



Children Looked After and Care Leavers Strategy 2022-25

Foreword



As a corporate parent, I am committed to ensuring that we provide the best care and support to protect our children looked after and to help them grow into happy and healthy independent adults.

I am pleased to present this Children Looked After and Care Leavers Strategy as both Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee and the Corporate Parenting Board.

As elected leaders, myself and my colleagues champion the needs of children looked after at all levels. We are proud that we have helped shape the vision and priorities of this Strategy so that they are fully owned at all levels, and we can play a proactive role in monitoring the progress and seeing the achievements and successes that are to come.

We know that young people's emotional health and wellbeing has been impacted by the COVID pandemic and therefore it must be prioritised. Children Looked After and Care leavers are no different and addressing and supporting them is crucially important.

Councillor Wendy Clements, Chair of Children, Young People and Education Committee



The local authority and partners have a responsibility to treat all the children that come into our care as if they are our own. Guidance provides us with seven principles which we must consider when thinking about what we must do to support our young people.

We also want to build a positive culture where everyone from the Chief Executive to front line staff, as well as elected members, are concerned about children as if they were their own.

This Strategy provides the opportunity to demonstrate our commitment to our children looked after and care leavers and identify our vision and priorities for their care and support over the next three years.

These may reflect our previous strategic direction, but I know this is because we will not stop until we provide the best opportunities and support, we can. We will continue our improvement journey until we provide outstanding services for young people in Wirral. This is a commitment I want to make as Director for Children, Families and Education.

Simone White, Director for Children, Families and Education

The Right Side of Care

A dedicated website for Looked After Children in Wirral

Corporate Parenting Principles



Councillor Kate Cannon, Member of Corporate Parenting Board



Councillor Wendy Clements, Chair of Corporate Parenting Board



Helen Heeley, Designated Nurse for Children Looked After



Councillor Chris Carubia, Member of Corporate Parenting Board



Councillor Chris Cooke, Member of Corporate Parenting Board



Kerry Mehta, Assistant Director – Children and Families



Simone White, Director for Children, Families and Education



Fiona O'Shaughnessy, Participation and Engagement Manager



The Wirral Promise for young people

We want:

- To be treated the same as everyone else and not be judged
- A safe and stable home
- Our care plan to be clear and explained to us
- To be supported to achieve our best
- Information about what we are entitled to
- Our voices and opinions heard not just listened to
- Our meetings to be held outside of school
- To know how to get health information and who to contact
- More support in applying for jobs and preparing for interviews
- To be taught basic life skills by our foster carers
- To know and understand who can make decisions for us so we can get on with our everyday lives and enjoy growing up just like other young people.

Developing the Strategy

Feedback from consultations

"It's extremely important to listen and promote wishes and feelings etc."

"Ensure that CLA have access to emotional support as soon as there is a plan for them to become looked after i.e. provision for counselling or other therapeutic services."

Priority setting – Corporate Parenting Board: On 2nd November 2021, members of the Corporate Parenting Board held a dedicated session to discuss and explore the priorities for children looked after and care leavers. This resulted in a draft vision and priorities outlined and drawn up into a plan on a page.

Workforce consultation: Between 1st and 10th December, the draft Plan on a page was shared with colleagues from across Children's Services to survey practitioners, managers and senior leaders as to their thoughts on the vision and priorities identified. The survey provided opportunity for employees to free text any specific actions or considerations which they felt were important. In total, 43 Children's Services employees completed the survey.

"Continuity of care givers and professionals - not having to move placements"

"Participation in positive activities (sports, arts, education, training, etc); access to advocates and mentors;"

Consultation with young people: The Care Council's carried out a consultation on the vision and priorities with children looked after and care leavers. The consultation was designed by young people themselves and was promoted by the care council members. These were shared with the Corporate Parenting Board at its meeting on 11th January and have informed priorities to make sure they are child-friendly and understandable.

"Regular planning and review and direct work"

"Ensure all workers/carers are fully trained in trauma and how it can rear its head at any time."

Corporate Parenting Operational Group meeting: A workshop with operational leads from Children's Services was held on 15th December to discuss and refine the priorities and discuss objectives and actions which will lead to tangible outcomes and impact. This group identified that a further workshop with partners would be beneficial in recognition that many tangible improvements required involvement and support from partners across departments and organisations who support children looked after and care leavers.

"More accommodation options for care leavers"

"More support needed for young people to stay with long term foster carers. Placements are needed which offer more support than semi-independent but with a clear pathway to independence."

The Right Side of Care

A dedicated website for Looked After Children in Wirral

Feedback from Young People to date



1. Please put the four priorities in order of importance to you (the most important at the top)

[More Details](#)

Rank **Options**

1 **Emotional and physical heal...**

2 **Independence and transitio...**

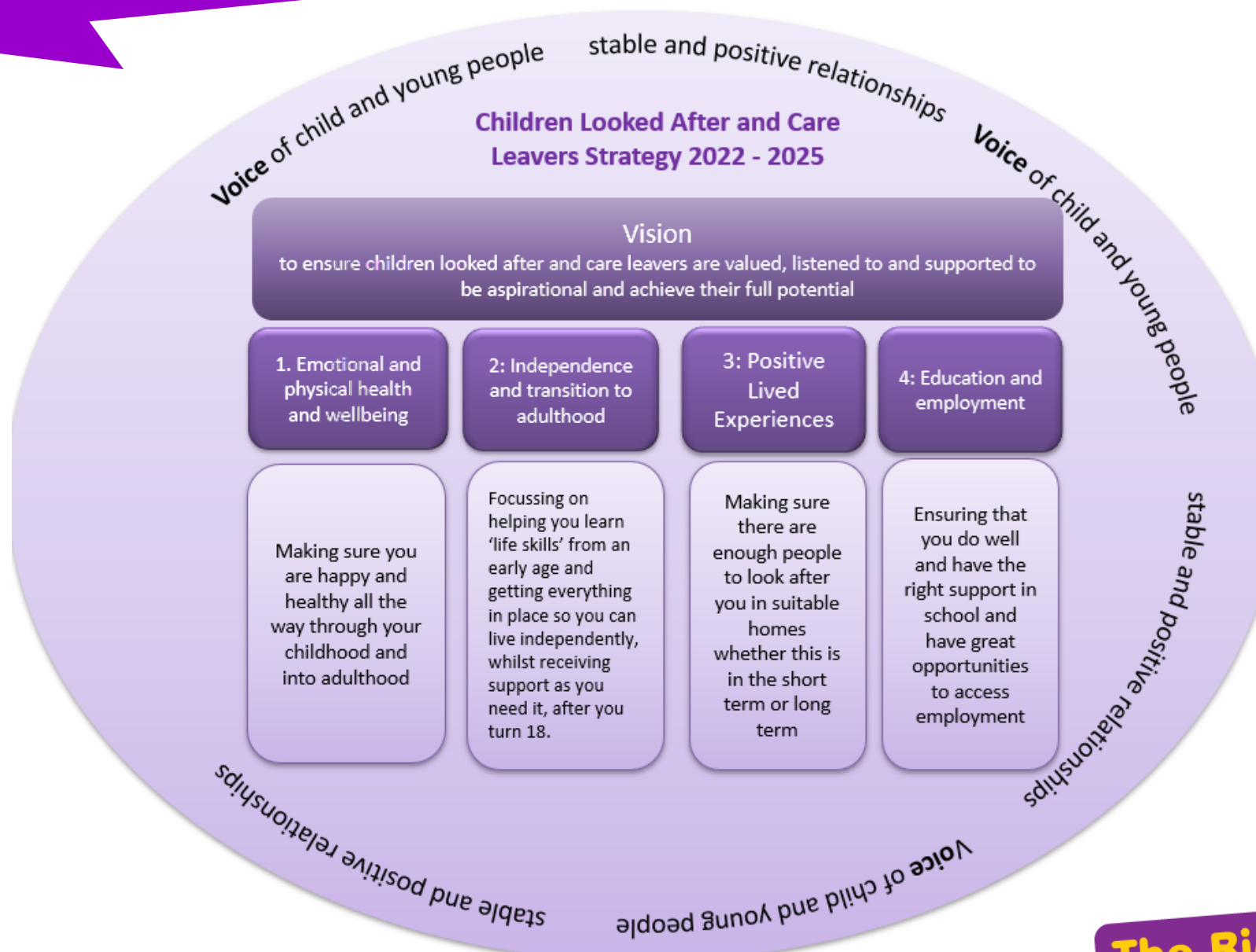
2 **Education and employment:...**

3 **Sufficiency:** Making sure ther...

First choice ■ ■ ■ ■ Last choice



Plan on a Page



Vision and priorities

The Corporate Parenting Board has set out its own vision for Children Looked After and Care Leavers. This vision supports the wider strategic framework and the overarching priorities for all children to make Wirral great for children, young people and families.

Vision: to ensure children looked after and care leavers are valued, listened to and supported to be aspirational and achieve their full potential.

In response to what young people told us, underpinning the Strategy will be the voice of the child which will be the bedrock of planning, reviewing, and considering the outcomes for young people. This will transcend all the priorities within the Strategy.

Priority 1.

Emotional and physical health and wellbeing - Making sure you are happy and healthy all the way through your childhood and into adulthood. Enabling you to build positive relationships, strengthen your sense of identity and understand your life experiences.

Good progress has been made over the past three years with the commission of OOMOO, the bespoke emotional health and wellbeing support offer, a new mental health crisis team has been put in place across CLA and other frontline services and the provision of gym and swim passes for care leavers has supported improvements in emotional and physical wellbeing.

To build on this, we want to strengthen the voice of children looked after in the new mental health and wellbeing transformation programme, ensuring that it is designed to consider their needs as paramount.

We also want to understand the specific issues around why young people are telling us that they do not feel safe and how this is impacting on their wellbeing and emotional health. Further work is required to identify the specific issues around this (contextual/family/home/school etc), and what strategies can we jointly develop to support young people.

We have improved process and practice around recording Strengths and Difficulties questionnaires and about improving the timeliness of health assessments and review health assessments. We need to continue to ensure all information about children and young people is communicated and that the use of surveys and health assessments are used to inform the wider needs of young people in a holistic outcome-focussed way.

Priority 2.

Independence and transition to adulthood - Focussing on helping you learn 'life skills' from an early age and getting everything in place so you can live independently, whilst receiving support as you need it, after you turn 18.

There has been some positive progress on enhancing 'life skills' for children looked after through the Care Leavers Hub, which is providing one stop shop support for learning new skills and promoting independence. We want to improve the systematic marketing and promotion of the SKILLZ programme to increase engagement of practitioners to facilitate more referrals to the programme. This focus is to also include foster carers.

The development of transition protocols and pathways have helped to define practices and identify clear pathways for support. Further work is required on ensuring that transition arrangements (whether they include staying put, transition to adult services for some or to independent living) are seamless and young people feel confident and empowered when they turn 18.

We need to review and improve referral processes between Children's and Adult Social Care, to ensure timeliness and successful transition arrangements for young people at age 18. We also need to look at this in the context of the recent inspection looking at Special Education Needs and Disabilities and how transition improvements can be made for our young people with SEND.

For transition to be effective, improved communication with frontline practitioners will be essential. We need to build a communication pathway with permanence and assessment teams through, for example, surgeries for social workers to consult with their team around support and pathways.

Priority 3.

Positive Lived Experiences - Making sure there are enough of the right people to look after you in suitable homes whether this is a short or long stay/time.

The Partnership Accommodation Programme which encompasses four key projects around residential and short break accommodation has paved the way as an innovation change programme which will radically reshape the residential care sector.

Equally, improvements across the Fostering Service are well documented and were recognised by Ofsted in the recent focused visit. Moving forward, we want to review the current model of offer for fostering ensuring there is dedicated training and recruitment support, develop a support offer for Special Guardians which is robust and tailored to need. We want to continue to explore new models of accommodation particularly for Care Leavers where challenges around homelessness are becoming more apparent.

Priority 4.

Education and employment - Ensuring that you do well and have the right support in school and have great opportunities to access employment

The Virtual School has driven significant change in the education planning for children looked after. The outcomes-based approach to the use of funding has also ensured support is targeted around the needs of individual children. Further work around inclusion, aligned to the SEND transformation programme will form the basis of planning and priorities moving forward.

We want to identify employment and work experience opportunities for care leavers within both new and existing Council contracts. Formal engagement of Corporate Procurement Team officers regarding commissioning of service providers with a focus on social value.

We also have an opportunity through the Care Leaver Covenant to build a culture of opportunity for care leavers. Our approach will be to engage members and officers on the Care Leaver Covenant and explore opportunities for implementation of different themes through different areas and departments.

Measuring Success

To assess our progress and make sure that the work we do positively improves the lives of children looked after and care leavers, our strategy and action plans will be reviewed during Corporate Parenting Board meetings, and we will use the following key indications to measure progress against our priorities:

Vision

- ✓ Number/rate of CLA
- ✓ Number of CLA starters
- ✓ % of CLA who have an EHCP
- ✓ % of care leavers with an EHCP
- ✓ % of CLA adopted in year
- ✓ % of CLA placed with foster carers
- ✓ CLA placements OOB
- ✓ Number of care leavers

Priority 1. Emotional and physical health and wellbeing - Making sure you are happy and healthy all the way through your childhood and into adulthood

- ✓ % of CLA who are open to CAMHs service
- ✓ % of CLA for 12 months or more who have had an SDQ completed
- ✓ % of CLA for 12 months or more who have had a Health check
- ✓ % of CLA for 12 months or more who have had a Dental check
- ✓ CAMHs waiting times
- ✓ Oomoo - Open Door & Polaris feedback
- ✓ Polaris & Open Door - distanced travelled (over 6-month period has the service had the desired impact)
- ✓ Open Door - CBT
- ✓ CLA KOOTH (early intervention, Public Health)

Priority 2. Independence and transition to adulthood - Focussing on helping you learn 'life skills' from an early age and getting everything in place so you can live independently, whilst receiving support as you need it, after you turn 18.

- ✓ % Percentage of Care Leavers in Touch Every 8 Weeks
- ✓ % Pathway plans completed
- ✓ % Pathway plan reviews completed
- ✓ % of referrals made to adults social care that are refused
- ✓ % of care leavers with passport
- ✓ % of plans not matching permanence plans
- ✓ Foster carer training

Priority 3. Positive Lived Experiences - Making sure there are enough of the right people to look after you in suitable homes whether this is a short or long stay/time.

- ✓ % CLA with 2+ social worker changes in the previous two years
- ✓ % CLA with 2+ placement moves in the previous 2 years
- ✓ % CLA with 2+ school moves in the previous 2 years
- ✓ Adoption - average number of days between placement order and match for children adopted (A2)
- ✓ Adoption - average number of days between child entering care and moving in with adoptive family (A10)
- ✓ Adoption - average number of days between child entering care and placement order being granted (A20)
- ✓ CYP permanent placement with foster carer
- ✓ Number of Reg 44 judgements - inadequate
- ✓ % Care Leavers in Suitable Accommodation (17–18-year-olds)
- ✓ % Care Leavers in Suitable Accommodation (19–21-year-olds)
- ✓ Lack of planning for care leavers 18+
- ✓ Care leavers referred to homeless team
- ✓ % Reduction in out of borough placements for CLA/CL

Priority 4. Education and employment - Ensuring that you do well and have the right support in school and have great opportunities to access employment

- ✓ % CLA achieving expected standard in reading, writing and maths at Key Stage 2
- ✓ % of CLA achieving GCSE Progress 8 Score for Children Looked After in Wirral
- ✓ Attainment 8
- ✓ % Of PEPs completed
- ✓ % PEPs quality good/better
- ✓ CLA attendance rates in schools
- ✓ CLA fixed term exclusions
- ✓ CLA permanent exclusions
- ✓ CLA persistent absenteeism
- ✓ % Care Leavers in EET 17–18-year-olds
- ✓ % Care Leavers in EET 19–21-year-olds
- ✓ % Care Leavers with an EHCP in EET 19–21-year-olds
- ✓ % Care Leavers in higher education
- ✓ Care Leavers in apprenticeship

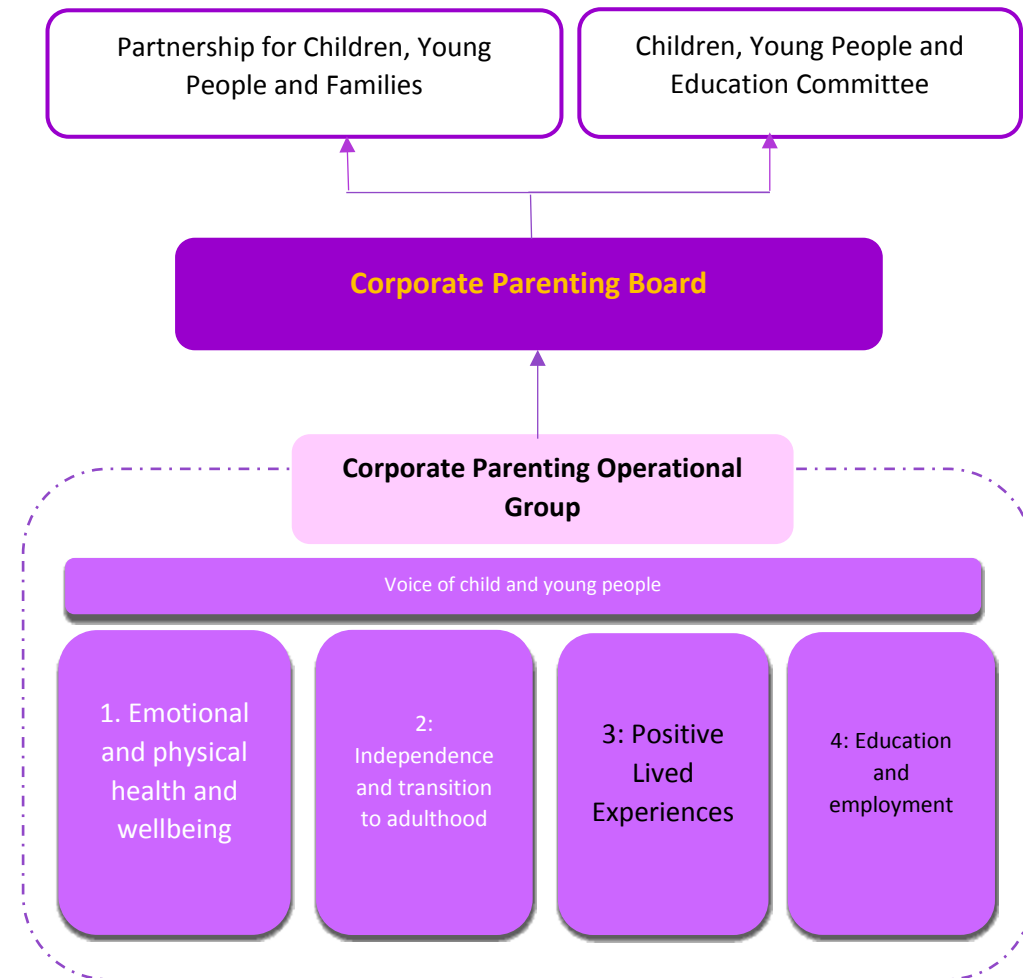
Governance

The governance of this strategy rests with the Corporate Parenting Board. The Corporate Parenting Board is comprised of senior managers and officers from across the council and partners representing education, health, social care and elected members. The Board is chaired by the Lead Member for Children's Services, ensuring a high level of scrutiny for delivery of our priorities.

Working with partners under the Children Act 2004, local authorities have a duty to promote cooperation between 'relevant partners', including the police, the NHS and education providers, while those partners have a duty to cooperate with the local authority in turn. Guidance on the Act highlights that corporate parenting is a 'task [that] must be shared by the whole local authority and partner agencies. The Corporate Parenting Board requires partner agencies to be accountable for the delivery of the priorities alongside the council. Councils should consider how their partners can help them to deliver their corporate parenting role, especially in relation to the provision of services.

Delivery of the strategy will sit with the Corporate Parenting Operational Group. The lead, the Head of Permanence, will report back regularly to the Corporate Parenting Board. The impact of the work will be measured by key indicators presented as part of the board's performance report.

The Children Looked After and Care Leaver's Councils form part of the core membership of the Board and drive the agenda, ensuring that children and young people receive feedback from partners and officers of the council.



The Right Side of Care

A dedicated website for Looked After Children in Wirral