Review to help meet demand for local specialist accommodation, education settings, and health services, which will lead to more informed joint commissioning decisions.

## Our shared outcomes



### Best start

Children have the best start in life



### Sustainable economy

Kirklees has sustainable economic growth and provides good employment for and with communities and businesses



### Well

People in Kirklees are as well as possible for as long as possible



### Safe and cohesive

People in Kirklees live in cohesive communities, feel safe and are safe/protected from harm



### Independent

People in Kirklees live independently and have control over their lives



### Clean and green

People in Kirklees experience a high quality, clean, sustainable and green environment



### Aspire and achieve

People in Kirklees have aspiration to achieve their ambitions through education, training employment and lifelong learning



### Efficient and effective

Kirklees Council works smart and delivers efficiently and effectively.

PLUS

Our **Corporate Plan** sets the context for everything we do. In our new Plan (2018-20), we have committed to focussing on people, partners, and places: doing better at enabling people and communities to address problems independently, sharing more knowledge, information, and resources with local partners, and adapting our work to the unique strengths of each of the communities and places we work in.

## Ofsted's recommendations and the Improvement Plan

In June 2017, Kirklees entered into an Improvement Partnership with Leeds City Council. This Strategy forms part of Kirklees Council's efforts to deliver the outcomes stated in the Improvement Plan, which are, in turn, our response to Ofsted's recommendations following their September-October 2016 inspection ([link](#)).

Following the inspection, Ofsted recommended that Kirklees 'increase the availability of local placements to ensure that children and young people do not need to be placed at a distance from their communities' (recommendation 20) ([link](#)). In the Improvement Plan, we committed to help deliver this outcome through a Sufficiency Strategy and accompanying Action Plan.

## Further strategic context

This strategy was consulted on with key local education and health partners, and it sets out a shared understanding of the challenges for sufficiency in the District.

This strategy's scope is limited to managing and meeting accommodation need for our looked after children in a way that is sensitive to local education and health support provision. It is part of a wider strategic framework, aiming to improve the lives of all children and young people and their families living in Kirklees:

- Our **Corporate Plan** sets the context for everything we do. In our new Plan (2018-20), we have committed to focussing on people, partners, and places: doing better at enabling people and communities to address problems independently, sharing more knowledge, information, and resources with local partners, and adapting our work to the different communities and places we work in, starting from their unique, different strengths.
- This Sufficiency Strategy sets out ways of improving children's wellbeing. With partners from across the health sector, we are aiming to deliver the health and wellbeing outcomes agreed in the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2014-2020) ([link](#)). The new Economic Strategy (due for completion in early 2019) will set out priorities complimentary to those in the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, recognising the role of inequality in the health and wellbeing of all Kirklees' residents, and its implementation will support this strategy.
- We are developing a new Corporate Parenting Strategy, which sets out how we are delivering and will deliver on our responsibilities as corporate parents.
- The Kirklees Partners Early Support strategy sets out the strategic context for how district partners are helping to strengthen families so more children and young people can stay at home, when safe. It sets the context for how district partners, including the Council, can improve local early support.
- Future in Mind: Transformation Plan 2015-2020 ([link](#)) sets out how Kirklees is working together with the NHS to provide better outcomes for children and young people's mental health. This strategy's emphasis on early intervention is consistent with the Plan's commitment to help protect those at risk of serious mental health problems.
- Ensuring we have the right placement, education, health, and other support services is particularly important for children and young people living with special educational needs or disabilities. This Strategy compliments the outcomes stated in the Joint Strategy for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities ([link](#)).

## The statutory duty to secure sufficient placements and supporting services

The Strategy sets out our approach for 2019 on meeting the requirements of section 22G of the Children Act 1989 in line with the statutory guidance 'Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked after Children' (2010).

Section 22G ([link](#)) applies to all children looked after under the Children Act. It requires local authorities to secure, as far as practicable, enough accommodation to meet the needs of any children whose circumstances are such that living within the local authority's area would be consistent with their welfare.

The UK Government guidance 'Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked after Children' sets out a check-list for what counts as meeting the sufficiency duty:

1. The right placement is available at the right time.
2. There is a range of local placements and supporting services that are sufficient to meet the needs of all Looked after Children or a plan to move towards that position.
3. There is consideration of the service requirements of children that are looked after, on the edge of care, at risk of custody, and/or leaving care.
4. Working with local partner agencies and neighbouring authorities to ensure this need will be met and that young people with this need receive the support they need.<sup>1</sup>

The guidance also sets out the building blocks of effective commissioning for children and young people in care: high quality assessments, care planning, and placement decisions.

This Strategy's approach has been developed in line with that guidance. Given that we do not have enough local placements for our looked after children and young people, this is the plan to move towards that position as referenced under (2) of the check-list.

The Corporate Parenting Board will review our progress against the Service Action Plan appended to the Strategy. Progress against our key indicators will be presented to Corporate Parenting Board every six months.

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<sup>1</sup> Partners have obligations under the Children Act 2004 section 10 in relation to improving the outcomes for children in the local area.

## **Enabling families to stay together and our children and young people to live independently**

We want to enable families to stay together and children and young people to be independent and leave care early. A key part of this is early support, which delivers better outcomes for children and families and is less expensive than late intervention. The Kirklees Partners Early Support strategy sets out the strategic context for this, and so how district partners, including the Council, can improving local early support.

Problems at home become entrenched when left too long, which makes them more disruptive for the children and family and harder and more expensive to solve. It also raises the risk of a child being taken into care, which is disruptive for the child and expensive for the Council.

Early support means managing challenges when they are easier to solve, to prevent their problems becoming entrenched. It also means targeted and evidence-based responses to entrenched problems to support a child or young person to stay at home when safe. This is an urgent issue, as the number of looked after children will rise, if current trends continue. Problems become entrenched when not handled early, and are thereby harder to handle. This increases pressure on staff in social services. Early support helps manage that pressure by preventing, reducing, and delaying the need for intense support, which in turn helps social workers make high-quality, cost-effective decisions.

We want a full range of care and support packages to support children and young people living with disabilities or health (including mental health) problems. Disabilities and health problems create challenges at home that make it more likely that a child or young person will be looked after, but the right support can help them and their families manage. It is more difficult and costly to complete health assessments on our children and young people once they are placed outside the District, making it harder to ensure we're meeting all the needs of those with complex health problems, including mental health problems.

## **We will support our children and young people exiting care**

When safe, young people will be enabled to return home or exit care early. To this end, we will try to support more children and young people into adoption and other permanence arrangements. We will work more closely with One Adoption West Yorkshire, who provide our adoption services. We will also support children and young people to exit care earlier through more Special Guardianship Order and Child Arrangement Order placements.



We will build our relationships with private sector providers of both fostering and residential services. We will meet regularly with private sector fostering and residential services to understand their capacity and challenges and to share relevant policies and procedures.

We will have effective support for young people entering adulthood, including a range of appropriate semi-independent accommodation placements and high quality personal advisor support.

### **Accommodating young people leaving custody**

If a child or young person leaves custody following a criminal offence and they do not have a parent or guardian, cannot return home, or were previously in care, the local authority will be responsible for providing accommodation. Some of these children and young people have very complex needs, which require highly specialist support. We have to plan our specialist placement provision in line with what we know about children and young people due to leave custody. We need the right kind of local placements and supporting services for these young people. Without the right specialist provision, we will have to place them out-of-area. The ongoing partnership work in delivering the actions from the High Needs Review will support this.

We will continue the good work of the dedicated Looked-After Children team within the Young Offenders Team: since 2010/2011 we have seen a reduction in the percentage offending of LAC young people, from 12.8% (10/11) to 7.26% (17/18).

## More local placements of the right kind

### More foster placements

Wherever it is in their best interests, children and young people will be placed in family settings with friends and family (Connected Persons) or foster placements rather than residential settings. Increasing local fostering and other family setting placements is a priority for guaranteeing the sustainability of local placement and support provision.

The local children's residential market is not currently meeting local need because of its availability, quality, and/or affordability. Historically, we have had above average numbers of children in residential care. In November 2017, 11.2% of Kirklees' looked-after-children were in residential care, whilst comparable local authorities have around 8.2%. Residential care placements are expensive and this high proportion in residential care affects the sustainability of local placement availability.

Historically, we have had proportionately few foster placements in our care: 68% of our looked after children are in foster care compared to 73% in other local authorities' care. The use of the Council's own in-house foster carers for placements is also low at 34% of placements against 44% for our comparators. As of publication, this is the last available data for comparing to comparable authorities. These metrics have since started to improve in Kirklees: we now have more children in fostering placements and fewer in residential settings.

With this in mind, we will try to lower the proportion of children placed in residential care by increasing the number placed in family settings such as foster care. Children in residential care aged 12 or below might especially benefit from being in foster care. These decisions will always be made with the best interest of the child in mind and in light of their views.

### Foster carer retention

The Council's recent foster carer recruitment campaigns have not been as successful as anticipated and recruitment has not kept pace with carers deregistering or retiring. This situation will continue to be a challenge as foster carers retire or become involved in Staying Put arrangements.

65 of the 192 approved foster carers (or 34%) are aged 56 or above (July 2018) and so are currently or will soon be eligible to retire. Staying Put arrangements mean the number of foster placements can reduce as children and young people are allowed to live with their carer after 18, if both parties agree. We welcome Staying Put

arrangements for bringing stability and associated benefits to looked-after children's lives. We will continue to actively encourage foster carers to be involved in Staying Put arrangements. However, we need to match this with strong recruitment to increase the number of local foster placements.

Recruiting new foster carers is one side of our approach. We know that word of mouth and seeing friends, neighbours, and family enjoying being foster carers is the strongest way to attract interest. We need to ensure we continue to improve every aspect of the foster carer's experience through, for example, our unique foster carer support team. We will continue to listen to the concerns raised to us by the Kirklees Fostering Network at our business meetings and at foster carer reviews. We will use these concerns to identify improvement priorities.

We need to focus more on retention of foster carers and listening to foster carers and acting on their concerns in this way will help with that. We are also keen to be innovative in our approach to foster carer retention and the Head of Corporate Parenting is looking to meet with researchers from the University of Huddersfield to discuss options for collaborative research on local foster care retention.

It is vital that we recruit the right people into foster care, people who want to be foster carers for the right reasons and who have the skills and passions that help deliver our looked after children the best outcomes possible. Recruitment will always be limited by these factors, but we believe there are plenty of people in Kirklees who would be excellent foster carers. To attract them, we need to peak their interest by constantly improving the quality of our support and the attractiveness of foster caring.

In developing our approach to increasing local foster placements through recruitment and retention, we will take time to properly assess both:

- the recommendations from Sir Martin Narey and Mark Owers's independent review into foster care in England, including its 36 recommendations (February 2018, [link](#)); and
- the UK Government's response, including their own analysis and recommendations (July 2018, [link](#)).

Both documents provide an important opportunity for us to learn from a national perspective, and improve local provision in an intelligence-led manner.

### **More small residential homes**

Our children and young people in residential care have told us they feel safer and enjoy home more when they are in smaller residential homes. They highlighted how larger homes have more children and young people with more complex needs together and that this heightens the risk of conflict and disorder in the home.

We have already reduced the number of beds in some homes. Our three mainstream homes are now registered as four beds. We are looking to acquire further property to develop additional small children's homes within the District and are already exploring opportunities to work together with partners on this.

The Specialist Accommodation project board will assess ways for the Council itself to provide more small children's homes, semi-independent accommodation, and more care leavers' accommodation, so we have a sustainable local placement offer, that meets the needs of our looked after children and care leavers.

### **Specialist residential homes**

A small number of our children and young people, often with autism, learning difficulties, and/or emotional and behavioural issues, need highly specialist placements and educational settings. Our residential, health, education, and other support services for these children requires improvement so that more of these children are placed locally. This should reduce costs and help ensure the placements are of the highest quality possible. To ensure we have the right services for those of our children with such complex needs, we need to fully understand their needs. The findings of the High Needs Review and the ongoing work responding to those findings will inform our priorities in developing our services in future commissioning. Some of our young people with the most complex needs will transfer to Adult's Services on or close to their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. We will support them in this transition.

We know the majority of badged 'therapeutic or specialist' residential placements do not currently deliver the outcomes we expect or value for money. We will explore other options to meet needs.

### **We will review our commissioning practices**

A key means to achieving this outcome of this strategy is securing the placements and services needed to meet need when a child or young person's wellbeing is better served in care. We need to ensure our placement services are sustainable, so we will review and improve our arrangements for purchasing placements. These might include framework contracts and block and/or spot purchasing.

In line with the commitment in our Corporate Plan to work more inclusively with partners, partnering with other organisations, including other councils, public sector organisations, businesses, and/or charities will be key to effectively increasing capacity. We are already looking at new partnership arrangements to help with this.

We will review our current placements service, examining the efficiency and effectiveness of current arrangements. The service will manage all placement referrals and use a robust quality assurance and contract management model to ensure good quality matches and sustainable investments.

Quality assurance is a priority. There will be robust quality assurance and oversight. For children's homes, there are monthly monitoring visits of an independent person to a children's home with a report sent to Ofsted following the visit ('Regulation 44 visits'). There are also regular manager reports. We are developing regular foster care business meetings, which will take place every 6 weeks. We are also creating new practice standards for our fostering service and a quality assurance officer role within the Placements Team to drive up standards in private sector residential and fostering provision.

## More stable placements

Children and young people have the best start in life when they develop secure attachments with their carers. Evidence shows that moving care placements reduces children's opportunities to develop these attachments. It may also worsen any behavioural and/or emotional difficulties. Moving placements only happens when absolutely necessary, so moving placements means that the child or young person and the placement either no longer match or did not match in the first place.

The main ways to ensure placement stability are: proactively asking our children and young people whether they are happy in their placements, effectively responding when they're not and as early as possible, and ensuring they have the right health support and education placement alongside their accommodation.

We and our partner agencies will always look to improve the quality of our wrap around care and improve support to carers. Our new Quality Assurance Officer role in the Placements Team will help make this happen.

### Speaking to our children and young people

Research and reviews from Laming to Munro emphasise the importance of the voice of the child in ensuring children are effectively supported and protected. Children's services need to build the right relationships and trust with our children and young people to enable them to voice their concerns, share their views and be involved in agreeing the support and plans that are right for their needs. Kirklees will have more efficient and effective services and our children will have a better start in life if their voices are at the heart of everything we

### What our Looked after Children and Care Leavers told us

*"Make sure you listen to children and young people to get their views on their placements"*

*"Care Leavers should be in a comfortable placement so they can feel at home"*

*"Make sure that people in care feel important"*

*"Not enough attention given to Care Plans and Pathway Plans"*

*"Kids in care and care leavers don't know what social workers expect of them"*

March 2017

do. In line with the Improvement Plan, this is becoming a value shared across local partners and is central to all our work.

In April and May 2018, a draft version of this strategy was discussed with the Children in Care Council and the Care Leavers Forum. The 'Voice of the Child' Sufficiency Action Plan (Appendix 1) shows what the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum told us and our response. This is to demonstrate how the voice of the child is shaping the design of our services and our Kirklees Commitment to Care Leavers, which is under development.

In May 2018, the Children in Care Council produced a 'great-placement check-list':

### 'Voice of the child' 'great placement' check-list

A list produced by our Children in Care Council (May 2018):

- The child or young person is given skills for living independently
- A non-judgmental carer that respects the child or young person
- The family positively including the child or young person in activities with the extended family or young people they live with, to create good memories
- A variety of placements are available, so the placement chosen suits the person's needs
- The carer and support workers listen to the voice of the child or young person
- The carer helps with and promotes education and extra-curricular activities
- The child or young person lives with the right number of people
- The child or young person lives in a safe and accessible area
- The carer understands the child's family dynamics and culture
- The carer allows the child or young person personal space

### Listening to children returning from being missing

A crucial time to listen to the voice of children in young people is when they return to their placement after being missing. When a child or young person goes missing, it can indicate that something is wrong and they are struggling to cope. Being missing from their placement also makes them more likely to be a victim of crime, including child sexual exploitation, as they can come into unsupervised contact with others. As the statutory guidance sets out ([link](#)), in-depth return home interviews provided by someone the child or young person trusts are an effective way for us to:

- understand the child's situation;
- help to solve or handle the problems that led them to run away;
- identify anything that happened whilst they were away; and
- equip the child or young person with the resources and knowledge of how to stay safe if they run away again.

We will ensure we provide return home interviews within 72 hours of one of our children or young people returning to their placement and ensure this is given by someone the child or young person trusts, which might not be someone involved in caring for the child or young person, as set out in the statutory guidance ([link](#)).

### **High quality contact for children placed out of area**

We know that any placement move, whether in or out of area, can frighten a child or young person and they can feel anxious as they get to know a new place, new people, and sometimes a new school, whilst leaving some others behind. A 2016 survey of our children and young people placed out of area found a consistent challenge to be wanting to see more of their family and friends.

Ongoing contact with old friends and family can help a child or young person cope with the emotional challenges of a placement move. The Council has a duty to ensure good quality, regular contact happens (unless restrictions apply) and will continue to support our children and young people to have this contact when appropriate. We have to continue to listen to each of our children and young people placed out of area, to ensure high quality contact

### **Education needs will be central in every placement decision**

Alongside health and a good home life, education is one of the most important considerations in delivering good placements for our children and young people. A good placement is stable and provides opportunities to move on to live a successful, independent life and achieve ambitions after leaving care.

Whenever a child or young person is taken into care or needs to move placements for whatever reason, we will always try to maintain their current educational provision, which may be the only stability left for them at an otherwise difficult and disruptive time in their lives. We understand there are exceptional circumstances where this is not possible, and in these cases finding the right educational needs will be central to any placement searches and decisions.

When we don't have the right education placement locally for one of our children or young people, they may have to move out-of-area to ensure they get an appropriate education placement. In these cases, the focus will still be on ensuring as stable and



long-term a placement as possible. Placement stability is key to good outcomes for our children and young people, but stability is only possible with the right educational decision. The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Assessment and Commissioning Team (SENDACT) will be closely involved throughout the placement decision-making process and help ensure any new placement meets all the educational needs of our child or young person, so they don't need to move because of those needs.

Finding a school place can be complicated for the small number of children and young people requiring specialist placements with on-site education, such as some of those living with complex disabilities, or those with complex emotional, behavioural, and social needs. When education is an afterthought or education needs are not thoroughly assessed, it can lead to a child or young person having a place to live without the right high quality school placement to match their sometimes complex needs. This leads to education placement breakdown. This is disruptive in itself, but it can also then result in a child or young person having to move home in order to stay in education, if there is no alternative nearby.

The Kirklees Virtual School monitors the education of and offers support to all children and young in our care. It will liaise with SENDACT to ensure children with special education needs are identified on the Placement Referral Form prior to commencing the placement search. SENDACT will be involved at all stages and always before any education package is chosen. We will strengthen our relationships with mainstream and specialist education providers and find ways to provide more bespoke education provision locally to meet our children and young people's educational needs.

Alongside attendance and attainment monitoring for our looked after children and young people, the Kirklees Virtual School flags difficulties they may have in their education placements. This can indicate support is needed to help keep them in their education placement and the Kirklees Virtual School, Social Worker, and school will work together to try to stabilise the situation through early intervention and prevention with regular meetings and targeted support through Pupil Premium Plus funding.

This Strategy conforms to the latest statutory guidance on promoting the education of looked after children (February 2018, [link](#)). Amongst other things, the guidance means:

- When we make a care plan for one of our children or young people, we have to set up a Personal Education Plan (PEP) as part of that and at the same time.

- Social workers, the Kirklees Virtual School Headteacher, Independent Reviewing Officers, pupil admissions officers, and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Assessment and Commissioning Teams in Kirklees should work together to ensure appropriate education provision is arranged at the same time as the care placement, except in an emergency (p.6). In emergency placements, Kirklees has to find a suitable education placement for the child within 20 days (p. 11).

## **Data development agenda**

Effective commissioning requires that we collect the right data and draw the right conclusions about what it says. Alongside drawing on the findings of the High Needs Review to understand the most complex needs in the District, teams in the Council are developing baseline figures for more effectively monitoring things like our early support and intervention and prevention efforts. This will support an intelligence-led response to the challenge of early intervention and prevention that is thereby more likely to deliver the outcomes our children and young people need. This will help to ensure sufficient local placements and support services to meet those needs.

## **Next steps**

In early 2019, we will have a better understanding of current and expected support needs and potential sites that can be converted into residential care. These will help us produce commissioning options that will inform the next 5-Year Strategy. Note, that any longer-term strategy will be subject to review, to ensure we remain flexible in responding to sudden shifts in demand (e.g. from high-profile cases).

We will also produce a Market Position Statement, so that private providers know what the needs of our local children and young people are and the volume of demand.

## APPENDIX 1: 'Voice of the Child' Sufficiency Action Plan

### What our Children in Care Council told us (May 2018)

When someone is a carer, they should:

- Understand the needs of children and what motivates them
- Teach life skills that young people will need in the future, including independent living skills
- Be supportive
- Be non-judgemental
- Be flexible
- Be understanding

When someone becomes a foster carer, their extended family should receive training on how to behave appropriately with the child or young person.

### By the end of 2019 we will...

Develop and implement a Corporate Parenting training package for elected members, social care and other Council staff, and partner agencies.

Develop and deliver the Kirklees Commitment to Care Leavers that goes beyond statutory requirements.

Improve training to foster carers and residential staff.

Implement better quality assurance in relation to purchased placements.

There is currently some training available to extended family members. We will look to extend this to more family members with regular contact with those of our children and young people in foster care, developing a skilled, informed team around the child.

<p>When residential homes (in-house and private) recruit, they should include children and young people on the recruitment panels</p>	<p>This will be made a requirement for recruitment processes in residential care.</p>
<p>When the Council recruits a foster carer, children and young people should be involved</p>	<p>We will start to involve young people in foster carer recruitment events, when appropriate. There is a regulatory process for the recruitment of foster carers that includes analysis of their history and appearance before a panel. We will find ways of involving our children and young people as much as possible, including in the developing recruitment material.</p>
<p>When children are in care, there should be no more than 4 children or young people in total in their placement</p>	<p>As set out in the Sufficiency Strategy, we are seeking to develop smaller children's homes, with occupancy four and below. Current mainstream homes are now operating at a maximum of four residents.</p>
<p>When a child or young person is in care, their carer should start planning them leaving care and thinking about the skills they need earlier</p>	<p>Skills training for carers will incorporate the Kirklees Commitment to Care Leavers, which is under development. It will set out a natural, incremental approach to preparing our children in care for the transition adulthood.</p>

Police come to care homes too frequently

Residential staff and foster carers will continue to receive training in restorative ways of working to improve conflict resolution.

### What our Care Leavers Forum told us (April and May 2018)

When a young person is leaving care and moving into independent living, they need:

1. An introduction to independent living;
2. in-depth skills in money management (including budgeting, debt management, bills, and the cost of living), shopping, cooking, cleaning, and other skills;
3. support with home decoration, repairs, and maintenance;
4. more resources for emotional resilience;
5. mental health support;
6. more housing options;
7. housing with Wi-Fi;
8. housing in a good location; and
9. housing options in their Pathway Plan.

### By the end of 2019 we will...

Consider these options in developing our Kirklees Commitment to Care Leavers, which will exceed the requirements in existing legislation and guidance.

When a young person lives in foster care, they should be able to ask to stay in the home until they're 21	Continue to actively encourage foster carers to become involved in Staying Put arrangements. Foster carers are volunteers and it is their choice if they wish to care for an adult post-18.
When a care leaver finishes University, they should have housing available.	Review this as part of the development of the Kirklees Commitment to Care Leavers.
When a care leaver lives in semi-independent accommodation, they should receive more support from staff	Review this as part of the development of the Kirklees Commitment to Care Leavers.
When supported lodgings providers are trained, young people should be involved	Review this as part of the development of the Kirklees Commitment to Care Leavers.

The Leaving Care Grant should be £250 higher to reflect the higher cost of living

Consider, by comparing the Kirklees Leaving Care Grant with other authorities and gathering local evidence.

When a young person leaves care, they should have accommodation available

The Specialist Accommodation Board is looking at needs for specific groups. Young people leaving care are included as a specific group. Discussions are already taking place between the Council and local partners.

## APPENDIX 2: Working Service Action Plan

Service Lead: HEAD OF CORPORATE PARENTING

Board responsible for monitoring: CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

Update: AT LEAST SIX MONTHLY

**NOTE:** This action plan is a high-level summary of what we are doing to improve sufficiency. The needs and outcomes of children we support or who are in our care are always our first consideration in any placement decision. The measures we have most direct influence over are the number of in-house placements (in purchasing and converting more properties) and placement stability (in making the right placement decision first time round and by effectively listening to the voice of our looked after children).

A more detailed action plan to help staff from across the service see how their teams help deliver this strategy will be developed with those staff over the coming year. We will consider similar engagement with partners.

Indicator	What it's like now? (31 <sup>st</sup> July 2018)	What will be done before the end of 2019?	Comments
% of Looked After Children placed outside Kirklees and more than 20 miles from home	17% of all looked after children  <i>We are working to decrease this</i>	<i>Standards to be in place</i> Every 6-months, the <b>Corporate Parenting Board</b> will review progress against the indicators and actions in this Action Plan  At least every three months, the <b>Head of Corporate Parenting</b> will meet the	This is an Interim Strategy that sets out what we will do whilst developing the detailed knowledge base to get a longer-term Strategy right. The main local challenge is a lack of local places. It takes time to develop high-quality local placements. Our focus on improving the support offer to foster-carers will also not have an immediate effect, but will in the long-run.



		<p>CCGs, Virtual School, and external placement providers to discuss local health, education, and accommodation needs</p> <p>At least every three months, the <b>Head of Service for Assessment and Intervention</b> will meet the CCGs, Virtual School, and external placement providers to discuss early-help services</p>	
# of children in care that have three or more placement moves a year	<p>8.4% of all looked after children</p> <p><i><b>We are working to decrease this</b></i></p>	<p><i>Actions</i></p> <p><b>The Virtual School Headteacher</b> will develop new services and resources for the education, health, and wellbeing needs of complex children</p> <p>In 2019, the <b>Placements Team Service Manager</b> will create a Quality Assurance Officer role within the Placements Team</p> <p><i>Standards to be in place</i></p> <p>When children and young people identify good practice in their placements, the <b>Children’s Rights Team Manager</b> will collect and communicate it</p>	<p>The chief preventable reason for placement moves is that the placement doesn’t meet all of the child or young person’s needs, including care, education, and health needs. By continually learning what works well in our residential and family-setting placements, we can encourage good practice that is based on real experience.</p> <p>By involving the Virtual School at the earliest possible stage, we can ensure that our children and young people’s education needs are fully met in any new placement.</p> <p>Going missing is an indication that something is wrong and it’s important that we figure out what that is through timely return interviews.</p>

		<p>On a regular basis, the <b>Children's Rights Team</b> will hold regular informal consultations with young people on foster care recruitment and developing new residential homes</p> <p>When a placement decision has to be made, <b>the Placements Team</b> will involve the Virtual School at the earliest possible stage</p> <p>Within 72 hours of one of our children or young people returning from being missing, every child or young person will receive a return interview with a person they trust, which might be someone not involved in their care, in line with the statutory guidance</p> <p>When agreeing a Care Plan with fostered children, the <b>Fostering Team</b> will ensure it is outcome-focussed</p> <p>The <b>Resource Panel</b> will meet regularly to ensure there is senior management oversight of all placements</p>	<p>The new Resource Panel provides an important check that service decisions reflect overall requirements.</p>
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<p># of approved foster care households</p>	<p>192</p> <p><i>We are working to increase this</i></p>	<p><i>Actions</i></p> <p>The <b>Head of Corporate Parenting</b> will meet with the <b>Centre for Applied Childhood, Youth and Family Research (CACYFR)</b> at Huddersfield University to find opportunities for collaborative research into the recruitment and retention of foster carers</p> <p>In 2019, the <b>Service Manager for Fostering</b> will survey existing and former foster carers on their support needs</p> <p>In 2019, the <b>Service Manager for Fostering</b> will develop new training and support models that better meet the identified support needs of foster carers</p> <p>We will take time to properly assess both:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The recommendations from Sir Martin Narey and Mark Owers’s independent review into foster care in England, including its 36</li> </ul>	<p>We expect many foster carers to be retiring soon. We know that word of mouth is the strongest advert for foster carers, so we will focus efforts on providing the best quality support to existing foster carers and encourage them to talk to people they know.</p> <p>The independent review into foster care in England and the UK Government’s response provide an important opportunity for us to learn from a national perspective, and improve local provision in an intelligence-led manner.</p>
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		<p>recommendations (February 2018, <a href="#">link</a>); and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the UK Government’s response, including their own analysis and recommendations (July 2018, <a href="#">link</a>).</li> </ul> <p><i>Standards to be in place</i></p> <p>Every two months, <b>the Head of Corporate Parenting</b> will meet with the local Foster Care Association to identify good practice and challenges in our support and recruitment/retention of foster carers.</p>	
# of in-house placements (residential and family-setting)	<p>48% of all looked after children in foster care in in-house foster</p> <p><i>We are working to increase this</i></p>	<p><i>Standards to be in place</i></p> <p>At least every three months, <b>the Head of Corporate Parenting</b> will hold meetings with external providers to understand their future plans and how they impact on our provision.</p> <p>In 2019, <b>the Head of Corporate Parenting</b> will continue to meet regularly with <b>the Specialist Accommodation Board</b> to help identify</p>	<p>We are looking to have more small residential homes, which will mean the number of homes will go up. This will be a significant investment. We will balance that with financial sustainability. Converting existing homes into residential children’s homes is cheaper and quicker than building new homes.</p> <p>Our children and young people in residential care have told us they feel safer and enjoy home more when they are in smaller residential homes. They highlighted how larger homes have more</p>

		<p>sites potentially convertible into children’s homes.</p>	<p>children and young people with more complex needs together and that this heightens the risk of conflict and disorder in the home.</p> <p>We know that external providers are significant local providers. If they decide to provide more or less local placements, we need to know as far in advance as possible, to prepare for any resulting changes in local demand. Also, telling external providers what our children and young people’s needs are and how we expect them to change will help ensure local services match local demand.</p>
<p># of care leavers in suitable accommodation</p>	<p>90%</p> <p><b><i>We are working to increase this</i></b></p>	<p><i>Action</i></p> <p>Develop the Kirklees Commitment to Care Leavers</p> <p><i>Standards</i></p> <p>We will continue to improve our support for young people entering adulthood, including a range of appropriate semi-independent accommodation placements and high quality personal advisor support.</p>	<p>We have seen an improvement since July 2018. The 2017 England average was 84%. The 2017 average for our statistical neighbours was 88.4%.</p>

## Next strategy

A five-year strategy produced in 2020, led by the Head of Corporate Parenting.

## Data development agenda

### What will be done?

The Head of Education, Safeguarding, and Inclusion is coordinating the work around the High Needs Review, which is providing us with an understanding of:

- % of our children who need specialist health support
- % who need specialist education support and/or placement

Other measures are under development. We also want to know:

- % of local partners reporting high levels of confidence with locality early-help services
- % of partners who report improved satisfaction with partnership arrangements / joint working
- # of children and young people moved outside of Kirklees that have complex needs (emotional, behavioural, educational, and health)