



Strategic Plan for Children in Our Care and Care Leavers 2019 - 2022

Children and Families Directorate

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1. Forward

Nothing is more important to Redcar and Cleveland Council than how we look after the Children in Our Care. The Council's commitment to our corporate parenting duties, as well as our values, principles and standards, are set out in this strategic plan.

We have a strong ambition in Redcar and Cleveland. We want the Children in Our Care and Care Leavers to have everything that any good parent would want for their children. We want each child to be happy, healthy and safe, and to reach their full potential. We will also make sure that children and young people are fully involved in reviews of our progress and implementation of our strategies.

This plan is owned by us, our partner agencies, our corporate parenting board, our managers, workers and foster carers. Everyone involved has a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. It sets out how the Council and our partners, working together, will work to improve the life chances of young people in care, to ensure that each child and young person experiences high quality care and services that are matched to their individual needs.

Why children are in care

There are numerous reasons why children might live in care. They could live in care because of abuse or neglect and need protection, or because their parents are unable

to care for them due to illness. If it is deemed that home is not a safe place for them to live or it is believed that they are putting either themselves or others at significant risk then a court may decide to place the child in care. Children may live in care for a short period of time or a more



Cllr Alison Barnes

Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services

2. Who are Children in Our Care & Care Leavers

A child (under 18 years old) is in the care of a local authority if he or she:

'Is provided with accommodation under section 20 of the Children's Act 1989 from the local authority for a continuous period of more than 24 hours; is subject to a care order; or is subject to a placement order. This also includes disabled children who are provided with accommodation under Section 20. Children in Our Care (CioC) can be placed with foster carers, in residential homes, with parents or other relatives (under certain circumstances)'.

Definition of a Care Leaver:

'A Care Leaver is broadly defined as a person aged between 16 and 25, who has been cared for by a local authority for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14, is either currently in care or has left care and has been in care period of time after their 16th birthday.'



3. What Children and Young People told us

We have listened to our children and young people to ensure that our strategy reflects the needs of the Children in Our Care and Care Leavers

Believe in me

Support me

Listen to what we say and act on it

Push me to reach my dreams

Listen and advise

Help me to get an apprenticeship with RCBC

Encourage us

4. Promises to Children in Our Care and Care Leavers

The Government requires every local authority as corporate parents to set out a pledge to Children in Our Care and Care Leavers detailing the support and care children and young people can expect to receive. Together with the Children in Our Care Council and Corporate Parenting Board we devised a set of promises to them.

LISTEN,
ACHIEVE,
COMMUNICATE,
ENGAGE and
SUPPORT

LACES - tying up our
promises to Children in Our
Care and care leavers



5. Our promise to you

As corporate parents we promise to...

LISTEN We promise to listen to the voices of all Children in Our Care and Care Leavers, ensuring they are not only listened to but where appropriate, acted upon.

ACHIEVE We promise to offer you incentives to stay in education, employment and training, celebrating your achievements and successes.

COMMUNICATE We promise to support you in expressing your opinions about your care, whether that is having access to the support from your independent reviewing officer, or the information needed so that you can make a comment or complaint

ENGAGE We promise to give you opportunities to engage with other Children in Our Care, and Care Leavers via our Children in Our Care Council groups. Where appropriate to do so we will support you with contact with your family and friends.

SUPPORT We promise to support you with all of your needs, keep you safe and healthy, and give you all the advice, guidance and support you need so that you can achieve your full potential and when ready to do so live independently.

6. About the Strategy

The strategic plan for Children in Our Care and care leavers outlines the vision of the Children in Our Care service within the Children & Families Services Directorate. It identifies how we will improve the quality of services, support and care we offer to Children in Our Care and care leavers.

It has been developed by the Corporate Parenting Board and Council partners to set out our determination to improve the life chances and quality of life for all those children and young people in our care. It is focused on achieving the best possible outcomes for Children in Our Care and Care Leavers for whom we are corporate parents and ensure that they receive the same care that a good parent would give their own child.

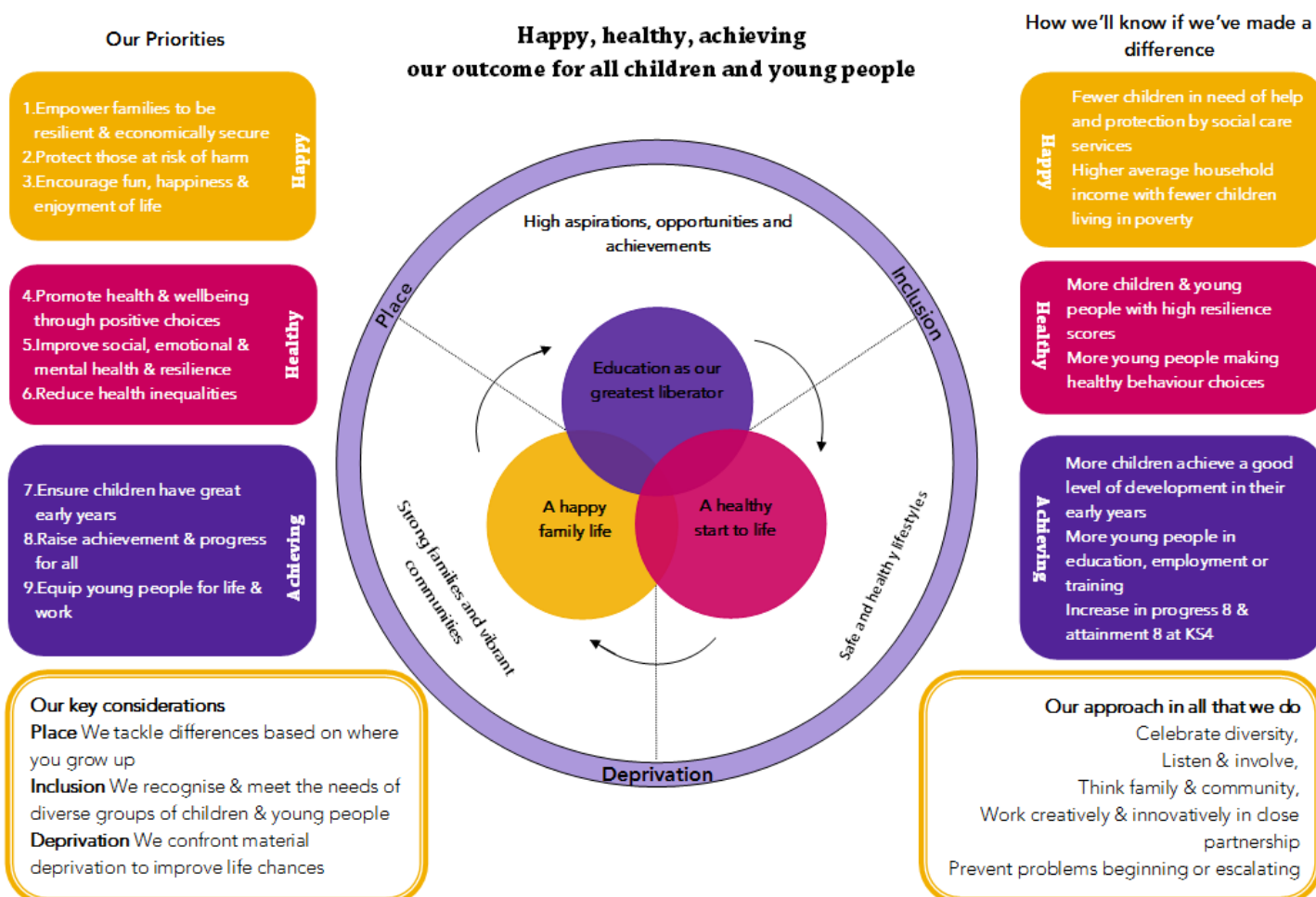
'Is this good enough for my child?'

We know that the best outcomes for Children in Our Care and care leavers can only be achieved by effective partnership working. Every Elected Member and officer of the council is a corporate parent, as is any other person involved in their care.

Alongside our corporate parenting principles, there are a number of priorities that underpin this strategy and the services that both ourselves and our partners provide and offer to the children and young people in our care. These are central to how we operate as a partnership, providing the level of care and support that we would expect for our own children.

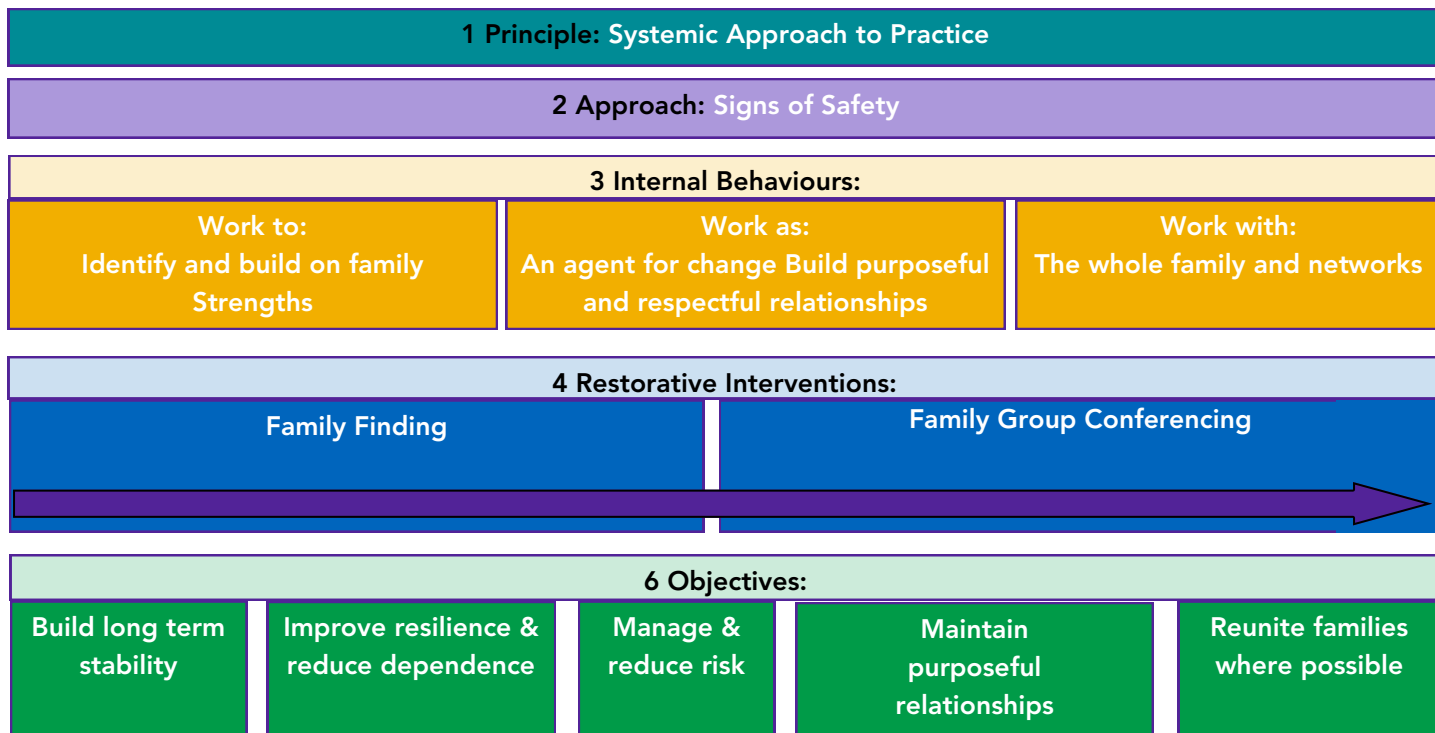
- Every Child In Our Care will be nurtured and grow up with a sense of identity and belonging, in a safe and stable placement in a family setting within our borough wherever possible.
- Every Child in Our Care and Care Leaver will feel their needs are given the highest priority and that they are valued and cared about, not just cared for.
- Every Child in Our Care and Care Leaver will have opportunities and support to achieve their full potential
- We will ensure that young people leaving care have the stability and support that they need to become independent successful adults.

This strategy reflects our priorities for all children and young people as outlined below which help to inform how we plan service delivery as corporate parents, both alone and with partners.



7. How will we provide support?

The diagram below lays out the model of practice we follow when providing support to children, young people & their families. We believe that stable relationships should be established between workers, children, young people & their families, & always look for strengths within the work that is done. This model of practice acts as the foundation upon which we develop individual plans to ensure the best possible outcomes.



8. Children and Social Work Act 2017 - Corporate Parenting Principles

Corporate parenting is a term used to describe the responsibility of a Local Authority to all the children in their care and Care Leavers. A corporate parent has a legal responsibility to ensure that the needs of looked after children and care leavers are prioritised, in the same way as any good parent would do for their own child or children. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 sets out 7 Corporate Parenting Principles to achieve the best possible outcomes for Children in Care and Care Leavers.

To act in the best interest, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and young people.

To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings.

To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people.

To help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the Local Authority and it's relevant partners.

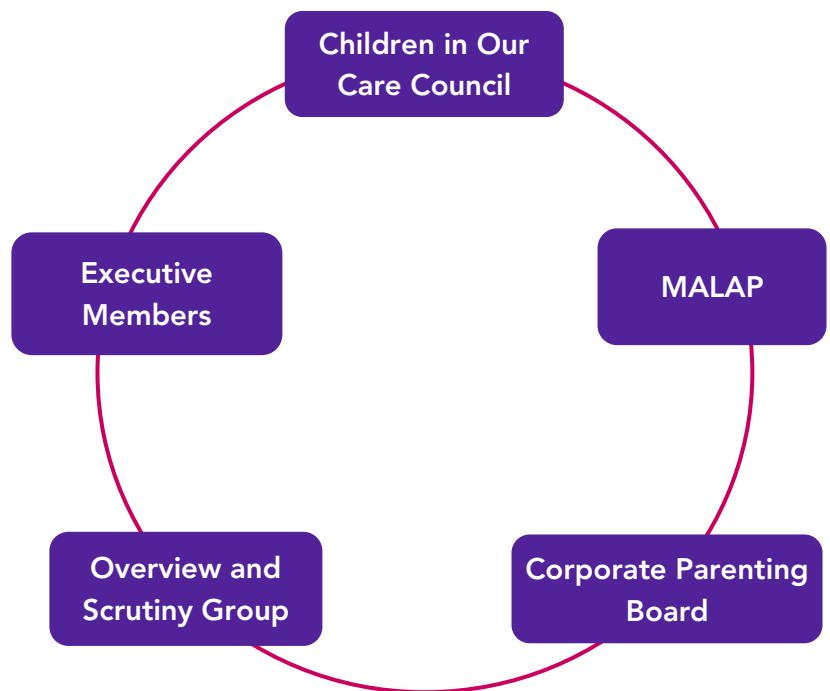
To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people.

For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships, and education or work.

To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

9. Governance Arrangements for Corporate Parenting

Our governance arrangements underpinning corporate parenting have a clear focus on the voice of 'care experienced' young people through the Children in Our Care Council, with effective scrutiny from the 'Overview and Scrutiny Group' and 'Executive Members'. We can be confident that the decisions made by the 'Multi Agency Looked After Partnership' (MALAP) and our 'Corporate Parenting Board' have the child's best interests at heart, adhere to our corporate parenting principles and represent the vision we have for Children in Our Care and Care Leavers.



9.1 Multi-Agency Looked After Partnership (MALAP)

Building on the good partnership arrangements that are in place in Redcar and Cleveland, a Multi-Agency Looked After Partnership was formed, bringing together the Local Authority responsibility and that of other agencies represented by the involvement of key people, to ensure the needs of Children in Our Care and Care Leavers are met. This provides a common understanding of each agency's responsibility, as referenced in their organisation's strategic plans, culminating in better outcomes for Children in Our Care and Care Leavers.

1. Aim

To take a Multi-Agency approach to challenging outcomes, improving systems and promoting the needs and interests of Children in Our Care, Care Leavers, who are a priority group in Redcar and Cleveland Council

Shaping our Futures, Best Start in Life strategic plan.

2. Objectives

- Identifying opportunities for collaboration and partnership.
- Seeking to improve outcomes through sharing good practice, experience and approaches.
- Further development of a coherent approach to issues relating to Children in Our Care and Care Leavers.
- Work within the Joint Commissioning Unit Principles and Framework to improve and co-ordinate commissioning across all of the services for Children in Our Care.
- Making recommendations to the Assistant Director of Children and

Families Services, Chair of RCBC Corporate Parenting Board and all other relevant partnership boards as appropriate.

- Pro-actively celebrating success and achievement of Children in Our Care.
- Forging productive links with other local, regional and national groups with a focus on Children in Our Care.
- Ensure actions, targets, outcomes and reporting arrangements reflect the strategic structure of RCBC Children and Families Services Shaping our Futures, Best Start in life, the Corporate Parenting Strategy and the MALAP Work Plan.

9.2 The Role of the Corporate Parenting Board

Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council's corporate parenting board has a membership of 12 Elected Members including the Lead Members for Children and Health and Housing. Other members of the Board include the Director and Assistant Director of Children and Families and other officers.

The Board's remit is to:

1. Raise awareness for all Members of the Council on the role of corporate parenting.
2. Develop effective corporate responses to fulfil the Council's responsibilities as a corporate parent.
3. Review the Council's corporate parenting policy.
4. Implement changes to policy and practice and to inform services development in the context of corporate parenting.
5. Ensure the education, health and social needs of Children in Our Care and Care Leavers are met.
6. Promote and safeguard the welfare of all looked Children in Our Care and Care Leavers, including those placed outside the Borough.
7. Review the Council's arrangements for rota visits to Children in Our Care.



9.3 Virtual School

RCBC's Virtual School helps the Children in Our Care and leaving our care to achieve the best. Although the pupils attend many different schools and settings, we operate as if they all attend one school.

We encourage and support children and work to provide stability and expect schools and settings to provide quality learning environments which meets their needs.

We hold schools to account for the impact of the provision on pupil's progress through the education system using Personal Education Plans (PEPs). The Virtual School has a dedicated quality assurance officer for PEPs to ensure consistency of quality assurance across all PEPs and to provide individual feedback on every PEP completed to educational settings.

Direct engagement between the Virtual School Head (VSH) and school leads for Children in Our Care has been enhanced recently. The VSH attends the Education in Partnership meetings (secondary heads) and the Strategic Leadership Board (CEOs of primary and secondary multi academy trusts and Head teachers representatives for non academised

primary and secondary settings).

This has increased direct working with schools and academies enabling the Virtual School to achieve successful outcomes for Children in Our Care.



9.4 Children in Our Care Council

As Corporate Parents, we know that we cannot make effective decisions for young people and provide the support they need without their help, thoughts and views.

We have a dedicated Children in Our Care Council (CIOCC) currently known as the Have Your Say Group who provide a voice for care experienced young people in Redcar & Cleveland.

The CIOCC is attended by a growing number of Children in Our Care who want to be involved in the decision of making process regarding services. They meet regularly and discuss what improvements could be made to the support young people receive. Members represent Redcar & Cleveland's 'care experienced' children and young people by attending the Corporate Parenting Board and RCBC'S MALAP.

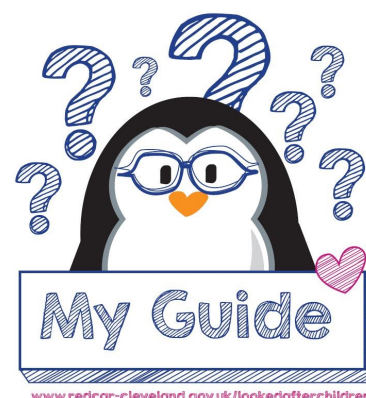
Regularly involved in decision making at various levels, the group has given feedback on key pieces of consultation such as the LA's Housing Strategy, consultation on public transport, the JSNA of the Health of Care Leavers, and wider communication and participation.

Changes that the group have implemented for Children in Our Care and Care Leavers include 'Promises to Children in Our Care and Care Leavers', they have also created 'My Guide' which is given to every child when they come into care so that they know what to expect.

The CIOCC are active members of the Regional Child in Care Council, playing a key role in the organisation and delivery of the regional conference. Following the success of previous Regional Child in Care

Conferences our young people have been involved in presentations to the Regional LA Chief Executives Forum, and the Regional LA Council Leaders network.

Our Council also plays a key role in planning the annual achievement awards for Children in Our Care and Care Leavers. Working closely with elected members the Council is involved with the design and decoration, they also select the winners for a number of awards.



Outlined below are some of the areas where the Children in Our Care Council has had a direct impact or influence on the support that our children and young people receive.

CIOCC Activities	Outcomes
Consultation on the design & look of the Beach House, a decided Family Time venue	Provides opportunity for families to have individual contact in a friendly environment
Children in Our Care told the Local Authority what they wanted to see included in the LACES Promise	The views of the CIOCC were incorporated into RCBC's Promise to Children in Our Care and Care Leavers, influencing strategy over the coming years
Contributed to the development of the Local Offer for care leavers	Supporting Care Leavers by offering a jargon free, easy to read Local Offer framed around key themes
Redesigned the child protection family room at Seafield House	Made the family room more friendly for children and young people
Instrumental in the decision to change the term "contact" to "family time"	The term has changed throughout the Directorate reflecting the voice of children and young people
Played a key role in securing 'ring fenced' in-house apprenticeships for Children in Our Care and Care Leavers	Supporting Care Leavers to access employment opportunities
Developed and created My Guide which is given to every child when they come into care	Supporting other children and young people coming into care to understand the process and know what to expect

10 What we will do

<p>Ambition for children To promote high aspirations, & seek to secure the best outcomes for Children in Our Care and Care Leavers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer ring-fenced, council apprenticeship opportunities to care leavers • Introduce dedicated 'Foundation for Jobs' Careers Advisor within the Leaving Care Service. 	<p>Working together To help looked after children & young people gain access to, & make the best use of services provided by the local authority & its relevant partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement a new policy which sets out clearly defined levels of financial support payable to carers, to enable them to meet the individual needs of the children and young people placed in their care, under the terms of a Special Guardianship or Child Arrangements Order. • Review the offer to foster carers on an annual basis • Review the staffing structure within the team to ensure it best meets the needs of the service. • Embed the Tees Valley Adoption Agency. • Strengthen the audit process. 	<p>Safeguarding & permanence For looked after children & young people to be safe, & stability in their home lives, relationships & education or work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement a revised recruitment campaign to attract more in-house foster carers. • Target recruitment activity on specific gaps in provision, including teenagers, sibling groups, parent and child placements. • Secure and register two in-house, residential properties for Children in Our Care. • Develop a new model of short-term emergency/respite provision for families with challenging teenagers to avoid the need to become Children in Our Care. • Develop a bespoke family time centre for the delivery of quality contact for Children in Our Care and those separated from family members. • Review transport arrangements for family time services.
<p>Youth voice To encourage Children in Our Care & young people to express their views, wishes & feelings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that care plans & pathways plans are of sufficient quality focussed and accessible and young people are connected with the aims set out • Implement a range of customer feedback opportunities for children, families and professional that use the service. 	<p>Youth participation To take into account the views, wishes & feelings of Children in Our Care & young people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop appropriate provision to fully support the integration of UASC into the Borough. • Increase children's participation in their reviews through the use of digital technology. 	<p>Transitions To prepare Children in Our Care & young people for adulthood & independent living</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully implement the Local Offer. • Support the development of Pathway Plans through the Senior Personal Advisor Post in the Leaving Care Team. • Review and develop supported lodgings initiative for young people.

11 What success will look like

More children and young people will be cared for by in-house foster carers.

A range of placements will better meet demand from children and young people with complex needs.

Increased number of Children in Our Care with a meaningful Care or Pathway Plan.

Care and Pathway Plans will show greater evidence of improved outcomes for children and young people.

Family time will be facilitated from a dedicated building enabling more 1-1 sessions and reduced contact in group settings.

More Care Leavers will be in education, employment and training.

The Tees Valley Adoption Agency will provide well matched placements in a timely and seamless way.

Financial Support will be available to all Special Guardianship Order (SGO) and Child Arrangement Order (CAO) families with a consistent approach to assessing the financial support requirements of those with additional needs.

Feedback from Children in Our Care and Care Leavers will indicate that their experiences of care helped them to achieve positive outcomes.

12 What's working well?

As part of our role as Corporate Parents, we are committed to working with our partners to improving outcome for the children we care for. Examples of what is working well includes:

- Long term placement stability is improving.
- Only 9.4% of Children in Our Care are in residential care.

- A proactive and articulate Children in Our Care Council.
- Outcome for children in care are good overall.
- Support services for adopters are good and there is an effective matching process.
- There is a programme of Members' rota visits to residential care and foster placements both in and out of borough.
- There is an increasing number of in house foster placements.



13 How well are we doing?

Below we have set out some of the key measures we will use to monitor progress and performance.

Our progress towards achieving our performance measures will be monitored by the strategic partnership on a quarterly basis with progress reported to the authorities' Corporate Parenting Board. Annually the action plan will be reviewed, with quantitative and qualitative data, including feedback from Children in Our Care and Care Leavers used to assess our progress made against our priorities.

Findings from the annual review will inform and direct revised actions that will form the basis of a reviewed annual plan.

Monitoring and reviewing the annual review will be facilitated by Redcar & Cleveland's MALAP, with all strategic partners and the Children in Our Care Council contributing to this process.



Measure Description	Current	Target
% of children & young people in foster care placed with in house carers (excluding those places with friends & family)		
% of Children in Our Care places in residential accommodation		
% of in house foster carers who can and will care for children with complex needs.		
% of families receiving an Edge of Care Package of support that did not become looked after during the following 6 months		
Short term placement stability: % of Children in Our Care having 3 or more placements in 12 months		
Long term placement stability: % of Children in Our Care under 16 years old, looked after continuously for at least 2.5 years, in their current placement for at least 2 years.		
% of Children in Our Care placed out of Borough (excluding those placed with friends and family).		
% of families providing positive feedback regarding the family time service.		
% of Pathway Plans judged to be good or better.		
% of Care Leavers in suitable accommodation.		
% of Care Leavers in Education, Employment or Training.		
Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, for children who have been adopted (days).		
Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family for children who have been adopted (days) (3 year average).		
Rate of Children in Our Care per 10,000		

Find out more

To find out more about our Children and Young People's Services please visit: www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk and search for Children's Services.

Contact Us

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