

# Children in care and care leavers strategy

1 April 2018 to 31 March 2021

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**WARRINGTON**  
Borough Council

# Foreword

Care is a vital part of our child protection system. Most children and young people in care say that their experiences are good and that it was the right choice for them. But more needs to be done so that the children and young people that we care for are healthy and safe; have the same opportunities as their peers; and are ready to lead successful adult lives.

Warrington's original Strategy was first published in 2013 and I wholeheartedly welcome this new Strategy. It gives Warrington partners the opportunity to demonstrate what has been achieved so far and what we need to do in the future to improve the lives of our children in care and care leavers.

As the Executive Member for Children and Young People and the Chair of the Corporate Parenting Forum, I see the work of the council officers and their partners as they do their best to help support Warrington's children in care and care leavers. I am always impressed with their commitment to making better lives for them. Whilst I am delighted with the commitment shown to improving the experiences of our children in care and care leavers, we cannot be complacent. There is always more that we can do. We need to constantly challenge each other and ask ourselves "If this were my own child would it be good enough?"

Everyone who works with our children in care and care leavers has an important role to play in improving the services we provide to our children and young people so that they get the best possible experience as they move through care and become care leavers.

This scrutiny and challenge of the impact of our work are the essential ingredients to being strong Corporate Parents.

In our roles as Corporate Parents, we enjoy and value working alongside our Children in Care Council and going forward we will continue to make sure that their views and experiences are at the heart of all that of all we do.



**Councillor Jean Carter**

Executive Member for children and young people and  
Chair of the Corporate Parenting Forum

# Section 1: Introduction

Since we published our first Strategy in 2013, we have made good progress and improved the lives of children and young people in our care and care leavers. Some of the highlights include improvements to the number of children being adopted, the recruitment of more local fosters carers and better outcomes for children in care and for young people leaving care.

There have also been some significant challenges - our children in care population has almost doubled. This new Strategy sets out our plans to address some of our key areas for development over the next three years. The Action Plan in Section 4 sets out what we will do, who will lead this work and how it will be reviewed going forward.

It will also serve as Warrington's Children in Care, Care Leavers and Corporate Parenting Strategy.

## Corporate Parenting Forum

As the 'Corporate Parent' to the children in our care and care leavers we have a responsibility to make sure that we work together with our partners and provide the best possible care and protection for them.

To thrive, children and young people have certain needs that all good parents will meet and in our role as Corporate Parents Warrington partners are committed to fulfilling these needs as we would for our own children. As part of our work we have adopted

the seven corporate parenting principles introduced as part of the Children and Social Work Act in 2017.

1. To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of children and young people in care
2. To encourage children and young people in care to express their views, wishes and feelings
3. To take into account their views, wishes and feelings
4. To help children and young people in care gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners
5. To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for children and young people in care
6. To make sure that children and young people in care are safe, and have stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work
7. To prepare children and young people in care for adulthood and independent living.

We are currently responsible for over 400<sup>1</sup> children and young people and we are accountable for keeping them safe; making sure their experiences in care are positive and improving their life chances. We approach this role with the same commitment as any other family would so that our children have the best opportunities that we can offer.

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<sup>1</sup>Children in care population, 31 March 2018, MOSAIC

To keep us grounded, we always consider the following four questions when looking at the help and support that our children in care receive:

1. Is this good enough for my child?
2. Would this have been good enough for me as a child?
3. Is this the best that we can achieve?
4. Have we asked young people what they think?



### **Our key responsibilities as corporate parents include:**

- Meeting with children in care and care leavers including those in foster care and residential care and listening to what they tell us about the help and support they receive and their experience in care
- Scrutinising the feedback reports from services for children in care, including from the Independent Reviewing Officers about what they know about life in care for children in Warrington
- Monitoring the quality of care delivered by Warrington's residential children's homes and fostering service
- Having oversight of the performance of Together for Adoption (our regional adoption agency) including the recruitment and assessment of adopters for Warrington children and young people and adoption support
- Reviewing the performance of the council and its partners around education and health outcomes
- Scrutinising the key strategic plans for children in care and care leavers including the Sufficiency Statement, the Local Offer to Care leavers and the Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy
- Promoting a partnership approach to the delivery and development of services for children in care and care leavers
- Celebrate the individual and collective success of children in care and care leavers.

## Our pledge to children in care and care leavers

As corporate parents we have worked with the Children in Care Council, who told us about their hopes and dreams. We agreed to do all in our power to keep these nine promises to the children in care in Warrington.

### 1: Hopes and Dreams

Help us to achieve our goals by supporting us and encouraging us through challenging times. Like all children we have dreams about what we want to achieve and do in life and we need your support to make these come true.

### 2: Respect and Trust

Don't judge us: show us understanding when things are not good.

### 3: Equality

Treat us the same, it's not our fault.

We don't want to be treated differently than other children because we are children in care.

### 4: Live and Learn

Everyone makes mistakes sometimes, so allow us to make mistakes and learn from them.

### 5: Promises

Be honest with us and trust us. We are children in care and some of us have been let down in the past and need you to keep your promises to us.

### 6: Listen

Let our voice be heard, listen to what young people want.

### 7: Fairness

Love us like we are one of your own because we didn't make this choice; make us feel part of family life. Whether we have foster carers, live with relatives or in a children's home we want to be a key member of the family or the group and have the opportunity to join in all the activities.

### 8: Fun

Help our hobbies to become a reality.

### 9: Understand (walk in our shoes)

Being in care can be good but we need help to guide and support us along the way and overcome any obstacles that we experience.



## National drivers

We take our corporate parenting responsibilities seriously, but Corporate Parenting requirements formally came into force in 1998 as part of the Department of Health's 'Quality Protects' Programme. The main principle behind corporate parenting is that the local authority has a legal and moral duty to provide the kind of support that any good parent would provide for their own children. This includes enhancing children's quality of life as well as simply keeping them safe. An extensive statutory and legal framework now underpins this responsibility, including the:

- Children and Families Act 2014
- Keep on Caring: Supporting young people from care to independence 2016
- Putting Children First 2016
- Children and Social Work Act 2017.

## Our partners

It is important to recognise the role of all public services in meeting the needs of children and young people in care and care leavers, including partners in the statutory, private and third sectors.

Our key partners are:

- Warrington Clinical Commissioning Group, which funds health services to meet the needs of people who live in Warrington including children in care and those leaving care.
- Bridgewater Healthcare Foundation Trust, which provides community health services.
- Cheshire Police who work with the Warrington Borough Council and other partners to keep children in care safe, particularly around child abuse, missing children, child sexual exploitation and children in trouble with the law.

- Torus Housing, who work with the council to secure appropriate housing provision.
- School leaders and class teachers, who provide education support to help children in care achieve their academic potential.
- Children's homes and supported accommodation providers in the area.
- The Youth Justice Service, which supports young people in the criminal justice



# Section 2:

## What we know about children in care and care leavers in Warrington

### In Warrington there are:

- 49,000 children aged up to 19 years old, making up nearly a quarter of the total population<sup>2</sup>
- 25,200 boys and 23,800 girls<sup>3</sup>
- 401 children in care as of the 31 March 2018<sup>4</sup>
- 343 (85%) children in care recorded as white British<sup>5</sup>
- 58 (15%) children in care recorded as being from an ethnic minority<sup>6</sup>
- 166 care leavers<sup>7</sup>
- 140 children living in Warrington in the care of another council<sup>8</sup>

### What children in care and care leavers have told us:

- New children coming into care should meet with the Children in Care Council so that they have the opportunity to meet other children who have experienced care.
- They would like a health passport which records all their key medical and healthcare information.
- Spending time with their brothers and sisters is important to them, especially when they are no longer able to live in the same house.

<sup>2</sup>Population estimates, Nomis, 31 March 2018

<sup>3</sup>Population estimates, Nomis, 31 March 2018

<sup>4</sup>Children in care population, 31 March 2018, MOSAIC

<sup>5</sup>Children in care population, 31 March 2018, MOSAIC

- They found it helpful to have access to an Independent Visitor who spent time with them doing fun activities.
- Where possible, Independent Advocates should be the same person each time to improve consistency.
- Having a monthly drop in session for Care Leavers with support workers who can help with advice around employment opportunities, housing options and benefits was really useful.
- The support offered to care leavers is good and the introduction of a named worker for all care leavers has been helpful.
- The Council Tax Exemption policy for care leavers would support young people to make ends meet. The council has agreed that from now on they will not have to pay this until they are twenty-five.



<sup>6</sup>Children in care population, 31 March 2018, MOSAIC

<sup>7</sup>Children in care population, 31 March 2018, MOSAIC

<sup>8</sup>Children in care population, 31 March 2018, MOSAIC

## What we have achieved since our first strategy:

- We work hard to build and maintain relationships with the children we care for. We have improved the retention of our social workers which means that children and young people are usually able to keep the same social worker for a longer time. We also help children in care to get to know their Independent Reviewing Officer who is responsible for reviewing their care plans.
- We have reviewed the way in which we recruit foster carers and have put in place a regional approach so that we can work towards having enough good quality foster care placements to meet the needs of our children and young people.



- Being able to live with their brothers and sisters is also very important for children in care and we work very hard to help siblings stay together wherever possible. Where this cannot happen we try hard to find places for brothers and sisters to live near their families and each other.
- Where it is safe to do so, most of our children in care live within 20 miles of their family home - in March 2017 this was more than 93%<sup>9</sup>. This helps them to keep in touch with the people and communities that are important to them.
- We have set up a successful Staying Put Scheme, which makes it possible for young people to remain with their foster family beyond the age of 18. Nine young people were in a Staying Put arrangement as of the 31 March 2018<sup>10</sup>.
- We have significantly increased the number of children placed for adoption. 23 children were adopted in 2017/18 with a further 10 placed for adoption.
- Children with a plan for adoption are adopted in a timely way.
- Children in care are supported to do well at school. Results in their GCSEs fluctuate annually because of the small size of the group, but overall attainment levels have been on an improving over the past three years.
- As of the end of March 2017, more than 96% of children and young people in care have had an annual health and dental check<sup>11</sup>.
- As of March 2018 more than 88% of care leavers were in suitable accommodation<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup>Children in care population, MOSAIC, 31 March 2017

<sup>10</sup>Staying Put Placements, Fostering Service, 31 March 2018

<sup>11</sup>Children in care population, MOSAIC, 31 March 2017

<sup>12</sup>Children in care population, MOSAIC, 31 March 2018 (Provisional)



# Section 3: Our priorities for children in care and care leavers

## Our vision

Our vision remains the same:

“ We want every child in our care to be healthy, happy and safe, and feel loved, valued and respected. ”

## Our ambition

We have introduced new ambition into our work so that children in care have the same health, educational and employment outcomes as their peers.

Where this is not the case we will challenge the council and its partners about the quality of help and support for children in care and ask them to explore new ways of working.

## Our new priorities

Although we have made good progress over the past five years, we believe that the time is right to refresh our strategic priorities in line with the changes that have happened locally and nationally since our last strategy.

They are described as ‘strategic outcomes’ and provide a useful framework for describing what actions we will take to address the areas which require development to improve the lives of children in care and care leavers.

These priorities are based on what we know about:

- The needs of our children and young people,
- What they have told us about what would make a positive difference to their lives; and
- The changes we need to make to the way we run our services for children in care and care leavers.

Our strategic outcomes are for children in care and care leavers to:

1. Live in settled families
2. Stay safe
3. Be healthy
4. Get the best from school and college
5. Be prepared for independence
6. Have successful adult lives.

## Workforce development

We work hard to build and maintain relationships with the children we care for and part of this commitment means making sure that they have the same social worker throughout their time in care. One of our key challenges over the past three years has been creating a stable workforce. We have made sure that Warrington is a great place to work to attract the best social workers in the North West and encourage those who do work here to stay so that children and young people do not have to change their social worker unless they want to.

## Living within our means

Whilst services for children in care are prioritised within council's budget, our resources have for the most part remained the same since our most recent strategy. Given the rise of children and young people being brought into care, this has placed a significant strain on workers as they try to do more with the same budget.

Going forward we will need to make changes to the way that we work so that we can live within our means. This will mean changing our behaviours and working more efficiently and effectively.



## Priority one: Live in settled families

Being a good corporate parent means that we are responsible for making sure that children and young people live in settled families where they can thrive, and that there is good, early decision-making and excellent multi-agency planning so that children don't 'drift' in the care system.

This means seeking legal permanence for children and young people at the earliest opportunity so that they know where they are going to be living for the rest of their childhood and who their carers are going to be.

### Why is it important?

We know that children and young people in care have the best chance in life when they live in settled families and feel cared for. Just being in a stable placement is not good enough. Children and young people need to be able to build relationships with people who they can trust and rely on, and who look out for them.

Children in care tell us that they value relationships with people who:

- Are always there for them
- Care about their health and wellbeing
- Love, accept and respect them for who they are
- Are ambitious for them and help them succeed
- Stick with them through thick and thin.

### How well are we doing?

- Our main aim is to make sure that the children and young people that we care for live in stable families. However, we know that the proportion of children living in the same placement for two years or more has reduced from 87% to 50% between 2017 and 2018.
- We have significantly increased the number of children placed for adoption - in 2017/18 23 children were adopted.
- Being able to live with their brothers and sisters is also very important for children in care and we work very hard so that most siblings can stay together wherever possible. Where this cannot happen we try hard to find places for them to live near each other.
- We have set up a successful Staying Put scheme to support young people to remain living with their foster family beyond their 18th birthday

### What we will do:

- Make sure that we get legal permanence for children and young people at the earliest opportunity.
- Continue to work with children and young people to plan their care, understand who are the important people in their lives and where they would be best living.
- Prevent placement breakdowns by continuing the support we give to the people who look after our young people.
- Where adoption is the best plan, we will start to make arrangements as soon as we possibly can.
- Where children and young people are living with their family members we will work with both the child in care and the family members to explore whether a Special Guardianship Order may be more appropriate, so that legal permanence for the child can be achieved.

## What difference will we make?

- All children in care at their four month review will have a permanence plan which sets out the arrangements for the future.
- All children in care will be involved in the review of their plan.
- At least 70% of children and young people in care will have been in the same placement for two years or more.
- We will continue to increase the number of children and young people adopted.
- More children and young people will have Special Guardianship Orders.



## Priority two: stay safe

Keeping children and young people safe is everybody's business and this means all organisations working together to protect them from intentional neglect, harm and abuse. This includes all forms of discrimination, bullying, violence or exploitation.

We want our children and young people to be protected from harm and to get the help and support they need if circumstances where they are at risk.

### Why is it important?

Everyone who works with children and young people in Warrington wants to make sure that all children are safe and have access to the help and support they need when they need it.

This means working together to address the needs of children and young people in care and in particular those who:

- Are seeking refuge from political, cultural, religious or other forms of persecution including armed conflict and war
- Run away or go missing from home and care
- Are at risk of criminal and sexual exploitation
- Have experienced honour based violence.

### Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children often have significant physical and emotional health needs as a result of their journey which need to be addressed. Their experiences may include being subject to beatings, rape or torture and/or witnessing beatings, rape, torture and killing of others including family members.

As children in care, Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children benefit from the same services, support and care that other children in care receive. Arrangement of a suitable placement to meet their needs is paramount and provides a secure base for the young person to feel settled and safe, and support their long term welfare.

### Missing children and young people

Children and young people who go missing from home or care are at risk of being targeted for involvement in gangs, trafficking, criminalisation, sexual exploitation and violence.

It is recognised that children and young people do not always acknowledge what may be an exploitative and/or abusive situation. As Corporate Parents have a responsibility to safeguard and work to prevent, disrupt activity and prosecute perpetrators.

Any young person who is reported as missing is referred to our commissioned service who undertake a 'return to home' interview to support on-going risk management and reduce the likelihood of further missing episodes.

### Criminal and sexual exploitation

Children from all backgrounds can be affected by criminal and sexual exploitation but children who are in care are at greater risk. There is a clear child sexual exploitation strategy and procedures in place which provide practical guidance for social workers and other practitioners dealing with cases where there is suspected child/young person sexual exploitation. Where there is sexual exploitation of children and young people, this is regarded as abusive criminal behavior on the part of the perpetrator.

Children and young people who are groomed into drug-running or other criminal activity by adults are being exploited in the same way as those who are enticed into sexual activity. They too are vulnerable and need help and support to keep them safe and not criminalised but recognised as victims.

### **Honour Based Violence**

Honour Based Violence affects people of all ages, but often begins early in childhood and can lead to coercive control, built on expectations about behaviour that are made clear at a young age.

Women are particularly at risk of honour based violence, and often communities have a role to play in either perpetrating or condoning abuse which means that survivors are often unable to return to their communities even after the immediate risk has been removed.

For survivors, the long term impact on their wellbeing, sense of belonging and day to day life can be severe and long lasting.

### **How well are we doing?**

- Children's social care has a lead role to play and a legal duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. We work with a range of partners across the public, private and voluntary sectors. This includes health services, schools and the police, so that children and young people are properly safeguarded from harm at home, at school and in the community.
- In Warrington the number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children has increased significantly from 4 in 2016 to 23 in 2018. To address the increase in demand a worker has been identified to work with Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children and find appropriate accommodation which supports their cultural identity.

- Children in the care of Warrington Borough Council and other local authorities are over represented in the number of children being repeatedly reported as missing. They are also make up the largest percentage of children who are missing for over 24 hours and the number of episodes has doubled since 2017/18.

### **What we will do:**

- Make sure that young people have the opportunity to see their social workers alone and know how to tell people if they are unhappy about something.
- Provide access to independent support from advocates and independent visitors.
- Continue to work with our partners in Warrington and across Cheshire to plan and deliver services for children at risk of going missing and child sexual exploitation.
- Continue to commission and provide services which support the young people to reflect upon and recognize CSE.

### **What difference will we make?**

- All children in care will be seen by alone by their Social Worker at their statutory visit.
- All children in care will have the opportunity to access an Independent Support Visitor and/or Independent Advocate.
- 10% reduction in both the number of children in care going missing and the number of episodes.
- People who engage in the exploitation, of children, including those who sexually exploit children, will be held to account through improved disruption and prosecution activity.

## Priority three: Be healthy

As corporate parents, we have a legal responsibility to promote the welfare of the children in our care and make sure that they have access to the right medical treatment and healthcare services when they need it.

We want all children in care and our care leavers to be healthy and receive treatment for any medical problems as soon as they arise.

### Why is it important?

Children often enter care with a poorer levels of physical and mental health than other children and nationally two thirds of children in care have at least one physical health complaint, and nearly half have a mental health issue.

All parents want their children to have the best start in life and to be healthy. As corporate parents, we have the same aspirations for our children in care so that they receive the care and support they need in order to thrive.

### How well are we doing?

- The majority of children in care have had a dental and health check in the last 12 months.
- 68% of children in care aged 3 to 16 years had completed a Strengths and Difficulties Screening Questionnaire which is used to identify children and young people with mental health needs.
- Only 1.8% of children in care had been identified with a substance misuse issue. This is a significant shift from the previous year and this is a key area for development as we intend to improve the early identification of children and young people at risk of addiction.

### What we will do:

- Improve the numbers of children and young people who are registered with a dentist so that all children in care have access to regular check-ups and treatment when they need it.
- Make sure that children and young people in care are permanently registered with a GP and temporary registrations are used only in exceptional circumstances.
- Health outcomes are positive for the children in our care and we will continue to make sure that all children in care have regular and timely health and dental appointments.
- We will continue to use Children in Care Reviews to make sure that the health needs of children in care are being met and any issues are escalated to appropriate services.
- Improve the uptake and recording of immunisation records for all children and young people in care.
- We will continue to improve the identification of children in care with substance misuse issues and provide appropriate interventions and treatment when needed.
- For children in care with mental health needs we will make sure that they receive the help they need in a timely way.

### What difference will we make?

- 95% of children in care will be registered with a dentist.
- 95% of children in care will be permanently registered with a GP.
- 85% of children in care will have their dental checks on time.
- 85% of children in care will have their annual health checks on time.
- 95% of children in care will have up to date immunisations.
- 4% of children in care are identified as having a substance misuse issues in line with the national trend.
- 100% of these children in care receive timely and appropriate treatment.
- 100% of children in care referred to CAMHs will be assessed within six weeks of the referral.

## Priority four: Get the best from school and college

As good parents we are ambitious for the children we care for and our care leavers, and we expect them to receive a planned and stable education which helps them to fulfil their potential.

We have high aspirations and this means helping children in care and care leavers to get the best from their school and college education so that they have the qualifications they need to pursue their career aspirations.

### Why is it important?

We know that going to school, getting qualifications, taking part in training and securing employment after leaving care are important steps in helping young people to succeed in adulthood.

We also know that for some young people going to university can give them the qualifications they need to open up opportunities in their life and we want our young people to be able to have the same chances as other children and young people living in Warrington.

### How well are we doing?

- The people that inspect our services tell us that we are ambitious for our children in care and care leavers and that they are well supported.
- The Headteacher for the Virtual School makes sure that all children in care attend good quality education provision and all are placed in either a good or outstanding school.
- In Warrington the majority of schools are judged by Ofsted to be good or outstanding. Based on their most recent inspection

reports 97% of primary schools and 67% of secondary schools were found to be good or outstanding. All three of the special schools were judged to be outstanding and the Pupil Referral Unit was found to be good.

- Children and young people make good progress in their learning according to their needs and in Warrington a high number of care leavers have been supported to go onto university compared to the national average.

### What we will do:

- Work with children in care, schools, colleges and other professionals to make plans that help them go to school and reduce persistent absenteeism.
- Provide support to children in care and so that they make appropriate progress in Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 assessments.
- Work with children in care so that more care leavers are in education, training or employment when they reach 19 years
- Continue to offer support and help to young people who want to go to university and offer a bursary of £2000 for those in higher education.

### What difference will we make?

- Increase attendance of children in care at school to 95%
- Increase children in care reaching the expected level 4 in reading, writing and maths at Key Stage 2 to at least 50%
- Increase children in Care achieving five A\*-C GCSEs (or equivalent at Key Stage 4), including English and maths to at least 27%
- Increase the proportion of care leavers at the age of 19 years in education, training or employment to at least 70%
- Continue to support high numbers of our children to go to university.



## Priority five: Preparation for adulthood

Every child in care regardless of their needs will leave care at some point and our job as parents is to gradually prepare young people to move on, in the same way that other parents prepare their own children to leave home at 18 or later in life.

This means teaching all children age-appropriate independence skills so that they feel prepared to live on their own.

### Why is it important?

The transition to adulthood for young people in care can be difficult as unlike their peers, many will move to live independently at the age of 18 years. But like all good parents it is our responsibility to provide the same level of care and support that other young people will get from their parent.

In Warrington we are committed to removing some of the practical barriers that care leavers will face and supporting them to develop practical self-care skills such as cleaning, cooking, budgeting and managing safe relationships. When young people have these skills we know that they are ready to lead independent adult lives.

### How well are we doing?

- In our residential homes preparation for independence starts three months after being placed with us. There are three different levels of achievement - Bronze, Silver and Gold. Direct Work includes producing a CV, applying to college, paying bills, household budgeting, mortgage v rent, etc.
- When our young person is 16 (or coming up to their 16th birthday) each young person in our residential homes has a

dedicated Independence File which records the progress made against their monthly action plans on what they want the young person to achieve based around the Children's Home 2015 Standards.

- Once the young person in our residential homes has left school an independence plan is established against the following standards - Wishes and Feelings; Education; Enjoy and Achieve; Health and Wellbeing; and Positive Relationships and Protection.
- Where a young person has not reached full independence, then this information is fed back to the social worker who will ensure that their independence transition plan has a built in care package to support the young person with whatever help is needed (for example young person still requires help with their budgeting or will need support in making health appointments).

### What we will do:

- Support our foster carers to work with children in care to develop the life skills they will need to live independently.
- Explore different residential models for those leaving care but not ready to set up on their own.
- Use family group conferences more creatively when young people are approaching leaving care to ensure all parties have the appropriate support.

### What difference will we make?

- All young people in foster care post 16 will have an independence support plan in addition to their Pathway Plan.
- A business case and appropriate investment will be identified to establish different accommodation models for young people not ready to live on their own.
- 50% of care leavers have a Family Group Conference prior to leaving care.

## Priority six: Successful adult lives

As corporate parents it is important that we support children in care and care leavers to enter adulthood in a planned way, with a home to live in, the skills to look after themselves and the ability to earn a living or continue in education.

This means that all care leavers feel confident about the future.

### Why is it important?

Having a stable and secure place to live where young people feel looked after is important, but it is also important to recognise that many young people will need to move on to independent living as young adults. We need to support them to make these moves in the most appropriate and positive way possible. For some young people this will mean supporting them to return to live with their families and for others to live in their own home for the first time.

### How well are we doing?

- Care leavers and the people who inspect our services tell us we help young people to make the transition to being an adult.
- We have developed our Care Leavers Local Offer which is currently out for consultation and will be launched in September 2018.
- We have put in place drop in sessions for all Care Leavers to provide practical support around claiming benefits, looking for employment and housing.
- We have introduced a new policy so Warrington care leavers do not have to pay council tax until they reach 25 years.

- All of our young people have special plans called Pathway Plans to support them through times of change as they move on from our care.
- All our care leavers are able to find suitable places to live.
- The leaving care grant has been increased from £1500 to £1700.

### What we will do:

- Help care leavers apply for apprenticeships and prepare for interviews
- Work with partners to improve the range of training, employment and education opportunities for care leavers
- Work with partners to ensure we have enough suitable places for young people to live
- Continue to work with care leavers to plan their future and move into adulthood - this will be tailored to every young person.

### What difference will we make?

- Make sure that 75% of care leavers are in education, employment and training.
- Make sure that at least 95% of relevant young people have up to date pathway plans.
- Work with our partners to create more supported accommodation options.
- Ask care leavers if they feel supported to successfully move into independence.

# Section 4: Delivering the strategy

## Monitoring and review

This strategy covers a three year period from the 1 April 2018 to the 31 March 2021. Delivery of the strategy will be underpinned by an action plan which will enable us to measure the difference we have made to the lives of children and young people in care and care leavers.

Progress against the action plan will be monitored by the Corporate Parenting Forum on a quarterly basis.

The Chair of the Children in Care Council will be invited to these meetings to discuss the action plan and to identify any gaps in progress.

A schedule for the monitoring and review of the action plan will be agreed with the Corporate Parenting Board on an annual basis.

## Action Plan

Strategic outcome	Activity	Lead agency/department	Timescale	Success measure
<b>1. Live in settled families</b>	Legal permanence will be sought for all children and young people at the earliest opportunity.	Children's safeguarding teams. Permanence Team.	Ongoing – monthly review	100% of children in care will have a plan for permanence at their four month review.
	Continue to work with children and young people to plan their care.	Children's safeguarding teams Permanence Team	Ongoing – monthly review	100% of children in care contribute to the review of their plans
	Prevent placement breakdowns by continuing the support we give to the people who look after our young people.	Children in care teams	Ongoing – monthly review	70% of children and young people in care will have been in the same placement for two years or more.
	Where adoption is the best plan for the child/young person we will start to make arrangements as soon as we possibly can.	Children's Adoption Social Workers	1-Apr-19  Annual review thereafter 1-Apr-19	26 children and young people will be adopted in 2018/19 and the number will continue to increase year on year.

Strategic outcome	Activity	Lead agency/department	Timescale	Success measure
<b>1. Live in settled families</b>	Special Guardianship Orders will be sought for children and young people who are best placed with connected persons/ or currently placed with connected person.	Children's safeguarding teams Permanence Team	1-Apr-19  Annual review thereafter	29 Special Guardianship Orders will be granted in 2018/19 and the number will continue to increase year on year.
<b>2. Stay safe</b>	Make sure that young people have the opportunity to see their social workers alone and know how to tell people if they are unhappy about something.	Children's safeguarding teams Permanence Team	Ongoing – monthly review	All children in care will be seen by alone by their Social Worker at their statutory visit.
	Provide access to independent support from advocates and independent visitors for children in care.	Permanence Team	Ongoing – monthly review	All children in care will have the opportunity to access an Independent Support Visitor and/or Independent Advocate.
	Continue to work with our partners in Warrington and across Cheshire to plan and deliver services for children at risk of going missing and child sexual exploitation.	Permanence Team	Ongoing – monthly review	10% reduction in both the number of children in care going missing and the number of episodes.
	Continue to commission Catch 22 to provide services which support the young people to reflect upon and recognize CSE.	Permanence Team	Ongoing – monthly review	Perpetrators of CSE will be held to account through improved disruption and prosecution activity.
<b>3. Be healthy</b>	Improve the numbers of children and young people who are registered with a dentist so that all children in care have regular check-ups and access to dental treatment when they need it.	Children in Care Nurse	Ongoing – monthly review	95% of children in care will be registered with a dentist.

Strategic outcome	Activity	Lead agency/department	Timescale	Success measure
<b>3. Be healthy</b>	Make sure that children and young people in care are permanently registered with a GP and temporary registrations are used only in exceptional circumstances.	Children in Care Nurse	Ongoing – monthly review	95% of children in care will be permanently registered with a GP.
	Children in care will continue to have regular and timely health and dental checks.	Permanence Team	Ongoing – monthly review	85% of children in care will have their dental checks on time.  85% of children in care will have their annual health checks on time.
	Improve the uptake and recording of immunisation records for all children and young people in care.	Children in Care Nurse Permanence Team	Ongoing – monthly review	95% of children in care will have up to date immunisations.
	Improve the identification of children in care with substance misuse issues and provide appropriate interventions and treatment.	Drug and Alcohol Abuse Team	Ongoing – monthly review	4% of children in care are identified as having a substance misuse issues in line with the national trend. 100% of these children in care receive timely and appropriate treatment.
	For children in care with mental health needs we will make sure that they receive the help they need in a timely way.	North West Healthcare Trust	Ongoing – annual review	100% of children in care referred to CAMHs will be assessed within six weeks of the referral.
<b>Get the best from school and college</b>	Work with children in care, schools, colleges and other professionals to make plans that help them go to school and reduce persistent absenteeism.	Virtual school	Ongoing – annual review	Overall attendance of children in care at school will be at least 95%

Strategic outcome	Activity	Lead agency/department	Timescale	Success measure
<b>Get the best from school and college</b>	Provide support to children in care and so that they make appropriate progress in Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 assessments.	Virtual school	Ongoing – annual review	50% of children in care will achieve five GCSEs (or equivalent at Key Stage 4), including English and maths
	Work with children in care so that more care leavers are in education, training or employment when they reach 19 years.	Virtual school	Ongoing – annual review	70% of care leavers will be in education, training or employment at the age of 19 years
	Continue to offer support and help to young people who want to go to university and offer a bursary of £2000 for those in higher education.	Virtual school	Ongoing – annual review	5% of care leaver will go onto university
<b>Be prepared for independence</b>	Support our foster carers to work with children in care to develop the life skills they will need to live independently.	Fostering service	Ongoing – annual review	All young people in foster care post 16 have an independence support plan in addition to their pathway plan
	Explore different residential models for those leaving care but not ready to set up on their own.	Commissioning / Service Development Manager	Ongoing – monthly review	Develop a business case and identify appropriate investment to support care leavers
	Use family group conferences more creatively when young people are approaching leaving care to ensure all parties have the appropriate support.	Permanence Team	Ongoing – monthly review	50% of care leavers have a FGC prior to leaving care
<b>Have successful adult lives</b>	Help care leavers apply for apprenticeships and prepare for interviews.	Permanence Team	Ongoing – monthly review	Make sure that 75% of care leavers are in education, employment and training.

Strategic outcome	Activity	Lead agency/department	Timescale	Success measure
Have successful adult lives	Work with partners to improve the range of training, employment and education opportunities for care leavers.	Permanence Team	Ongoing – monthly review	Make sure that at least 95% of relevant young people have up to date pathway plans.
	Work with partners to ensure we have enough suitable places for young people to live.	Permanence Team	Ongoing – monthly review	Work with our partners to create more supported accommodation options.
	Continue to work with care leavers to plan their future and move into adulthood - this will be tailored to every young person.	Permanence Team	Ongoing – monthly review	Care leavers report that they were supported to successfully move into independence.



